

The Chora parekklesion as a space of becoming

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Abstract

In this thesis church space is examined as a product of the material and conceptual interactions between architecture, painting, symbolism and the faithful. In order to study the conditions and factors that shape church space, I undertake a case study that examines the space of the Chora, a Byzantine monastery situated in Istanbul, Turkey, as a product of the intersection between art, symbolism, and the faithful. The parekklesion of the Chora (1316-1321) is explored within the context of its architectural and iconographic design, its symbolic function, and in relation to the way that the faithful experienced their presence within it. In addressing issues related to the experience of church space by the faithful, I problematise a reading of space as γίγνεσθαι – a realm of becoming – and engage with questions that address the involvement of the body – material and conceptual – in the process of producing space and meaning. The concept of church space as an interactional realm of becoming is understood as closely linked to a perception of church as a space in between that unites the human and the divine in a ‘heaven on earth’ and facilitates communication between them. In addressing the complexity of experiencing church space, this study challenges views of space as an empty medium and attempts to establish links between church space as an intermediate domain of becoming and the philosophical concept of chora.

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Introduction

In this thesis church space is examined as a product of the material and conceptual interactions between architecture, painting, symbolism and the faithful. In addressing issues related to the experience of church space by the faithful, I problematise a reading of space as γίγνεσθαι – a realm of becoming – and engage with questions that address the involvement of the body – material and conceptual – in the process of producing space and meaning. The concept of church space as an interactional realm of becoming is understood as closely linked to a perception of the church as a space in between that unites the human and the divine in a ‘heaven on earth’ and facilitates communication between them. In addressing the complexity of experiencing church space, this study challenges views of space as an empty medium and attempts to establish links between church space as an intermediate domain of becoming and the philosophical concept of chora. In order to study the conditions and factors that shape church space into a chora space of becoming, I undertake a case study that examines the space of the Chora, a Byzantine monastery situated in Istanbul, Turkey, as a product of the intersection between art, symbolism, and the faithful. The parekklesion of the Chora (1316-1321) is explored within the context of its architectural and iconographic design, its symbolic function, and in relation to the way that the faithful experienced their presence within it. The space of the parekklesion is regarded as a microcosm and point of departure for the exploration of

material and conceptual traces of the chora as a tool for interpreting church space. The choice of the parekklesion as the focus of this case study is based on practical as well as theoretical reasons. Tracing the concept of chora within the context of church space, led to the quest for a space that not only evokes that concept but embodies it as well. The Chora monastery, sharing the same name with the philosophical chora, was regarded as a suitable point of departure for the exploration of the implications of the concept in the production and experience of church space. Apart from the name of the monastery, the term chora is also used in inscriptions inside the church and its relation to the philosophical chora has fascinated art historical research for decades.¹ The history of the monastery has been another factor for its selection, as the present form of the church is a result of a fourteenth-century restoration that was funded by Theodore Metochites, an intellectual who had extensively studied ancient Greek philosophy.² The space of the Chora can be regarded as a highly intellectual space for two reasons. Its *ktetor* (κτήτωρ/*ktetor* is the Greek word for founder) was a highly educated individual with an interest in ancient Greek philosophy, and its frequent visitors included members of the imperial court of the nearby palace of Blachernae. In this way, the links established between architecture, painting and symbolism in the space of the Chora, as a result of Metochites' involvement in the restoration of the monastery, were an important part of the way the space and its images were perceived.

¹ See for example Paul Underwood, *The Kariye Djami* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966), vol. 1, p. 269 *The Kariye Djami: Studies in the Art of the Kariye Djami and Its Intellectual Background*, ed. by Paul Underwood (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975) Robert Ousterhout, 'The Virgin of the Chora', in *The Sacred Image East and West*, ed. by Leslie Brubaker and Robert Ousterhout (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

² Ihor Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time', in *Kariye Djami*, ed. by Paul Underwood (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), IV, pp. 19-91.

The space of the parekklesion in particular was chosen for several reasons. As a funerary chapel, it was created to contain the tombs of Metochites – the ktetor – and his associates. The arcosolia of the deceased were placed inside the main space of the parekklesion and were directly attached to the south and north walls, forming in this way parts of the architectural body of the church. The parekklesion can thus be perceived as a space of interaction between the living and the dead, where the living mourn for the passing of the deceased while still being able to interact with their bodies, placed inside the arcosolia. In this way, the chapel can be regarded as an especially powerful chora space of becoming that bridges the gap between the living and the dead and facilitates interaction between the two groups.³ Another reason for the selection of the parekklesion is that its interior decoration has been well preserved, which makes examination of the paintings possible. Moreover, the small scale of the building in combination with the design of the iconographic programme contribute to the formation of a highly accessible architectural and pictorial space that offers a strong sense of immediacy and inclusion to the beholder. The space of the parekklesion emerges as a space that is rich in conceptual terms and was designed around the concept of the body and its active participation in the production of meaning and space. In addition to the architectural and pictorial elements of space being highly accessible to the body of the faithful, the parekklesion is deeply

³ The parekklesion of the Pammakaristos church is a parallel to the Chora parekklesion. The Pammakaristos was probably founded in the twelfth century by a John Komnenos and after 1261 it came into the possession of the *protostrator* Michael Tarchaneiotes Glabas. Glabas was buried in a funerary chapel attached to the south side of the church that his wife built in his memory (ca. 1305). Even though there are similarities between the two chapels, the study of the Pammakaristos chapel will remain outside the scope of this study. The Pammakaristos chapel is so close a parallel to the Chora parekklesion that not much is to be gained from including it. Moreover, the patronage of Glabas' wife, Maria Doukaina Komnene, would raise questions of gender that I have no scope to discuss here, but I wish to take up in the future.

marked by other bodies as well. The Incarnate body, the Resurrected body, the collective body of the Church and the body of the deceased are only a few examples of bodies that shape the space of the chapel with their presence and contribute to the transformation of the parekklesion into an intermediate locus of interaction between bodies across space and time.

The space of the parekklesion is analysed according to the methodology outlined below, using specific examples that highlight the intersection of the material and the conceptual within the space of the chapel. In identifying the links between architecture, painting, symbolism and the use of space by the faithful in the fourteenth century, it is possible to suggest an interpretation of space that focuses on the role of the body – material, formal and conceptual – in the formation of a chora space of becoming. In the first chapter I define certain concepts that will serve as focal points in my analysis of the space of the chapel and I provide an overview of the space of the monastery and a description of the iconographic programme of the parekklesion. In chapter two, I focus on the icon as a nucleus of the concept of chora inside the church. I look at the way that the space of the icon can be interpreted as a chora space, where the Imaged manifest themselves into the visible through a peculiar kind of presence perceived corporeally by the beholder. In the third chapter I focus on the way that the space of the icon within the parekklesion expands to include the beholder in a chora space of bodily interaction between human and divine. In the fourth chapter I explore the way that architecture relates to painting, symbolism and the beholder in the parekklesion in order to form bodies – artistic and ecclesial – that are marked by, and project the concept of the chora as a space of becoming. In the fifth chapter I analyse the conditions of the transformation of

the space of the chapel as a whole into an interactional chora where meaning is produced through corporeal inclusion and participation. In these chapters, I problematise a reading of the parekklesion, and of the micro spaces created by its elements, as sites of interaction between bodies, and engage with the material and conceptual factors that came to shape these spaces into chora spaces of becoming. The objective of this thesis is to ask a number of questions about the way that the concept of chora as a space of becoming appears in the parekklesion in and through the body, and how experiencing the parekklesion as chora space through the body affects the act of inscribing meaning on space.

Theodore Metochites and the Chora

Theodore Metochites was born in Constantinople in 1270 to wealthy and educated parents. His father, George Metochites, was an ambassador for emperor Michael VIII to the Papal curia, and a pro-unionist. Metochites' education started during his early years and was supervised by his parents. In 1283, Michael VIII's death was followed by a violent anti-unionist reaction and Metochites' parents were banished to Asia Minor, taking young Theodore with them. Metochites resumed his education while his family was in exile and when he finished school he continued studying on his own. He read ancient philosophers and studied theology, making it his goal to become a scholar.⁴

⁴ Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time', p. 25.

In 1290, when Metochites was slightly over twenty years old, an important event would change the course of his life. The emperor Andronicus II visited Nicaea during a tour of inspection in Asia Minor. Metochites had composed a eulogy of the city of Nicaea and recited it in the presence of the emperor.⁵ Even though Metochites' father was still a state prisoner, Andronicus, impressed by Metochites, took the young man into his service.

After joining Andronicus' court, Metochites' progression was rapid. Initially, Metochites was travelling with the emperor through Asia Minor and after only a year he was granted the title of Logothete of the Herds and became a member of the senatorial class. After having been sent out on minor embassies in the early nineties, in 1295 he was sent to Cyprus and Cilician Armenia in order to bring back a wife for the emperor's son and co-ruler Michael IX.⁶ After successfully arranging the marriage between Michael IX and the Armenian king's elder sister, Rita, Metochites was awarded the title of Logothete of the Emperor's Private Estates.⁷

In 1305, and after having served as Prime Minister in Salonica under Andronicus' wife for two years, Metochites was called back to the capital. He was awarded the title of Prime Minister of the whole empire, pushing his predecessor – Nikephoros Choumnos – into the background.⁸ He also received the tile of Logothete of the Treasury.⁹ Being the

⁵ Ihor Ševčenko, *Études Sur La Polémique Entre Théodore Métochite Et Nicéphore Choumnos* (Bruxelles: Byzanthion, 1962), p. 137.

⁶ Ševčenko, *Études Sur La Polémique Entre Théodore Métochite Et Nicéphore Choumnos*, pp. 129-34.

⁷ Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time', p. 26.

⁸ Choumnos' replacement by Metochites arguably gave rise to a long enmity that lasted throughout their lives. About 1325, the enmity between the two men took the form of a literary attack, started by Choumnos. The enmity between the two men and the different forms through which it was expressed has been studied extensively by Ševčenko. See Ševčenko, *Études Sur La Polémique Entre Théodore Métochite Et Nicéphore Choumnos*, pp. 275-79.

mediator between the emperor and his subjects, Metochites had to perform the most important function in the empire. As a ‘grand vizier’, Metochites sold land grants and dignities, granted or refused the right of audience before the emperor and dealt with foreign governments.¹⁰

Metochites continued to study and compose literary works and he also took up astronomy, encouraged by the emperor.¹¹ In 1316 he turned to the restoration of the Chora assisted by a young man called Nikephoros Gregoras.¹² The Chora was an imperial monastery that was under the protection and administration of the imperial court. The emperor himself suggested that Metochites should focus on the restoration of the monastery as it was in a bad state, although still habitable and in use.¹³ The restoration work progressed rapidly and by early Lent of 1321 Metochites was able to attend services in the newly restored monastery.¹⁴

Around Easter 1321, Metochites was awarded the highest title of his political career, that of Grand Logothete.¹⁵ However, a civil war between Andronicus II and his grandson, Andronicus III, had just broken out. After years of political turmoil, Andronicus III took

⁹ Ševčenko, *Études Sur La Polémique Entre Théodore Métochite Et Nicéphore Choumnos*, pp. 272-73.

¹⁰ Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time', pp. 27-28.

¹¹ Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time', p. 28.

¹² Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time', pp. 90-91. Ševčenko estimates the date that restoration work in the Chora began based on Gregoras' accounts. He suggests that Gregoras came to Constantinople from Heracleia of Pontus around 1314-1315 and was introduced to Metochites about 1315 through Patriarch John Glykys (Patriarch from April 1315), an associate of Gregoras' uncle, John, Bishop of Herakleia, and an old friend of Metochites. See Nikephoros Gregoras, *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina Historia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol. I, pp. 270-71, 328.

¹³ Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time', p. 29.

¹⁴ Nikephoros Gregoras, *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina Historia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol. I, p. 303.

¹⁵ Ševčenko, *Études Sur La Polémique Entre Théodore Métochite Et Nicéphore Choumnos*, p. 19.

the capital by force in May 1328, terminating Metochites' political career. Metochites was exiled to Didymoteichon in Thrace, where he lived for two years.¹⁶ His palace was destroyed and his possessions were confiscated, he was in disgrace and suffering from illness.

After two years in Thrace, Metochites was permitted to return to Constantinople and to settle in the Chora, which had remained untouched by the mob that destroyed his palace.¹⁷ He remained in the monastery for two bleak years, imprisoned by the government and suffering from illness. He died as the monk Theoleptos on the thirteenth of March 1332 and he was buried in the Chora.¹⁸

The arrival of the Palaeologi in Constantinople in 1261, after sixty years of Latin rule, coincided with an 'intensification of the elite's contacts with antiquity',¹⁹ a tendency that acquired momentum especially under the reign of Andronicus II Komnenos, who became emperor in December 1282. As Ihor Ševčenko points out, 'the period of feverish antiquarianism' was in full swing in the last two decades of the thirteenth century, coinciding with the teenage and young adult years of Metochites.²⁰

Metochites' writings amount to 1881 folios.²¹ Apart from his letters, which were lost in a fire at the Escorial library in 1671,²² all known works by Metochites have been

¹⁶ Nikephoros Gregoras, *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina Historia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol. I, p. 428. On the date of 1330 see Ševčenko, *Études Sur La Polémique Entre Théodore Métochite Et Nicéphore Choumnos*, p. 39 and 43.

¹⁷ Nikephoros Gregoras, *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina Historia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol. I, pp. 458-59. Also see Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time', p. 36.

¹⁸ Ševčenko, *Études Sur La Polémique Entre Théodore Métochite Et Nicéphore Choumnos*, p. 8.

¹⁹ Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time', p. 19.

²⁰ Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time', p. 24.

²¹ Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time', p. 37.

preserved. He composed twenty Poems in dactylic hexameter, eighteen Orations (*Logoi*), and three works on philosophy: the *Stoicheiosis Astrononike* (1316/1317), the *Paraphraseis of Aristotle's Writings on Natural Philosophy* (c. 1320), and a collection of philosophical and historical essays, the *Seimeioseis Gnomikai* (c. 1326). In the *Seimeioseis Gnomikai*, Metochites discusses classical authors, such as Plato and Aristotle, on political, ethical and epistemological questions, and meditates on different aspects of Greek and Roman history. As Börje Bydén suggests, these themes were common among late antique Platonists, such as Philo of Alexandria, Plutarch, Maximos of Tyre, and Synesios, from whom Metochites seems to be drawing inspiration in his attempt to combine a philosophical context with natural eloquence in the *Seimeioseis*.²³

Metochites' devotion to scholarly activity is expressed in the generous contributions of books he made to the library of the Chora, which was in a deteriorating state before he began the restoration of the monastery. His own scholarly library, which was preserved at the monastery, was the largest monastic library in Constantinople,²⁴ and included almost complete collections of secular and sacred works, including works of Greek philosophers.²⁵ Metochites himself, in a lengthy letter addressed to the monks of the Chora written while he was in exile, stresses the importance of the library not only for the monks but mostly for the visitors to the monastery, and he urges the monastic community to take good care of it, admitting that the library was his most important contribution to

²² Christian Förstel, 'Theodore Metochites and His Books between the Chora and the Renaissance', in *The Kariye Camii Reconsidered*, ed. by Holger Klein, Robert Ousterhout, and Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Arastirmalari Enstitüsü, 2011), pp. 257-84, 257.

²³ Börje Bydén, 'Theodore Metochites', in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy: Philosophy between 500 and 1500*, ed. by Henrik Lagerlund (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), pp. 1266-69, 1267.

²⁴ Edmund Fryde, *The Early Palaeologan Renaissance 1261 - 1360* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p. 323.

²⁵ Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time', p. 36.

the monastery.²⁶ The importance of the preservation of the library to Metochites is also obvious in the fourth *Poem* of his collection of poetry, addressed to Nikephoros Gregoras.²⁷ There he asks Nikephoros to become the guardian of the library, which he calls the ‘dearly beloved offspring of my soul’. His relation to Greek antiquity and his extensive knowledge of the works of the Church Fathers is reflected throughout his work.²⁸ Metochites cites about eighty ancient writers in his works. He was particularly proud of Byzantine civilization because he regarded it as an embodiment of ancient Greek culture and occasionally he would call the Byzantines ‘Hellenes’ rather than ‘Romans’.²⁹ Establishing links and promoting continuity between ancient Greece and his own time seems to have been a major aim for Metochites.³⁰ The legacy of Greek antiquity was for Metochites a living source of inspiration for his work, as the thoughts of the ancient

²⁶ This letter is *Logos* 15, and it is entitled *To the monks of the Chora, on the occasion of the death of their first abbot Lucas; lament over him and exhortation to them to pursue the god with diligence*. For the original text in Greek of this letter see Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time', pp. 58-84, and especially pp. 80-83.

²⁷ *Poem* 4, verse 285. For the original text in Greek see: Ihor Ševčenko and Jeffrey Featherstone, Michael, 'Two Poems by Theodore Metochites', *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 26 (1981), 1-46 Translation of this extract comes from J. M. Featherstone, 'Metochites's Poems and the Chora', in *The Kariye Camii Reconsidered*, ed. by Holger Klein, Robert Ousterhout, and Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Arastirmalari Enstitusu, 2011), pp. 215-56, 237.

²⁸ Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time' pp. 37-40.

