IMAGE AND IMAGINATION:
THE BYZANTINE EPIGRAM AS EVIDENCE
FOR VIEWER RESPONSE

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For Antony Littlewood
with best wishes,

Henry Maguire.

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Two years ago a symposium took place in London, under the title "British Reflections of Byzantium." This meeting was held in conjuction with an exhibition at the British Museum showing Byzantine art drawn solely from British collections.[1] The symposium explored British contacts with and reactions to Byzantium, from Anglo-Saxon times to the twentieth century. It was advertised by a flyer (fig. 1), which reproduced one of the objects shown in the exhibition, namely an icon of around 1400 celebrating the Triumph of Orthodoxy (fig. 2).[2] In this painting, we see the Hodegetria icon of the Virgin and Child, flanked on the left by the powers responsible for the restoration of icons after iconoclasm, namely the Empress Theodora with her young son, Michael III, and on the right by the Patriarch Methodios accompanied by three monks. The drawing on the flyer for the symposium reproduces this image, but with one significant omission; the icon of the Virgin has been taken out, and in its place we are confronted with a blank space that presumably represents a mirror - a glass in which we, the viewers, see not Byzantium, but ourselves (fig. 1). The conceit is clever, and very much a reflection of its times, for in modern art historical discourse there has been a tendency to separate the physical characteristics of images from the reactions of their viewers, as if image and response were independent of each other. The corollary to this view, of course, is that the study of responses is not dependent upon the study of the forms of images, and vice-versa.

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[1] *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture from British Collections*, ed. David Buckton (Exhibition Catalogue, British Museum, London, 1994).
[2] *Ibid.*, 129-30, no. 140.

Among the recent historians of Byzantine art, I will cite the work of four authors who have argued for a separation of image and response in epochs ranging from the sixth to the ninth centuries. In an influential article in the journal *Art History*, published in 1980, John Onians observed that in the Late Antique period, while works of art tended to become progressively more abstract, the descriptions of them became more vivid and detailed. In his own words: "later writers [that is, those of the sixth century] were consistently able to see more than earlier ones. . . . the later writers see increasing signs of natural vitality, of life-likeness [in the images]." According to Onians, the heightening of the late antique viewers' imaginative sensibilities culminated in ekphrastic descriptions of veined marble slabs. He noted that beholders went from "seeing virtually nothing life-like [in the marbles] to seeing something that explicitly represents a part of nature."[3] He cited, especially, the sixth century *ekphraseis* of the colored marbles of St. Sophia in Constantinople by Procopius and Paul the Silentiary. These authors read into the variegated stones an astonishing range of natural images: mountains, meadows and seas, as well as rocks, flowers and waves. Onians commented that the later writers: "give the impression that they can genuinely make more out of the same or less visual information."[4]

Somewhat similar conclusions were reached by Leslie Brubaker, in an article published in *Word and Image* in 1989. Brubaker based her analysis upon ninth-century descriptions of martyrdom scenes by Ignatios the Deacon in his *Life of Tarasios*. She compared the descriptions by Ignatios with paintings of martyrdoms in a ninth-century manuscript, the Paris Gregory, and saw a disjunction between the vivid emotionalism of the Byzantine writer's responses and the static quality of the images. She argued that the tradition of the images - that is, of portrayals of martyrdom, - had remained static since Early Christian times, while the viewers' responses had changed. "Ignatios's new rhetoric," she said, "reflects a changed way of seeing... rather than a dramatic shift in the images themselves."[5] She also claimed: "Byzantine perception of art seems. . . increasingly an emotional response, based not on what is seen, but what is imagined."[6]

In 1991 an article on *Ekphrasis* was published by Liz James and Ruth

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[3] John Onians, "Abstraction and Imagination in Late Antiquity," *Art History* 3 (1980), 1-23, esp. 11-12.

[4] *Ibid.*, 8-12.

[5] Leslie Brubaker, "Perception and Conception: Art, Theory and Culture in Ninth-Century Byzantium," *Word and Image* 5 (1989), 19-31, esp. 23.

[6] *Ibid.*, 25.

Webb, again in the journal *Art History*. Here, too, the authors severed the reaction of the viewer from the physical appearance of the object and argued for the primacy of imagination in the medieval viewer's reception of the image. They maintained that the Byzantine *ekphraseis* gave a psychological or a spiritual truth rather than an accurate description of the object. In their words: "What we can reconstruct from *ekphraseis* is not the appearance of works of art *per se* but rather how they were perceived within a particular society and what that society thought about its art. . . . It is this unseen dimension that we should seek to explore through the medium of ekphrasis."[7]

Most recently, in an article that appeared two years ago in the *Art Bulletin*, Antony Eastmond has extended such arguments, which prioritize preconception over perception, to imperial images in twelfth century Byzantium. Eastmond drew attention to the differing interpretations of the same imperial images made by their creators and by contemporary viewers, and he argued that the viewers came with preconceptions about the meanings of the images, to which they fitted what they subsequently saw. I quote from his text: "the viewers did not look at an image in isolation and draw a meaning from its details, but rather. . . they looked at an image and saw in its details confirmation of their ideas about the emperor. . . . Images did not simply portray the emperor, but acted as a screen onto which many images of the emperor were projected."[8] In other words, Eastmond is saying that the portraits of the emperors acted somewhat like the blank icon at the center of the flyer for the British symposium.

Of course, these analyses of the Byzantine beholders' reactions to Byzantine art are all correct. Noone would deny that the spectator brings imagination to the image, and interprets it in accordance with his or her cultural preconceptions. But here I shall argue that the image is not simply inactive and inert, but that it plays a meaningful role in the process of response. It is not just a blank mirror, in which the viewer sees himself or herself, but it has its own personality, and creates a *dialogue* with the spectator. To use a modern term, it is interactive with the viewer. I shall try to demonstrate this proposition with a case study, namely Byzantine icons of the Crucifixion and the epigrams that were inscribed upon them. My chronological range will be from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries;

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[7] Liz James and Ruth Webb, "<To Understand Ultimate Things and Enter Secret Places>: Ekphrasis and Art in Byzantium," *Art History* 14 (1991), 1-17, esp. 14.

[8] Antony Eastmond, "An Intentional Error? Imperial Art and "Mis"-Interpretation under Andronikos I Komnenos," *The Art Bulletin* 76 (1994), 502-510, esp. 508-10.

within this period we shall see that the poems and the images developed in tandem, each responding to the other.

Before we examine the Crucifixion icons and their associated poems, however, it is necessary to make some general observations about the relationship between epigrams and art in Byzantium. That relationship was complex, and will detain us for a while. Some of the epigrams that we shall look at are still inscribed upon medieval works of art - as is the case with a fifteenth-century icon in the Cathedral of the Dormition at Moscow, which is framed on its top and its two sides by a poem which was written by the twelfth-century poet, Theodore Prodromos (fig. 3).[9] Other epigrams now only survive in manuscripts, but evidently were once written upon, or were intended to be written upon, works of art. In the case of all these poems, we can propose two main types of relationship to the images that they accompany, or once accompanied. According to the first scenario, the epigram was composed without any reference to the work of art to which it is now attached; either it was originally written for a different work of art, or perhaps it was not composed in the first place for a work of art at all, but as an independent poem, and only subsequently was pressed into service as an inscription to be placed upon some object. The second scenario is that the poet did indeed compose the epigram on the basis of close knowledge of the work of art on which it is inscribed; either the poet saw the work of art in person, or he had it described to him, or he was even in some sense the author of both the poem and the art itself, being not only the poet but also the artist, or possibly the patron who told the artist what to make. Both of the two scenarios can be demonstrated; that is, in some cases we can be sure that the poem did *not* originally belong to the object upon which it now appears, and in others it can be shown that the epigram was composed as a direct response to the work of art that it accompanies. However, it must be said that it is usually much easier to prove that the first was the case than the second.

