

15. Some Thoughts on Greco-Venetian Artistic Interactions in the Fourteenth and Early-Fifteenth Centuries

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The recently restored fourteenth-century triptych from Polesden Lacey is an impressive and unusual object (Fig. 15.1).¹ Even if its shape and wooden frame clearly indicate that it was intended for use in a Latin devotional context, as a votive offering or visual counterpart to an individual's practice of prayer, viewers can clearly see that the painting displays a rather shattering mixture of Gothic Italianate and Byzantine forms. This is revealed by its vivid chromatic scale, the selection of both Eastern and Western saints, and the use of such stylistic features as the Palaiologan way of modelling faces combined with the introduction of formulae (especially in the rendering of folds) borrowed from the Giottoesque repertory. Previously considered to be the product of such a border area as the Dalmatian coast, it was then seen to be a work made either in Venice or Constantinople by a Byzantine painter working for a Latin patron in the first half of the fourteenth century; more recently, Rebecca Corrie has assumed that it was painted for the royal court of Naples by a Greek itinerant artist working in either Rome, Siena, or Naples itself in the second quarter of the century.² On the whole, the triptych's historiographical vicissitudes reveal scholarly embarrassment with an artwork whose stylistic features and historical determination prove elusive.

Possibly as a consequence of its positivistic inheritance, art history has often proved to be suspicious of such objects as the Polesden Lacey triptych. With their untroubled and somewhat insulting blending of forms commonly supposed to be incompatible, these works of art challenge the assumption,

¹ *Byzantium 330–1453*, cat. no. 250, pp. 443–444 (R. Corrie).

² M. S. Frinta, 'Searching for an Adriatic painting workshop with Byzantine connection', *Zograf* 18 (1987): 12–20; D. Buckton, ed., *Byzantium. Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture from British Collections* (London, 1994), 206–207, cat. no. 223 (R. Cormack and M. Vassilaki); *Byzantium 330–1453*, cat. no. 250; R. Corrie, 'The Polesden Lacey Triptych and the Sterbini Diptych: A Greek Painter between East and West', in E. Jeffreys, ed., *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies, London, 21–26 August, 2006* (London, 2006), vol. 3, 47–48.

worked out in the context of the nineteenth-century ‘milieu-theory’ and more or less consciously surviving even in the present-day scholarly debate, of the intrinsic cohesion of the major cultural traditions. In their efforts to

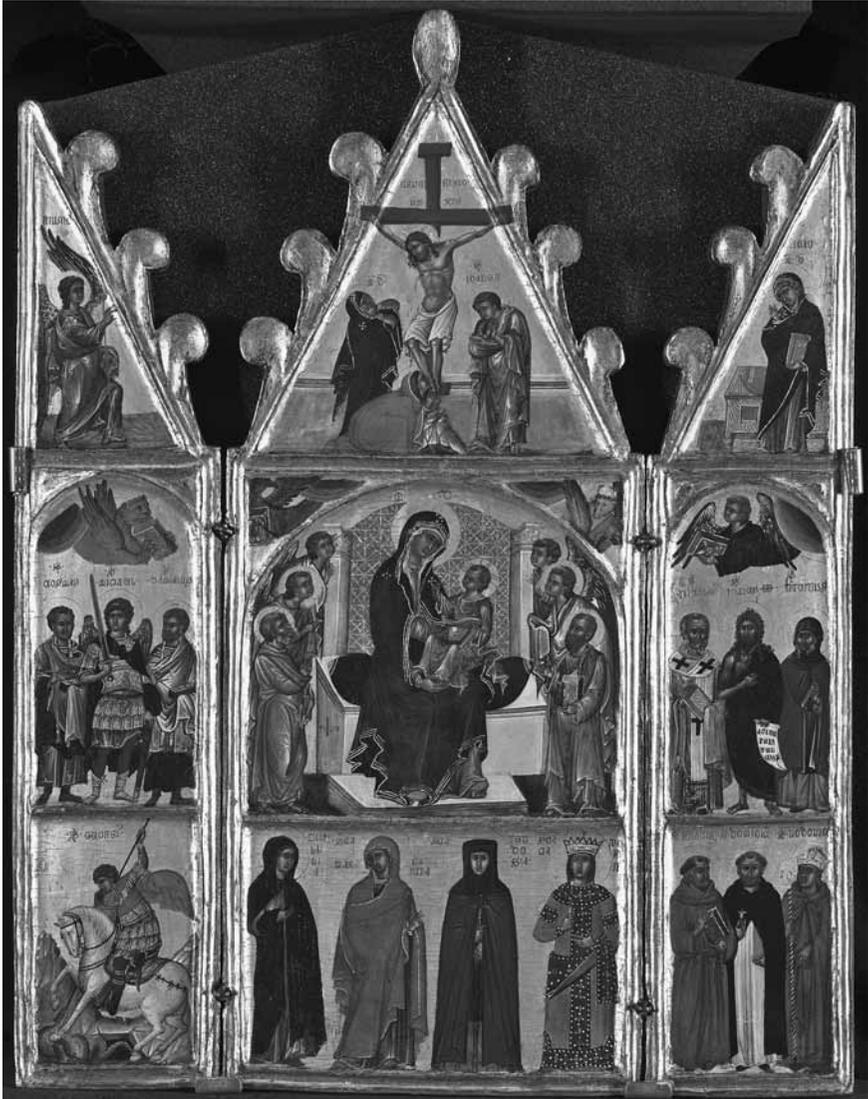


Fig. 15.1

Greek painter working in Venice, *Triptych with Virgin and Child Enthroned, Angels, and Saints*, c.1340–1350. Polesden Lacey, The McEwan Collection (The National Trust). Photo: courtesy of The National Trust

pinpoint the truly distinctive hallmarks of 'national' styles, scholars have had difficulty in recognizing the historical importance of cross-cultural exchange and have failed to work out appropriate terms to define such phenomena as the different forms of stylistic juxtaposition, synthesis, or hybridization. It is only recently, partly as a consequence of postmodern rhetoric on globalization and multiculturalism, that art historians have started rethinking the issue, by focusing especially on the multiconfessional, multi-ethnic, and multilayered societies of the medieval Mediterranean.³

However, this new approach and increased emphasis on synthesis may also prove to be misleading if the identification of these characteristics results in an indiscriminate exaltation of artistic convergence, deprived of a deeper understanding of the social, religious, cultural, and even 'technical' dynamics underlying the blending and combination of forms. Such phenomena can hardly be considered to take place mechanically, as if their hybrid character simply mirrored an indistinguished melting pot. In contrast, evidence from 'mixed' societies points out that approaches to other people's repertory of forms may vary according to such factors as the attractiveness or non-attractiveness of forms, their being imbued or not with religious or political meanings, or the impact of artistic media thought to be authoritative, as is almost always the case with Byzantine pictorial tradition.⁴ Use and imitation of stylistic, compositional, and iconographic features are essentially born out of a selection process, whose motif-forces need to be thoroughly investigated.

In this respect, the Polesden Lacey triptych is undoubtedly a case in point. From a typological viewpoint, it is one of the many devotional panels which were executed in fourteenth-century Italy to indulge the overwhelming wish of laypeople to visualize and promulgate their individual piety. Its very special selection of saints was meant, as was convention, to manifest the holy figures' willingness to act as intercessors on behalf of the donors before the Queen and the King of Heaven: preference was given to either namesakes of the donors' and members of their family, or to personages associated with special places or events of their life. For the most part, the figures represented here are traditional saints of universal worship, including Peter and Paul on both sides of Mary's throne, the *anargyroi* medical saints Cosmas and Damian, the archangel Michael, Nicholas, John the Baptist, Anthony the Abbot, and George slaying the dragon. On the lower register of the central panel, the martyr of Syracuse, Lucy, is displayed close to Margaret (the Latin alter ego of the Byzantine Marina of Antioch), the much less obvious Theodosia,

³ See my survey in M. Bacci, 'L'arte delle società miste del Levante medievale: tradizioni storiografiche a confronto', in A. C. Quintavalle, ed., *Medioevo: arte e storia* (Milan, 2008), 339–354.