²⁹ In his first *Poem*, Metochites calls the Byzantines Hellenes: ‘τάδ’ ἐφ’ ἡμέας ἔδραον οὐμοφύλους Ἑλληνας’. For the original text in Greek see Theodore Metochites, *Dichtungen Des Gross-Logotheten Theodoros Metochites*, ed. by Maximilian Treu (Potsdam: Krämersche Buchdruckerei, 1895), p. 26 For the significance of the use of the term Hellenes by Metochites see Edmund Fryde, *The Early Palaeologan Renaissance 1261 - 1360* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p. 328; Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time', p. 46; For the use of the term Hellenes in the Palaeologan era see Ihor Ševčenko, 'The Palaeologan Renaissance', in *Renaissances before the Renaissance: Cultural Revivals of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. by Warren Treadgold (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1984), pp. 144-72, 163.

³⁰ Edmund Fryde, *The Early Palaeologan Renaissance 1261 - 1360*, p. 328.

Greek philosophers helped him express his own reflections on life.³¹ Metochites was also an enthusiastic student of ancient history. As he mentions in his *Seimeioseis*, ‘no achievement is possible in the field of learning without acquaintance with ancient historians and ancient history’.³² This historical approach extended from the ancient Greek writers to the Church Fathers of late antiquity. Metochites was very well read but particularly admired St Basil and Gregory of Nazianzos and recognised their role in shaping the Orthodox faith. Indeed, in one of his early *Logoi*, he asserts that ‘*the works of St Basil and Gregory of Nazianzos were sufficient as a defence against those who attacked one’s faith*’. And he adds that ‘*everyone should say about the two fathers... this is my defence to those who would examine me*’.³³ Metochites had studied Gregory extensively, as Ševčenko shows that ‘he knew all of Gregory’, especially his poetry.³⁴ He had also dedicated some of his works to the Nazianzene. His sixth *Logos* is entitled *Eulogy of Gregory*, and his sixth *Poem* is dedicated to the Three Hierarchs.³⁵ Metochites’

³¹ Edmund Fryde, *The Early Palaeologan Renaissance 1261 - 1360*, p. 331; Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time', p. 45.

³² This extract is from *Essay* number 111 of the *Seimeioseis Gnomikai*. For the original text in Greek and English translation see Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time', p. 40.

³³ ‘*τίς γάρ οὐκ ἂν εὖ φρονῶν οἶμαι μετὰ τούτων [i.e., Basil and Gregory] ἔλοιτο συντάττεσθαι... καὶ οὐ πιστεύσαι τῇ μεγάλῃ τῶν ἀνδρῶν σοφίᾳ, πρὸς πᾶσαν μάχην τῶν ἐναντίων καὶ πολεμούντων καὶ κακουργούντων ἔξωθεν καὶ κατεπιχειρούντων τῆς ἐκκλησίας αὐτοῦς ἀρκεῖν μόνους ἀξιῶν, καὶ τὰ κατ’ αὐτοῦς εἰς ἀπολογία ἀντιφέρειν παντὶ δύσῳ καὶ κακοῆθει... καὶ τοῦτ’ ἂν εἰκότως τῶν ἀποστολικῶν ῥημάτων φάναι πάντα τινά... ἢ ἐμὴ ἀπολογία τοῖς ἐμέ ἀνακρίνουσιν αὕτη ἐστίν*’. *Logos* 6, original text and translation in Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time' p. 53 *Logos* 6 was written according to Ševčenko before 1294/1295. For the date of the *Logos* see Ševčenko, *Études Sur La Polémique Entre Théodore Métochite Et Nicéphore Choumnos*, p. 139.

³⁴ Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time', p. 38.

³⁵ The poem dedicated to the Three Hierarchs is the longest of the poems written by Metochites. It remains unpublished.

sixth *Logos* is the first scholarly appreciation of Gregory,³⁶ and it is superior to earlier and contemporary panegyrics on Gregory.³⁷ Ševčenko suggests that Gregory's autobiographical poems, which were written in hexameters, must have had great influence on Metochites' own autobiographical writings, where he uses hexameters as well.³⁸ Ševčenko also observed several textual coincidences between the writings of the Nazianzene and those of Metochites.³⁹

In an era characterised by a skillful and passionate utilisation of antique sources, where male antiquarians expressed their admiration of antiquity by searching for ancient texts, borrowing them from each other and diligently collecting them, Metochites was 'the most prominent representative of the early Palaeologan revival', possessing broad knowledge and deep understanding of ancient and late antique sources, secular and sacred, philosophical and theological.⁴⁰

The name of the monastery that Metochites restored has been discussed by scholars in a topographical as well as in a 'mystical' context.⁴¹ The discussion of the mystical dimension of the name focuses mostly on the inscriptions of Christ and the Virgin that

³⁶ Ihor Ševčenko, 'The Palaeologan Renaissance', in *Renaissances before the Renaissance: Cultural Revivals of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. by Warren Treadgold (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1984), pp. 144-72, 149.

³⁷ Edmund Fryde, *The Early Palaeologan Renaissance 1261 - 1360*, pp. 327-8.

³⁸ Ihor Ševčenko, 'The Palaeologan Renaissance', in *Renaissances before the Renaissance: Cultural Revivals of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. by Warren Treadgold (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1984), pp. 144-72, 164; J. M. Featherstone, *Theodore Metochites's Poems 'to Himself'* (Vienna: Verlag, 2000), p. 16.

³⁹ For an overview of the way that the writings of Gregory of Nazianzos influenced the poetry of Metochites and for a comprehensive analysis of the textual coincidences between the two, see Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time', p. 38.

⁴⁰ Ševčenko, 'The Palaeologan Renaissance', p. 147.

⁴¹ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, pp. 4-5, 27-28, 39, 41 Also see Ousterhout, 'The Virgin of the Chora' pp. 96-97.

contain the epithet Chora. In particular, there are four inscriptions in the Chora monastery where Christ is called Chora (i.e., land, dwelling-place) of the Living (*Χώρα τῶν Ζώντων*) and another two where the Virgin is called Chora (i.e., dwelling-place) of the Uncontainable (*Χώρα τοῦ Ἀχωρήτου*). Images of Christ that bear the inscription *Chora of the Living* can be found in four places inside the church: above the entrance to the inner narthex (bust of Christ Pantokrator) (fig.1), above the main door leading into the naos (the Enthroned Christ and the Donor) (fig.2), at the northeastern corner pier of the naos as a templon image (full-figure image of Christ) (fig.4), and at the medallion of tomb H (tomb of a man named Demetrius), which is attached to the northern wall of the inner narthex (bust of Christ). Images of the Virgin that bear the inscription *Chora of the Uncontainable* can be found in two places: in the lunette above the entrance of the exonarthex (half-figure image of Virgin Blachernitissa), directly facing the image of Christ above the main entrance to the inner narthex (fig.3), and at the southeastern corner pier of the naos as a templon image corresponding to that of Christ at the northeastern pier (full-figure image of the Virgin Hodegetria) (fig.5).



Fig. 1: Christ Pantokrator. Lunette above the entrance to the esonarthex. Mosaic.



Fig. 2: Christ enthroned and the donor. Lunette above the entrance to the naos. Mosaic.



Fig. 3: The Virgin Blachernitissa and Angels. Lunette above the entrance door. Mosaic.



Fig. 4: Christ. Templon image in the naos. Northeastern pier. Mosaic.



Fig. 5: The Virgin Hodegetria. Templon image in the naos. Southeaster pier. Mosaic.

However, the so-called ‘mystical’ dimension of the term *chora*, as used in the inscriptions that accompany images of Christ and the Virgin, has not been fully explored. Underwood cites examples of earlier uses of the term without however focusing on explaining in what sense the term *chora* came to have mystical connotations in the

fourteenth century.⁴² He suggests that the epithet *Chora of the Living* is a phrase taken from the Psalms.⁴³ Indeed, in Psalm 116:9 one reads: ‘*I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living*’. Concerning the epithet of the Virgin as *Chora of the Uncontainable*, Underwood maintains that the epithet was used from as early as the fifth century by Cyril of Alexandria in his eleventh *Homily*.⁴⁴ Cyril, depicted in the conch of the apse of the parekklesion among the Hierarchs, in his homily hails the Virgin as ‘*τὸ χωρίον τοῦ ἀχωρήτου*’ (*chora of the uncontainable*),⁴⁵ with the term *χωρίον* here used as a cognate of the term *χώρα*. Moreover, as Underwood points out, the epithet is also found in the Akathistos Hymn, where the Virgin is hailed as ‘*Θεοῦ ἀχωρήτου χώρα*’ (*chora of the uncontainable God*).⁴⁶

Ousterhout focuses on examining the notion of Chora by relating it to the Virgin and proposes a view of the term that engages with the different connotations that Chora might have had within the context of the monastery. Following Underwood, he maintains that the phrase *Chora of the Uncontainable* as an epithet of the Virgin is taken from the Akathistos Hymn, even though he acknowledges that the origin of the phrase is certainly older, mentioning the use of the term by Cyril of Alexandria in the fifth century.⁴⁷ Ousterhout focuses his analysis on the image of the Virgin that is positioned in the lunette above the western entrance to the church, in the central bay of the exonarthex (fig. 3). The

⁴² ‘*The term Chora... was employed from the beginning not in a topographical but in a mystical sense, as it assuredly was in the fourteenth century*’. Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 4.

⁴³ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 39.

⁴⁴ Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, theologian and saint (378-444). *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol.1, p. 572.

⁴⁵ Cyril of Alexandria, 'Homily XI,' in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J. - P. Migne, 162 vols (Paris: Centre for Patristic Studies, 1857-1886), vol. 77, 1032D.

⁴⁶ Akathistos Hymn 15:6. For the full text in Greek and English translation see Leena Peltomaa, Mari, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

⁴⁷ Ousterhout, 'The Virgin of the Chora', p. 93.

Virgin is depicted frontally in bust form, while her hands are raised in the orans position. Before her breast there is a bust of Christ Emmanuel enclosed in an egg-shaped mandorla. The Virgin is surrounded by angels to the right and left. This type of image is called the Blachernitissa, named after an image that was located in the nearby monastery of Blachernae. With Christ placed directly before the Virgin, the image functions as a visual allusion to the miracle of the Incarnation, as Christ can be seen as contained within the womb of the Virgin. As the *Chora of the Uncontainable*, the image of the Virgin is associated here with the notion of containment and the role of the Virgin in Salvation. The Virgin Blachernitissa stands to the west of the domical vault of the exonarthex, where the Miracle at Cana and the Multiplication of the Loaves appear. These two scenes were not often placed together in Byzantine iconography, and in the case of the Chora they have also been taken out of their proper chronological sequence specifically in order to appear on the main axis of the church, directly above the images of Christ as the *Chora of the Living* and the Virgin as *Chora of the Uncontainable*.⁴⁸ In the two scenes, visual emphasis is given on the containers, as large baskets of bread and pithoi of wine fill the pendentives of the domical vault; as the Virgin contains the Uncontainable God, the baskets and the pithoi contain the symbols of Christ's sacrifice. The notion of containment that underlines the role of the Virgin as an extraordinary container that contained God is visually projected elsewhere in the church, too. In the parekklesion, which ultimately is a projection of the exonarthex to the south enveloping and containing the naos,⁴⁹ the symbolism of containment is expressed through the Old Testament prefigurations of the

⁴⁸ Ousterhout, 'The Virgin of the Chora', pp. 98-99.

⁴⁹ Engin Akyürek, 'Funeral Ritual in the Parekklesion of the Chora Church', in *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life*, ed. by Nevra Necipoglu (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 89-104, 103.

Virgin depicted in the western bay. The Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, the wall of Jerusalem, the sacred vessels of the Temple as well as the Temple itself, all highlight the role of the Virgin as an extraordinary container acting as an intermediary between God and humankind.

Ousterhout underlines that the symbolism of containment is also expressed in Byzantine hymnography. Romanos the Melode, in his kontakion *On the Nativity of the Virgin Mary* writes that the Virgin ‘became the temple and the tabernacle of the Lord’.⁵⁰ Elsewhere, the Virgin is also hailed as ‘the pot that has contained (*χωρήσασα* – the one who has contained) the giver of the manna, which symbolises the Eucharist.’⁵¹ The pot of manna symbolising the Virgin as a container of God is found in the images of the monastery as well. In the lower zone of the northern dome of the inner narthex, Moses is portrayed holding the pot of manna, on which one can see an image of the Virgin. The four hymnographers depicted in the pendentives of the dome of the western bay of the parekklesion, John of Damascus, Cosmas of Jerusalem, Joseph the Hymnographer and Theophanes Graptos, have all used the term *chora*, or a variation of it, in their hymns addressed to the Virgin.⁵² John of Damascus in his *Homily on the Annunciation* hails the Virgin as ‘*the one who contained (χωρήσασα)... Him who cannot be contained by the universe*’.⁵³ Cosmas of Jerusalem calls the Virgin ‘*container of the infinite Creator*’,⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Marjorie Carpenter, *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1973), vol. 2 no. 35, strophe 5.

⁵¹ ‘*στάμνος χωρήσασα τόν τοῦ μάννα δοτήρα*’: Ignatios, *Canon of the Fourteen Thousand Holy Children of Bethlehem*, Ode 8, Troparion 4. In Sofronios Eustratiades, *Η Θεοτόκος Εν Τη Υμνογραφία* (Paris: Chompion, 1930), p. 73. Underwood and Ousterhout mention this extract. See Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 55; Ousterhout, ‘The Virgin of the Chora’, p. 101.

⁵² Ousterhout, ‘The Virgin of the Chora’, p. 97.

⁵³ ‘*χωρήσασα... ὃν περ ὁ κόσμος χωρήσαι οὐ δύναται*’: John of Damascus, *Homily on the Annunciation*. In Eustratiades, *Η Θεοτόκος Εν Τη Υμνογραφία*, p. 86.

while Theophanes hails Her as ‘*the container of the unbearable God*’.⁵⁵ Finally Joseph the Hymnographer hails the Virgin as ‘*the one who contained the holy fire*’,⁵⁶ and in his Canon for the Mid-Pentecost, every verse begins with a different play on the word *χωρήσασα* – *choresasa*.⁵⁷

The Akathistos hymn also provides numerous examples of the association of the notion of containment with the Virgin. The Akathistos is an anonymous poem in praise of the Virgin, with its subject being the Incarnation. The poem cannot be securely dated, but evidence suggests that it was composed as early as the fifth or sixth century.⁵⁸ It became very popular in Byzantium in later centuries and even at the time of Metochites was sung throughout the year for private devotional purposes.⁵⁹ In the Akathistos hymn, the hymnographer uses various metaphors to describe the Virgin that evoke the notion of containment. The Virgin is called ‘*chora of the uncontainable*’, ‘*womb of divine Incarnation*’, ‘*container of God’s wisdom*’, ‘*living temple*’, ‘*tabernacle of God*’, ‘*dwelling place of Him who is above the Cherubim*’.⁶⁰ Akyurek suggests that a special

⁵⁴ ‘*χωρίον τοῦ ἀπείρου πλαστουργού*’: Cosmas of Jerusalem, *Canon of the Feast of Pentecost*, Ode 9. In Eustratiades, *Η Θεοτόκος Ἐν Τῇ Ὑμνογραφίᾳ*, p. 86.

⁵⁵ ‘*χωρίον ἀστέκτου θεότητος*’: Theophanes Graptos, *Parakletike of the Sunday Canon*, Ode 8. In Eustratiades, *Η Θεοτόκος Ἐν Τῇ Ὑμνογραφίᾳ*, p. 86.

⁵⁶ ‘*χωρήσασα πῦρ τό θεῖον*’: Joseph the Hymnographer, Canon of St Tertius, Ode 1. In Eustratiades, *Η Θεοτόκος Ἐν Τῇ Ὑμνογραφίᾳ*, p. 86.

⁵⁷ Ousterhout, ‘The Virgin of the Chora’, p. 97. ‘[1] *Alone you contained the Creator himself in your womb, Godbearer*’. ‘[2] *She has contained in her womb the unbounded God*’. ‘[3] *In your womb you contained the uncontainable logos*’. ‘[4] *You contained in your womb, Virgin Mother, the one of the Trinity, Christ the lifegiver*’. Joseph the Hymnographer, ‘Canon for the Mid-Pentecost’, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J. - P. Migne (Paris: Centre for Patristic Studies, 1857-1886), vol. 105, col. 1393.

⁵⁸ Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*, p. 21.

⁵⁹ Akyürek, ‘Funeral Ritual in the Parekklesion of the Chora Church’, p. 101.

⁶⁰ ‘*Θεοῦ ἀχωρήτου χώρα*’: 15:6, ‘*γαστήρ ἐνθέου σαρκώσεως*’: 1:15, ‘*σοφίας Θεοῦ δοχείον*’: 17:6, ‘*ἔμψυχον ναόν Θεοτόκε*’: 23:2, ‘*σκηνή τοῦ Θεοῦ*’: 23:6, ‘*οἶκημα*

commemorative service for the dead was held in monasteries every Friday during the eleventh hour, which is the last monastic hour of the day. The Akathistos hymn, was also sung during the eleventh-hour service in honour of the Virgin.⁶¹ As Akyurek explains, evidence suggests that the Akathistos was sung every Friday night in monasteries, as after the twelfth century, especially in Constantinople, the Friday night memorials that were celebrated before the tombs merged with the vigil that was held in monasteries, and in this way the Akathistos hymn continued to be sung to commemorate the dead.⁶² At the Chora parekklesion, St Joseph, depicted in the south-west pendentive of the dome of the western bay, holds a scroll, and the inscribed text on it comes from his *kanon* for the Akathistos hymn. The line reads: ‘*Propitiation of the world, hail, spotless Virgin...*’.⁶³ Akyurek suggests that based on evidence for the use of the Akathistos in monasteries of Constantinople and on the basis of Joseph’s inscription, it is reasonable to claim that the Akathistos hymn was sung in the Chora parekklesion during the commemorative services for those who were buried within the monastery and possibly for others as well.