The nonchalance with which epigrams were transferred from one context to another can appear astonishing today. For example, in the lavishly decorated New Church, cut into the rock at Tokali Kilise in Cappadocia,

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[9] Michel Alpatov, "L'icône byzantine du crucifiement dans la Cathédrale de la Dormition à Moscou," *L'art byzantin chez les Slaves, Deuxième recueil dédié à la mémoire de Théodore Uspenskij* (Paris, 1932), 195-211, pl. 24; A. Frolow, "Quelques inscriptions sur des oeuvres d'art du moyen âge," *Cahiers Archéologiques* 6 (1952), 163-7, esp. 167; *Vizantija, Balkan'i, Rus' Ikon'i XIII-XV vekov* (Exhibition catalogue, Tret'jakov Gallery, Moscow, 1991), no. 97, 255-6; Marc Lauxtermann, *The Byzantine Epigram in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (Ph.D. diss. Amsterdam, 1994), 58.

there is a poem in twenty dodecasyllable verses which runs around the cornice beneath the barrel vault of the nave (fig. 4). This poem names the donor of the tenth-century paintings, a certain Constantine, and tells us that its monastery was dedicated to the archangels. So far, so good. But then the poem goes on to list the subjects portrayed in the church:

"He (Constantine) decorates the new foundation with venerable images, recording in these. . .
[Christ] foreshowing [on Mount] Tabor;
how He prepared the disciples with divine words;
how on the grass He fed [the multitude]. . . ;
how on His death He went to hell for us. . . ,"

and so forth.[10] It is at this point that we discover that the list of scenes is quite inaccurate. As Jerphanion pointed out, in his book on the rock-cut churches of Cappadocia, The Feeding of the Multitude was not represented anywhere in the New Church, while many important episodes that *do* appear in the paintings, for example the scenes of Christ's Passion, were evidently omitted from the inscription.[11] Two explanations have been proposed for these discrepancies. Either the poem was originally written for some other church, and only subsequently copied onto this one; or the patron, Constantine, asked some poet, perhaps residing in Constantinople, to compose a poem for his Cappadocian church sight unseen, with the result that the list of scenes did not match the frescoes.[12]

The reuse of epigrams by noted poets as inscriptions for works of art was a relatively common phenomenon in Byzantium. The frequency with which epigrams were transferred from one work of art to another, and their concurrent appearance in manuscript collections, have led to the suggestion

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[10]   Κοσμεῖ νεουργὸν εἰκόσιν σεβασμίαις,
        γράφων ἐν αὐταῖς....
                  ...Θαβὼρ προδεικνύων·
        ὡς τοὺς μαθητὰς ὥπλισεν θείοις λόγοις·
        ὡς ἐπὶ χόρτου διέθρεψε...
        ὅπως δι' ἡμᾶς νεκρὸς εἰς Αΐδου τρέχη
                  ....
Guillaume de Jerphanion, *Les Églises rupestres de Cappadoce*, I, 2 (Paris, 1932), 304-7; Ann Wharton Epstein, Tokali Kilise. *Tenth-Century Metropolitan Art in Byzantine Cappadocia* (Washington, D.C., 1986), 33, 79-80.
    [11] This can be determined even though the inscription has lacunae, as there would not have been space to list the Passion scenes; Jerphanion, *Églises rupestres*, 307; Epstein, *Tokali Kilise*, 36.
    [12] Epstein, *Tokali Kilise*, 36.

that there were collections of poems which were assembled as quarries for inscriptions. Marc Lauxtermann, in his recent thesis on the Byzantine Epigram, has proposed that poets such as Prodromos wrote collections of epigrams with the *potential* to be used as inscriptions, but without having any specific works of art in mind; the verses were, so to speak, produced "on spec". This would explain the extraordinarily rich collection of epigrams on the New Testament composed by Theodore Prodromos, which are hard to match with any known type of Byzantine illuminated manuscript or painted church interior. On the other hand, many of the epigrams by Prodromos did end up being used as inscriptions, as the icon in Moscow demonstrates (fig. 3).[13]

Some manuscript collections even contain multiple epigrams describing the same object, which may have been composed as trial pieces for the patron to choose from. For example, a manuscript in the library of the Laura monastery contains eight short dedicatory poems all devoted to a silver bowl that was commissioned by Constantine Dalassenos when he was governor of Antioch, after 1025. To judge from the titles, the eight poems were the work of at least two authors. We do not know who wrote them, except that the first of the last five epigrams, which form a closely related group, is attributed to a certain "eunuch." The eunuch's poems read as follows.

First: "Constantine, the glory of the Dalassenoi, justly ruler of all Antioch, had the delightful work made for the relief of thirst."
Second: "The delights accompany delights, as you see, and for drinking. For the delightful Constantine, justly the ruler of Antioch, the glory of the Dalassenoi, had this delight made for drinking."
Third: "Constantine, justly the ruler of Antioch, the glory of the Dalassenoi, had the delightful work made with the appearance of inlaid gold."
Fourth: "Constantine, the glory of the Dalassenoi, justly the ruler of Antioch, a delight in every way, had the delightful work made for drinking."
Fifth: "O man, bearing this delightful work, this relief from thirst, in your hands, and drinking, wonder at Constantine the bright ruler of Antioch, the glory of the Dalassenoi."[14]

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[13] Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Epigram*, 56-7, 143. The Prodromos poems are found in PG 133, cols. 1175-1220.
[14] Ἔτευξε τερπνὸν ἔργον εἰς δίψης ἄκος
ὁ Κωνσταντῖνος, Δαλασσηνῶν τὸ κλέος,
ἄρχων δικαίως, Ἀντιοχείας ὅλης.

˙There are two ways to interpret this collection. Either there was a set of eight bowls, and a different poem was inscribed upon each, or there was only one bowl, and these are essentially trial pieces, from which the glorious Constantine was supposed to choose one. Given that the poems are so similar, and are simply shuffling around the same words and conceits, the second proposal seems the more likely.[15] In these verses what we see, in effect, is the Byzantine author ringing all the changes, in a somewhat desperate effort to find the right formula to please his patron.

Many of the medieval Byzantine epigrams also ended up in the seventeenth and eighteenth century painters' guides, where they are quoted as appropriate verse inscriptions, but sometimes in connection with the wrong scenes. For example, the eighteenth-century Painters' Manual by Dionysios of Phourna lists a two line poem under the heading of Christ's Deposition. This poem was taken from the cycle of epigrams by Theodore Prodromos, where, however, it appears under the heading of the Entombment.[16]

There is, then, ample evidence that poems were freely transferred from one context to another, from manuscript collections to objects, and from

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Τὰ τερπνὰ τερπνοῖς, ὡς ὁρᾷς, καὶ πρὸς πόσιν˙
καὶ γὰρ τὸ τερπνὸν τοῦτο τερπνὸς εἰς πόσιν
ἔτευξε Κωνσταντῖνος 'Αντιοχείας
ἄρχων δικαίως, Δαλασσηνῶν τὸ κλέος.

Τὸ τερπνὸν ἔργον χρυσοκολλήτῳ θέᾳ
ἔτευξε Κωνσταντῖνος 'Αντιοχείας
ἄρχων δικαίως, Δαλασσηνῶν τὸ κλέος.

'Ο πάντα τερπνὸς τερπνὸν ἔργον εἰς πόσιν
ἔτευξε Κωνσταντῖνος 'Αντιοχείας
ἄρχων δικαίως, Δαλασσηνῶν τὸ κλέος.

Ταῖς σαῖς φέρων, ἄνθρωπε, χερσὶ καὶ πίνων
τὸ τερπνὸν ἔργον τοῦτο, τῆς δίψης ἄκος,
Κωνσταντῖνον θαύμαζε τῆς 'Αντιόχου
ἄρχοντα λαμπρόν, Δαλασσηνῶν τὸ κλέος.

MS. Ω 126; S. G. Mercati, "Epigrammi sul cratero argenteo di Costantino Dalasseno," *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia* 3 (1925), 313-16.

[15] Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Epigram*, 31-2.

[16] Ed. A. Papadopoulos Kerameus, *Manuel d'iconographie chrétienne* (St. Petersburg, 1909), 277; PG 133, col. 1194B. See Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Epigram*, 55-8.

objects to objects. But what of our second scenario? Is it ever possible for us to be sure that a poem was composed specifically for the object to which it is now found attached? Clearly, poems that name the patron of the work have to have been to some extent tailored to that particular context, although even here it may be a case of an older poem being adapted, rather than a completely new composition. We have already seen that, at Tokali Kilise in Cappadocia, the poem which starts by naming both the patron and the dedication of the monastery goes on to give an inaccurate list of the paintings, suggesting that the latter part of the poem, at least, was originally composed for another place (fig. 4). But in those cases where the dedicatory epigram is relatively short, and where it gives an accurate description of the object, we can be reasonably certain that it was indeed written for its present location. Such a case is provided by the frontispiece miniature of a twelfth-century Gospel book from Constantinople, which is now in the National Gallery of Victoria, at Melbourne (fig. 5). Here we see a structure with a double arcade framing the donor, a monk standing on the left, and the recipient, the Virgin holding the blessing Christ Child on her left arm. Fitted neatly on either side of the triangular roof are four dodecasyllable verses:

"O queen of all, as mother of God the Logos,
Theophanes is the donor and the scribe of this book
as well as the executor of the ornaments it contains,
Theophanes your Nazarite servant."[17]

Thus the poem gives the donor's name, identifying him as a monk who is both the scribe and the artist of the book, and it specifies the recipient of the gift as the Virgin, the mother of God. The epigram, therefore, can only relate to this particular image, and must have been written for it; indeed, it is quite possible that Theophanes himself was the poet.

A famous copy of the homilies of John Chrysostom, MS. Coislin 79 in

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[17]   Ἄνασσα πάντων ὡς Θεοῦ μήτηρ λόγου·
        δοτὴρ κατ' αὐτὸ καὶ γραφεὺς τῆς πυξίδος
        καὶ τῶν κατ' αὐτὴν ἐργάτης ποικιλμάτων,
        σὸς ναζιραῖος οἰκέτης Θεοφάνης.