⁴ On medieval perceptions of Byzantine religious painting as an authoritative tradition see my overview in M. Bacci, 'L'arte: circolazione di modelli e interazioni culturali', in S. Carocci, ed., *Storia d'Europa e del Mediterraneo. Sezione IV. Il Medioevo (secoli V–XV). Volume IX. Strutture, preminenze, lessici comuni* (Rome, 2007), 581–632.

and Catherine, the saint worshipped on Sinai especially by Latin pilgrims. The presence of three holy friars, Dominic, flanked by Francis of Assisi and Louis of Toulouse, bears witness to the donor's unreserved involvement in Mendicant patterns of piety and manifests his or her 'cumulative' approach to the intercessory power of the more famous representatives of the new Mendicant orders, but their presence does not necessarily indicate a direct connection with either a Franciscan or a Dominican church.

The representation of Saint Louis of Toulouse provides a precise *terminus ante quem non* for the dating of the panel, which can only have been made after 1317, the year of the saint's canonization.⁵ Being a member of the Capetian dynasty of France, his cult was strongly promoted in Italy by his brother Robert of Anjou, King of Naples, but was also immediately spread by the Minor Friars almost everywhere in the peninsula. The Neapolitan connection proposed by Corrie seems to be grounded almost exclusively on this iconographical detail and the analogy with the alleged Angevin patronage of analogous triptychs. However, the only proof of this is the conjectural identification of another of Robert's brothers, Peter of Eboli, with the crowned figure kneeling at the feet of the Virgin Mary in the tabernacle no. 35 of the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Siena, made in Duccio's workshop probably in the first decade of the fourteenth century.⁶ Yet this identification has been much debated in the last years and, most recently, Diana Norman has proposed associating the panel with Charles of Valois, third son of King Philip III of France, whose daughter, Catherine, was born during his stay in Siena between the summer of 1301 and the spring of 1302.⁷ This would provide a plausible explanation for the crowned figure's patronage of a small devotional image, which played no political or representational role and was more probably meant to be offered to the local church of the Dominicans in thanksgiving for the newborn.

On the whole, the Polesden Lacey triptych, displaying neither coats of arms nor other corporate signs, provides no evident clues as to the patronage of members of the Angevin family. In this respect, it is striking that St Louis's mantle is not decorated with French lilies, as frequently happened, even outside the Kingdom of Naples.⁸ A completely different context is indicated

⁵ A. Vauchez, *La sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Âge d'après les procès de canonisation et les documents hagiographiques* (Rome, 1981), 264–272.

⁶ As proposed by J. Gardner, 'Saint Louis of Toulouse, Robert of Anjou and Simone Martini', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 39 (1976): 12–33, esp. 22 n. 59, and H. B. J. Maginnis, 'Tabernacle 35', *Source* 12/4 (1993): 1–4.

⁷ D. Norman, 'The Prince and the Bishop: A New Hypothesis for Tabernacle 35 in Siena's Pinacoteca Nazionale', *Studies in Iconography* 30 (2009): 96–125.

⁸ On the iconography of St Louis of Toulouse see E. Kirschbaum, ed., *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* (Rome, 1968–1976), vol. 7, 442–445; M. Roncetti, 'La fortuna iconografica di san Ludovico di Tolosa', in R. Mencarelli, ed., *Galleria nazionale dell'Umbria. I*

by another detail, the black and white ornament of the friar-bishop's crozier, which is seen in a number of paintings made in fourteenth-century Venice, including Paolo Veneziano's polyptych in Tbilisi, and two wings of a triptych by Guglielmo Veneziano in the Kisters collection in Kreuzlingen.⁹ Other features are best paralleled by solutions employed in Venetian art, such as the brilliant chromatic palette, giving emphasis to deep blue, crimson, and light green shades, and the characteristic way of rendering Francis and Dominic's tonsure with a separated tuft of hair in the middle of the forehead, which is a device regularly employed by Paolo Veneziano and his followers.¹⁰ The peculiar treatment of Catherine's black *loros* on a red tunic is also frequently found on works connected with the Venetian sphere.¹¹ The shape and compositional devices of the triptych, with the Annunciation on the top of the side wings, the many figures of saints, and the Crucifixion and the Virgin Mary axially disposed, are also typical of Venetian panel painting from Paolo Veneziano through to Jacobello del Fiore.¹²

The iconographic selection is well in keeping with its realization in Venice. All of the 'ancient' saints represented in the triptych could boast of a special worship in town: relics of Cosmas and Damian were kept in the church of San Giorgio Maggiore; the archangel Michael had been the titular saint of one of the earliest Benedictine abbeys in the lagoon; Nicholas's true body was said to be kept in his church on the Lido; Anthony the Abbot was especially venerated in Rialto; George was much honoured in different places; and Lucy's body was venerated in her town church; while Catherine and Margaret were also titulars of town churches.¹³

Alongside such saints of almost universal worship, the triptych also displayed the unusual figure of St Theodosia, whose cult was specifically rooted

lunedì della galleria (Perugia, 1998), 161–206. On his image in Venice and North-East Italy see G. Kaftal and F. Bisogni, *Iconography of the Saints in the Painting of North East Italy* (Florence, 1978), 622–628.

⁹ For the polyptych, see F. Pedrocchi, *Paolo Veneziano* (Milan, 2003), 156–157; for the triptych wings see Fig. 49 in C. Guarnieri, 'Per un corpus della pittura veneziana del Trecento al tempo di Lorenzo', *Saggi e memorie di storia dell'arte* 30 (2006): 1–131.

¹⁰ For notable examples see Pedrocchi, *Paolo Veneziano*, 164–165, 194–195, 202–203.

¹¹ See, for example, two early-fourteenth-century panels in the Acton Collection in Florence and the Pinacoteca Vaticana in Rome: E. B. Garrison, *Italian Romanesque Panel Painting. An Illustrated Index* (Florence, 1949), nos. 162, 689.

¹² See C. Guarnieri, 'Le forme del polittico veneziano: varietà e modelli nelle tipologie della tavola dipinta', in Guarnieri, *Lorenzo Veneziano* (Cinisello Balsamo, 2006), 73–96, esp. 87–91. Compositional connections with Venetian art were detected by Cormack and Vassilaki in Buckton, ed., *Byzantium*, 206.