Describing the Virgin as a container of God, appears to be a *topos* in homiletic and hymnographic Byzantine texts, while the epithet ‘chora of the uncontainable’ and its variations are among the commonest characterisations of the Virgin in hymns as well as in homilies.⁶⁴ Maria Evangelatou maintains that the frequency with which texts containing

πανάριστον τόν επί τῶν Χερουβίμ’: 15:10. For the full text in Greek and English translation see Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*, pp. 3-19.

⁶¹ Akyürek, 'Funeral Ritual in the Parekklesion of the Chora Church', p. 101.

⁶² Akyürek, 'Funeral Ritual in the Parekklesion of the Chora Church', p. 101.

⁶³ ‘*Ἰλαστήριον τοῦ κόσμου, χαίρει, ἄχραντε Δέσποινα*’. St Joseph the Poet, *Kanon for the Akathistos Hymn*, Ode 4. See Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 217.

⁶⁴ Maria Evangelatou, 'The Purple Thread of the Flesh: The Theological Connotations of a Narrative Iconographic Element in Byzantine Images of the Annunciation', in *Icon and Word: The*

that phrase were chanted or read in the church, suggests that the notion of containment and its association with the Virgin was a well-known symbolism in Byzantium.⁶⁵ As Ousterhout points out, the notion of the Virgin as an extraordinary container was very common in Byzantine hymnography and the epithet *chora* would have been immediately understood in this context by the fourteenth-century monks and visitors to the Chora.⁶⁶

The extraordinary character of the Virgin, in the context of her role in Incarnation and Salvation, is projected in the Chora monastery by highlighting not only the symbolism of containment but also the notion of passage. The image of the Blachernitissa is positioned in the lunette above the entrance to the exonarthex of the church and, as Ousterhout points out, the Virgin should be understood in the context of the portal, in visual as well as symbolic terms.⁶⁷ The Virgin as ‘the gate of the Word’, can be seen depicted elsewhere in the church. In the scene of Joseph taking the Virgin to his house, depicted in the inner narthex, one can see an image of the Virgin above the portal of the Temple. Moreover, in the scene of the angel smiting the Assyrians there is an image of the Virgin above the gate of Jerusalem. The notion of the Virgin as portal or passage was not an uncommon motif in hymnography either. In the Akathistos hymn, the Virgin is called ‘*gate of sacred mystery*’ and ‘*gate of salvation*’.⁶⁸ Theophanes Graptos calls the

Power of Images in Byzantium, ed. by Antony Eastmond and Liz James (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 261-79, 267.

⁶⁵ Evangelatou, ‘The Purple Thread of the Flesh: The Theological Connotations of a Narrative Iconographic Element in Byzantine Images of the Annunciation’, p. 267.

⁶⁶ Ousterhout, ‘The Virgin of the Chora’, p. 98.

⁶⁷ Ousterhout, ‘The Virgin of the Chora’, p. 101.

⁶⁸ ‘*σεπτοῦ μυστηρίου θύρα*’: 15:7, ‘*πύλη τῆς σωτηρίας*’: 19:7. For the full text in Greek and English translation, see Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*, pp. 3-19.

Virgin a ‘*gate through which the God spoke to the world*’,⁶⁹ while John of Damascus hails the Virgin as the ‘*symbolic gate through which God passed*’.⁷⁰ Finally, Joseph the Hymnographer employs the term ‘*God-containing gate*’ to describe the Virgin.⁷¹ In the work of Joseph the Hymnographer, the notion of the portal and the symbolism of containment come together in the context of the term *chora* in order to highlight the extraordinary properties of the Virgin as a container for God and a passage through which God came to earth, an intermediary between Heaven and earth. The contradictory imagery of container and passage is used here to express the mystery of the Incarnation and describe the Virgin as an extraordinary symbolic space in between the human and divine uniting the two by acting as a passage/bridge and a container. The role of the Virgin as a space in between and a bridge that unites two different realities and brings them together is finally emphatically projected in the Akathistos hymn. Section fifteen, verse twelve reads: ‘Hail, you who bring opposites together’.⁷² The hymnographer hails the Virgin as the ‘*celestial ladder through which God descended*’ and as the ‘*bridge leading those from earth to heaven*’.⁷³

The role of the Virgin Chora as a space in between human and divine that functions at the same time as a container, a passage and a bridge, has led Tasos Tanoulas to study

⁶⁹ ‘*πύλη δι’ ἧς Θεός τῷ κόσμῳ ὠμίλησε*’: Theophanes Graptos, *Canon of St Gregory of Neocaesarea*, Theotokion. In Eustratiades, *Η Θεοτόκος Ἐν Τῇ Ὑμνογραφίᾳ*, p. 67.

⁷⁰ ‘*πύλη νοερά ἣν διώδενσε Χριστός*’: John of Damascus, Canon on the Translation of the Relics of St John Chrysostom, Ode 5, Eirmos. In Eustratiades, *Η Θεοτόκος Ἐν Τῇ Ὑμνογραφίᾳ*, p. 67.

⁷¹ ‘*πύλη θεοχώρητος*’: Joseph the Hymnographer, *Canon on St Therapon*, Ode 6. In Eustratiades, *Η Θεοτόκος Ἐν Τῇ Ὑμνογραφίᾳ*, p. 67.

⁷² ‘*χαίρε, ἡ τάναντία εἰς ταυτό ἀγαγοῦσα*’: 15:12. See Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*, pp. 12-13.

⁷³ ‘*κλίμαξ ἐπουράνιε, δι’ ἧς κατέβη Θεός*’: 3:10, ‘*γέφυρα μετάγουσα τοὺς ἐκ γῆς πρὸς οὐρανόν*’: 3:11. See Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*, pp. 4-5.

the philosophic origin of the term chora, and investigate how it came to be used as an epithet for the Virgin as well as for Christ. The epithets Chora of the Living and Chora of the Uncontainable are found as inscriptions on monumental paintings for the first time in the monastery of Chora.⁷⁴ Underwood suggested that the phrase chora of the living originates in the Book of Psalms, as already discussed. Tanoulas however points out that the term chora was introduced by Plato and, keeping in mind that some of the early Church Fathers have written commentaries on the Psalms, Tanoulas attempts to identify the link between the Platonic chora and the Christian interpretation of the term. Indeed, St Basil, greatly admired by Metochites, describes the Chora of the Living in his *Homilies on the Psalms*:⁷⁵

*‘there is no male or female in the resurrection, but life is one and in one way: in the way of the ones who reside in the chora of the living and please their Lord... Where there is no change of either body or soul, that is where the chora of the living indeed is, [the realm] of the ones who remain forever the same... The chora of the living is where there is no night, no sleep that imitates death; where there is no eating, no drinking... no illness, no pains... But it is the chora of those who live the real life in Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the power forever’.*⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Tasos Tanoulas, 'Χώρα: Christian Aspects of a Platonic Concept', *Deltaion of the Christian Archaeological Society* 34.4 (2013), 405-14, 405.

⁷⁵ Basil Bishop of Caesarea, writer and saint. (ca. 329 – 379?). Basil wrote eighteen sermons on the psalms and except from one, all come from the first half of the Psalter. The recurring theme in these sermons is the living of the Christian Life. *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 1, p. 269.

⁷⁶ ‘Διότι οὐκ ἐνὶ ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει, ἀλλὰ μία τίς ἐστὶ ζωὴ καὶ μονότροπος, εὐαρεστούντων τῷ ἑαυτῶν Δεσπότη τῶν κατοικούντων ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ τῶν ζώντων... Ὅπου δὲ οὐκ ἐστὶν ἀλλοίωσις οὔτε σώματος οὔτε ψυχῆς χώρᾳ ἐστὶν ἐκείνη τῷ ὄντι ζώντων,

Tanoulas suggests that Basil's text describing the chora of the living is modeled in Platonic terms. God, as the Platonic Being, is the 'land of the living', in which the living live eternally 'remaining forever the same', in the same way that ideas do in the Platonic Being. The chora of the living is here an image of the afterlife in heaven, a promised land that will receive those who lived 'in Christ'. The image of Christ as Chora of the Living above the sarcophagus of Demetrius (Tomb H) supports this eschatological view of the epithet that is mirrored in the image of the Anastasis in the parekklesion. The image of Christ in the naos that bears the same inscription is also of eschatological character, as the book that Christ holds reads: '*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*' (Matt.11:28).⁷⁷ Christ's iconography here is of the *Antiphonetes* type, 'the one who responds', highlighting in this way the need for the beholder to communicate with Christ who addresses him or her ('*all ye*'). The three main images of Christ as Chora of the Living are placed on the central axis of the building, leading to the naos and stressing in this way the role of Christ in salvation,⁷⁸ a concept that is reflected in the parekklesion as well, where the east bay is mostly dedicated to Christ and the notion of salvation. In this way Christ is seen as not only the creator of the world, but the world

*ὁμοίων ὄντων ἀεὶ αὐτῶν... Ζώντων ἐκείνη χώρα, ἐν ἧ ἴσθι οὐκ ἐνὶ νύξ, οὐκ ἐνὶ ὕπνος τὸ τοῦ θανάτου μίμημα· ἐν ἧ ἴσθι οὐκ ἐνὶ βρωσίς, οὐκ ἐνὶ πόσις, τὰ τῆς ἀσθενείας ἡμῶν ὑπερείσματα, οὐκ ἐνὶ νόσος, οὐκ ἐνὶ ἀλγήματα, οὐκ ἰατρεία, οὐ δικαστήρια, οὐκ ἐμποροίαι, οὐ τέχναι, οὐ χρήματα, τῶν κακῶν ἢ ἀρχή, ἢ τῶν πολέμων ὑπόθεσις, ἢ ῥίζα τῆς ἔχθρας· ἀλλὰ χώρα ζώντων, οὐκ ἀποθνησκόντων διὰ τῆς ἀμαρτίας, ἀλλὰ ζώντων τὴν ἀληθῆ ζωὴν τὴν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ᾧ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων': Basil of Caesarea, 'Homiliae in Psalmos', in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J. - P. Migne (Paris: Centre for Patristic Studies, 1857-1886), vol. 29, pp. 492-93. For the English translation see Tanoulas, 'Χώρα: Christian Aspects of a Platonic Concept', p. 406.*

⁷⁷ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 169.

⁷⁸ Ousterhout, 'The Virgin of the Chora', pp. 99-100.

itself that embraces all people.⁷⁹ Christ as Chora represents the Church as physical and symbolic space and embodies the Christian community. He becomes an infinite milieu and receives the faithful, bringing into presence both the living and the deceased. The resurrection-related imagery of the parekklesion projects the inauguration of a new condition where the deceased join the faithful in the Chora of the Living. The juxtaposition of the images of Christ Chora in the narthexes with the architecture (as they are placed above the entrances), combined with the inscription on Christ's image in the naos (*'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'*), implies that Christ Chora is also seen as a portal, through which the faithful enter into life.⁸⁰ In this way, Christ can be regarded as a passage that connects heaven and earth, offering the faithful a way to enter the chora of the living, visually representing an extract from John 10:9: *'The Lord said I am the door; if anyone enters through me he will be saved, and will go in and out'*.⁸¹ Christ in the monastery is the chora of the living: an extraordinary space in between that bridges the gap between life and death, presence and absence. However, the prominence of Christ as Chora of the Living inside the church is not directly mirrored in Metochites' own writings about the monastery. Even though his first poem is dedicated to Christ and the restoration of the Chora, the epithet is not mentioned at all in his writings. The Virgin as Chora of the Uncontainable on the other hand, appears numerous times in his poems, a fact that possibly stresses Metochites' need

⁷⁹ This conception of identifying the creator with the creation is not entirely radical as more often than not Christ is considered to be the creator and head of the Church, but also the Church itself, for without him there would be no Church.

⁸⁰ Warren Woodfin, 'Wall, Veil and Body: Textiles and Architecture in the Late Byzantine Church', in *The Kariye Camii Reconsidered*, ed. by Holger Klein, Robert Ousterhout, and Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Arastirmalari Enstitusu, 2011), pp. 371-422, 376.

⁸¹ *'Εἶπεν ὁ Κύριος ἐγὼ εἰμὶ ἡ θύρα, δι' ἐμοῦ ἐάν τις εἰσέλθῃ σωθήσεται καὶ εἰσελεύσεται'*: John 10:9.

for the intercession of the Virgin, recognising her role as a chora in between human and divine.

The epithet Chora of the Uncontainable can be found in the Akathistos hymn (*chora of the uncontainable God*), and also in the work of Cyril of Alexandria (*chorion of the uncontainable*), as discussed earlier. An earlier reference to the phrase is found in the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea, who, in his *Commentary on Psalms*, writes:⁸² ... *like Sion which, being the city of God, is the chora of the man who has been born in it, so this man becomes the chora and the container of the Word of God who has been born in it, as in a holy sanctuary and temple*'.⁸³ The Virgin, as Sion, emerges here as the chora of Christ's body that, in its turn, becomes the chora and the container of the Word of God. Therefore, the Virgin, having contained Christ, who contained the Word of God, becomes the chora and the container of the Word of God herself and emerges as the chora of the uncontainable. Eusebius employs the terms chora and container (δοχείον – docheion) and uses them not as synonymous but as supplementary to each other; chora is understood here as a space one is borne by, born in and bred in, while the word container refers to Christ's body, the material container of God.

⁸² Eusebios of Caesarea, churchman and scholar (ca. 260 – 339/340). The *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 2, p. 751. In his *Commentary on the Psalms*, Eusebios discusses the historical bearing of the psalms and provides theological and mystical interpretations of the text of the Psalter. The *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 2, p. 751.

⁸³ 'Ὡσπερ γὰρ ἡ Σιών, πόλις οὐσα τοῦ Θεοῦ, χώρα τυγχάνει τοῦ τεχθέντος ἐν αὐτῇ ἀνδρὸς, οὕτω καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ ἀνὴρ χώρα γίνεται καὶ δοχείον τοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ γεννηθέντος Θεοῦ Λόγου, ὡς ἐν ἱερῷ ἀγίῳ καὶ ναῷ': Eusebios of Caesarea, 'Commentaria in Psalmos', in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J. - P. Migne (Paris: Centre for Patristic Studies, 1857-1886), vol. 23 p. 1049. For the English translation see Tanoulas, 'Χώρα: Christian Aspects of a Platonic Concept', p. 408.

Moving to earlier sources, Tanoulas points out that Clement of Alexandria in his *Stromata* uses the chora in a Platonic context,⁸⁴ referring directly to the philosopher. In particular, he states that: ‘*Plato says that the contemplative-intellectual God of ideas will live among the humans; and that the mind is the chora of ideas, and God himself is mind. He has said that the contemplative-intellectual god of the invisible God lives in humans*’.⁸⁵ Elsewhere Clement states: ‘... because it is hard to take hold of the chora of God, [God] whom Plato has named the chora of ideas’.⁸⁶ Clement here identifies the concept of chora with that of *ὑποδοχή*, in the sense of receptacle or container.⁸⁷ In Plato’s *Timaeus*, Socrates describes chora as a third kind of being; it is neither being nor nonbeing, it is rather an interval between the two. Chora is a disruption to binary oppositions, a transitional space between Being, the ideal intelligible model, and Becoming, the material sensible copy or form:⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Clement of Alexandria, early Christian philosopher (ca. 150 – after 215). The *Stromata* (‘Patchwork’) is the third book of Clement’s trilogy of works on the Christian life. It deals with a variety of matters and aims at giving an account of the Christian faith based on Scripture and tradition. *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 1, p. 470.

⁸⁵ ‘εἰκότως οὖν καὶ Πλάτων τὸν τῶν ιδεῶν θεωρητικὸν θεὸν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ζήσεσθαι φησιν οὐς δὲ χώρα ιδεῶν, νοῦς δὲ ὁ θεός. Τὸν οὖν ἀοράτου θεοῦ θεωρητικὸν θεὸν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ζῶντα εἴρηκεν’: Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* IV, Cap. XXV. 155, 2: See Clement of Alexandria, ‘Stromata’, in *Clement of Alexandria*, ed. by Otto Stählin, Ludwig Früchtel, and Ursula Treu (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985), vol. 2 p. 317. For the English translation see Tanoulas, ‘Χώρα: Christian Aspects of a Platonic Concept’, p. 408.

⁸⁶ ‘δυσάλωτος γὰρ ἡ χώρα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὃν χώραν ιδεῶν ὁ Πλάτων κέκληκεν’: Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* V, Cap. XI. 73, 3: See Clement of Alexandria, ‘Stromata’, p. 375. For the English translation see Tanoulas, ‘Χώρα: Christian Aspects of a Platonic Concept’, p. 409.

⁸⁷ Tanoulas suggests that Derrida also speaks of chora and *ὑποδοχή* indiscriminately in his work. See Jacques Derrida, *Khôra* (Paris: Galilée, 1993).