Hugo Buchthal, *An Illuminated Byzantine Gospel Book* (Special Bulletin of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1961), 1; Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, "Close Encounters: Contact between Holy Figures and the Faithful as Represented in Byzantine Works of Art," *Byzance et les images*, ed. Jannic Durand (Paris, 1994), 255-85, esp. 281.

the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris, illustrates the peculiar complexity of relationships between epigram and image that can be encountered in Byzantine art. The introductory miniatures of this manuscript, each of which portrays the same Byzantine emperor, had an unusual history.[18] Three of these paintings originally depicted Michael VII Doukas, who reigned from 1071 to 1078. After Michael VII had abdicated, these miniatures were reemployed. The paintings were cut out of their original folios, which probably had contained texts in the margins referring to Michael by name, and were pasted into new parchment frames. The face of the ruler was retouched, to make him appear as an older man with a longer beard. At the same time the inscriptions were changed, to identify him as the successor of Michael VII, Nikephoros III Botaneiates (1078-81). Finally, verses were inscribed on the replacement frames of the retouched miniatures, so that the paintings would make suitable frontispieces to a volume intended for presentation to the new emperor.[19] For example, in the miniature which now appears on folio 2 recto of the manuscript, the emperor is seen on his throne, flanked above by the two imperial virtues of Truth and Justice, and below by four court officials, each of whom is identified by his titles, but not his name. The poem inscribed on the frame above this painting reads:

"You hold the throne, which shines like the morning star,
wreathed above with all the virtues.
Beside you stand the pinnacle of those who are loyalest to you,
chosen men, moreover noble in their soul.
But, O king, may you show sympathy to the scribe,
for he brings the utmost loyalty to your sovereignty."[20]

    Clearly this poem, with its references to the throne, the virtues, and

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[18] The miniatures are on folios 2r., 2v., 2 bis r., and 2 bis v. of the present manuscript.

[19] On the history of these miniatures, see Iohannis Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts* (Leiden, 1976), 112-16; C. L. Dumitrescu, "Quelques remarques en marge du Coislin. 79 - Les trois eunuques," *Byzantion* 57 (1987), 32-45.

[20]   Ὡς φωσφόρον φέρεις ἐλάμποντα θρόνον
        ταῖς ἀρεταῖς μάλιστα κατεστεμμένον.
        Παρίσταταί σοι πιστοτάτων ἀκρότης,
        ἄνδρες λογάδες, εὐγενεῖς ψυχὴν πλέον.
        Πλὴν τῷ γράφοντι συμπαθὴς ἔλθοις, ἄναξ,
        πίστιν φέρει γὰρ εἰς τὸ σὸν πλείστην κράτος.
Spatharakis, *The Portrait*, 111.

the courtiers, was composed specifically for this particular image. But the poem does not apply to the original *subjects* of the image, because in this case the image itself was reused, and the ruler and courtiers praised in the verses are no longer the same individuals as the painting had originally portrayed.

There are, therefore, certainly cases where the epigram interlocks with the physical appearance of the image and its context, in such a way that the image and its accompanying inscription are impossible to separate. But in other cases the poems had an autonomous existence; they were free to float from one context to another, like *topoi* in Byzantine literature. But poems, like *topoi*, were not necessarily reused unthinkingly. We can imagine that in some cases an older poem was found appropriate for a new context because it fitted well with the physical characteristics of the object in question; an example of this type of reuse is provided by an extant fresco in the church at Asinou, on the island of Cyprus, which depicts the trial of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia, freezing to death in the lake (fig. 6). It formed part of a cycle of paintings donated by a local official, Nikephoros Magistros, in 1105-6. In the fresco we see the half-naked martyrs in various uncomfortable poses, while above them appear their crowns of martyrdom, miraculously suspended in the sky. Between the martyrs and their crowns is written a four line poem describing the image:

"Winter it is that causes pain, flesh it is that suffers here.
If you give your attention, you will hear even the groans of the martyrs.
But if you do not hear them, they are steadfastly enduring the violence (of the cold).
They look to their crowns, not to their toils."[21]

This poem is certainly very appropriate to the image at Asinou, for the fresco graphically shows the suffering flesh of the martyrs, who hug themselves for warmth. One of the martyrs, depicted third from the left in the second row from the top, even covers his mouth with his hand, as if to stifle the groans that are mentioned in the poem. At the same time, two of the martyrs at the top point upwards, as if, in the words of the last verse, they were looking "to their crowns" and "not to their toils." However, the

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[21]   Χειμὼν τὸ λυποῦν, σὰρξ τὸ πάσχον ἐνθάδε·
        προσχὼν ἀκούσεις καὶ στεναγμοὺς μαρτύρων·
        εἰ δ' οὐκ ἀκούσῃ, καρτεροῦσι τὴν βίαν,
        πρὸς τὰ στέφη βλέποντες, οὐ πρὸς τοὺς πόνους.

Henry Maguire, "The Depiction of Sorrow in Middle Byzantine Art," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 31 (1977), 125-174, esp. 152, note 156.

poem inscribed on the fresco was not composed for this particular painting, for it also survives in manuscript collections, and may be attributed either to the tenth-century poet John Geometres, or to John Mauropous, who wrote in the eleventh century.[22] One might be tempted to propose that the painter at Asinou based his version of the martyrdom on the poem, rather than the other way around, were it not for the fact that the features in the image that match the poem the most closely, especially the gestures of the martyrs, can all be found in other Byzantine portrayals of the scene. We can, then, only propose that whoever chose this poem for this location selected it as a particularly felicitous match to the composition of the painting, which followed an established iconography.

In other cases, a reused epigram might not be appropriate to the physical appearance of the work of art, but it might still be relevant to the image in a larger sense, conveying its context or its spiritual meaning. For an example of this kind of appropriateness of content, we can turn to another epigram at Asinou, which was inscribed in the fourteenth century around a fresco of the Virgin *Platytera* painted over the doorway leading from the narthex of the church into its nave (fig. 7).[23] In the fresco, the Virgin raises her two hands in prayer, while a medallion containing the bust of Christ Emmanuel is superimposed over her chest. The inscription consists of two dodecasyllable verses:

"How is he who holds together all judgments,
held as a babe in a virgin's arms?"[24]

This poem is similar to another that is contained in a tenth century manuscript in the Bodleian Library at Oxford:

"The babe who holds all things, and who of old alone
brought forth the ages,
desires (her) lap as if he were on a throne;
he who sets in place the whole of creation with his hand,

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[22] Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Epigram*, 59, 141-4.

[23] W. H. Buckler, "The Church of Asinou, Cyprus, and its Frescoes," *Archaeologia* 83 (1933), 327-50, esp. 334ff.; M. Sacopoulo, *Asinou en 1106 et sa contribution à l'iconographie* (Brussels, 1966), 11; David Winfield, "Hagios Chrysostomos, Trikomo, Asinou. Byzantine Painters at Work," *Praktika tou prōtou diethnous Kyprologikou Synedriou*, II (Nicosia, 1972), 285-91.

[24]   'Ω πῶς ὁ πάντων συνεχὴς τῶν κριμάτων
         βρεφοκρατεῖται παρθενικαῖς ὠλέναις;

Buckler, "Asinou," 336; Henry Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* (Princeton, 1981), 56-7.

is embraced by human hands. . . ." [25]

We can see, then, that the inscribed epigram at Asinou, while it reproduces a *topos*, does not give an accurate description of the physical appearance of the fresco, for in the image the Virgin does not actually hold her Child, as the verses state. But in a general sense the poem is true to the image and its context, for in the lunette opposite this fresco, over the western door of the narthex, there is a portrayal of the Last Judgment, including the throne, the river of fire, and the angel blowing the last trump (fig. 8).[26] Thus, in this case, the function of the inscribed verses was not just to describe the image, but to expand upon its context, and to provide a commentary evoking the paradox of the incarnation in relation to the Last Judgment.

From these and other examples of the discriminating reuse of epigrams, we can conclude that the very process of inscribing a particular poem on a particular work of art was an act of viewer response. Whoever chose the poem believed that it was in some way appropriate for the object. Therefore, it is valid to use these epigrams as evidence for the responses of viewers to images at different moments in time, even if the poems themselves were much older than the objects to which they were attached.

After these general remarks about the relationship of the inscribed poems and their objects, it is time to turn to our case study, namely the responses of Byzantine viewers to images of the Crucifixion. Our series of Crucifixion epigrams begins with the icon in figure 9, which is framed on four sides by verses. This panel painting, which is at Mount Sinai, is generally dated to the second half of the ninth-century, a period when the iconography of the Crucifixion was in a state of flux in Byzantine art.[27] If we compare the inscribed icon with an approximately contemporary

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[25]   Ἔχον τὰ πάντα κόλπον ὡς θρόνῳ πέλει
βρέφος παλαιὸν τέξαν αἰῶνας μόνον
ποθεῖ βροτείαις χερσὶν ἠγκαλισμένον
τὸ χειρὶ τὴν σύμπασαν ἑδράζον κτίσιν·
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MS. Barocci 50; ed. Robert Browning, "An Unpublished Corpus of Byzantine Poems," *Byzantion* 33 (1963), 297.