¹³ On the cult of saints in Venice see S. Tramontin, *Culto dei santi a Venezia* (Venice, 1965); R. D'Antiga, *Guida alla Venezia bizantina. Santi, reliquie e icone* (Padua, 2005); Bishop Agathangelos of Phanar, Chr. Maltezos and E. Morini, *Iera leipsana agion tes kath'emas Anatoles ste Venetia* (Athens, 2005).

in Constantinopolitan tradition. Although at least two saints were known under this name, a virgin from Caesarea and the more famous nun and martyr of the Iconoclastic era, by the beginning of the fourteenth century their cults had already been conflated, even in the Byzantine capital, apparently after the miraculous healing of a deaf mute during the reign of Andronikos II, in 1306.¹⁴ This event was perhaps the final outcome of Theodosia's increasing renown in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, being witnessed by both literary encomia and iconographic representations, including her solemn thirteenth-century icon on Mount Sinai.¹⁵ In Palaiologan times, the shrine housing her body, which was located next to the present-day Gül Camii and close to the Venetian quarter, became one of the most popular in Constantinople. On Wednesdays and Fridays it was visited by many sick people, and therein were celebrated wonderful rites during whose performance everybody was miraculously healed. The saint's annual feast was also magnificently solemnized with splendid offers of roses: the Byzantines were about to celebrate it when the City fell into the hands of Mehmet II on 29 May 1453.¹⁶

It was probably in the wake of her cultic success that the Venetians imported Theodosia into their homeland. Andrea Dandolo (1306–1354) made a special mention of her in his *Chronicle*, and a representation of her was included in one of the medallions encircling the Virgin Orant in the silver antependium made for Caorle Cathedral in the early fourteenth century.¹⁷ At some point in the first half of the fifteenth century, her worship was especially enhanced by a miraculous event and by the deposition of some of her relics in the church of San Tomà. In a small booklet written in the mid-fifteenth century and printed in Venice in 1488, the priest Andrea Ingenerio told the story of his mother Franceschina, whose blindness had been healed by virtue of St Theodosia of Constantinople.¹⁸ Curiously enough, a revised version of the same story about

¹⁴ Georgios Pachymeres, *De Andronico Palaeologo*, v. 32, PG 144, cols 496–500.

¹⁵ H. C. Evans, ed., *Byzantium. Faith and Power (1261–1557)* (New York, 2004), 383, cat. no. 238 (A. Drandaki); R. S. Nelson and K. M. Collins, eds, *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground. Icons from Sinai* (Los Angeles, 2006), 240–241 (C. Barber).

¹⁶ On the cult of Theodosia see J. Pargoire, 'Constantinople: l'église Sainte-Théodosie', *Échos d'Orient* 9 (1906): 161–165; G. P. Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Washington, DC, 1984), 346–351; N. Constat, 'Life of St. Theodosia of Constantinople. Introduction', in A.-M. Talbot, ed., *Byzantine Defenders of Images* (Washington, DC, 1998), 1–4. On iconography, see D. Mouriki, 'Portraits of St. Theodosia in Five Sinai Icons', in *Thymiana ste mneme tes Laskarinas Bouras* (Athens, 1994), vol. 1, 213–219.

¹⁷ Andrea Dandolo, *Chronica*, VII.3, ed. E. Pastorello (Bologna, 1928), 113; G. Musolino, 'Il culto dei santi nella antica diocesi di Caorle', in A. Niero, G. Musolino, G. Fedalto, and S. Tramontin, eds, *Culto dei santi nella terraferma veneziana* (Venice, 1967), 216–235, esp. 221.

¹⁸ The text edited by A. Zanchi, *Legenda miracolorum Beatae Virginis et Martyris Theodosiae, quae operata est in matre Venerabilis Presbyteris Andreae dicti ab Organis* (Venice, 1488), was reproduced in F. Corner, *Ecclesiae Venetae antiquis monumentis nunc etiam primum editis illustratae ac in decades distributae* (Venice, 1749), vol. 2, 330–337.

ten years later by the humanist Pescennio Francesco Negro made efforts, after an accurate investigation of old Greek synaxaries, to attribute the merit of the miraculous intervention to the homonymous and almost forgotten virgin of Caesarea.¹⁹ Notwithstanding this erudite effort, the identification with the martyr of Iconoclasm was clearly implied in the original text. According to this narrative, a man from the Byzantine capital provided the blind lady with a piece of the cloth covering Theodosia's tomb, in the hope of fostering her recovery. By such means he succeeded in translating into the lady's house the power associated with the saint's famous shrine on the Golden Horn, where thousands of sick received healing twice a week. Once Franceschina got her sight back, she started worshipping her benefactress and soon felt the need for a visual counterpart for her prayers. She asked the same man from Constantinople to bring her an icon from the Byzantine capital, and then something happened which is worth quoting in full:

After about three years she decided that a painted image had to be brought to her from Byzantium, so that, by looking at her most holy effigy, she might be inflamed by a stronger devotion. When the image arrived, the aforementioned lady's husband refused to buy it because of its irregular and excessive price: in fact, he hoped to have a finer and more pleasant image made by Venetian painters. But since the very moment she dismissed the icon, that lady fell sick from her previous illness, was full of aches and tormented by distress. In her illness, she remembered the image of Saint Theodosia she had dismissed, called her husband and son, and ordered them to pay double for the blessed icon and bring it home. And it happened that the painting, brought into the house, worked out a miracle wholly deserving to be both remembered and strongly worshipped, i.e. it healed the lady from the illness that had affected her for the second time.²⁰

This story which, according to Negro, took place in 1440, bears witness to the Venetians' involvement in the Constantinopolitan cult of Saint Theodosia, because it describes lay individuals being aware of the saint's reputation as an unfailing intercessor and relying on their Byzantine acquaintances to get objects connected with Theodosia's shrine in the City.²¹ Yet the lady's behaviour, compared to her husband's attitude, may well illustrate a twofold approach towards icons in fifteenth-century Venice: the text makes clear that images made according to the Byzantine tradition still looked extremely efficacious

¹⁹ Negro's *Historia Theodosiae martyris* is partially reproduced in *Acta sanctorum Aprilis* (Antwerp, 1675), vol. 1, 63–65. On the author and his work see G. Mercati, *Ultimi contributi alla storia degli umanisti. Fascicolo II. Note sopra A. Bonfini, M.A. Sabellico, A. Sabino, Pescennio Francesco Negro, Pietro Summonte e altri* (Vatican City, 1939), 91–94.

²⁰ Corner, *Ecclesiae Venetae*, 334.

²¹ *Acta sanctorum Aprilis*, I, 63.

as devotional tools, but at the same time, there was a sense that they could not be considered as aesthetically pleasing as contemporary Venetian painting.

The situation had been somewhat different in the previous decades. Compared to other parts of Italy, the perception of Byzantium as old-fashioned developed rather late in the art of Venice. In the fourteenth century, when the new Giottoesque manner was expanding from Padua throughout the *terraferma*, Venetian workshops worked out a distinctive and original production of panel paintings in which Italianate and Northern Gothic elements were combined with borrowings from contemporary Palaiologan art. Paolo Veneziano and his followers' misfortune to be characterized as inferior artists in nineteenth-century scholarly debate, a perception lasting to the present, was a consequence of the formalist school's lack of appreciation of such stylistic hybridizations. What importance could be assigned to artists who, in the golden century of Italian painting, still lingered in the past, imitating forms of Byzantine tradition, which had already been rejected by the natural selection operated by artistic evolution?²²

Without making value judgements, it is true to say that Venetian painters did indeed echo Palaiologan art, and more specifically the classicizing trend of the first two decades of the century, most notably in the rendering of physiognomic details, the chromatic palette, the modelling of faces with greenish shades, the use of elongated and bulging heads, and the treatment of hair and beards as small hanks arranged in rows vertically juxtaposed. These elements co-existed with a strong Gothic orientation towards richly ornamented garments, elegantly whirling folds, affected poses, punched haloes, and frames carved with luxuriant foliate motifs.²³ The impact of Giotto's style, and especially of his work in the Arena Chapel in Padua, is also present, revealed especially by Paolo's efforts to apply the model of the Florentine master's 'spatial box' to the

²² On historiography about Paolo's work see Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano*, 11–37, and A. De Marchi, 'Polyptyques vénitiens. Anamnèse d'une identité méconnue', in *Autour de Lorenzo Veneziano. Fragments de polyptyques vénitiens du XIVe siècle*, exhibition catalogue, Tours, Musée des beaux-arts, 22 October 2005–23 January 2006 (Cinisello Balsamo, 2005), 13–43, esp. 13–14.