⁸⁸ Plato defines Being and becoming in *Timaeus*, before proceeding to a definition of chora as a third genus. The world of Being is described by Plato as follows: ‘...ὁμολογητέον ἐν μὲν εἶναι τὸ κατὰ ταῦτὰ εἶδος ἔχον, ἀγέννητον καὶ ἀνώλεθρον, οὔτε εἰς ἑαυτὸ εἰσδεχόμενον ἄλλο ἄλλοθεν οὔτε αὐτὸ εἰς ἄλλο ποιῖόν, ἀόρατον δὲ καὶ ἄλλως ἀναίσθητον, τοῦτο ὃ δὴ νόησις εἴληκεν ἐπισκοπεῖν’ (‘is always the same, uncreated and indestructible, never receiving anything

τρίτον δὲ αὐτὸ γένος ὄν τὸ τῆς χώρας αἰεὶ, φθορὰν οὐ προσδεχόμενον,
 ἔδραν δὲ παρέχον ὅσα ἔχει γένεσιν πᾶσιν, αὐτὸ δὲ μετ' ἀναισθησίας
 ἀπτόν λογισμῷ τινι νόθῳ, μόγις πιστόν, πρὸς ὃ δὴ καὶ
 ὄνειροπολοῦμεν βλέποντες καὶ φάμεν ἀναγκαῖον εἶναί που τὸ ὄν
 ἅπαν ἔν τινι τόπῳ καὶ κατέχον χώραν τινά, τὸ δὲ μήτ' ἔν γῆ μήτε που
 κατ' οὐρανὸν οὐδὲν εἶναι, ταῦτα δὴ πάντα καὶ τούτων ἄλλα ἀδελφὰ
 καὶ περὶ τὴν ἄνπνον καὶ ἀληθῶς φύσιν ὑπάρχουσαν ὑπὸ ταύτης τῆς
 ὄνειρώξεως.⁸⁹

into itself from without, nor itself going out to any other, but invisible and imperceptible by any sense, and of which the contemplation is granted to intelligence only') in Plato, *Timaeus*: 52a. Original text comes from Plato, *Timaeus*, ed. by A. Papatheodorou (Athens: Papyrus, 1956), p. 87. Translation of this extract comes from Plato, *Timaeus*, ed. by Benjamin Jowett (Rockville, Maryland: Serenity Publishers, 2009), p. 41. The world of becoming is described as follows: '...τὸ δὲ ὁμώνυμον ὁμοίον τε ἐκείνῳ δεύτερον, αἰσθητόν, γεννητόν, πεφορημένον αἰεὶ, γιγνόμενον τε ἔν τινι τόπῳ καὶ πάλιν ἐκείθεν ἀπολλύμενον, δόξῃ μετ' αἰσθήσεως περιλήπτόν' ('there is another nature of the same name with it, and like to it, perceived by sense, created, always in motion, becoming in place and again vanishing out of place, which is apprehended by opinion and sense') in Plato, *Timaeus*: 52a. Original text in Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 87. Translation of this extract comes from Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 41.

⁸⁹ 'The third nature is space (i.e., χώρα/chora), and is eternal, and admits not of destruction and provides a home for all created things, and is apprehended without the help of sense, by a kind of spurious reason, and is hardly real; which we behold as in a dream, say of all existence that it must of necessity be in some place and occupy a space but that what is neither in heaven nor in earth has no existence'. Plato, *Timaeus*, 52a-b. Original text in Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 87. Translation of this extract comes from Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 41. The concept of chora in Plato has been studied extensively. See for example John Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida Religion without Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997); Derrida, *Khôra*; Nader El-Bizri, 'Being at Home among Things: Heidegger's Reflections on Dwelling', *Environment, Space, Place*, 3 (2011), 47-71; Nader El-Bizri, 'On Kai Khôra: Situating Heidegger between the Sophist and the Timaeus', *Studia Phaenomenologica*, 4.1-2 (2004), 73-98; Nader El-Bizri, 'Qui-Êtes Vous Khôra?: Receiving Plato's Timaeus', *Existential Meletai-Sophias*, 10.3-4 (2001), 473-90; Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Julia Kristeva, 'The Semiotic

Plato introduces the concept of ὑποδοχή as ‘the receptacle, and as it were the nurse, of all Becoming’,⁹⁰ ‘the Mother and the Receptacle of this generated world, which [world] is perceptible by sight and all the senses... if we describe her as a Kind invisible and unshaped, all receptive, and in some most perplexing and most baffling way partaking of the intelligible, we shall describe her truly’.⁹¹ In this sense, the female ὑποδοχή can be understood as a womb that receives and gives birth. Plato goes on to state that ‘it is proper to liken the Recipient to the Mother, the Source to the Father, and what is engendered between these two to the Offspring’.⁹² In this way, Father, mother and offspring, can be seen as corresponding figures to the Being, the ὑποδοχή and the Cosmos, in the sense of the sensible copy of the Being. This imagery can then be read in Christian terms according to Tanoulas and refer back to God the Father, the Virgin, and Christ.

and the Symbolic', in *The Women and Language Debate: A Sourcebook*, ed. by Camille Roman, Suzanne Juhasz, and Christanne Miller (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), pp. 45-55; Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). For an analysis of the concept of chora within the context of Byzantine church space see Nicoletta Isar, 'Chora: Tracing the Presence', *Review of European Studies*, 1.1 (2009), 39-55; Nicoletta Isar, 'Chorography: A Space for Choreographic Description', *Bulletin of the Transylvania University of Brasov*, 2.51 (2009), 263-68; Bissera V. Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010).

⁹⁰ ‘πάσης εἶναι γενέσεως ὑποδοχήν αὐτό, οἷον τιθήνην’: Plato, *Timaeus*, 49a. For the original text in Greek see Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 84. Translation of this extract comes from Tanoulas, 'Χώρα: Christian Aspects of a Platonic Concept', p. 409.

⁹¹ ‘Διό καί τήν τοῦ γεγονότος ὄρατοῦ καί πάντως αἰσθητοῦ μητέρα καί ὑποδοχήν... ἀνόρατον εἶδος τι καί ἄμορφον, πανδεχές, μεταλαμβάνον δέ ἀπορώτατά πη τοῦ νοητοῦ καί δυσσαλωτότατον αὐτό λέγοντες οὐ ψευσόμεθα’: Plato, *Timaeus*, 51 a, b. For the original text in Greek see Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 86. Translation of this extract comes from Tanoulas, 'Χώρα: Christian Aspects of a Platonic Concept', p. 409.

⁹² ‘καί δὴ καί προσεικάσαι πρέπει τό μὲν δεχόμενον μητρὶ, τό δ’ ὄθεν πατρὶ, τήν δέ μεταξύ τούτων φύσιν ἐκγόνῳ’. Plato, *Timaeus*, 50d. For the original text in Greek see Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 85. Translation of this extract comes from Tanoulas, 'Χώρα: Christian Aspects of a Platonic Concept', p. 409.

Characteristically, the Son of God is called *μονογενής* (unique of his kind, only son) in the Nicene Creed, the most fundamental declaration of Christian faith, while Plato employs the same term to describe the Cosmos.⁹³ The early Church Fathers acted within a Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophical setting and as a result their interpretation of the Christian faith was influenced by that tradition.⁹⁴ *Timaeus* in particular, was found at the centre of the Fathers' interests with regards to natural theology.⁹⁵ The way that the concept of chora was used by the Church Fathers of the early centuries suggests that the term originates in *Timaeus* and the Platonic chora.⁹⁶ However, as the term was developed in the writings of the Fathers, it came to be used interchangeably with the term *ὑποδοχή* – receptacle/container – to mean both the totality of all spaces, an infinite domain where sensible beings can be, and a space/container filled with the matter of sensible beings. In this sense, the Virgin Chora can be regarded as both the *Ἰπλατυτέρα τῶν οὐρανῶν* – 'wider than the skies' –⁹⁷ and as the chora or receptacle of the uncontainable; an infinite milieu and a container at the same time. The Platonic *ὑποδοχή* has no sensible qualities but, by receiving beings, she takes their appearance, remaining however always

⁹³ 'ἀλλ' εἰς ὅδε μονογενής οὐρανός γεγωνός ἔστι τε καί ἔτ' ἔσται'. Plato, *Timaeus*, 31b. For the original text in Greek see Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 74. See Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 188 and 99. Derrida also states: 'Le cosmos est le ciel (ouranos) comme vivant visible et dieu sensible. Il est unique et seul de sa race, 'monogène'. See Derrida, *Khôra*, p. 44.

⁹⁴ Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism*, pp. 9-10, 18-21, 94-97, 111.

⁹⁵ Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism*, pp. 20, 95-96, 188.

⁹⁶ Tanoulas, 'Χώρα: Christian Aspects of a Platonic Concept', p. 409.

⁹⁷ Another appellation for the Virgin Blachernitissa, whose image appears above the entrance to the exonarthex. See Ousterhout, 'The Virgin of the Chora', p. 93.

essentially identical to herself as well as formless.⁹⁸ In this way, Tanoulas suggests, the prefigurations of the Virgin as depicted in the Chora parekklesion, where she appears in the form of other material substances, can be seen as references to the qualities of the ὑποδοχή.

The works of hymnographers, the writings of the early Church Fathers and the Neoplatonists were known to Metochites at the time that the iconographic programme of the Chora was developed.⁹⁹ The writings of Plato were also well known to Metochites. Fryde suggests that based on the number of Platonic codices copied between 1261 and 1360, the early Palaeologan era saw a modest revival of Platonic scholarship.¹⁰⁰ As about fifteen Platonic manuscripts can be assigned with certainty to the century after 1260, Platonic scholarship seems to have been an important part of manuscript production for the first time since 1082.¹⁰¹ Treatises devoted to philosophical controversies that were produced in the century after 1260, testify to the widespread familiarity of early

⁹⁸ 'for while it is always receiving all things, nowhere and in no wise does it assume any shape similar to any of the things that enter into it. For it is laid down by nature as a moulding-stuff for everything, being moved and marked by the entering figures, and because of them it appears different at different times'. Plato, *Timaeus*, 50c. 'ἐκ γὰρ τῆς εαυτῆς τό παράπαν οὐκ ἐξίσταται δυνάμεως δέχεται τε γὰρ αἰεὶ τὰ πάντα, καὶ μορφήν οὐδεμίαν ποτέ οὐδενὶ τῶν εἰσιόντων ὁμοίαν εἴληφεν οὐδαμῆ οὐδαμῶς ἐκμαγεῖον γὰρ παντὶ κείται, κινούμενον τε καὶ διασχηματιζόμενον ὑπὸ τῶν εἰσιόντων φαίνεται δι' ἐκεῖνα ἄλλοτε ἄλλοιον'. For the original text in Greek see Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 85. Translation of this extract comes from Tanoulas, 'Χώρα: Christian Aspects of a Platonic Concept', p. 410.

⁹⁹ Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time' pp. 37-51. See also Karin Hult, *Theodore Metochites on Ancient Authors and Philosophy: Seimeioseis Gnomikai 1-26 & 71* (Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 2002), especially pp. 245-288.

¹⁰⁰ Edmund Fryde, *The Early Palaeologan Renaissance 1261 - 1360* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p. 188.

¹⁰¹ Fryde offers a comprehensive analysis of the Platonic scholarship revival between 1260-1361. See Edmund Fryde, *The Early Palaeologan Renaissance 1261 - 1360* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 188-191.

Palaeologan antiquarians with Plato's dialogues.¹⁰² For example, Nicephoros Choumnos' writings on the nature of the human soul, written circa 1315, reveal the statesman's familiarity with at least seven Platonic dialogues.¹⁰³ Two speeches written by Metochites' student, Nikephoros Gregoras, and delivered in the presence of Andronicus II between 1318-1328 are seen by Fryde as the strongest piece of evidence for the rehabilitation of Plato as a highly important philosopher.¹⁰⁴ Gregoras in his speeches praises the emperor as an ideal incarnation of the Platonic philosopher-ruler, as the term is described in Plato's *Republic*, and he expressly refers to the emperor's love of Plato.¹⁰⁵

The selected examples mentioned above, show how members of the Palaeologan elite and of Metochites' immediate circle were familiar with Plato's writings. Metochites' familiarity with Plato is also unquestionable. Gregoras in his *Historia* calls Metochites a 'reincarnation of Plato, Homer and Ptolemy'.¹⁰⁶ In his collection of essays, the *Seimeioseis Gnomikai*, Metochites discusses, among other topics, classical authors. In the first twenty-six essays Metochites deals with ancient writers and engages with philosophical, ethical and epistemological questions. Among those twenty-six essays, five are dedicated to Plato (numbers eight, ten, thirteen, twenty-four and twenty-five). Metochites also mentions Plato in a further thirteen essays. His admiration of the Greek

¹⁰² Fryde, *The Early Palaeologan Renaissance 1261 - 1360*, p. 190.

¹⁰³ J. Verpaux, Nicéphore Choumnos, Homme d'État et Humaniste Byzantin (Paris: Picard, 1959), p. 141-2.

¹⁰⁴ Edmund Fryde, *The Early Palaeologan Renaissance 1261 - 1360* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p. 188.

¹⁰⁵ P. A. M. Leone, 'Nicephori Gregorae Ad Imperatorem Andronicum II Palaeologum Orationes', *Byzantion* 41 (1971), 497-519.

¹⁰⁶ 'μετεμψύχωσιν... Ὁμήρου καὶ Πλάτωνος καὶ Πτολεμαίου'. The extract appears in Gregoras' *Dirge* on Metochites, *Byzantina Historia*, book X. For the full text in Greek see Gregoras, Nikephoros Nicephori Gregorae *Byzantina Historia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol. I, p. 479. Translation is my own.

philosopher is expressed throughout his work, as he calls him ‘excellent in all aspects’,¹⁰⁷ and he maintains that Plato’s work is still influential in his time, having left its mark throughout the centuries. In particular he states that ‘*the great reputation of these two [i.e., Plato and Aristotle] continuing unshaken from those early times up to the present, easily winning for them a unanimous vote for the first prize and a trophy for their great wisdom against all their competitors put together, is very much alive, and will, I think, probably live on forever after us*’.¹⁰⁸ Evidence for Metochites’ familiarity with Plato’s *Timaeus* and the cosmological model suggested there can be found in his *Seimeioseis Gnomikai*. Metochites’ seventh *Essay* contains a mention of *Timaeus*: ‘*seeing that he [Plato] utters his most beautiful thoughts on nature through the mouth of Timaeus*’.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, in his ninth essay, Metochites discusses the possibility of conceiving God by quoting an extract from *Timaeus*, section 28c.¹¹⁰ Metochites states: ‘This, if anything is

¹⁰⁷ ‘Πλάτων αὐτός ὁ πάντ’ ἄριστος’. Extract from *Essay* 13, section 4, paragraph 7. For the full text in Greek and English translation see Hult, *Theodore Metochites on Ancient Authors and Philosophy: Seimeioseis Gnomikai 1-26 & 71*, p. 135.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Καί ἡ τοιαύτη γε τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐκεῖθε πόρρω τῶν χρόνων εἰς ἡμᾶς νῦν ἄτρεπτος δόξα, πάσας αὐτοῖς ψήφους τῶν πρωτείων τε καὶ τροπαίων τῆς μεγάλης σοφίας κατὰ πάντων ὁμοῦ τῶν ἄλλων εὐ μάλα πείθουσα, κρατεῖ πάννυ τοι καὶ κατατήσει γ’ οἶμαι τὸν αἰεὶ χρόνον ἴσως ἐξῆς μεθ’ ἡμᾶς’. Extract from *Essay* 10, section 2, paragraph 6. For the full text in Greek and English translation see Karin Hult, *Theodore Metochites on Ancient Authors and Philosophy: Seimeioseis Gnomikai 1-26 & 71* (Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 2002), p. 99.

¹⁰⁹ ‘ὅς γε καὶ τὰ κάλλιστα τῶν αὐτοῦ περὶ φύσεως διὰ Τιμαίου πρὸς ἡμᾶς φθέγγεται’: Theodore Metochites, *Seimeioseis Gnomikai*, *Essay* 7, chapter 1, line 3. See Hult, *Theodore Metochites on Ancient Authors and Philosophy: Seimeioseis Gnomikai 1-26 & 71*, p. 74.

¹¹⁰ ‘τὸν μὲν οὖν ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα τοῦδε τοῦ παντὸς εὐρεῖν τε ἔργον καὶ εὐρόντα εἰς πάντας ἀδύνατον λέγειν’. ‘*But the father and maker of all this universe is past finding out; and even if we found him, to tell of him to all men would be impossible*’. Plato, *Timaeus*, 28c. Original text in Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 62. Translation of this extract comes from Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 29. Metochites’ quote of Plato is commented on by Hult. See Hult, *Theodore Metochites on Ancient Authors and Philosophy: Seimeioseis Gnomikai 1-26 & 71*, p. 92.

well put by Plato: that it is difficult enough to conceive God, but to describe and explain him is impossible'.¹¹¹

In Metochites' collection of poems, the term *chora* is mentioned numerous times in different poems in order to describe the Virgin as the *chora* of the uncontainable. The first two poems of Metochites' collection were dedicated to Christ and the Virgin respectively and refer to the renovation of the monastery of Chora. In the first poem he writes to the Virgin: *'And thou also, O blessed and all-inviolable Queen, Mother of my God, all-inviolable, holy Sanctuary of the Lord of High Counsels, to whom I dedicated this sanctuary containing this monastery, so lovely and glorious, called by the venerable name of Chora; protect me in one way or another, thou broad chora of Him who cannot be contained... Become thou for me a chora and defense'*.¹¹² The term is used in the second poem in a similar manner addressing the Virgin: *'It was through fear of Him, as a means of avoiding punishment, that I build this thy monastery, a chora of refuge, O thou Chora of the Lord who cannot be contained'*.¹¹³ In the penultimate poem of his collection,

¹¹¹ 'Πλατωνικός μὲν οὖν λόγος εἰ δὴ τις καὶ ἄλλος εὐ εἰρημένος, ὅτι θεὸν νοῆσαι μὲν χαλεπὸν, φράσαι δὲ καὶ διερμηνεῦσαι ἀδύνατον': Theodore Metochites, *Seimeioseis Gnomikai*, Essay 9, chapter 3, line 1. See Hult. See Hult, *Theodore Metochites on Ancient Authors and Philosophy: Seimeioseis Gnomikai 1-26 & 71*, p. 92.