[26] Buckler, "Asinou," 338.

[27] Kurt Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai, The Icons*, I, *From the Sixth to the Tenth Century* (Princeton, 1976), 82-3, no. B51; Kathleen Corrigan, "Text and Image on an Icon of the Crucifixion at Mount Sinai," *The Sacred Image East and West* (Illinois Byzantine Studies 4), eds. Robert Ousterhout and Leslie Brubaker (Urbana, 1995), 45-62.

painting of the Crucifixion in the Khludov Psalter in Moscow (fig. 10),[28] we find that at this time there were several variations in the image, which are generally signs of the humanity or the divinity of Christ. Specifically, at this period, in the ninth century, Christ may be shown either naked except for a loin cloth, as in the icon (fig. 9), or fully clothed in a colobium (fig. 10); his eyes may either be closed in death (fig. 9), or open, as if he were alive (fig. 10); and his head may either be virtually upright (fig. 9), or bowed in suffering (fig. 10). The gestures made by the two bystanders also may vary at this time. In figure 9 St. John points at Christ, as if he were bearing witness, while in other icons of this period he cups his right hand to his cheek, as a sign of sorrow and weeping - as may be seen in another ninth-century icon on Mount Sinai.[29] In the inscribed icon the Virgin touches her lips with her left forefinger, a gesture which indicates troubled thought rather than grief, as Kathleen Corrigan has pointed out.[30] In other Crucifixion scenes of the ninth century the Virgin either presses her hand against her cheek,[31] or holds it up under her chin, signs of weeping or sorrow.[32]

The verses inscribed around the icon in figure 9 match the choices made by the painter. First, the verses stress the fact that Christ is dead, which is indicated in the image by the closed eyes and possibly by the loin cloth. Secondly, the poem does not speak of grief or sorrow, but stresses the fearfulness of the sight. Here is the translation:

"Who will not be confounded, be in fear, and tremble
when he sees you, O Savior, dead upon the cross,
who rends the garment of mortality,
but is protected by the robe of incorruption."[33]

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[28] Moscow, State Historical Museum, MS. 129, folio 67r.; John R. Martin, "The Dead Christ on the Cross in Byzantine Art," in *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr.*, ed. Kurt Weitzmann (Princeton, 1955), 189-96, esp. 190, fig. 3.

[29] Weitzmann, *Icons*, 79-83, no. B50, pl. 105-6; Corrigan, "Text and Image," 49.

[30] Corrigan, "Text and Image," 49.

[31] *Ibid.*, fig. 15 (Mount Athos, Pantokrator Monastery, MS. 61, fol. 98r.).

[32] Weitzmann, *Icons*, 79-83, no. B50, pl. 105-6; Corrigan, "Text and Image," 49.

[33] Τίς οὐ κλονεῖται καὶ φοβεῖται καὶ τρέμει
ἐπὶ ξύλου σὲ νεκρόν, ὦ σῶτερ, βλέπων
ῥήγνυντα τὸν χειτῶνα τῆς νεκρώσεως
Ἀφθαρσίας δὲ τῇ στολῇ σκεπασμένον;
Corrigan, "Text and Image," 50, and 59, note 23.

These verses, with their emphasis upon the fearsomeness of the sight, can be compared with a description of the image of the Crucifixion by a contemporary Byzantine writer, Ignatios the Deacon. Ignatios's description is contained in his *Life of Tarasios*, and comes after his passage devoted to martyrdom scenes that I referred to earlier. Ignatios wrote:

"Seeing Him (that is, Christ) nailed in the flesh on the scaffold and given vinegar to drink on a sponge and bile, and pierced in his side by a lance, and pouring forth life-giving springs, I tremble and all of me shrinks back, and I honor his inscrutable and horrendous abasement and I admire exceedingly the sea of his forbearing and long suffering."[34]

Even though Ignatios does refer to the suffering of Christ at the end of his description, his emphasis is very much upon the awesome nature of the event, rather than on pain and grief. The painting of the Sinai icon, therefore, and its inscription, express one type of response to the Crucifixion that was current in the ninth century, a response of amazement and fear. We shall see that in subsequent centuries this particular response died out, while another response gained ascendancy, which demanded from the spectator not fear and trembling, but participation in the grief and sorrow invoked by the Passion.

Our second example comes from the tenth century; it is the ivory triptych seen in figure 11, which is now in the Cabinet des Médailles at Paris, and which is usually dated to the tenth century. The inscription under the feet of Christ is a single dodecasyllable line: "As flesh you have suffered, as God you release from sufferings."[35] Here, then, the verse is concerned not with the awesome nature of the event, but more with Christ's suffering. On the other hand, the angels above the cross spread the palms of their hands, bending one hand back at the wrist, which is often a gesture

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[34] Ὂν ἐν ἰκρίῳ σάρκα καθηλούμενον βλέπων καὶ ὄξος σπόγγῳ καὶ χολὴν ποτιζόμενον καὶ τὴν πλευρὰν λόγχῃ νυσσόμενον καὶ τὰ ζωοποιὰ βλυστάνοντα νάματα, φρίττω καὶ ὅλος ἐξίσταμαι καὶ τὴν ἀνεξιχνίαστον γεραίρων καὶ φρικτὴν αὐτοῦ συγκατάβασιν καὶ τῆς ἀνεξικάκου μακροθυμίας τὸ πέλαγος ὑπεράγαμαι.
I. A. Heikel, *Ignatii Diaconi Vita Tarasii archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani* (Acta Societatis scientiarium fennicae 17, Helsinki, 1891), 416.

[35] + Ὡς σὰρξ πέπονθας, ὡς θεὸς παθὼν λύεις.
Adolph Goldschmidt, Kurt Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.-XIII. Jahrhunderts*, II (Berlin, 1934), 37, no. 39.

of astonishment.[36]   One could say that the element of sorrow is most clearly expressed in the ivory's inscription, while the amazement is expressed by the gestures of the angels. In some ways, the ivory matches the tenth-century description by Constantine the Rhodian of the Crucifixion scene in the church of the Holy Apostles. In describing this mosaic, Constantine refers both to the amazement caused by the event, and to the suffering felt by its participants. He wrote:

"What man, even if he had a heart of stone,
upon seeing the image of the Passion,
and such violence against the Lord,
would not be *amazed* in his spirit,
as he beholds this altogether *astonishing* event."[37]

Then he goes on to describe the Virgin and St. John mourning beside the cross. He characterizes them as:

"The holy Virgin mother seeing these things,
and the disciple present with her at the Passion,
and crushed in his heart -
- the mother herself weeping out of sympathy,
streaming with tears and crying out ungovernably."[38]

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[36] Compare, for example, the gestures of the two angels flanking the enthroned Virgin in the early eighth-century icon of the Madonna della Clemenza in the church of S. Maria di Trastevere, Rome, where the framing inscription refers to the "stupentes angelorum principes"; Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence* (Chicago, 1994), 126, pl. II.

[37]   Τίς οὖν λιθώδη καρδίαν κεκτημένος,
ὅταν προσίδοι τοῦ Πάθους τὴν εἰκόνα
καὶ τὴν τοσαύτην ὕβριν εἰς τὸν δεσπότην,
μὴ θάμβος εὐθὺς ἔνδον ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ
σχοίη, βλέπων γε πρᾶγμα πάντη που ξένον,
    ....

Emile Legrand, "Description des oeuvres d'art et de l'église des Saints Apôtres de Constantinople: Poème en vers iambiques par Constantin le Rhodien," *Revue des Études Grecques* 9 (1896), 32-103, esp. 63.

[38]   καὶ ταῦθ' ὁρώσης μητρὸς ἁγνῆς παρθένου
καὶ τοῦ μαθητοῦ συμπαρόντος τῷ Πάθει,
καὶ συντρίβοντος τὴν ἑαυτοῦ καρδίαν,
αὐτῆς δὲ μητρὸς συμπαθῶς μυρομένης
δακρυρροούσης καὶ βοώσης ἀσχέτως
    ....

Ibid., 64.

The ivory and its inscription, therefore, illustrate one type of response to images of the Crucifixion that was current in the tenth century, in which awe and sympathy were present in equal measure.