²³ On fourteenth-century interactions between Venetian and Palaiologan art, usually interpreted in terms of a one-way Byzantine 'influence', see: V. N. Lazarev, 'Über eine Gruppe byzantinisch-venezianischer Trecento-Bilder', *Art Studies* (1931): 3–31; Lazarev, 'Saggi sulla pittura veneziana dei secoli XIII–XIV, la maniera greca e il problema della scuola cretese [I]', *Arte Veneta* 19 (1965): 17–31; Lazarev, 'Saggi sulla pittura veneziana dei secoli XIII–XIV [II]', *Arte veneta* 20 (1966): 43–61; M. Alpatov, 'Sur la peinture vénitienne du Trecento et la tradition byzantine', in A. Pertusi, ed., *Venezia e il Levante fino al secolo XV* (Florence, 1972), 1–17; M. Muraro, 'Varie fasi di influenza bizantina a Venezia nel Trecento', *Thesaurismata* 9 (1972): 180–202; H. Papastavrou, 'Influences byzantines sur la peinture de chevalet à Venise au XIVe siècle', in T. Velmans, ed., *Autour de l'icône. Origine, évolution et rayonnement de l'icône du VIe au XIXe siècle* (Paris 2006) [*Cahiers balkaniques* 34], 37–52; Papastavrou, 'Influences byzantines sur la peinture vénitienne du XIVe siècle', in E. Chrysos, ed., *Byzantium as Oecumene* (Athens, 2005), 257–278.

representation of architectural interiors, evidenced even in his early works, such as the *Stories of the Virgin Mary* in the Museo Civico, Pesaro.²⁴

The stylistic details can be analysed, but the reasons for painters' strategies of stylistic selection are not easily understandable. Even if Venetian painters seem to have been keener to make use of distinctively Byzantine features when representing themes strictly associated with Greek iconographic tradition, such as the Dormition of the Virgin, the Nativity, or the iconic portraits of elderly saints, they nevertheless took inspiration from a plurality of models and worked them out in a very original and selective way. Unlike most of the artists working in the thirteenth-century *maniera greca*, these fourteenth-century Venetian painters had a first-hand knowledge of both earlier Byzantine painting and the new classicizing trends of Palaiologan art and wished to find efficacious answers to the same stylistic and compositional problems that their Greek colleagues were tackling. Indeed, it is probable that the solutions worked out on both sides were easily communicated along the sea-routes of the eastern Mediterranean.

Interest in spatial experimentation, for example, is a case in point. A distinctive hallmark of early fourteenth-century painting in Venice is the use of painted borders simulating brackets and other architectural forms represented in a perspective view. This is encountered in such works as the icon of the Galaktotrophousa in the Museo Correr, the murals at San Zan Degolà, and in the frescoed *Lamentation* of the Orlandini chapel in the church of Santi Apostoli (Fig. 15.2), probably dating from the first or second decade of the century.²⁵ Even if the technique should be understood as an effort to rival Giotto and his school's optically accurate rendering of three-dimensional objects, it is interesting to observe that similar solutions were introduced by Palaiologan

²⁴ On Paolo Veneziano and the artistic context of fourteenth-century Venice see V. N. Lazarev, 'Maestro Paolo e la pittura veneziana del suo tempo', *Arte Veneta* 8 (1954): 77–89; R. Pallucchini, *La pittura veneziana del Trecento* (Venice-Rome, 1964); V. Zlamalik, *Paolo Veneziano i njegov krug* (Zagreb, 1967); M. Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia* (Milan, 1969); M. Lucco, 'Pittura del Trecento a Venezia', in E. Castelnuovo, ed., *La pittura in Italia. Il Duecento e il Trecento* (Milan, 1986), 176–188; F. Flores d'Arcais, 'Venezia', in M. Lucco, ed., *La pittura nel Veneto. Il Trecento* (Milan, 1992), 17–87; G. Lorenzoni, 'Retaggio bizantino, classicismo, e apporto occidentale tra Duecento e Trecento', in G. Romanelli, ed., *Venezia. L'arte nei secoli* (Udine, 1997), I, 92–117; F. Flores d'Arcais and G. Gentili, eds, *Il Trecento adriatico. Paolo Veneziano e la pittura tra Oriente e Occidente*, exhibition catalogue, Rimini, Castel Sismondo, 19 August–29 December 2002 (Milan, 2002); Pedrocchio, *Paolo Veneziano*; C. Guarnieri, 'Il passaggio tra due generazioni: dal Maestro dell'Incoronazione a Paolo Veneziano', in G. Valenzano and F. Toniolo, eds, *Il secolo di Giotto nel Veneto* (Venice, 2007), 153–201; M. Boskovits, 'Paolo Veneziano: riflessioni sul percorso (parte I)', *Arte cristiana* 97 (2009): 81–90; Boskovits, 'Paolo Veneziano: riflessioni sul percorso (parte II)', *Arte cristiana* 97 (2009): 161–170.

²⁵ L.V. Geymonat, 'Stile e contesto: gli affreschi di San Zan Degolà', in C. Rizzardi, ed., *Venezia e Bisanzio. Aspetti della cultura artistica bizantina da Ravenna a Venezia (V–XIV secolo)* (Venice, 2005), 513–579, esp. 534–539.

artists at exactly the same time, as is revealed, for instance, by the decorative frames used for the almost contemporary mural icons in the esonarthex of the church of the Holy Apostles at Thessaloniki (Fig. 15.3).²⁶ This does not necessarily imply that Byzantine painters either borrowed such motifs from Venetian or Italian art or autonomously worked them out, simply relying on the imitation of the Greco-Roman repertory, but only that artists in both Venice and Thessaloniki might share a common interest in visualizing their ability to simulate reality.



Fig. 15.2 Venetian painter, *Lamentation*, mural painting, c.1320. Venice, church of Santi Apostoli, Orlandini Chapel. Photo: after Muraro, Paolo Veneziano, 1969

²⁶ A. Xyngopoulos, 'Les fresques de l'église des Saints-Apôtres à Thessalonique', in *Art et société à Byzance sous les Paléologues* (Venice, 1971), 85–89; S. Kissas, 'O vremenu nastanka freska u crkvi Svetih Apostola u Solunu', *Zograf* 7 (1976), 52–57; Ch. Stephan, *Ein byzantinisches Bildensemble. Die Mosaiken und Fresken der Apostelkirche zu Thessaloniki* (Worms, 1986), 177. For analogous simulated brackets in Kalliergis's murals from 1314–15 in the church of the Holy Saviour at Veroia see A. Tsitouridou-Tourbié, 'Remarques sur le programme iconographique de l'église du Christ Sauveur à Veroia', in G. Koch, ed., *Byzantinische Malerei. Bildprogramme – Ikonographie – Stil* (Wiesbaden, 2000), 337–344 (good detail in fig. 3). The motif is frequent in later paintings, such as, e.g., the icon of the Pafsolypi in Istanbul: Evans, ed., *Byzantium. Faith and Power*, cat. no. 90, 167–168 (A. Weyl Carr).