¹¹² 'καὶ σύ με, μάκαιρά τε πάναγνέ τε βασιλεία, μήτερο ἔμοιο θεοῖο, τέμενος πάναγνον ἰσὸν ὑψιμέδοντος ἀνακτος, ἧ τέμενος τοδ' ἔγωγε ἀνεθέμαν φέρον ἰμερτόν νύ τ' ἀγακλεές οἶον τήνδε μονάν, ἃ σέ σὺνομα κεκλήατ' ἀρίτιμον Χώρ' ἀτάρ οὕτωσί πως, ὦ σύγε, χωρ' εὐμήκες ἀχωρήτου... χώρα τέ μοι τότε ἠδ' ἄλλαρ γένευ καταφυγῆς'. Theodore Metochites, *Poem 1*, v. 1340-1349. Original text in Theodore Metochites, *Dichtungen Des Gross-Logotheten Theodoros Metochites*, p. 37. For the English translation see Featherstone, 'Metochites's Poems and the Chora', p. 230.

¹¹³ 'ναί, βασιλεία, μ' ἰλήκοις νιόν σεῖο, κόρη μάτερ, ἠμέν φουβερόν ἠδ' εὔοικτον, τοῖό χ' ὑπαί τε δέους, ὡς τιν' ἀλεωρήν, τήνδε δεῖο μονάν αταφυγῆς χώραν, ὦ θεοῖο χώρα σύγ' ἀχωρήταιο'. Theodore Metochites, *Poem 2*, v. 569-573. Original text in Theodore Metochites, *Dichtungen Des Gross-Logotheten Theodoros Metochites*, p. 53. For the English translation see Featherstone, 'Metochites's Poems and the Chora', p. 236.

addressed to himself after the reversal of his fortune, Metochites hails the Virgin as the chora of the uncontainable once more: ‘*and I have this hope especially in His mother, the virginal and all-holy Chora, most broad, of Him who cannot be contained*’.¹¹⁴ The term chora is also used by Metochites in a context unrelated to the Virgin on numerous occasions throughout his work. He uses for example the expressions *χώραν διδόναι* (to make chora/space, to bring chora into existence),¹¹⁵ and *χώραν ἔχειν* (to take place, to come into existence).¹¹⁶ He also uses the expression *χώρα τοῦ νοῦ* in the same way that Clement of Alexandria uses it, as discussed above.¹¹⁷ Metochites, in his epitaph for Theodora Palaeologina, uses the phrase *ταῦτα χώραν τινά... ἔχει* (to occupy a space);¹¹⁸ this expression could have derived directly from *Timaeus*, where Plato in 52b defines chora and uses the expression *κατέχον χώραν τινά* (to occupy a space).¹¹⁹

Nicoletta Isar studies the area of intersection between the Platonic chora, the Christian re-shaping of the term and the notion of Christ as Chora of the Living in the monastery of the Chora. Suggesting that in the writings of the early Church Fathers the Platonic chora has been reshaped to function in a Christian context, Isar studies Gregory

¹¹⁴ ‘*ἡδέ μάλιστα τόδ’ ἔλπαρ ἀνά ματέρ’ αὐτοῦ, παρθενικήν τε πάναγνον ἀχωρήτοιο χώραν εὐρυτάταν*’. Theodore Metochites, *Poem 29*, v. 383-385. For the original text in Greek see Featherstone, *Theodore Metochites's Poems 'to Himself'*, p. 138. For the English translation see Featherstone, 'Metochites's Poems and the Chora', p. 239.

¹¹⁵ Theodore Metochites, *Seimeioseis Gnomikai*, Essay 3, chapter 7, line 1. See Hult, *Theodore Metochites on Ancient Authors and Philosophy: Seimeioseis Gnomikai 1-26 & 71*, p. 44.

¹¹⁶ Theodore Metochites, *Seimeioseis Gnomikai*, Essay 7, chapter 4, line 1. See Hult, *Theodore Metochites on Ancient Authors and Philosophy: Seimeioseis Gnomikai 1-26 & 71*, p. 80.

¹¹⁷ Theodore Metochites, *Ἠθικός ἢ περί παιδείας*, section 32, lines 50-51. See J. Polemis, *Θεόδωρος Μετοχίτης. Ἠθικός ἢ Περὶ Παιδείας* (Athens: Kanakis, 1995), p. 164.

¹¹⁸ Theodore Metochites, Epitaph of Theodora Palaeologina, lines 20-21. See A. Sideras, *25 Unedierte Byzantinische Grabreden* (Thessalonica: Paratititis, 1990), p. 256.

¹¹⁹ Original text in Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 87. Translation of this extract comes from Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 41.

of Nazianzos,¹²⁰ a personality that had greatly influenced Metochites,¹²¹ and his interpretation of chora in a Christian context. In his Epistle to Cledonios, Gregory writes: ‘*and who (Son of Man) is ultimately also man, who took upon himself our salvation, limited according to the body, unlimited according to the spirit, visible and accessible only in spirit, contained and uncontained (choreton and achoreton)*’.¹²² Isar suggests that Gregory describes Christ through antitheses (God and man, limited and unlimited, contained and uncontained) as a contradictory and extraordinary space realised through Incarnation, a space where two realities, human and divine, came together. Christ, by virtue of his divine nature, is ‘outlined in an uncircumscribable space, abstract and infinite, in chora’ and is ultimately contained in the Virgin as well as in his own human body to offer salvation, emerging in this way as a paradoxical chora space.¹²³ The notion of the uncontainable God resonates in Metochites’ own writings as well. In the first poem, addressing the Virgin, he writes: ‘*protect me in one way or another, thou broad chora of Him who cannot be contained*’.¹²⁴ Similarly, in the second poem he addresses the Virgin

¹²⁰ Gregory, Bishop of Nazianzos and saint (329/330 – ca. 390). *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 2, p. 880.

¹²¹ Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time' pp. 38, 51

¹²² ‘*ἐπὶ τέλει δὲ καὶ ἄνθρωπον, προσληφθέντα ὑπὲρ τῆς σωτηρίας τῆς ἡμετέρας, παθητόν σαρκί, ἀπαθῆ θεότητι, περιγραπτόν σώματι, ἀπερίγραπτον πνεύματι, τὸν αὐτὸν ἐπίγειον καὶ οὐράνιον, ὁρώμενον καὶ νοούμενον, χωρητὸν καὶ ἀχώρητον*’: Gregory of Nazianzus, *101st Letter to Cledonius*. See Gregory of Nazianzos, *Lettres Théologiques*, ed. by P. Gallay (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1974), pp. 42-43. For the English translation see Nicoletta Isar, 'The Iconic Chora: A Space of Kenotic Presence and Void', *Transfiguration: Nordisk tidsskrift for kunst og kristendom*, 2 (2000), 64-80, 68.

¹²³ Isar, 'The Iconic Chora: A Space of Kenotic Presence and Void', p. 69.

¹²⁴ ‘*ἀτάρ οὕτωςί πως, ὦ σύγε, χωρ’ εὐμήκες ἀχωρήτου...*’. Theodore Metochites, *Poem 1*, v. 1347-1348. Original text in Theodore Metochites, *Dichtungen Des Gross-Logotheten Theodoros Metochites*, p. 37. For the English translation see Featherstone, 'Metochites's Poems and the Chora', p. 230.

and states: ‘*O thou Chora of the Lord who cannot be contained*’.¹²⁵ Finally, in the nineteenth poem of his collection, addressed to himself after the reversal of his fortune, Metochites hails the Virgin as the chora of the uncontainable once more: ‘*and I have this hope especially in His mother, the virginal and all-holy Chora, most broad, of Him who cannot be contained*’.¹²⁶ As discussed above, Christ is not mentioned in Metochites’ writings as Chora of the Living, instead he is mentioned numerous times as the ἀχώρητος (achoretos), the one who cannot be contained, highlighting the paradox of Incarnation and placing emphasis on the extraordinary and contradictory character of chora space as marked by Christ.¹²⁷ This notion, necessarily in relation to the concept of the Virgin as the Chora of the Uncontainable, is projected in the church, as the beholder moves from east to west. As discussed above, when entering the church and walking towards the naos, the beholder sees three images of Christ as Chora of the Living in the central axis of the building, with the last one in the naos calling him or her to join God in the Chora of the Living (‘*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*’), a space of extraordinary properties. As Ousterhout points out however, moving towards the exonarthex, the gaze of the beholder is led first to the image of the Virgin in the southeastern pillar of the templon bearing the inscription Chora of the Uncontainable, then to the image of the Koimesis of the Virgin above the entrance to the naos, then to the Presentation of the Virgin to the Temple above the entrance to the inner

¹²⁵ ‘ὦ θεοῖο χώρα σύγ’ ἀχωρήταο’. Theodore Metochites, *Poem 2*, v. 572-573. Original text in Theodore Metochites, *Dichtungen Des Gross-Logotheten Theodoros Metochites*, p. 53. For the English translation see Featherstone, ‘Metochites’s Poems and the Chora’, p. 236.

¹²⁶ ‘ἠδέ μάλιστα τόδ’ ἔλπαρ ἀνά ματέρ’ αὐτοῦ, παρθενηκὴν τε πάναγνον ἀχωρήτιο χώραν εὐρυτάταν’. Theodore Metochites, *Poem 29*, v. 383-385. For the original text in Greek see Featherstone, *Theodore Metochites’s Poems ‘to Himself’*, p. 138. For the English translation see Featherstone, ‘Metochites’s Poems and the Chora’, p. 239.

¹²⁷ Isar, ‘The Iconic Chora: A Space of Kenotic Presence and Void’, p. 71.

narthex and culminates in the image of the Blachernitissa as the Chora of the Uncontainable above the entrance to the exonarthex.¹²⁸ In this way, while salvation and the eschatological significance of Christ as the Chora of the Living is given prominence on the west to east axis, Incarnation, the Virgin Chora and Christ the a-choretos – both representing extraordinary and contradictory spaces – are projected on the east to west axis.

Defining the concept of chora in the parekklesion

My theoretical approach to the concept of chora and its incorporation into a reading of the space of the parekklesion builds on the relation between the Platonic and the Christian chora, as this was shaped in the writings of the Church Fathers and Metochites, and projected inside the church conceptually as well as spatially. This thesis investigates a series of appearances of the chora in the conceptual and material realm of the parekklesion to reveal the way that chora comes into being in and through the body. The concept of chora will be regarded here as a space in between marked by dualisms such as life and death, presence and absence, human and divine, containable and uncontainable. The concept of chora will be articulated in a two-fold manner: in terms of an extraordinary container/womb that receives and produces bodies and meaning, and functions as a space in between that bridges oppositions, mirroring the Virgin Chora; and

¹²⁸ Ousterhout, 'The Virgin of the Chora' pp. 99-100.

as an open, infinite, uncircumscribable domain where opposites interact, reflecting the notion of Christ the *a-choretos* and the Chora of the Living. Throughout the following chapters I argue that chora is an extraordinary and contradictory space in between that stages interactions between bodies and at the same time becomes the result of these interactions. In attributing an intermediate status to chora, it is possible to draw attention to its role as a bridge between the material and the conceptual, the human and the divine, the past and the present. In highlighting the role of the body in the formation of a chora space in the *parekklesion*, as this is emphatically projected by the bodies of Christ and the Virgin, it is possible to identify chora as a site where bodies negotiate their presence and their interactions and combat to produce meaning. In identifying chora as a fluid physical and conceptual domain or as an unstable material that is always in the process of being shaped and re-shaped, it is possible to focus on its interactional properties and problematize a reading of chora as a space where meaning comes into being through participation and interaction between bodies. Chora will be regarded as a space of becoming, to highlight its contradictory properties and stress the fact that it is marked by the uncertainty of the act of interacting. Throughout each of the following chapters I interpret chora as a space of becoming, in the sense that it appears and is produced through the body and its interactions – starting from the bodies of Christ and the Virgin and expanding towards other bodies in space – while at the same time it comes to shape these interactions. Chora will be seen here as a space always in the making that can accommodate endless revision, an interactional domain that abolishes the totality of being and is marked by a sense of a work in progress, a never ending struggle for *teleiosis/fulfilment*. Chora will be interpreted as a space that is non-complete, for there

will always be interactions yet to flourish within its space and meaningful links yet to be produced. The notion of space as a realm of becoming refers to the production of meaning through the act of approaching the other, relating, interacting and attempting to become a unity, a functional body of bodies. Therefore, the concept of becoming will be understood here as *γίγνεσθαι*, both as an event of becoming meaningful – coming into being of meaning – and an event of becoming a unity, a body.

In the chapters that follow, I explore the intersection of chora as a space of becoming and the body – human, divine, pictorial, architectural, symbolic, temporal – within the space of the *parekklesion*. In chapter one I focus on defining four concepts that will play a central role in the reading of the space of the *parekklesion* (beholder, icon, body and space), and I provide a description of the space to which those concepts will be applied.

In chapter two I look at the way that the divine body presents itself in the space of the icon, and how the divine body's interaction with the conceptual space of the icon transforms the latter into a chora space in between. I begin by examining the relation between form and essence in the space of the icon in order to shed light on what it is that the holy image presents. I suggest that while the image cannot contain the portrayed in essential terms, the space of the icon remains a space in between that receives the Imaged in formal terms and brings them into presence. This peculiar type of presence will be regarded as having an intermediate nature, existing in a space between presence and absence and bridging the two realities in the space of the icon. I argue that this intermediate type of presence can be understood as pictorial presence, a presence created, realised and mediated through art. The pictorial presence of the Imaged is directed

through art towards the beholder, transforming in this way the space of the icon into a chora space between the human and the divine body that facilitates the interaction between the two parties. In studying issues related to interactivity and corporeality, I explore the conditions of the act of communicating within the chora space of the icon and the production of meaning.

Chapter three discusses the role of form in realising the concept of pictorial presence in the holy image. In exploring the principles of Palaeologan painting, I aim at identifying a system of formal analysis that would illustrate the realisation of pictorial presence and the transformation of the space of the icon into a space in between that unites Imaged and beholder. In chapter three I suggest that rhythmic analysis is the most appropriate tool for this task and I provide a detailed analysis of the way that rhythm is used in the images of the parekklesion to create pictorial bodies that appear to exit the painting surface and enter the space of the beholder. Through the extension of the holy image towards the physical space of the beholder, the space of the icon acquires the characteristics of chora as it exists in a space in between and is marked by dualisms, which it aims to bridge. Through the application of rhythm, the space of the icon becomes an interactional domain of becoming that exists between realities – human and divine, visibility and invisibility, immediacy and mediation, past and present – and acquires meaning through the corporeal communication between the bodies that are present within it.

In chapter four I focus on the interactions between architecture, painting, symbolism and the use of the space of the parekklesion by the faithful and their role in shaping the chapel into a space of becoming through the production of spatial bodies. In analysing the

way that these four elements of space relate to each other, I look at the formation of two bodies within the chapel. The first part of chapter four discusses the creation of an artistic body in the form of an installation that involves architecture, painting and symbolism. In exploring the conditions of the experience of the artistic body by the faithful, it is possible to draw attention to the way that the space of the chapel is shaped into a chora space of becoming through the act of interacting and producing meaning. In the second part of chapter four I analyse the concept of space as a body of bodies that is projected in the parekklesion through architecture, painting and symbolism. In exploring the characteristics of the chapel as a living ecclesia/organism, it is possible to shed light on the conditions and factors that contributed to the transformation of the church into a chora space in between realities – heaven and earth, past and present – that is constantly in the making through the interactions between the bodies of the faithful and the bodies of the holy persons.

In chapter five the act of interacting with other bodies and producing meaning and space is understood within the context of time and relationality. In interpreting the body as a realm of relations that take place in the present, it is possible to shed light on the dual concept of space as body and body as space. The body in the chapel is regarded as chora and chora is articulated in terms of the body and acquires its characteristics. In this sense, the chora space of the parekklesion as a whole is interpreted in chapter five as a body space that incorporates bodies, physical and conceptual, and gives birth to bodies. At the same time, I look at how bodies through their interactions and their interrelations in time give birth to chora space and inscribe meaning on it. The Chora parekklesion, existing on the borders between heaven and earth, human and divine, challenges formal and

ideological conceptions. This thesis investigates the role of the body in producing space and the role of space in producing bodies to reveal the way that the concept of chora as a realm of becoming comes into being in space and time within the parekklesion of the Chora monastery.

Chapter 1: Foundations: definitions of terms and description of space

In chapters two through to five, the space of the parekklesion will be studied as a chora space in between based on different theories of embodiment. In order to develop a foundation for the chapters that follow, it is first necessary to establish the ways in which specific terms and ideas will be employed and provide a description of the space to which those concepts will be applied. In the first part of this chapter I focus on defining four terms that will be central to the reading of the space of the chapel: beholder, icon, body and space. The second part of this chapter provides a description of the space of the monastery and an outline of the plan and iconography of the parekklesion.