This balance shifts in the next poem that we shall consider, which is one of a series of ten epigrams composed in the eleventh century by John Mauropous to accompany large panel paintings of the major feasts. Unfortunately these paintings no longer survive, so we will have to make visual reference to other eleventh century Crucifixion scenes. The poem of John Mauropous is too long to read in its entirety, so I will only pick out certain lines which demonstrate that it places an even stronger emphasis than the earlier poems upon the sorrow of the Passion, and upon the viewer's emotional participation in that grief. In the fifth line, for example, John Mauropous asks:

"And wherefore,
when I had for long awaited you as savior of the world,
do I now see you (nailed) as a malefactor on the cursed wood.
Your physique has gone, you no longer have beauty."[39]

These words correspond to a completely new innovation in the iconography of the crucifixion, which seems to have become popular in the eleventh century, namely the portrayal of Christ's body slumped down upon the cross, no longer able to support itself erect. Figure 12 illustrates the eleventh-century mosaic at Hosios Loukas,[40] which can be contrasted with the earlier ivory in Paris, where Christ's body - though not his head - is still upright.

John Mauropous continues:

"Your mother laments and your beloved (disciple),
they alone being present out of the friends you lately had.
Your disciples are fled, and your winged servants
circle you in vain, full of tears,

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[39]   Καὶ πόθεν
σωτῆρα κόσμου προσδοκῶν σε μακρόθεν,
νῦν ὡς κακοῦργον εἰς ἀρᾶς ξύλον βλέπω;
ἀπῆλθεν εἶδος· κάλλος οὐκ ἔχεις ἔτι.
Iohann Bollig, Paul de Lagarde, *Iohannis Euchaitorum Metropolitae quae in codice vaticano graeco 676 supersunt* (Gottingen, 1882), 5, no. 7; see Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 270.
[40] For the date, see Nicolas Oikonomides, "The First Century of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992), 245-55.

for they are unable to help you in your passion."[41]

Here, then, John Mauropous tells us that the cast of mourners has increased; in the *ekphrasis* of Constantine the Rhodian we had just the lamenting of the Virgin and St. John, but now the angels are lamenting too. This detail, also, can be compared with contemporary paintings, where it was a comparatively recent innovation. To my knowledge, the earliest surviving Crucifixion scene that shows angels above the cross weeping with their garments held to their faces is an eleventh century icon at Mount Sinai.[42] Both of these motifs, that is the sagging of Christ's body and the weeping of the angels, became more frequent in twelfth century art, as can be seen from a fresco of around 1200, painted in the Naos of the Hermitage of St. Neophytos on Cyprus (fig. 13).[43] Here the slackness and shapelessness of Christ's body is particularly emphasized.

Another line in the poem by John Mauropous deserves to be highlighted. He says at one point, as he contemplates the image:

"It is needful for me, needful to die with you, O benefactor,
so that I may partake again of your awakening."[44]

Thus the viewer joins the picture, and participates in it. We shall see that this theme was to be developed in later poems.

We now come to a series of four epigrams which probably all date to the twelfth century. They emphasize either the sorrow of the Crucifixion scene, or the element of viewer participation, or both. In many cases the

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[41]   μήτηρ δὲ θρηνεῖ καὶ σὸς ἠγαπημένος,
         μόνοι παρόντες τῶν πρὸ μικροῦ σοι φίλων.
         Φροῦδοι μαθηταί· καὶ πτερωτοὶ δ' οἰκέται,
         μάτην περιτρέχουσι μεστοὶ δακρύων·
         οὐ γὰρ βοηθεῖν εὐποροῦσι τῷ πάθει.
Bollig, de Lagarde, *Iohannis Euchaitorum Metropolitae quae in codice vaticano graeco 676 supersunt*, 6, no. 7.

[42] G. and M. Soteriou, Εἰκόνες τῆς Μονῆς Σινᾶ I (Athens, 1956), pl. 40. On the weeping angels, see Maguire, "The Depiction of Sorrow in Middle Byzantine Art," esp. 145 with note 115.

[43] On the date, see Cyril Mango and Ernest J.W. Hawkins, "The Hermitage of St. Neophytos and its Wall Paintings," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 20 (1966), 121-206, esp. 201.

[44]   Δεῖ γάρ με, δεῖ, σοὶ συνθανεῖν, εὐεργέτα,
         ὡς συμμετασχῶ τῆς ἐγέρσεως πάλιν.
Bollig, de Lagarde, *Iohannis Euchaitorum Metropolitae quae in codice vaticano graeco 676 supersunt*, 6, no. 7.

poets relate these responses to the specific gestures or facial expressions of the figures. None of these epigrams is still attached to its original image. The first example is from the collection by Theodore Prodromos:

"Here Jesus, the giver of breath, gives up his breath,
and his Virgin mother bewails her dead son,
while the holy expounder of the mysteries, on the other side, may shed tears,
casting his beloved head to his right, a wonder to behold!"[45]

In this epigram, therefore, the poet reads grief into the inclined head of St. John, as the Evangelist stands beside the cross, opposite the Virgin. As we have seen in the ivory in Paris (fig. 11), in the mosaic at Hosios Loukas (fig. 12), and in the painting from the hermitage of St. Neophytos (fig. 13), this pose was, with rare exceptions, a consistent feature of Byzantine portrayals of the Crucifixion after the tenth century; but in several Crucifixion scenes from earlier periods, such as the eighth and ninth-century icons on Mount Sinai (fig. 9), John looks up at Christ as a witness, rather than down at the ground as a mourner.[46]

Another poem of the twelfth century that refers to the downcast faces of the bystanders was written by Eugenius of Palermo, a court poet in Sicily who wrote in Greek. He said:

"It is possible for me to look at another tree
and the death of a second Adam on the wood.
The first (Adam) introduced sin,
but this one set salvation against (sin).
For it is God who accomplishes these things with his almighty power,
even if the pair of virgins here stand with downcast eyes,
bearing with pain the passion,
and the rank of the angels laments with them."[47]

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[45] Πνοιὴν πνοιοδότης μὲν ἐρεύγεται ἔνθαδ' Ἰησοῦς·
μήτηρ δ' ἀγνοτόκεια νέκρον στοναχίζεται υἷα·
ἀγνὸς δ' αὖθ' ἐτέρωθε δάκρυ σταλάῃσι μυητής,
δεξιτερῇ βαλέων φίλον κάρα, θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι.
PG 133, col. 1223.

[46] Weitzmann, *Icons*, pp. 61-4, no. B36, pl. 89, and pp. 82-3, no. B51, pl. 107.

[47] Καὶ φυτὸν ἄλλο καθορᾶν πάρεστί μοι
καὶ δευτέρου θάνατον Ἀδὰμ ἐν ξύλῳ·
ὁ πρῶτος εἰσήγαγε τὴν ἁμαρτίαν,
ἀλλ' οὗτος ἀντήνεγκε τὴν σωτηρίαν.
Θεὸς γὰρ ὁ δρῶν ταῦτα πανσθενεῖ κράτει,

Here Eugenius of Palermo refers not only to the weeping of the angels, but also to a second female mourner behind Mary. It will be recalled that John Mauropous, in the eleventh century, saw Mary and John "alone being present" at the Passion. The addition of Mary's lamenting companions to the Crucifixion scene had already occurred in pre-iconoclastic painting, but the motif only became frequent in Byzantine art from the eleventh century onwards.[48] It can be seen in the painting from the hermitage of St. Neophytos (fig. 13), where two mourning women stand behind the Virgin.

Our next example is an unpublished poem which I owe to the kindness of Professor Ihor Ševčenko. The epigram is written in a twelfth-century hand in an eleventh century manuscript in the University Library at Salamanca (the principal text is a Catena on Isaiah). The poem reads:

"Either the painter saw the terrible suffering of God,
or he had the cooperation of Him who suffered.
Or it is Christ himself who is being crucified (here),
as the sad countenances of the women testify."[49]

Experts on ekphrasis will notice that this poem embodies a well-known topos, but as is often the case with Byzantine literature, the topos is presented with a twist. The conceit is that, for such an accurate likeness to have been obtained, either the artist visited God, or God visited the artist. The original form of the topos is found in an epigram in the Greek Anthology by the poet Philip, which describes the statue of Zeus at Olympia. It reads:

"Either God came from heaven to earth to show you his image,
Pheidias, or it was you who went to see God."[50]

κἂν ἡ ξυνωρὶς παρθένων τῶν ἐνθάδε
ἔστη κατηφής, δυσφοροῦσα τῷ πάθει,
καὶ συστενάζῃ τάξις ἡ τῶν ἀγγέλων.

M. Gigante, *Eugenii Panormitani versus iambici* (Palermo, 1964), no. 13.

[48] Maguire, "The Depiction of Sorrow in Middle Byzantine Art," 144-5.

[49] Ἦ φρικτὸν εἶδε ζωγράφος Θεοῦ πάθος,
ἢ τοῦ παθόντος ἔσχε τὴν συνεργίαν,
ἢ Χριστὸς αὐτὸς ἐστιν ἐσταυρωμένος,
ὡς ἡ γυναικῶν μαρτυρεῖ σκυθρωπότης.

Salamanca, University Library, MS. 2722, fol. 11v.

[50] Ἦ Θεὸς ἦλθ' ἐπὶ γῆν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, εἰκόνα δείξων
Φειδία· ἢ σύ γ' ἔβης τὸν Θεὸν ὀψόμενος.