Fig. 15.3 Palaiologan painter, *Simulated Brackets*, mural painting, c.1317. Thessaloniki, Church of the Holy Apostles, esonarthex. Photo: Valentino Pace, Rome)

A twofold approach to pictorial space is revealed by other Palaiologan solutions. The author of the mural decoration from c.1290 in the Protaton church on Mount Athos, traditionally identified as Manuel Panselinos, made a peculiar use of perspective-rendered buildings as pictorial devices in order to build up a perfectly symmetrical composition and give emphasis to the central figure of Christ. This is especially notable in the *Last Supper*, whose innovative solution was curiously not followed in the corresponding scene in the exonarthex of the katholikon in Vatopedi monastery, which is thought to be the work of one of his collaborators.²⁷ An echo of Panselinos's composition may be detected in Paolo Veneziano's rendering of the same theme in the Santa Chiara Polyptych in the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice, probably executed in c.1335–1340: the apostles are seated around a rectangular table, borrowed from that introduced by Giotto in the murals of the Arena Chapel, looking at the frontal figure of Christ, disposed in the very middle of the composition and visually enhanced by an arched building on the background, which is used plainly as an architectural frame.²⁸

Another variant of the same scheme is encountered in a somewhat later work, a magnificent epistyle icon painted by a Byzantine artist for a Greek church in Latin-ruled Cyprus. Now preserved in the small museum of St Herakleidios's Monastery at Kalopanagiotis, it is painted in an elegant style, connected with the classicizing trend of the early Palaiologan period, though combined with a more dynamic rendering of folds and a preference for darker tones of colour; its most probable date, in my opinion, is in the third quarter of the fourteenth century. Although it has been seen as 'purely Palaiologan', some of its devices prove to be distinctive enough to provide an interesting parallel to solutions employed also by Paolo Veneziano, such as the extensive use of chrysography for the decoration of garments.²⁹ Indeed, in such scenes as the *Last Supper* (Fig. 15.4), the *Appearance to the Apostles on Mount Sion*, and the *Incredulity of Thomas*, the artist, though relying on Panselinos' model, definitely adopts an accurate perspective view of the architectural interior, especially of its red wooden roof, which proves to be in keeping with the spatial boxes (and red wooden roofs) employed by Paolo in his later works.³⁰

²⁷ E. N. Tsigaridas, *Manuel Panselinos. Ek tou Ierou Naou tou Protatou* (Thessaloniki, 2008), 41–42 and pl. 68 (on the rendering of architectural space in the Protaton). On Vatopedi, see Tsigaridas, *Manuel Panselinos*, 57–60 and pl. 162, as well as Tsigaridas, 'Ta psefidota kai oi vyzantines toichographies', in *Iera Megiste Mone Vatopaidiou. Paradosi – istoria – techne* (Thessaloniki, 1996), 220–284, esp. 272.

²⁸ Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano*, 64.

²⁹ A. Papageorgiou, *Icons of Cyprus* (Nicosia, 1992), 88; A. Weyl Carr, 'Art', in A. Nicolaou-Konnari and Chr. Schabel, eds, *Cyprus. Society and Culture* (Leiden, 2005), 285–328, esp. 319. P. L. Vokotopoulos, *Vyzantines eikones* (Athens, 1995), 220.

³⁰ See especially the *Birth of Saint Nicholas* of c.1345 in the Galleria Contini Bonacossi in Florence: Pedrocco, *Paolo Veneziano*, 174–175; M. Bacci, ed., *San Nicola. Splendori d'arte d'Oriente*



Fig. 15.4 Palaiologan painter, *Last Supper*, detail of an iconostasis beam with 22 feast scenes, second half of the fourteenth century. Kalopanagiotis (Cyprus), Museum of the Monastery of Saint Herakleidios. Photo: author

In this context of mutual interactions, born out of a shared interest in giving answers to analogous artistic problems, we have to consider the possibility that Venetian painters' acquaintance with Palaiologan art may have been fostered not only by the circulation of icons and illuminated books along the Mediterranean sea routes, but also by a more direct relationship with itinerant artists from the major Byzantine centres working in town. Even if we lack written evidence for the fourteenth century, the case of George Philanthropinos, a Constantinopolitan immigrant to Candia who between 1430 and 1436 worked

e d'Occidente, exhibition catalogue, Bari, Castello Svevo, 6 December 2006–6 May 2007 (Milan, 2006), cat. no. IV.8, 329–330 (C. Guarnieri).

on the mosaics of San Marco, may not have been completely unprecedented.³¹ Moreover, the activity of Greek artists, alongside with Venetian, Tuscan, Bolognese, and Apulian colleagues, is frequently documented in the main ports of the East Adriatic coast, places like Kotor, Dubrovnik, and Zadar, which had strong connections with Venice,³² and it is much likely that at least some of these artists, as frequently happened with Dalmatian painters,³³ moved to the lagoon to get more profitable commissions. The parallel case of Genoa, where a Greek painter named Markos was responsible for the painted decoration of the town cathedral at the beginning of the century, indicates that artists from the major Byzantine centres were accustomed to travel and work for Western patrons in the major Italian city-ports.³⁴ Material evidence from Genoese-ruled Famagusta clearly indicates that in the last quarter of the fourteenth century, some Palaiologan artists executed murals in Latin and other non-Orthodox churches and eventually adopted Italianate iconographic schemes.³⁵ Last but not least, further early fifteenth-century documents concerning George Philanthropinos witness that, at least in Venetian-ruled Crete, a Byzantine painter could easily enter into partnership with a Venetian artist, Nicolò Storlato, and accept a commission to paint such a distinctively Western type of image as an altarpiece.³⁶

It is plausible that the author of the Polesden Lacey triptych came to Venice from Constantinople. The high standards of his style are best evidenced by his preference for elegantly curling folds and voluminous and well-proportioned bodies; his figures' intense faces compare with those encountered in such luxury manuscripts as the Theol. Gr. 300 of the National Library of Vienna, probably made in the Byzantine capital in the second quarter of the fourteenth

³¹ M. Constantoudaki-Kitromilides, 'A Fifteenth Century Byzantine Icon-Painter Working on Mosaics in Venice: Unpublished Documents', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 32/5 (1982): 265–272.

³² V. J. Djurić, *Icônes de Yougoslavie* (Belgrade, 1961); Djurić, 'Vizantijske i italovizantijske starine u Dalmaciji – I', *Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji* 12 (1961): 123–145.

³³ Pallucchini, *La pittura veneziana*, 7–8.

³⁴ R. S. Nelson, 'A Byzantine Painter in Trecento Genoa: The Last Judgement at San Lorenzo', *Art Bulletin* 67 (1985): 548–566; Nelson, 'Byzantine Icons in Genoa before the Mandylion', in A. R. Calderoni Masetti, C. Dufour Bozzo and G. Wolf, eds, *Intorno al Sacro Volto. Genova, Bisanzio e il Mediterraneo (secoli XI–XIV)* (Venice, 2007), 79–92.

³⁵ M. Bacci, 'Syrian, Palaiologan, and Gothic Murals in the "Nestorian" Church of Famagusta', *Deltion tes Christianikes archaiologikes etaireias*, ser. IV, 27 (2006): 207–220; Bacci, 'Greek Painters Working for Latin and Non-Orthodox Patrons in the Late Medieval Mediterranean', in J. Anderson, ed., *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration and Convergence: The Proceedings of the 32nd International Congress of the History of Art* (Melbourne, 2009), 196–201.