Definitions of terms

Beholder

The main inhabitants of the space of the Chora were the monks who formed the monastic community. The Chora monastery was an all-male institution and, as Maguire points out, even though women would occasionally be allowed into the porch of the

church, in all probability, they would not be allowed into the naos.¹²⁹ The space of women in the Chora is however unknown as the typikon of the monastery has not survived. On typika from other monasteries in Constantinople the rules on spatial restrictions for women vary; nevertheless a pattern can possibly be detected, as suggested by Alice-Mary Talbot.¹³⁰ The eleventh-century typikon of the Evergetis monastery that functioned as a model for numerous subsequent monastic typika, states that it would be best for women to be banned from the monastery all together, with the exception of some well-born women that were allowed to visit occasionally for religious purposes.¹³¹ At the monastery of St Mamas, aristocratic women were permitted to attend the burial or memorial services of the relatives of the founder. However, they could only visit the church and leave the premises as soon as the service concluded.¹³² Isaac Komnenos, Chora's ktetor before Metochites, composed a typikon for the Kosmosoteira monastery in Thrace, following the model of the Evergetis monastery typikon. Magdalino has suggested that the Kosmosoteira typikon could have been similar to the typikon of the Chora.¹³³ According to the Kosmosoteira typikon, women could enter the church only three times a year on three separate Marian feasts, the Annunciation, the Birth of the Virgin and the Dormition.¹³⁴ Even though monastic typika established strict rules with regards to

¹²⁹ Henry Maguire, 'Rhetoric and Reality in the Art of the Kariye Camii', in *The Kariye Camii Reconsidered*, ed. by Holger Klein, Robert Ousterhout, and Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Arastirmalari Enstitusu, 2011), pp. 57-94, 67.

¹³⁰ Alice Talbot, Mary, 'Women's Space in Byzantine Monasteries', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 52 (1998), 113-27 p. 113.

¹³¹ Talbot, 'Women's Space in Byzantine Monasteries', p. 114.

¹³² Talbot, 'Women's Space in Byzantine Monasteries', p. 114.

¹³³ Paul Magdalino, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and Constantinople', in *The Kariye Camii Reconsidered*, ed. by Holger Klein, Robert Ousterhout, and Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Arastirmalari Enstitusu, 2011), pp. 169-214.

¹³⁴ Talbot, 'Women's Space in Byzantine Monasteries', p. 115.

women's access, occasional admittance to monasteries was granted to noblewomen, in order to attend funerals or commemorative services,¹³⁵ a rule that was possibly relevant to the Chora monastery as well.

In interpreting the space of the parekklesion and its elements in terms of the concept of the chora as a space of becoming and its relation to the body, it is necessary to acknowledge the implications of gender in experiencing space. While I examine the way that chora functions as an extraordinary space in between that receives and gives birth to bodies and meaning, the relation of chora to the feminine remains outside of the scope of this thesis and for this reason feminist approaches will not be incorporated in my reading of the Chora monastery. I acknowledge that gender issues are important in experiencing and interpreting the space of the Chora. However, the theoretical and theological issues related to gender are too complicated and ambiguous to discuss in this space. For all the above reasons, there is no scope to cover issues of gender in relation to the experience of space in this thesis, even though this is a subject that I will turn to at a future date. Even though the need for a gendered reading of space is not overlooked, in the present study I am interested more in the formation of a space of becoming within the limits of the Chora, and for this reason the parekklesion will be regarded here as a predominantly male space, as it was part of a male-only monastery. In this thesis, I examine my subject from the perspective of the aristocratic ktetor, who funded the restoration of the Chora monastery and experienced the interaction between human and divine, past and present in the parekklesion. Behind the generic terms beholder, viewer and faithful that are used in this

¹³⁵ Talbot, 'Women's Space in Byzantine Monasteries', p. 118.

study, stands the male elite of Palaeologan Constantinople.¹³⁶ The majority of the faithful who visited the Chora at the time of Metochites would probably have missed the subtle symbolic connections formed within the church through art and architecture. However, as Ousterhout points out, this might have been intentional, as a conscious attempt to distinguish between the ‘refined intellectual and the common rabble’ – an attempt that would have been appreciated by Metochites and his circle of aristocratic intellectuals. In this way, one might think of the style of the Chora as having a snob appeal.¹³⁷

Icon

The terms icon and sacred image are used interchangeably and as equivalent in this thesis, following the Greek term *εικόνη*. When discussing the monumental paintings of the Chora, the terms icon and sacred image are employed to denote both single-figure images and compositions depicted on the walls of the monastery. However, when discussing the role of the icon in the process of worship and the way through which the sacred image can affect the experience of space, reference will be made to wall paintings – single-figure images and compositions – as no portable icons survive from the Chora. Metochites in his writings does not distinguish between the above categories of icons when discussing the function of the sacred images in the space of the Chora and their role

¹³⁶ For an analysis of the social structure of the Constantinopolitan aristocracy and the role of patrons see Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 180-227, 510-12.

¹³⁷ Robert Ousterhout, 'Reading Difficult Buildings: The Lessons of the Kariye Camii', in *The Kariye Camii Reconsidered*, ed. by Holger Klein, Robert Ousterhout, and Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Arastirmalari Enstitusu, 2011), pp. 95-128, 99.

in the process of communicating with God, a point that is highlighted by Featherstone.¹³⁸ In his first poem Metochites mentions that he donated to the church ‘icons’ (*εικόνας*) and ‘representations’ (*τυπώματα*),¹³⁹ without clarifying whether he refers to portable icons or wall paintings. Following Metochites, my discussion of sacred images and their role within the space of the chapel will equally include single-figure images and compositions, suggesting that a similar degree of communicative potency can be assigned to both categories of images. Indeed, as Metochites goes on to describe some of the paintings in the church, one understands that he refers to images of the Nativity, the Passion, the Resurrection, the Virgin and the Apostles. As Featherstone points out, Metochites’ discussion of sacred images assigns equal degrees of communicative potency to single-figure images and compositions, as he describes how the act of interacting with those images affects him:¹⁴⁰

‘I also donated sacred icons and beautiful representations of the Lord Himself, how for our sake He became mortal man, He who was God, the Word of the Father, the only-begotten Son of great God, in all ways like Him, invisible Child and formerly unbounded Child of the Invisible and Unbounded; becoming a true mortal, even as we are,

¹³⁸ Featherstone, 'Metochites's Poems and the Chora' p. 218.

¹³⁹ Theodore Metochites, Poem 1, lines 1087-1088, 1115, 1121 and 1138. For the original text in Greek see Theodore Metochites, *Dichtungen Des Gross-Logotheten Theodoros Metochites*, pp. 30-31. For the English translation see Featherstone, 'Metochites's Poems and the Chora' pp. 226-27.

¹⁴⁰ This point is highlighted by Featherstone. See Featherstone, 'Metochites's Poems and the Chora' p. 220. Theodore Metochites, Poem 1, lines 1087-1137. For the original text in Greek see Theodore Metochites, *Dichtungen Des Gross-Logotheten Theodoros Metochites*, pp. 30-31. For the English translation see Featherstone, 'Metochites's Poems and the Chora' pp. 226-27.

assuming all of our nature save sin which threw us down into Hades, inside dark Tartarus. And when He had lived as long as He chose, He was seised and suffered and died in accordance with the nature He has assumed; and He Himself went down into Hades; He stunned Hades and stole the dead away from him, raising them all up with Himself: those whom the other had kept in unbreakable bonds and fetters – O great wonder! – even these did He raise up forthwith all together, being Himself the first risen. All of this did the hands of the artist depict in their work, and as we behold it we are now delighted, now affrighted, contemplating the great mercy of God who for our sake wrought this great miracle, this ineffable deed, most unexpected, surprising, impossible to conjecture, surpassing every mind and by far greater than all reason... I said there were sacred representations: first of the Lord Christ Himself, but also of His mother who bore Him whilst still an inviolate Virgin and all-pure Queen; and of the dear companions of Christ who were his faithful servants and whom we revere for Christ's sake'.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ 'ἐξείης δ' ἱράς εἰκόνας αὐτοῦ δεσπότηῶ τε τίμια ἀγλαά κεν τυπώματα, ὡς ἄρα γέντο ἄνθρωπος βροτός, ὅς κε θεός λόγος ἦεν πατρός μονογενῆς μέγαλοιο θεοῖο, πανθ' ὁμοίος ἀόρατος ἀοράτου πάσις ἠδ' ἀόριστος πάρος καὐτός ἀουρίστου δι' ἡμέας, ἡμέες ὡς κεν, βρουτός ἀληθῆς γεινάμενος, προσλαβὼν ἡμῶν φύσιος ἅπανθ' ἄτερ ἁμαρτίας, ἢ κεν Αἶδος δεσμοῖς κάββαλεν ἡμέας ἀφαᾶ Τάρταρον εἶσω, καί τε βιώσας ὄσονπερ εἶλετο, αὐτάρ ἔπειτα συλληφθεῖς πάθεν ἠδέ τε θάνε κατ' ἄρ φύσιν αὐτήν, ἦν προσλάβετο, καὐτός Αἶδοσδ' εἶσω βιβιάς Αἶδην ἐνάριξεν ἀπό σκύλα σφέο νεκρούς ξυγ γ' ἅπαντας ἀείρας, οὓς ἔχ' ἐνί γε δεσμοῖς ἀρρήκτοισί τε κλειθροπέδησιν, ἦ μέγα θαύμα, τοῦσδ' ἄφαρ ἄμυδις ἀνστάσας αὐτός πρῶτατος ἀνστάς τά κεν ἅπαντα πονεῦντι χέρεις γραφέων τυποῦντες χ' ἄμμες ὀράοντες τί μὲν ἠδόμεθα, τί δ' αὐθις φρίττομες οἴκτον τοσσάτιον θεοῦ κατανοεῦντες οὐνεκεν ἄρ' ἀμέων τότε θῶνυμ' ἄφατον ἔργον, καρτ' ἀδόκητον, ἄελπτον,

Metochites' perception of the images of the Chora as presented in his first two poems, will form the basis on which the second and third chapters of this thesis will develop in order to understand the way that Metochites and his contemporaries would have perceived and related to the art of the Chora and highlight the roots of that specific mode of perception and image-viewer communication. In particular, Metochites' writings reveal that the act of communicating with sacred images would be initiated through intromission. In his second poem he discusses how grace and serenity are conveyed from the images inside the space of the chapel and into his soul:

'Serenity is poured round me forthwith when I go into this thy church, making my heart straightaway bright and airy, and an ineffable, unambiguous joy seizes my soul from within as I cast my eyes around; and thereby are my grieves dissolved as soon as I look upon the lovely grace of the church, as soon as I bring my eyes to the image of Christ resembling mortal men – and also of his Mother making entreaty nearby Him – which sends forth grace and great, ineffable wonder; nor could I

*ἀτέκμαρτον, πρήξαντος πάντα νόον νικάον, πάντα λόγον αὐ' ἔτ' ἄρα πλεῖν... ἰδὲ μὲν οὖν τυπώματ' ἔφην πρώτᾳ τ' ἀνακτος αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἀτάρ ἔπειθ' ἅμα ματέρος αὐτοῦ, ἢ γεννήσασά μιν ἔτ' ἔμπης παρθένος αὐθις ἀαπτος μὲν αἰεὶ παναγνοτάτη βασιλεία, ἠδ' ἄρ' ἔπειτ' αὐ' οἰκετᾶων φίλων Χριστοῦ, οἳ λάττριες ἐσθλοί, τούς τε δι' αὐτόν Χριστόν καυτοῦς ἀζόμεθα καί τ' εἰκόνας οὐράν αὐτῶν'. Theodore Metochites, Poem 1, lines 1087-1121. For the original text in Greek see Theodore Metochites, *Dichtungen Des Gross-Logotheten Theodoros Metochites*, pp. 30-31. For the English translation see Featherstone, 'Metochites's Poems and the Chora', pp. 226-27.*

*ever express how my heart is thereby made mild, light, looking about
with calm and quelling woes and all grieves that stifle my soul'.¹⁴²*

Experiencing the space of the church through the icons and engaging in a corporeal dialogue with them is a major point in Metochites' description of the images of the Chora,¹⁴³ and for this reason my discussion of the space of the parekklesion will begin from the sacred image and the way it functions within the chapel. Engaging in a discussion on the way that sacred images functioned in the space of the parekklesion, in theological, pictorial and symbolic terms, I will highlight the images' influence in shaping the space of the chapel and the beholder's experience of it. My discussion will focus on the interaction between the beholder and the holy persons depicted. The terms Imaged, portrayed and prototype will be used as equivalent here when referring to the holy persons depicted in the icons of the Chora.

The second and third chapters of this thesis deal with the images of the parekklesion and the way those would have been perceived and used in the act of worship. The second chapter focuses on the role of the theological implications in the interaction between the faithful and the holy person depicted. In studying the characteristics of icon-viewer

¹⁴² 'Καί μ' ἄφαρ αὐτός ἰόντα τόνδε τε σεῖο νηόν ἀμφικέχυτο γαληναίη, κέαρ ἴλαον εὐπνοῦν αὐτίκα τιθεμένη, ὅσσε τ' ἀμφιπαπταίνοντα κύκλος ἠδονά τις ἄφατος γ' ἔχεν εὐξύμβλητος εἴσω ψυχάν ἐμάν, λῦτο δ' ἔνθεν ἄρ ἄλγε ἐμεῖο, ὡς μόνον οὖραον ἀμφ' ἰμερόεσσαν χάριν νηοῦ, ὡς μόνον ἀμφ' εἰκῶ μερόπεσσιν ὁμοίην Χριστοῦ ὅσσε φέρον, χάριν ἠδέ τε θῶνμα μαλ' ἄρρητον πολλόν ἰεῖσαν αὐτόθεν, ὅς κεν ὀπώποι, πρὸς δέ ματρὸς ἐοῖο παρ' ἄλλον αὐτῷ λιτεούσης οὐκ ἂν ἔγωγε μυθήσασθ' οἴός τ' εἶην, ὡς κεν αὐτόθ' ἀγανόν ἐμόν κέαρ ἀλλάττοντ' εὐηνές ἀφί γαλήν' ὄραον καταπαυόν τ' ἀλεγεινά, ὅσσα δέ τ' ἄχθεα κατ' ἄρ ἠγγεν ἐμεῖο ψυχάν'. Theodore Metochites, *Poem 2*, lines 161-174. For the original text in Greek see Theodore Metochites, *Dichtungen Des Gross-Logotheten Theodoros Metochites*, pp. 42-43. For the English translation see Featherstone, 'Metochites's Poems and the Chora', p. 221.

¹⁴³ Featherstone comments on Metochites' discussion about the way that images convey energy to him and to the space of the chapel. See Featherstone, 'Metochites's Poems and the Chora', p. 221.

communication, I explore the way that Metochites' perception of sacred images and their role in worship was formed through the writings of the major iconophile theologians who defended the use of icons based on the teachings of the Cappadocians, and St Basil in particular,¹⁴⁴ a personality that Metochites regarded as an unquestionable authority in theological matters.¹⁴⁵ The main focus of my analysis will be on the writings of John of Damascus, Theodore the Studite and Nikephoros of Constantinople, as the three theologians who were mainly responsible for developing the iconophile defence of icons during the two periods of Byzantine Iconoclasm (726-787 and 813-843).¹⁴⁶ In analysing the iconophile theologians' views on the role of the sacred images, it will become possible to highlight the influence that those views had on Metochites' perception of icons. Metochites dedicates space to an analysis of the role of sacred images in the church, engaging in a discussion on the limits of pictorial representation, and states the reasons for which the veneration of icons plays a crucial part in Christian worship. In particular, in his first poem he states:

'Looking upon these things and venerating them we are forced to remember and to think humbly and to act and to take thought for God's suffering on our behalf: how much gratitude we owe and how much we should do and suffer on His behalf... and we desire to see their images with great affection even as it is the custom for mortal men to regard the likeness in pictures of those whom they love, and their hearts thereby

¹⁴⁴ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Imago Dei: The Byzantine Apologia for Icons* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time', p. 53.

¹⁴⁶ Kenneth Michael Parry, *Depicting the Word: Byzantine Iconophile Thought of the Eight and Ninth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), p. 1.

rejoice greatly. Such is the reason why we revere the images of Christ and His dear mother and His servants, never worshipping the images themselves, but paying honour, albeit only in images, to those whom we love'.¹⁴⁷

Metochites' discussion of sacred images should be understood as summarising the focal points of iconophile thought, as expressed in the writings of the iconophile theologians and in the teachings of the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (787), while making an indirect mention of Basil as well.¹⁴⁸ Metochites establishes that the sacred image is only a likeness of the prototype and that the object of worship is not the image itself but the person depicted in it, following in this way the teachings of John, Theodore and Nikephoros that will be discussed below. Moreover, Metochites mentions that the veneration of images refers to 'paying honour' to the prototype, quoting in this way

¹⁴⁷ *Καί τάδ' ἄρ' ἡμέες ἀμφοράοντες τιμῶντές τε ἐκ τ' ἄρα αὐτόφιν ἀνάγκην ἔχομεν μεμνᾶσθαι καί τε ταπεινά νοεῖν τε καί δρᾶν ἠδέ τε μέμβλειν ἀμφ' ἡμῶν θεοῖο παθόντος, ὅσον γ' ὀφλέομεν χάριν ἄμμες ὑπέρ τ' αὐτοῦ δρᾶν ἠδέ τε πάσχειν, ὄφλομεν αὐθις ὅσον, προῖτω δ' ὁ λόγος, τῶν ἦν πρὶν... καί τ' εἰκόνας οὐράν αὐτῶν ἀμφαγαπάζομεν ἱμερόεσσι φίλτροις, ὡς κεν εἴθισται μερόπεσσι βρουτοῖς, οὓς νυ φιλοῦσι, τάων καί τε φιλοῦσ' εἰκούς ὁράαν εἶν γραφαῖς, καί σφιν ἐνθεῦτεν μάλα τέρεπετ' ἔσωθι κείαρ. Τοῖος ἔα δ' ἄμμιν λόγος εἰκόνας ἀζομένοισι Χριστοῦ μητρος τ' αὐ φίλας ἠδέ τε δούλων αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἄρ' μή ποτε λατρεύουσιν εἰκόνας αὐτάς, ἀλλά τε κἂν γραφήσι τιμάουσιν, οὓς ποθέουσιν. Τῶ γ' ἄρα καί κόσμοισιν ἀριπρεπέσσι ταύτας εἰκόνας ἀργύρω τε καλλύνομεν χρυσῶ τε ἠδέ τε μαργάροισι τε λίθοισι τε τιμίαις, ἧ μάν κάρτ' ἐνθαῦτα τιμίαις, ὡς κεν ἐν ἄλλοις μή ποτ' ἔασιν ἔργοις πρῆγμασί τ' αὐ παντοίοις, τά κεν ἐριπρεπέα μέροπς βρουτοῖ μάψ αὐτοῖ κοῦ τιν' ἀναγκαίη πονέονται καλλύνοντες, τοῖσδέ γε κόσμοισι κάμνοντες πουλυμέριμοι'. Theodore Metochites, Poem 1, lines 1109-1137. For the original text in Greek see Theodore Metochites, *Dichtungen Des Gross-Logotheten Theodoros Metochites*, pp. 30-31. For the English translation see Featherstone, 'Metochites's Poems and the Chora', pp. 226-27.*

¹⁴⁸ Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time', pp. 52-53.