Anthologia Palatina, XVI, 81; on the topos, see Cyril Mango, "Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963), 66-7.

It will be noted, however, that in this Byzantine poem on an image of the Crucifixion, a *third* alternative is presented. That is, either the artist saw God, or God cooperated with the artist, or, and this is the addition, Christ is actually present in the picture, and the proof of this is the sad expressions of the mourning women. In other words, the weeping women prove not just the realism of the work, but its reality. The real presence of Christ means, of course, that he can respond to the viewer's prayer. We have moved, therefore, from the aesthetics of the image to its function. Like our poet, artists of the twelfth century liked to emphasize the "sad countenances of the women," as can be seen in a detail from the late twelfth-century mosaic of the Crucifixion at San Marco, in Venice (fig. 14).[51]

The fourth epigram in this group describes the inclination of Christ's head, seeing it not only as a sign of His own suffering, but also as an assurance of His response to the viewer, who is thus once again drawn into the image. The poem comes from the collection in Codex Greek Z 524, in the Marciana library in Venice. The manuscript belongs to the thirteenth century, but the date of the epigram may be somewhat earlier, perhaps twelfth century, in common with several other poems in the collection. I will quote the last lines of the epigram, which records the donation of a silver-gilt revetment to an icon of the Crucifixion by one Leo Mesarites.

"Lo! I beautify (the head) that formerly was crowned with thorns. . . .
But you, who have inclined your head on the cross,
as if you were saying "Come unto me all ye. . ." (Matth. 22,4),
now incline it to me as I beseech you, O Logos,
and with your nod accept my entreaty,
and by withdrawing the thorns of my sufferings,
grant that I may rejoice in the green shoots of divine delight."[52]

The poet's emphasis on the inclination of Christ's head corresponds to

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[51] Otto Demus, *The Mosaics of San Marco in Venice*, I (Chicago, 1984), 203, fig. 340.

[52] Τὴν πρὶν ἀκανθόστεπτον ἰδοὺ καλλύνω,

....

Σὺ δ' ἀλλ' ὁ κλίνας τὴν κεφαλὴν ἐν ξύλῳ
καὶ Δεῦτε πρός με πάντες ὡσπερεὶ φράσας
αἰτοῦντι καὶ νῦν κλῖνον αὐτήν μοι, λόγε,
καὶ κατανεύων τὴν παράκλησιν δέχου,
ἐμῶν δὲ παθῶν τὰς ἀκάνθας ἐκσπάσας
θείας τρυφῆς δὸς ἐντρυφᾶν με τῇ χλόῃ.

S.P. Lampros, *Neos Hellenomnemon* 8 (1911), 39, no. 73.

developments in art. While this motif was introduced into Byzantine iconography as early as the sixth century, it tended to be exaggerated in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The head becomes not merely inclined, but it is slumped onto the chest, and even hanging to one side, as can be seen once more in the painting at the Hermitage of St. Neophytos (fig. 13). The late twelfth-century painting can be contrasted in this respect with the tenth-century ivory in Paris (fig. 11). In the case of our poem, the inclination of the head is related to Christ's acceptance of the viewer's request - the viewer is definitely brought into the picture.

The last of my examples belongs to the very end of the Byzantine period; it is the fifteenth century icon in the Cathedral of the Dormition in Moscow, with which we started (fig. 3). The epigram that is written around the frame of this icon comes, as we saw, from the twelfth-century collection of poems by Theodore Prodromos, but it has some significant additions. There appear to have been six verses, which are now partially effaced. They read:

1) "You were insulted, you were insulted, you were beaten. . . ."
2) "Let yourself be tortured, be nailed to the wood, drink the gall."
3) "By the impious. . . ."
4) ". . . here, then, Savior, suffer,
5) and die for the sake of man who dies,
6) in order that you may resurrect the. . . ."[53]

Even though the inscription on the icon has some lacunae, enough remains to show that it quotes the quatrain by Prodromos practically word for word.[54] However, the fifteenth-century inscription adds two more lines - numbers three and six - which, even though they are incomplete, appear to refer to two details of the icon that are characteristic of later Byzantine art, and that would not have been present in a typical crucifixion scene of the twelfth century, the time of Prodromos. One of these added lines mentions the impious, and thus may refer to the crowd of passers-by who come out from the gates of Jerusalem on the right of the painting to insult Christ.

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[53]   Ἐπήχθης, ἐπήχθης, ἐρραπίσθης...
     κεντοῦ, προσηλοῦ τῷ ξύλῳ χολὴν πίνε
     ὑπὸ ἀνόμων...
                    ...δεῦρο γοῦν Σῶτερ, πάθε,
     καὶ θνῆσκε τοῦ θανόντος ἀνθρώπου χάριν
     ἵνα ἐγείρῃς τόν....
Frolow, "Quelques inscriptions sur les oeuvres d'art du moyen âge," 167.
     [54] Ibid.

This is a detail found especially in late Byzantine icons and wall-paintings of the crucifixion, such as the fourteenth century fresco in the church of Staro Nagoričino.[55] The second interpolated line evokes the resurrection, and thus relates to the subsidiary scene of Peter coming to the empty tomb, which is shown in the lower right-hand corner of the panel. Again, the addition of such subsidiary subjects in the margins of feast icons was a feature of later Byzantine icons of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[56] Already in the thirteenth-century fresco of the Crucifixion at Sopoćani, there are portrayals of the dead rising from their tombs in the lower left and right-hand corners of the scene.[57] Thus the epigram by Prodromos was, in a sense, updated to match the more crowded compositions typical of fourteenth and fifteenth century Byzantine art. Here the viewer's response evidently required something more than the original poem provided.

In summary, these poems attached to icons of the Crucifixion give us a kind of development. At first, in the ninth and to some extent in the tenth century, there was an emphasis on the amazing nature of the event, upon responses of fear and awe. But then, in the tenth and increasingly in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, this gave way to a stress on suffering. The pain of Christ, of Mary, of John, of the holy women, and even of the angels, was seen by the authors of the poems in the gestures, postures, and expressions of the painted figures. At the same time, there was a more personal involvement of the viewer in the actuality of the event, and in the suffering that was for his or her own sake. These responses were related by the poets to newly introduced details in the images, such as the weeping angels, the slumped body, and the inclined heads of St. John and Christ. Thus the images and the inscribed texts developed in tandem; the artists were introducing or emphasizing those details that viewers found the most speaking. Conversely, even if a text was reused, it might be up-dated to fit the new realities of the image.

This small sampling shows that the Byzantine epigrams provide us with valuable evidence of viewer response. Unlike those *ekphraseis* that were delivered as rhetorical speeches, often as public panegyrics of the patron,

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[55] Gabriel Millet, *La peinture du moyen âge en Yougoslavie*, III (Paris, 1962), pl. 92, 1.

[56] Compare the fourteenth-century icon of the Anastasis in the Walters Art Gallery of Baltimore, which has a depiction of the Women at the Tomb in the lower margin of the panel; Thalia Gouma-Peterson, "A Byzantine Anastasis Icon in the Walters Art Gallery," *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 42-3 (1984-5), 48-60, fig. 1.

[57] Vojislav J. Djurić, *Sopoćani* (Leipzig, 1967), pl. 16. I owe this reference to the kindness of Natalia Teteriatnikov.

for the icons on which they now appear, they demonstrate clearly that the viewer's imagination and the forms taken by the images were interdependent. It is true that what mattered in these epigrams was more often psychological and spiritual truth rather than scientific accuracy of description. Nevertheless, as the psychological and spiritual truths sought by the viewers changed over time, so the images changed too; there was a reciprocal process between the images and the viewers' imaginations, with each working on the other. The image was not just a passive screen, waiting for projections from the viewer, but it was interactive. If it had been the viewer who provided all of the meaning, irrespective of the appearance of the image, then it is hard to explain why artists should have bothered to alter their images to match the changes in their viewers' imaginations that are evidenced by the poems. There must have been a process of natural selection, according to which those types of images and verses prevailed that best responded to the demands of viewers at particular moments in time - so that, for example, more sorrowful evocations of the Crucifixion were more popular in the twelfth century. At the same time, the inscriptions, with their appeal to significant innovations in the images, suggest that the spectators actively responded to the stimulus of art. The viewers found the images that best matched their imaginations to be more satisfying, because those images reached out to them, helping them to see what they wanted to see, like the miraculous icons of the Virgin that moved in response to prayers. In other words, the image in the frame both reflected and *provoked* the responses of the spectators. We could even say that a different kind of religiosity - more intimate and more tender - was actively encouraged among later medieval viewers by a different kind of art. Therefore, I would argue that there *is* a picture in that empty frame, and when that picture changes, the responses are changing with it. It is not possible to completely sever the link between the icon and the spectator: however fertile is the imagination of the viewer, it cannot escape the physical reality of the image itself.[58]

THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS

BRITISH REFLECTIONS OF BYZANTIUM

The 29th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies is being held at King's College London from Friday 7 to Monday 10 April 1995 under the patronage of the Trustees of the British Museum and the aegis of the Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies, with generous support from the Hellenic Foundation and the British Academy and the hospitality of the Centre for Hellenic Studies, King's College.