³⁶ Constantoudaki-Kitromilides, 'A Fifteenth Century Byzantine Icon-Painter', 266–267, and Constantoudaki-Kitromilides, 'Conducere apothecam, in qua exercere artem nostram. To ergasterio enos vyzantinios kai enos venetou zografou sten Krete', *Symmeikta* 14 (2001): 292–300.

century.³⁷ Working for a Latin patron, he ventured into a very personal imitation of Western formulae in the rendering of non-iconic themes: the central 'sacred conversation', displaying the Virgin Mary seating on a marble throne flanked by six angels and the apostles Peter and Paul, obviously relied on Venetian motifs borrowed from Sieneese painting, as did the Annunciation on the spandrels. In a wish to invest his Crucifixion scene with a stronger dramatic tone, the artist adopted a solution which proved to be overwhelmingly pathetic: instead of fainting, Mary is shown in the desperate gesture of covering her face, a pose rarely found in Italian art (a notable exception being an early fourteenth-century Venetian panel now preserved at the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena, California).³⁸ Moreover, the figure of St George, though rendered according to Palaiologan conventions including, for instance, a snake-like dragon and a Byzantine-type harness, seems to reveal the artist's desire to rival Paolo Veneziano's chivalric horsemen, even if the final outcome is an absolutely original solution, where the saint, shown in profile, is slaying the monster from beyond the horse's neck.

On the whole, this triptych defies any interpretation as an indiscriminately 'hybridized' painted panel. On the contrary, it proves to be the work of a Byzantine master who, in order to suit a Latin patron's devotional needs and visual conventions, appropriated and worked out Italian formulae and compositional devices in a distinctive and original way, the outcome of which can be understood only as the product of many social, cultural, and religious factors in a specific context being open to artistic interactions. In this respect, the Polesden Lacey work can be used as a Trojan horse to a thorough rethinking of the stylistically mixed production that Edward B. Garrison labelled, rather unsatisfactorily, as 'Adriatic'. Garrison gave the following explanation of this term:

Although the group shows distinct Italianism, its unassimilated Byzantinism excludes the possibility that it was produced on the Italian east coast. It therefore seems likely that most of the group was produced in various centers from eastern Venetian territory down through Dalmatia and that itinerant artists went out to the accessible islands, including Sicily, and even to the Italian mainland. Some of these artists may have been trained and have worked in Venice; at any rate their style is compounded of the same Byzantine and Italian elements as that of Venice.³⁹

³⁷ V. N. Lazarev, *Storia della pittura bizantina* (Turin, 1967), 371 and fig. 507.

³⁸ See F. Hermann, *Selected Paintings at the Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, California* (London–New York, 1980), 18.

³⁹ E. B. Garrison, *Italian Romanesque Panel Painting. An Illustrated Index* (Florence, 1949), 11.

Into this conceptual, rather than geographical, space were confined many of those paintings which showed a more or less deep acquaintance with Palaiologan art, including such works as the Nativity at present in the Andreadis collection in Athens, which are today considered to be important representatives of the last phase of Constantinopolitan art.⁴⁰ Mojmir Frinta shared Garrison's view in locating most of these 'mixed' works in the harbour towns of the Dalmatian area, which looked to him more ready to appropriate the Byzantine schemes elaborated in the nearby Balkan lands, like the Virgin *Pelagonitissa* – which is nevertheless encountered also in the western Adriatic coast, as is notably witnessed by an early fourteenth-century Riminese panel.⁴¹ In his effort to determine the Dalmatian origins of the master of the Polesden Lacey triptych, Frinta put together a corpus of attributed works which include a panel in Trsat whose linearly simplified forms are really not in keeping with contemporary Palaiologan art.⁴²

Much more interesting is the association with the cluster of works attributed to the so-called Master of the Sterbini diptych, including the eponymous panel in the Museum of Palazzo Venezia in Rome and an altarpiece with the Virgin Mary between Saints Agatha and Bartholomew in the Museo Regionale in Messina (Fig. 15.5).⁴³ Given its larger dimensions, the latter lacks the miniature-like figures seen in the other two paintings, although some similarities can be detected in the rendering of Mary's face and pose. Nonetheless, a genuine common trait is the blending of Palaiologan and Gothic elements which, instead of revealing a mere juxtaposition of schemes and formulae of different origins, seems to result in a much deeper stylistic synthesis. Even if the emphasis on Agatha makes plausible the original destination of the altarpiece to a church in Sicily, such elements as the elaborate wooden frame

⁴⁰ Garrison, *Italian Romanesque Panel Painting*, no. 293; also A. Drandaki, *Greek Icons, 14th–18th Century: The Rena Andreadis Collection* (Milan, 2002), 24–35. Another notable case is an icon of the Crucifixion presently in the Pomona College at Claremont, California: considered by Garrison to be Adriatic, it proves to be a Palaiologan work from the first half of the fourteenth century, which was made for a Latin patron, as indicated by the coat of arms included at the feet of the cross: Garrison, *Index*, no. 156; F. R. Shapley, *Paintings from the Samuel H. Kress Collection. Italian Schools XIII–XV Century* (London, 1966), 12 and fig. 15.

⁴¹ See Giovanni da Rimini's *Madonna and five saints* in the Pinacoteca Civica at Faenza: D. Benati (ed.), *Il Trecento riminese. Maestri e botteghe tra Romagna e Marche*, exhibition catalogue, Rimini, Museo della città, 20 August 1995–7 January 1996 (Milan, 1995), 170–171 cat. no. 12 by A. Volpe.

⁴² Frinta, *Searching for an Adriatic Workshop*, 12–14.

⁴³ Rome panel: A. Muñoz, *L'art byzantin à l'exposition de Grottaferrata* (Rome, 1906), 6–10; A. Santangelo, *Museo di Palazzo Venezia. Catalogo. Vol. I. I Dipinti*, Roma 1947, 5–6; Garrison, *Index*, no. 247. Messina altarpiece: G. Vigni and G. Carandente, eds, *Antonello da Messina e la pittura del '400 in Sicilia*, exhibition catalogue, Messina, 1953 (Venice, 1953), 2; E.B. Garrison, 'Addenda ad indicem – III', *Bollettino d'arte* 41 (1956), 301–312, esp. 303; F. Campagna Cicala, *Le icone del Museo di Messina* (Messina, 1997), 34.



Fig. 15.5 Greek painter working in Venice (?), *Altarpiece with the Virgin and Child between Saints Agatha and Bartholomew*, c.1350. Messina, Museo regionale. Photo: author

indicate a Venetian connection. The rendering of the facial features is true to Byzantine conventions, while Bartholomew's solemn pose and proportionate body, as well as the means of modelling flesh, are more reminiscent of mid-fourteenth-century icons showing classicizing features, such as the bilateral image with the Hodegetria and Saint Luke in the Archaeological Museum in Rhodes.⁴⁴ The treatment of folds, however, though defined by strongly marked outlines, implies a first-hand knowledge of the delicately whirling garments of Paolo Veneziano's mature activity. The Mother of God's richly ornamented blue maphorion, the pseudo-Kufic decoration of its border, the white veil underneath, her three-quarter pose, almond-shaped eyes, and delicately arched brows are all features borrowed from the production of Paolo and his workshop.⁴⁵ Such an approach to the repertory of contemporary Venetian painting is almost the same as that which can be detected in the Benaki icon with the Virgin Glykophilousa, scenes of the Dodekaorton and saints, which has been recognized as the work of a Greek painter working in Venice in the mid-fourteenth century.⁴⁶ Unlike the icon, however, the Messina altarpiece

⁴⁴ *Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art*, exhibition catalogue, Athens, Old University, 26 July 1985–6 January 1986 (Athens, 1985), cat. no. 82, pp. 79–82 (entry by M. Acheimastou-Potamianou).

⁴⁵ Pallucchini, *Pittura veneziana*, figs 91–96.