Basil's statement that 'the honour given to the image is transferred to the prototype'.¹⁴⁹ In the discussion that follows, I will demonstrate the importance of Basil's statement in the development of iconophile thought. Metochites' understanding of the role of sacred images is ultimately informed by the teachings of the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea. As he explains why images are important in worship, he mentions that the faithful use icons to express their love for the holy persons, to direct their minds towards them and to remember Christ's suffering. As it will be demonstrated below, Metochites' terminology emanates directly from the terminology used by the Fathers that participated in the Council of 787 in their defence of icons.

The third chapter of this thesis focuses on the way that sacred images function in pictorial terms within the process of worship. My analysis of the images of the parekklesion is anchored in Metochites' writings and particularly in his discussion of the performativity of icons that is mainly triggered by intromission. In his first poem, Metochites describes the way that images are transmitted to the eyes of the beholder: *'And there are lovely, beautiful works of the most golden tesserae fixed to the ceiling, arranged at intervals, dazzling the eyes as with brilliant fire, presenting nought of ugliness to cause the heart grief or fear, but sending forth a kind of enchanting glow unto the eyes, honey-sweet, well-composed and quite pleasant so as to charm the heart within upon having seen them'*.¹⁵⁰ In Metochites' perception, the beholder communicates with

¹⁴⁹ Basil of Caesarea, 'De Spiritu Sancto', in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J. -P. Migne, 162 vols (Paris: Centre for Patristic Studies, 1857-1886), vol. 32, p. 149 C.

¹⁵⁰ *'Ατάρ ὑπερχρῦσε' οὐροφον ἀμπαχθέντα τμητά ψηφίδων ἰμερόεντα κάλλεα διασταδόν κατακεκόσματ' ἐπαστράπτοντ' ὄμματ' ἠύτε λαμπετόοντι πυρί, μή τί γ' ἀγριοπόν ἔμψης ἀπαντῶντα κέαρ ἀλεγεινόν ἠδ' ἐκπλαγον, ἄν δέ τιν' ὄσσοισι χαρίεσσαν αἴγλαν ἰέντα δὴν μελιηδέα κάρτ', εὐξύμβλητον κάπτηρον, ὡς τε δεδορκέμεν εὐ μάλα θέλγοντ' ἔνδοθι ἦτορ'*. Theodore Metochites, Poem 1, lines 1039-1046. For the original text in Greek see Theodore

sacred images through intromission, as the icons send forth a glow that reaches the beholder and charms his heart.¹⁵¹ In studying the images of the parekklesion, I incorporate Metochites' perception of the way that holy icons function in order to develop a theoretical framework that will provide a basis on which the pictorial principles that govern the images of the chapel will be understood. The framework that will be used here will develop around a central concept, that of rhythm. Rhythm is a pictorial technique used consistently by the painters of the Chora throughout the church, including the narthexes and the parekklesion. In studying the way that the beholder relates to and interacts with rhythmically managed images, rhythm theory aims at highlighting the performative aspect of icons and exploring how that aspect plays an important part in shaping the beholder's experience of space and worship. Rhythm theory is anchored in intromission and studies the manner through which sacred images develop outwards, towards the space of the beholder. As Ousterhout points out, in the Chora the space of the beholder and the pictorial space were one and the same. The Byzantine artists who decorated the monastery created three-dimensional images that came to life as the beholder interacted with them.¹⁵² It will be suggested that the expansion of pictorial space towards the space of the beholder facilitates interaction between Imaged and faithful and results in the formation of a symbolic space in between where human and divine co-exist within the chapel. The concept of symbolic co-existence of human and divine inside the church is expressed by Metochites in his second poem. Addressing the monks of the Chora he mentions that he would like to live in the same way as they do,

Metochites, *Dichtungen Des Gross-Logotheten Theodoros Metochites*, p. 29. For the English translation see Featherstone, 'Metochites's Poems and the Chora', p. 226.

¹⁵¹ Featherstone, 'Metochites's Poems and the Chora', p. 221.

¹⁵² Ousterhout, 'Reading Difficult Buildings: The Lessons of the Kariye Camii', p. 101.

‘inhabiting these lovely halls together with Christ’.¹⁵³ A focal concept within rhythm theory is that of relationality.¹⁵⁴ Rhythm as a technique is above all concerned with the manner in which pictorial elements relate to each other and to the beholder. My analysis focuses on exploring how pictorial elements develop and function *in relation to* each other, and *in relation to* the faithful in order to fulfil their purpose. Metochites reveals in his writings an interest in the relational element and highlights the importance of relationality in the project of the renovation of the Chora. In his second poem he states:

‘Amongst these most beautiful churches [of Constantinople], then, which outnumber the others in this great city, did I raise up this thy famous monastery and adorn it with all manner of brilliancy, and I established it in unshakable strength, sturdily built, most secure and in all ways well proportioned. In the middle I placed this church, well made in every wise, pleasing in every wise, of just width and height with regard to itself and all else, everything in keeping with symmetry and wisely disposed so as to derive every good thing whereof there is need.’¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ ‘συναύλια δ’ ἔμπης κάρτ’ ἐρίηρα τάδ’ ἅμα συνοικέοντες Χριστῶ’. Theodore Metochites, Poem 2, lines 441-442. For the original text in Greek see Theodore Metochites, *Dichtungen Des Gross-Logotheten Theodoros Metochites*, p. 50. For the English translation see Featherstone, ‘Metochites's Poems and the Chora’, p. 234.

¹⁵⁴ The concept of relationality and its implications in shaping the space of the parekklesion are analysed in detail in chapter five.

¹⁵⁵ ‘Τοῖς μὲν ἄρ’ αὐτός οἱ γε περί τ’ ἔασι τῶν γ’ ἄλλων ἀνά μεγαλόπολιν περικαλλέες τήνδε νηοί, τήνδε συνανέστασα μονήν σέο δὴ περίφαντον ἀγλαίησι τε κατ’ ἄρ’ ἐκόσμησα πάσησι κράτει τ’ αὐτήν ἀκράδαντον εὐδμητόν τε κάρτ’ ἀσφαλέ ἀνίδρυσσα διὰ πάντ’ ἀραρυίαν. Ἦτοι τόνδε μὲν εἶν μέσω ναόν εὖ μάλ’ ἔχοντα διὰ πάντ’, ἐρίηρα διὰ πάνθ’, ἔστηκ’ ὄντ’ εὖ εὐρός τ’ ἠδέ τε ὕψος ἀνα τ’ ἄλληλ’ ἀνά τ’ αὐτὸ πᾶν, ξυμμετρίας εὖ λελάχοντα πάντος εἴσης ἐλλογίμου τε διαθέσιος ἀμφικρατέουσας, ὡς κε τελέσφορον ἔμμεν’ ἀγαθοῦ παντός, οὐ χροῆν’. Theodore Metochites, Poem 2, lines 304-315. For the original text in Greek see Theodore Metochites, *Dichtungen Des Gross-Logotheten Theodoros Metochites*, p. 46. For the English translation see Featherstone, ‘Metochites's Poems and the Chora’, p. 232.

In highlighting the relational element and focusing on proportion and harmony, Metochites places emphasis on the way that architectural parts function in relation to the whole and in relation to the beholder. This principle is reflected in rhythm theory and developed further with reference to the paintings of the parekklesion in order to provide a comprehensive view of how the sacred images function in the chapel.

Body

In the chapters that follow, I aim at producing a reading of the parekklesion as a chora space of becoming based on a theory of embodiment. The decision to place the concept of the body at the centre of my thinking about the space of the parekklesion is mainly rooted in Metochites' own writings. In his twenty-sixth *Essay*, Metochites discusses the importance of the body in perceiving one's environment, in expressing one's thoughts and in interacting with others. Perception and interaction pass, for Metochites, through the body by necessity:

'For it is not possible to proclaim one's inner thoughts in any other way; nor is it possible to communicate with each other by means of our souls and thoughts alone, in the way that perhaps those beings do that are essentially more divine and completely liberated from bodily manner, as we and the pagan wise men believe. But as long as we live together with the body we must live together with and deal with each other, and do so

with the help of our bodies. Therefore we must by necessity use what belongs to the body, I mean both all the other parts and not least the voice itself, without adding anything or troubling ourselves with that which is not necessary'.¹⁵⁶

Following Metochites' conception about the role of the body, the concept of embodiment and the body's participation in the production of meaning will be of central importance to the analysis of the space of the chapel. Individual or collective, literal or symbolic, the body as an idea is echoed in almost every part and aspect of the space.

The notion of the body, being so complex, is used in a different way in each of the chapters that follow. In the Introduction, I engage in a discussion of the way that the bodies of Christ and the Virgin are perceived inside the parekklesion symbolically and spatially as the Chora of the Living and the Chora of the Uncontainable respectively, and I explore the implications of the connection between the notion of the divine body and the concept of chora.

In the second chapter, I look at corporeal communication modes between the icon and the beholder and explore various ways through which the faithful interact with the

¹⁵⁶ 'Οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ἄλλως ἀγγέλλειν τάνδον, οὐδὲ ψυχαῖς μόναις καὶ διανοαῖς συνεῖναι καὶ κοινωνεῖν ἀλλήλοις, ὡς ἄρ' ἴσως τὰ θειώτερα κατ' οὐσίαν καὶ ὅλως ἐλεύθερα τοῦ σωματοειδοῦς ἡμῖν τε καὶ τοῖς ἔξω σοφοῖς δοκεῖ, ἀλλ' ἀνάγκη μέχρῃς ἂν καὶ ζῶμεν μετὰ τοῦ σώματος καὶ ἀλλήλοις συζηῖν καὶ συνεῖναι καὶ συνεῖναι γε σωματικῶς. Ταῦτ' ἄρα καὶ χρηστέον γέ ἐστιν ὅτι διὰ πᾶσα ἀνάγκη τοῖς κατὰ τὸ σῶμα, ἄλλοις τέ φημι πᾶσι πράγμασι καὶ μηδὲν ἦττον αὐτῇ τῇ φωνῇ, μηδὲν ἐπιποιούντας μηδὲ πράγματ' ἔχοντας ἐν οἷς μὴ δεῖ. Ἄλλ' ὡσπερ ἐν τῇ κατὰ τόπον κινήσει καὶ κατ' ἀνάγκην ἐκάστοτε χρειαῖ προσχρώμεθα τῇ πορείᾳ καὶ τοῖς ποσὶν ἀπλῶς οὕτωσί πως καὶ οὐδὲν προσπεριεργαζόμεθα τῇ ἀπαραιτήτῳ χρήσει σχήματά τινα καὶ ὑποκρίσεις'. Theodore Metochites, Essay 26, section 1, paragraphs 4-6. Original text in Greek and English translation in Hult, *Theodore Metochites on Ancient Authors and Philosophy: Seimeioseis Gnomikai 1-26 & 71*, pp. 213-15.

sacred image through the senses, and vision in particular. In discussing different theories of the role of vision in icon-viewer communication, I look at ways through which the interaction with the holy persons depicted becomes for the beholder a *visual experience*.

In chapter three, I focus on the formation of pictorial bodies: the bodies of the holy persons as depicted in the icons of the parekklesion. By examining the techniques employed by the painters, and especially that of rhythm, I explore the main principles of the formation of pictorial bodies. In studying the technique of rhythm, I look at how the interaction of the faithful with the icon moves from visual experience, as described in chapter two, to *bodily inclusion*. With the application of rhythm to the icons of the chapel, the beholders, when standing in front of the images, find themselves corporeally enveloped in a virtual cone that emanates from the painting surface and calls for the body's engagement as a whole. Rhythm will be studied as based on the theory of intromission. In this sense, the optical rays are thought to emanate from the painting in order to be received by the beholder's eyes. Based on intromission, rhythm theory describes a similar process where pictorial forces emanate from the painting surface outwards towards the space of the chapel, forming a virtual cone that envelops the beholder. In this way, rhythm, through intromission, connects sight with bodily inclusion in order for a conical space of corporeal participation to be created.

Having progressed from vision to bodily inclusion through the study of the pictorial technique of rhythm, connecting two different theories of embodiment, in chapter four I engage in a discussion of the relation between space and the concept of the body and I explore the dual concept of space as body and body as space. In this sense, *space as body* is conceived in a twofold manner. Firstly, it is the space of the chapel conceived as an

artistic installation/body: here I examine how painting, architecture and symbolism interact to form an artistic installation/body in and of the parekklesion that is formed by interconnected members and experienced by the faithful corporeally. Secondly, it is the space of the chapel thought of as a *body of bodies*. Space is in this sense regarded as being reflected in the collective body of the faithful that form the Church and the symbolic Body of Christ, as Germanos of Constantinople envisioned it.¹⁵⁷ The space of the parekklesion experienced as an interactive installation can also be regarded as having the characteristics of a human body, as it is formed by individual but interconnected members that interact with each other to form a functional whole, a spatial body, as Maximos the Confessor suggests.¹⁵⁸ The concept of the *body as space* is a reflection of Germanos' and Maximos' theories; Germanos regards the collective body of the faithful as being and creating space – the *ecclesia* – and Maximos conceives the human body as a church by likening its members to the physical parts of a church.

In the fifth chapter, I explore further the concept of the body as chora, as it was presented in the Introduction. With the bodies of Christ and the Virgin at the centre of my thinking about the body as chora, I discuss the participation of physical, artistic and symbolic bodies in the act of inscribing meaning in the space of the parekklesion and embodying the concept of the chora as a space of becoming.

Bodies in the space of the chapel are moulded into the imprint of the body of Christ. Christ's body is at the centre of the body space symbolism and its attributes are transferred to all other bodies inside the parekklesion at least to some extent even if that

¹⁵⁷ Germanos I, Patriarch of Constantinople (630/650 – 730/742). *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. by Alexander Kazhdan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), vol. 2, p. 846.

¹⁵⁸ Maximos the Confessor (580 – 662). Theologian and saint. See *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. by Alexander Kazhdan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), vol. 2, p. 1323.

translates into a schematic, abstract or conceptual projection. The body of Christ is a symbol and at the same time it is the ultimate realisation of unity; he is the Chora of the Living, an extraordinary space in between that bridges the human and the divine. The body of Christ is a locus of sacrifice for the faithful and at the same time it is a source of hope and a symbol of salvation. Christ's resurrected body, depicted in the conch of the apse, is deeply marked by His sacrifice for the sake of mankind. The image of the Anastasis reminds the beholder that before Christ rose from the dead, He died as a human, suffering bodily torments. Christ had to die as human, His body had to become lifeless before he rose as God. The resurrected body of Christ is therefore not only the locus of hope and victory over death, it is also the body that suffered and died. In this way, salvation is uniquely a matter of the body, as it is through the body that salvation is offered to mankind. Hope for life after death passes through the body, first and foremost the body of Christ and then through the bodies of the faithful, salvation is not simply a concept but a somatised necessity. The somatization of sacrifice and salvation as depicted in the image of the Anastasis finds its pure expression in the Holy Communion, where the faithful receive the Body and Blood of Christ as a symbol of His bodily sacrifice for the salvation of mankind. The contact between the faithful and Christ is realised through the body during Holy Communion, as the connection between the two is primarily bodily. The Body and Blood of Christ, the sacramental body, is necessarily at the centre of thinking about bodies inside the space of the chapel. Around it, the beholder witnesses the development of concentric circles projecting different, but always interrelated, aspects of the body of Christ inside the parekklesion. There is the resurrected body of Christ, dominating the space of the chapel from the conch of the apse, standing victorious as a

locus of hope and salvation. There is the symbolic body of Christ, formed by the holy persons depicted in the frieze joined by the faithful inhabiting the chapel. A community formed in Christ and of Him that constitutes the body of Christ, extending in space and time from heaven to earth and from past to present, the locus of the living, of a living, ever-present community. Christ's body is ultimately the ecclesia, the community in Christ and its sacred space joined together in a compound subsistence, a living organism, a chora of bodily interaction and spiritual communication.