Symposiarch: David Buckton

Organizing Committee: David Buckton (British Museum), Robin Cormack (Courtauld Institute of Art),
Charlotte Roueché (King's College London) and Rowena Loverance (British Museum).

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Fig. 1. "British Reflections of Byzantium."

Fig. 2. London, British Museum, icon. The Triumph of Orthodoxy (British Museum).

Fig. 3. Moscow, Cathedral of the Dormition, icon. The Crucifixion (after M. Alpatov,
"L'icône byzantine du crucifiement dans la Cathédrale de la Dormition à Moscou," *L'art
byzantin chez les Slaves* [Paris, 1932], pl. 24).
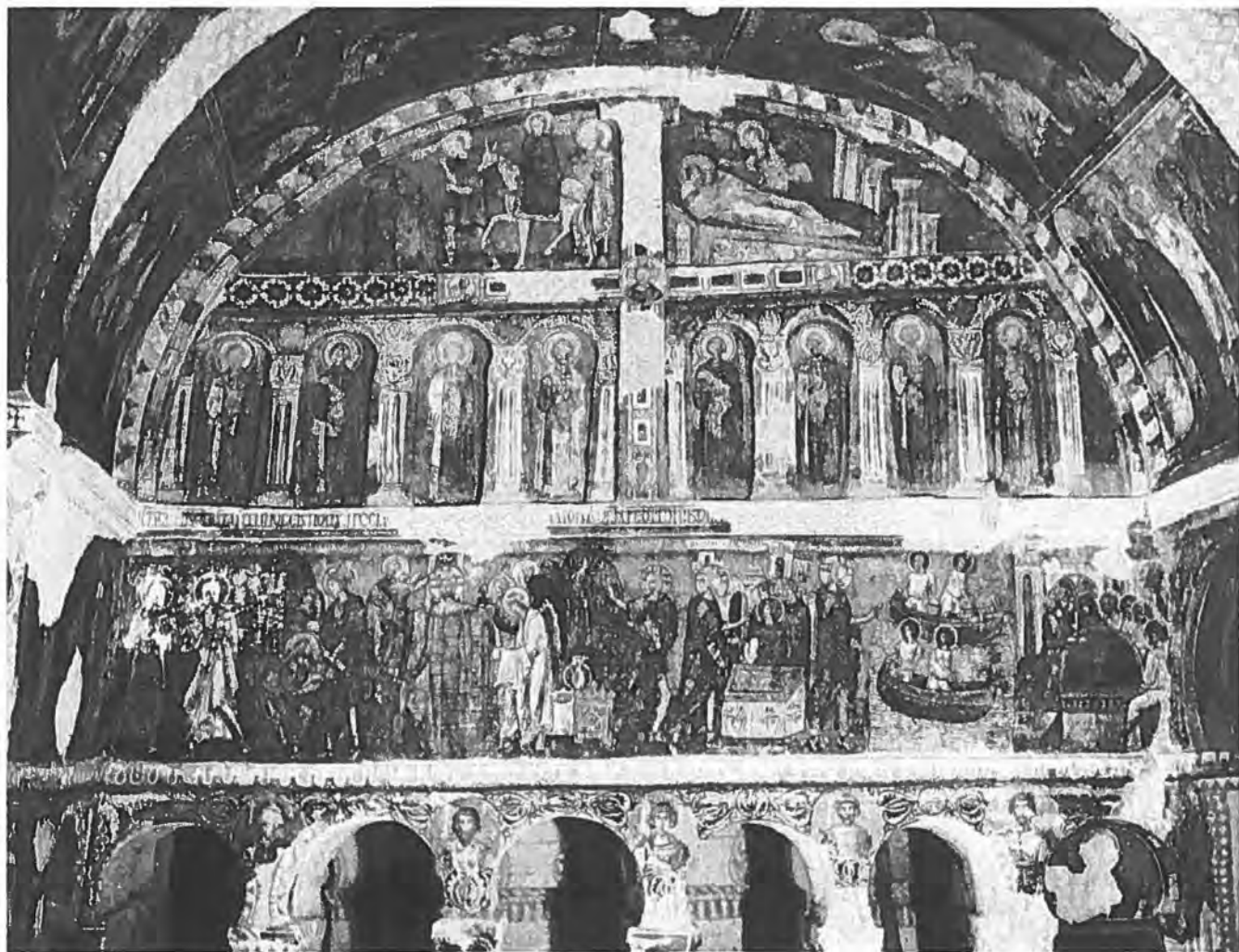
Fig. 4. Tokali Kilise, New Church, general view to the north (Dumbarton Oaks).

Fig. 5. Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria, Gospel book, frontispiece. The Monk Theophanes giving his work to the Virgin (after H. Buchthal, *An Illuminated Byzantine Gospel Book* [Melbourne, 1961]).
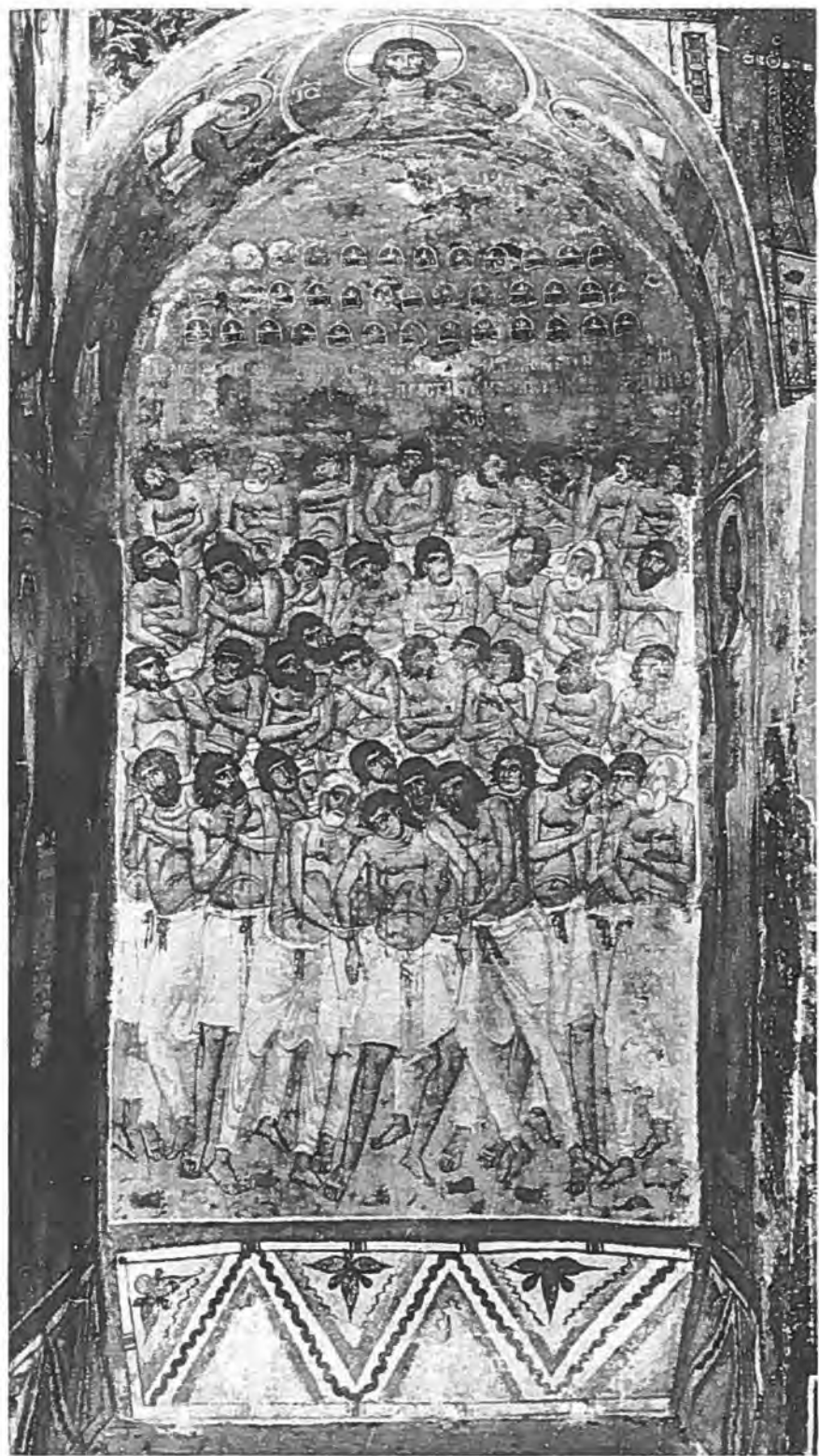
Fig. 6. Asinou, Church of the Panagia Phorbiotissa, fresco. The trial of the Forty Martyrs (Dumbarton Oaks).