⁴⁶ M. Vassilaki, ed., *Mother of God. Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art* (Athens-Milan, 2000), 448–449 cat. no. 73 by M. Vassilaki; M. Vassilaki, 'Eikona tes Panagias Glykofilousas tou Mouseiou Benake (ar. eur. 2972): provlemata tes ereunas', in *Vyzantines*

emphasizes the Gothic qualities of the image by adding unconventional solutions, reminiscent of formulae developed in Sienese painting, such as the Christ Child playing with a string or the white veil covering the Virgin's right shoulder.

On the whole, the central composition of the Messina altarpiece looks much like that employed in a panel formerly in the Lord Clark collection at Saltwood Castle (Fig. 15.6), whose stylistic features seem to me thoroughly Italian, and reminiscent of the head proportions, curling folds, and facial features characterizing the work of the Paduan painter Guariento around the mid-fourteenth-century.⁴⁷ The two works are so strikingly similar that there is enough ground to postulate that the latter served as a model for the Messina altarpiece, which should therefore be interpreted as the outcome of a Greek artist's efforts to replicate Western style. The same scheme occurs once again in a later work preserved in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (Fig. 15.7), displaying the Crucifixion with the Virgin and Child in the gabled top: such features as the crucified Christ's bodily proportions with very thin waist and large pelvis, the rather angular rendering of folds, the geometric rocks of Golgotha, and the tall walls of Jerusalem in the background, as well as the general treatment of physiognomic details and flesh modelling, are best paralleled by Palaiologan works of the late fourteenth century, such as the hexptych with scenes of the Dodekaorton in the Monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai.⁴⁸ The Virgin's and the Child's diminutive figures are consistent with this dating, although Mary's foliate-ornamented maphorion with a white veil on the right shoulder are clearly inspired from the same Venetian models used by the painter of the Messina altarpiece and were possibly borrowed directly from his work.⁴⁹

In many respects, the 'mixed' features of these paintings anticipated solutions which were fully exploited in the Venetian-ruled territories in the east Mediterranean during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and may also have played a role in introducing Italianate formulae into the repertory of icon painting. Alongside the work of itinerant artists in Venice and the Dalmatian harbours, the ateliers of Crete, such as that run in partnership by George Philanthropinos and Nicolò Storlato, must have become privileged sites of artistic experimentation, where panels of different types and shapes were produced, including polyptychs, like the sumptuous altarpiece made around the year 1400 for a church in Monopoli, Apulia, presently in the

eikones. Techne, technike kai technologia (Heraklion, 2002), 201–207; *Byzantium 330–1453*, cat. no. 251, p. 444 (M. Vassilaki).

⁴⁷ On this painter, see especially F. d'Arcais, *Guariento* (Venice, 1965). Sold at Christie's, London, 7 December 2006, lot 43.

⁴⁸ G. and M. Soteriou, *Eikones tes mones Sina* (Athens, 1956–1958), fig. 214.

⁴⁹ H. W. van Os, ed., *Sieneese Paintings in Holland*, exhibition catalogue, Groningen, Museum voor Stad en Lande, 28 March–28 April 1969, (Groningen, 1969), cat. no. 14 (M. Janssen-de Waele); Frinta, *Searching for an Adriatic Workshop*, 14 and fig. 6.



Fig. 15.6 Painter from the Veneto, *Virgin and Child*, c.1350. Whereabouts unknown. Photo: after Frinta, *Searching for an Adriatic Workshop*, 1987

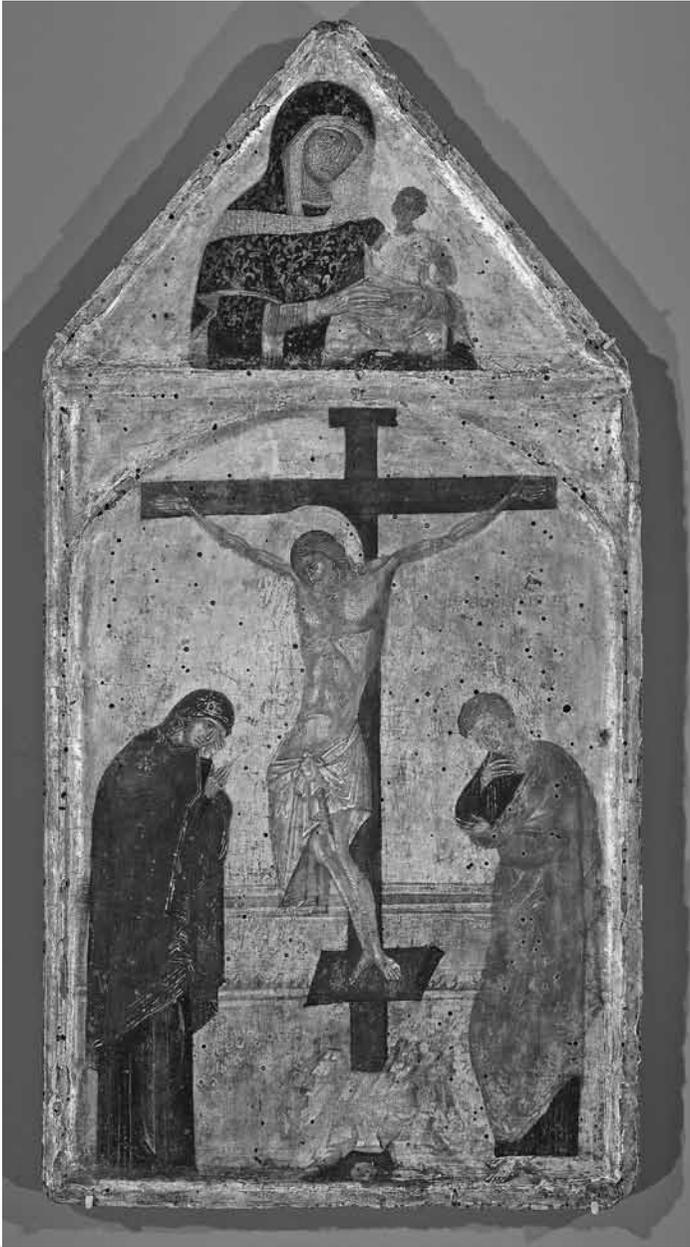


Fig. 15.7

Greek painter working in Venice (?), *Icon with the Crucifixion and the Virgin and Child*, second half of the fourteenth century. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. A4461. Photo: courtesy of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Museum of Fine Arts in Boston,⁵⁰ and an early fifteenth-century set of icons now dismembered and preserved in different collections, but originally a single large composition.⁵¹ Both of these examples show a selective use of iconographic and compositional models taken from Italian art and rendered according to Byzantine stylistic conventions (also most remarkably apparent in the 'Duccioesque' Crucifixion now in the National Museum in Stockholm),⁵² which are occasionally combined with such Westernizing devices as the fluent Gothic folds of the enthroned Saint Nicholas sold in 1969 by the Ilas Neufert Gallery in Munich (a work attributed to a Constantinopolitan artist working on Crete around 1400), which seem to be reminiscent of those in the Messina altarpiece (Fig. 15.8).⁵³

Indeed, one of the features of late Medieval Venetian panels which happened to be particularly attractive to icon-painters on Crete and other parts of the *Stato da mar* was their richly ornamented wooden frame. Already by the first half of the fifteenth century, local ateliers had started introducing such decorations into works made for Latin-rite churches, as in the case of the altarpiece in Boston and the less known *Adoration of the Magi* in the Benaki Museum (Fig. 15.9), whose shape and foliate ornaments are clearly modelled on such works as the *Crucifixion* attributed to Paolo Veneziano, originally in the church of Saint George in Piran, Istria.⁵⁴ Since the latter proves to be the only extant element of a now destroyed polyptych, it is probable that even the former also served as one of the top terminations of a larger altarpiece, made for one of the churches of the Catholic community in Paros, where the icon was originally preserved. However, fascination with Venetian wood carving soon transcended confessional identity and was satisfactorily employed as a means to embellish icons, though remaining loyal to Byzantine forms. An unpublished icon of the Virgin *Glykophilousa* formerly in a private collection in

⁵⁰ M. Constantoudaki-Kitromilides, 'Enthroned vrefokratousa kai agioi. Syntheto ergo italakretikes technes', *Deltion tes christianikes archaiologikes etaireias* 17 (1993–1994): 285–302.