Fig. 7. Asinou, Church of the Panagia Phorbiotissa, fresco. The Virgin *Platytera*
(Dumbarton Oaks).

Fig. 8. Asinou, Church of the Panagia Phorbiotissa, fresco. The Last Judgment
(Dumbarton Oaks).

Fig. 9. Mount Sinai, Monastery of St. Catherine, icon. The Cr
(reproduced through the courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Ale:
Mount Sinai).

Fig. 10. Moscow, State Historical Museum, MS 129, fol. 67r. (Khludov Psalter). The Crucifixion and the destruction of icons (after M. V. Scepkina, *Miniatjury Khludovskoi Psaltiri* [Moscow, 1977]).
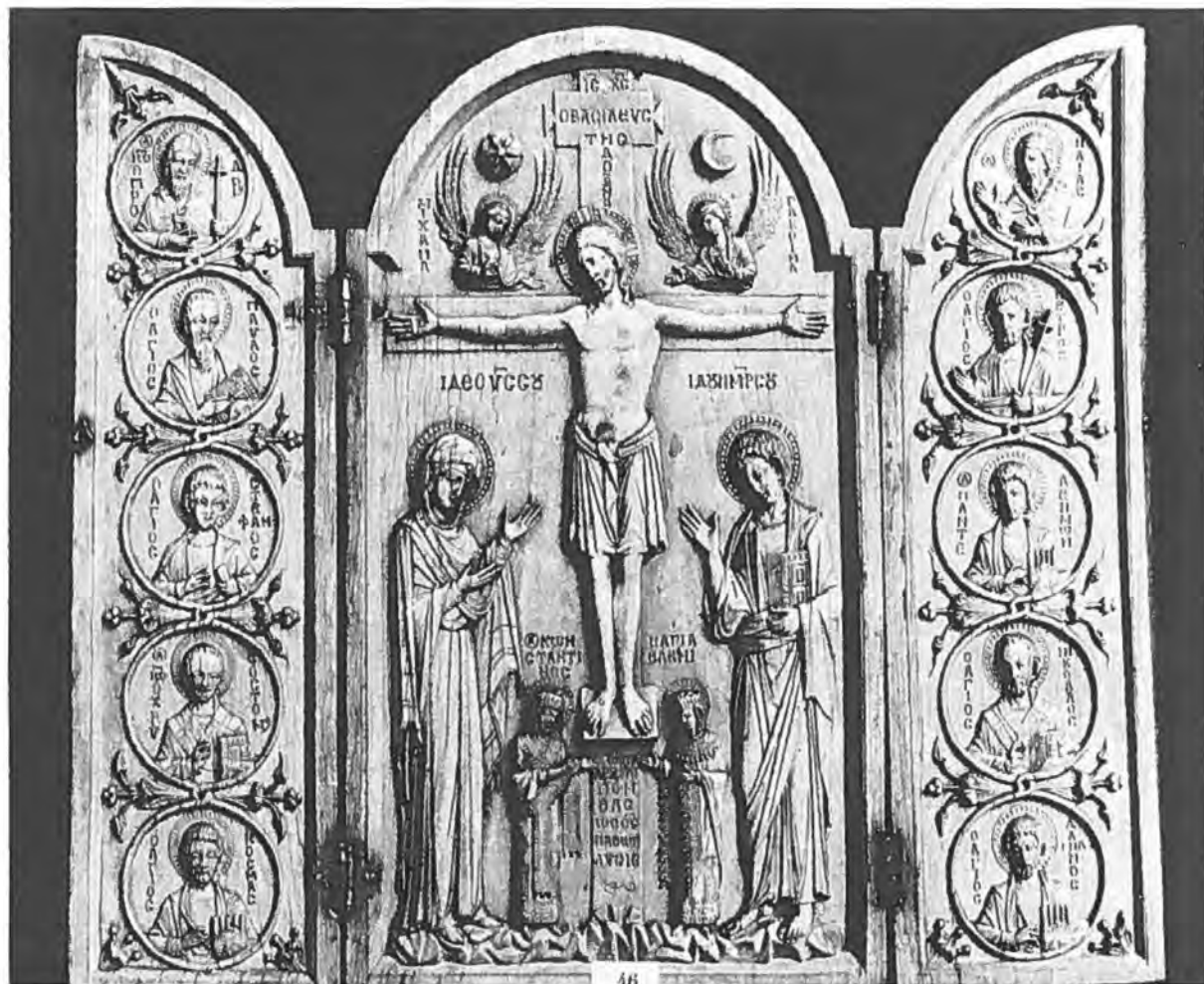
Fig. 11. Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, ivory triptych. The Crucifixion and saints (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris).
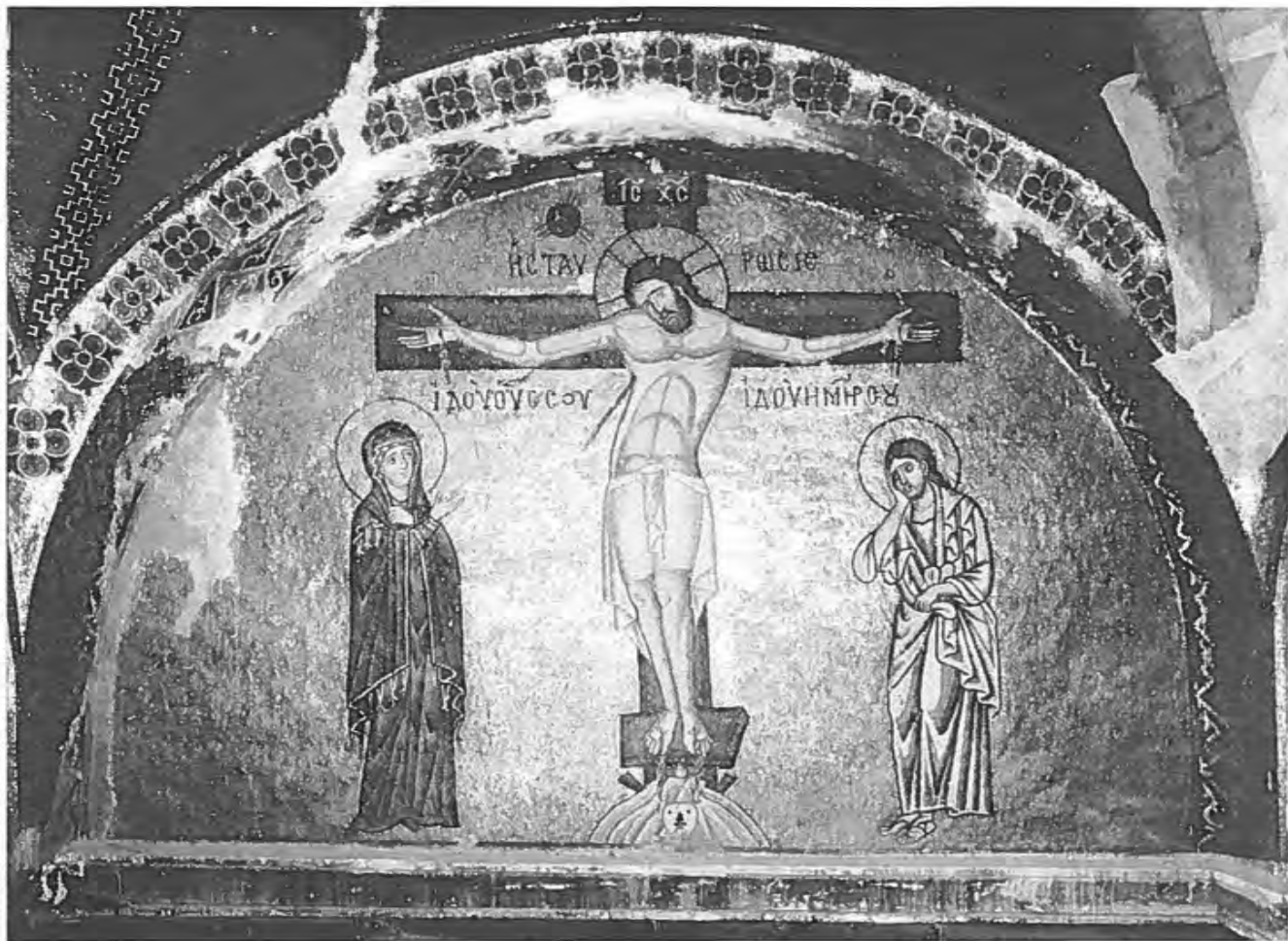
Fig. 12. Hosios Loukas, Katholikon, mosaic. The Crucifixion (Josephine Powell).

Fig. 13. Cyprus, cave church of St. Neophytos, fresco. The Crucifixion (Dumbarton Oaks).

Fig. 14. Venice, San Marco, mosaic. Mourning women from the Crucifixion (Dumbarton Oaks).

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