⁵¹ E. Haustein-Bartsch, 'Die Ikone 'Lukas malt die Gottesmutter' im Ikonen-Museum Recklinghausen', in E. Haustein-Bartsch and N. Chatzidakis, eds, *Griechische Ikonen. Beiträge des Kolloquiums zum Gedenken an Manolis Chatzidakis in Recklinghausen, 1998* (Athens-Recklinghausen, 2000), 11–28; M. Kazanaki-Lappa, 'Two Fifteenth-Century Icons in a Private Collection', in Haustein-Bartsch and Chatzidakis, eds, *Griechische Ikonen*, 29–38.

⁵² Haustein-Bartsch, 'Die Ikone', 20–21 and fig. 18.

⁵³ Haustein-Bartsch, 'Die Ikone', 22–23. M. Vassilaki, 'San Nicola nella pittura di icone postbizantina', in Bacci, ed., *San Nicola*, 71–76, esp. 71–72.

⁵⁴ See most notably M. Borboudakis, ed., *Oi Pyles tou Mysteriou. Thesouroi tes Orthodoxias apo ten Ellada* (Athens, 1994), 237–238 cat. no. 58 by A. Drandaki; Chr. Baltogianne, *Eikones. O Christos sten ensarkose kai sto pathos* (Athens, 2003), 227–230. I am indebted to Anastasia Drandaki for providing me with a photograph of the icon and sharing her views with me. Flores d'Arcais and Gentili, *Il Trecento adriatico*, 162–163 cat. no. 29 by L. Morozzi.



Fig. 15.8 Palaiologan painter working on Crete, *Saint Nicholas Enthroned and Two Scenes of his Legend*, icon, c.1400. Whereabouts unknown. Photo: after Haustein-Bartsch in *Griechische Ikonen*, 2000

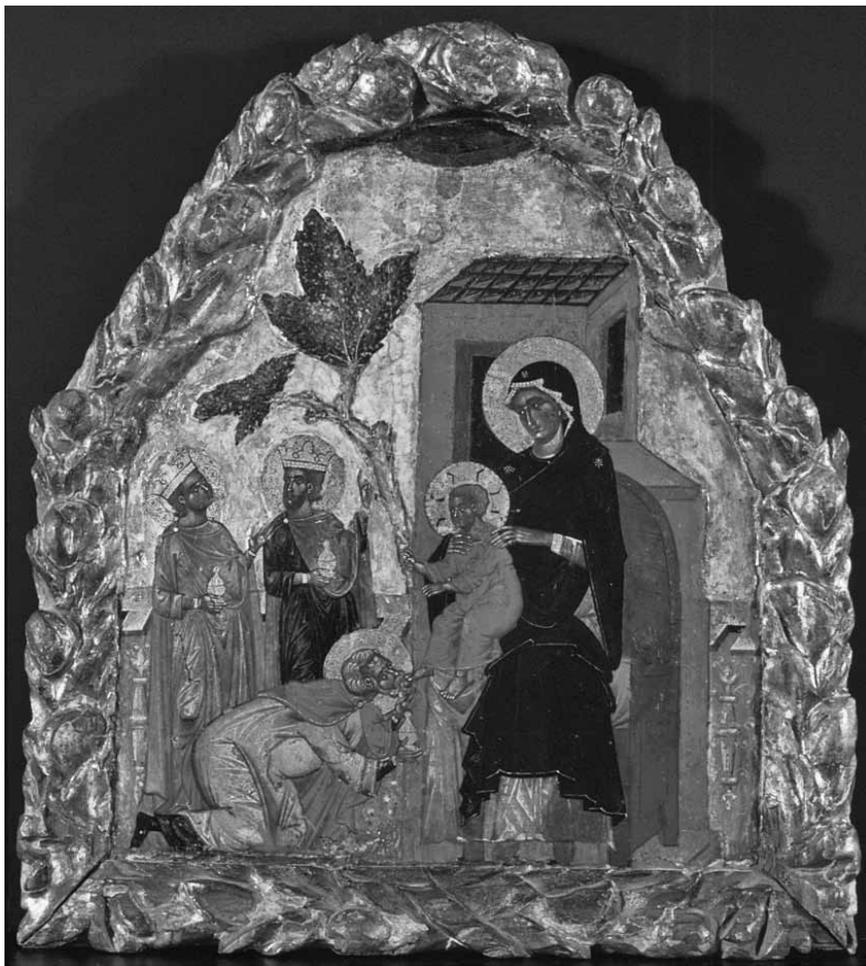


Fig. 15.9 Greek painter, *Adoration of the Magi*, element of polyptych, c.1400. Athens, Benaki Museum. Photo: courtesy of the Benaki Museum, Athens

Belluno⁵⁵ (Fig. 15.10) displays stylistic features which prove to be firmly rooted in late Palaiologan tradition and may point to an execution on Crete still in the first half of the fifteenth century. These traits include the pictorial modelling of faces, the austere physiognomies of the figures, the Virgin's brownish-red maphorion with lighter folds, the Child's elongated head, fleshy face, and

⁵⁵ *Finarte Casa d'aste. Arredi e dipinti antichi dal XIV al XX secolo da una dimora bellunese e altre provenienze. Asta 1416* (Milan, 2008), 98.



Fig. 15.10 Palaiologan painter working on Crete (?), *Icon of the Virgin Glykophilousa* with Gothic frame, first half of the 15th century. Whereabouts unknown. Photo: after Finarte Casa d'aste. Asta 1416, Milan, 2008

garments taken after the *Anapeson* scheme.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, the decoration of haloes is clearly inspired by Venetian art and the wooden frame, composed of twisted colonnettes, polylobed arch with ogee termination and a trefoiled motif, is paralleled by a number of panels produced in the late Medieval ateliers of the *Serenissima*.⁵⁷ Alongside some compositional and stylistic devices, such precious ornaments, selected and elaborated by Palaiologan artists working for Latin patrons, constituted a rich repertory of forms which was frequently drawn upon by post-Byzantine painters on Crete and elsewhere long after their complete dismissal in Renaissance Venice.

On the whole, the above-mentioned artworks can hardly be considered to be either the outcome of indiscriminate processes of cultural hybridization or isolated cases of artistic experimentation. The appropriation, imitation, and combination of forms was essentially selective and its intensity could vary according to different factors such as the more or less deliberate evocation of authoritative artistic models, the appreciation of innovative ornaments and embellishments, the working experience and training of painters, the visual culture of donors and beholders, and the extent to which specific forms were perceived as instrumental to convey specific meanings and functions, regardless of their confessional or cultural associations.

⁵⁶ See the late-fourteenth or early-fifteenth-century icon of the Virgin Gorgoepikoos in Kos in *Byzantine and Postbyzantine Art*, 88 cat. no. 89 by M. Acheimastou-Potamianou.

⁵⁷ For some notable examples see Guarnieri, 'Per un corpus', figs 80, 96, 97, 103, 108. For comparable Gothic frames in later Cretan icons see *Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art*, 119 no. 117, and P. Angiolini Martinelli, *Le icone della collezione classense di Ravenna* (Bologna, 1982), 94.