Seen through the body of the Virgin, the body is also bearer, a passage from one reality to the other and a bridge over opposing binary forces as well. The Virgin's body contained the Uncontainable; she bore God and acted as a passage for Him to enter the human world. Her body is the locus of miracle and a symbol of unity between two worlds; the divine became one with the human through the Virgin's body, the portal through which God entered earth. The body of the Virgin is a chora space in between, partaking of two realities, the human and the divine, and bridging the two worlds through the miracle of the Incarnation, bringing them closer and facilitating their interaction. Through the offering of Her body to God she became a mediator between heaven and earth, enabling the faithful to communicate with God through Her intervention. The body of the Virgin is also that of a mother; it is the locus of hope and consolation and easing of pain, it is the embrace that the faithful seek when they are in need.

However, the body inside the chapel is also one of pain and desperation. The human body is the carrier of sin, and being impure and insatiate might lead the faithful away from God, to a path marked by eternal suffering. As depicted in the image of the Second Coming, the sinners undergo bodily torments and will be damned in eternity. The body

carries the pain of sin and the desperation of mortality. The bodies of the deceased in the arcosolia of the chapel stand there as reminders of the perishability of the flesh and the fate of mortals and highlight the importance of the participation in another body, that of Christ, in order for the faithful to save themselves from sin.

The body in the parekklesion is unity, it is hope and consolation, sin, pain, loss and desperation and at the same time it is salvation and victory over death. The body is the locus of prayer. It is the chora of the living and the container of the Uncontainable. It is a space in between, a portal and a bridge, bringing opposite forces closer. It is a mother and a shelter in times of desperation. It is the body of Christ and that of the Virgin, the pictorial bodies of the saints on the walls and the resurrected bodies of Adam and Eve and those of the daughter of Jairus and the son of the widow. The body is a mediator and a locus of contact and interaction between bodies and elements. The body is church, an ecclesia, and the church is a body, a community in Christ. The body itself is a bridged opposition and an active invitation for interaction. The body is an individual entity but also a member, an imperfect part of a wider system of members that needs to relate to other members in order to fulfil its purpose. It is formed by its members and so it can be analysed in smaller parts and those parts in their turn can be analysed in smaller and simpler parts as well. The body is space and has space. It creates space and produces itself in space. It defines space, while at the same time its energies are defined by space. It is of space and develops relations in space. The body in the parekklesion is abstract and physical, it is mortal and immortal, human and divine, present and absent, sacred and profane, alive and deceased, sinful and pure, accessible and inaccessible, active and in need of activation, visible and invisible, of the present and of the past. It is sacramental,

Christological and liturgical, and also artistic, pictorial and architectural. It is symbolic and literal, private and collective, communicative and perceptive. It is a living organism that expands and floods the space of the chapel establishing relations and connecting meaningfully with other bodies in the process of producing meaning. It is a body-space of unity, participation and interaction, a living ecclesia.

Space

In exploring the appearances of chora in the material and conceptual realm of the chapel, I look at how the concept of chora shapes and is shaped by space. Space will be discussed in this thesis in its various aspects but the two main categories that I will be referring to can be identified as physical and conceptual or symbolic space. The space of the parekklesion will be studied as the physical space in which conceptual space is formed and experienced. Physical space will not be regarded here as an empty medium but as an installation created to interact with conceptual space, an interaction that produces a chora space of becoming in and of the parekklesion. The elements of the chapel that will be examined as part of the physical space are architecture, painting and the liturgical uses of the parekklesion. It should be pointed out however that due to the absence of a monastic typikon, the liturgical uses of the space of the parekklesion are not clear and remain at the level of speculation. The paintings of the parekklesion will be studied in the third chapter, while architecture and its interaction with painting will be examined in chapter four. The liturgical uses of the parekklesion will be explored in relation to architecture and painting in chapter four.

The notion of conceptual space will be studied as a complex phenomenon, accepting that conceptual space is produced through the interaction between physical space, symbolism and the beholder. In the chapters that follow, I examine different aspects of conceptual space, as that is formed through various media. At the centre of the notion of conceptual space stands the concept of chora as a space of becoming, which will be explored in its various forms and appearances in the parekklesion. The notion of chora space is constructed in the Introduction and emanates from the epithets given to Christ and the Virgin in the church. In the Introduction I engage in a discussion of the role of Christ and the Virgin as Chora of the Living and Chora of the Uncontainable respectively. The definition of the conceptual chora space is anchored in the way that Christ and the Virgin are conceived as being, occupying and producing conceptual chora spaces. In analysing the concept of chora from Plato to the early Church Fathers and Metochites, I adopt a reading of chora as a conceptual extraordinary space in between that will be traced in the parekklesion in its various appearances through different media.

In the second chapter, I explore the space of the icon through the prism of chora space, and suggest that the sacred image functions as a bridge, a chora space between the holy persons portrayed and the beholder, facilitating the beholder's communication with the divine in the process of worship.

Chapter three builds on the relationship between Imaged and beholder established in chapter two. In chapter three, I focus on an analysis of the way that the beholder interacts with the space of the icon as chora, and I explore the characteristics of the physical and the conceptual space between the beholder and the sacred image. In examining the paintings of the parekklesion based on rhythm theory, I look at the way that the sacred

image expands towards the physical space of the beholder. In considering the implications of this expansion, I explore the creation of a conceptual chora space between the beholder and the holy persons depicted that calls for the engagement of the body of the faithful and extends between past and present, immediacy and mediation, presence and absence.

The fourth chapter is divided in two parts. In the first part, I focus on the concept of space as an artistic installation and I look at how, through the interaction between architecture, painting and symbolism, a conceptual chora space is shaped in the *parekklesion* and experienced by the beholder. In the second part of the fourth chapter, space is explored primarily through the concept of embodiment. In anchoring my reading of the *parekklesion* on the dual concept of space as body and body as space, I aim at exploring two different but interconnected types of conceptual space. The first reading of space will be that of space as a collective body or a body of bodies. To this end, I examine the conditions under which a conceptual chora space is formed by the community of faithful, the *ecclesia*, and I explore its properties and its impact on the faithful's experience of worship within the physical space of the chapel. A second reading of the *parekklesion* will examine the notion of conceptual space as a human body, formed by members that interact with each other to create a functional whole. The formation of conceptual space in this case will be regarded as taking place in the interactions between physical space, symbolism and the beholder.

In the final chapter, I elaborate further on the properties of chora space as conceptual space and on the way the latter is experienced by the beholder. In incorporating Lefebvre's reading of space as a product created primarily 'to be lived', and engaging in a dialogue with human geography definitions of conceptual space, I further

explore the role of the concept of the body in the process of producing meaning and experiencing physical and conceptual space, I look at the way that the concept of time impacts the formation of chora space and I raise questions on the role of the concept of relationality in shaping chora space.

Brief history of the Chora monastery

The Chora monastery is situated in the Edirnekapi area of Istanbul, about a hundred metres away from the ruins of the fifth-century city walls of Constantinople, which extend from the Sea of Marmara to the Golden Horn. The origins of the monastery are unclear but they can be placed in the early history of Byzantine Constantinople.¹⁵⁹ The existing superstructure of the church is a combination of three phases of construction that took place during the eleventh, twelfth and fourteenth centuries. In part, the construction rests upon the substructures of a building that dates back to the sixth century and does not seem to have the characteristics of an actual church.¹⁶⁰ The Chora monastery was converted into a mosque during the sixteenth century, after the Turkish conquest of Constantinople in 1453 and was renamed the Kariye Camii. Today it is a museum.

¹⁵⁹ Robert Ousterhout, *The Architecture of the Kariye Camii in Istanbul* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Studies, 1987), p. 1.

¹⁶⁰ David Oates, 'A Summary Report on the Excavations of the Byzantine Institute in the Kariye Camii: 1957 and 1958', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*.14 (1960), 223-31.

The early history of the Chora is obscure, and evidence indicating that the Chora existed as a monastery even before the seventh century is contradictory and unclear.¹⁶¹ In particular, there is a tradition that places the foundation of the monastery before the erection of the city walls of Theodosius II, i.e. before 413 A.D. that is based mostly on a topographical interpretation of the name of the monastery and can probably not be treated as reliable from a historical point of view. The name Chora can be perceived to some extent as a toponym, as the term chora (from the Greek word *χώρα*) was used to describe a suburban area that lies outside the city walls. Hence, the monastery's own name has given rise to the conception that the building, or probably a hallowed site in the monastery's vicinity, might have been constructed at a very early date, even before the construction of the Theodosian city walls, and that it retained its name even after the city had expanded beyond it.¹⁶² Even though this particular theory cannot be proved definitively, the possibility that a chapel or a monastery had existed in the vicinity of the Chora as we know it today cannot be completely rejected either.¹⁶³

Different sources place the founding of the Chora monastery in different centuries. The first source is an anonymous biography of an unknown St Theodore, who possibly was an uncle of the Empress Theodora. It places the founding of the monastery in the sixth century and relates the event to the reign of Justinian. According to the biography, St Theodore became a monk in Antioch after serving a military career. His imperial relatives called him to Constantinople in order for him to advise them on theological matters. While in the city, he began constructing a monastery, shortly after 536, on the Charisius

¹⁶¹ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 3.

¹⁶² Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 4.

¹⁶³ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 5.

family estate, which was situated close to the Adrianople Gate of the city. According to the same source, a chapel already existed on the spot where St Theodore began constructing the new buildings, hosting a small monastic community. Three years after the completion of work on the monastery, an earthquake destroyed it. Justinian took on the task of rebuilding it on a bigger scale and built four churches, which were dedicated to St Anthimus of Nicomedia, the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, St Michael and the Virgin Mary. A hospital for the blind was attached to the monastery as well as a hostel for Syrian monks visiting the city.¹⁶⁴ The second source places the founding of the monastery in the seventh century and attributes it to the general Crispus, son-in-law of the Emperor Phocas, who was count of the Excubiti and eparch of the city. Crispus played a leading role in the overthrow of Phocas and was sent to the monastery by the new Emperor Heraclius to serve as a monk-prisoner.¹⁶⁵ As Underwood suggests, the second source could be considered more credible in the absence of knowledge concerning a saint who was uncle of the Empress Theodora. However, denying a sixth-century founding of the Chora is not possible either, as sixth-century substructures underlie part of the existing building.

¹⁶⁴ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 6.

¹⁶⁵ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 7.

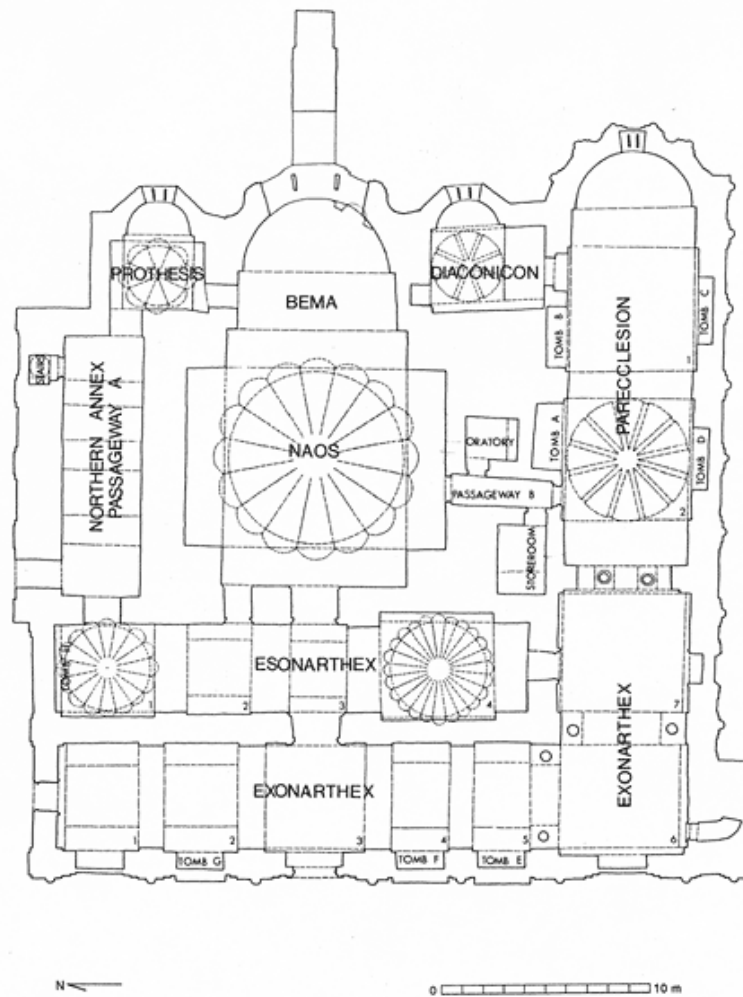


Figure 6: Chora monastery. Plan and identification of components.

The present form of the Chora monastery is mainly the result of the final construction phase that took place ca. 1316–1321, funded by Theodore Metochites. However, the building itself combines various structures that date back to the sixth century. Ousterhout suggests that the construction history of the Chora can be broken down into five periods.¹⁶⁶ Phase One and Two refer to sixth and ninth-century substructures that lie beneath the eastern end of the building. These substructures offer no

¹⁶⁶ Ousterhout, *The Architecture of the Kariye Camii in Istanbul*, p. 12.

information about the form or function of that early building. Phase Three refers to the construction of ca. 1077–1081, funded by Maria Ducaena. At that time, the main body of the church was reconstructed in order to be made rectangular in shape, possibly following a cross-in-square plan. Phase Four refers to a major alteration of the building that took place ca. 1120 and is associated with the sebastokrator Isaac Comnenus. During that time, the east end of Maria Ducaena's construction was rebuilt and the plan of the naos was transformed into an atrophied Greek cross plan, covered by a large dome. Phase Five refers to the construction work funded by Theodore Metochites, ca. 1316–1321. At that time, the dome and pastophoria were reconstructed and ancillary chambers surrounding the building on three sides were added. These include a two-level addition in the north side (passageway A and northern annex); in the south side, a domed funerary chapel or parekklesion, connected with the naos through passageway B, two small chambers east and west of passageway B, used as oratory and storeroom respectively and an inaccessible and functionless gallery above the oratory and the storeroom; in the west side, an open arcaded exonarthex that included a belfry over the southwest corner and a twin-domed exonarthex. Metochites also provided the greater part of the interior decoration, including mosaics and frescoes.

Soon after Metochites' construction, certain changes to the building took place. Tomb arcosolia closed the west arcade of the exonarthex and arches and columns were added to the southwest bay of the exonarthex in order to support the belfry. After the transformation of the building into a mosque ca. 1495–1511, certain parts of the interior

decoration were destroyed or covered and a mihrab was also added. Finally, the belfry that Metochites' created was replaced by a minaret.¹⁶⁷

Description of interior space

In order to understand the space of the parekklesion it is necessary to have a sense of the overall space of the Chora church and how it develops. In the following section I focus on a description of the interior space of the monastery.

Naos and Bema

The dome of the naos of the Chora monastery rests on a cruciform building plan. To the east, the naos opens into a deep bema, which is extended by an additional bay that steps in to a wide apse. The naos has little connection to the additional chambers and no internal supports, such as columns, and for this reason, as Ousterhout underlines, it appears as a 'monumental, unified space'.¹⁶⁸ The entrance to the main body of the church is from the west through a large doorway. There is a doorway in the south wall that leads to the parekklesion, though passageway B. A smaller, arched doorway on the north side of the bema provides access to the prothesis. Concerning the vaulting, four short barrel

¹⁶⁷ Ousterhout, *The Architecture of the Kariye Camii in Istanbul*, p. 37.

¹⁶⁸ Ousterhout, *The Architecture of the Kariye Camii in Istanbul*, p. 38.

vaults, dating from the twelfth century, spring from the corner piers of the naos. The dome of the naos, with its drum pierced by sixteen tall windows, is Metochites' work. It starts at approximately 11.52 metres above the floor and it rises another 6.40 metres to its crown.¹⁶⁹

Pastophoria

Constructed in the fourteenth century, the two domed chapels flank the bema. The south chapel became inaccessible from the bema during the fourteenth century, as the entrance to it was blocked, probably because it was used thereafter as the prothesis of the parekklesion. The north chapel is accessible from the bema and in all probability it was used both as the prothesis and the diaconicon, given that the church of the fourteenth century had no proper diaconicon.¹⁷⁰ The prothesis is almost rectangular in form and is covered by a blind, gored dome that rises straight from the dome cornice without a drum. The south chapel is also rectangular in form and is covered by a tall octagonal, ribbed dome on pendentives, except for the southern end, which is covered by a barrel vault.¹⁷¹

Northern Annex

The annex on the north side of the building has two levels and consists of long rectangular barrel-vaulted rooms on both levels. The lower chamber is referred to as

¹⁶⁹ Ousterhout, *The Architecture of the Kariye Camii in Istanbul*, p. 46.

¹⁷⁰ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, pp. 22-24.

¹⁷¹ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, pp. 48-50.

passageway A and is used to connect the esonarthex and the prothesis. The upper chamber is accessed by a stairway in the north wall of the building. It is probable that passageway A served at some point as the diaconicon, while the upper chamber might have served as a treasury or as a library housing Metochites' collection of manuscripts.¹⁷²

Esonarthex

The esonarthex is a rectangular space attached to the west wall of the naos. This inner narthex can be divided into four bays, which are separated by pilaster strips. An octagonal dome covers the northern bay and a dodecagonal dome, similar to the one of the parekklesion, covers the southern bay. The two central bays are quite similar and they are covered by sail vaults. The esonarthex is connected to the naos to the east, to the exonarthex to the west and south and to passageway A to the east. Natural light is provided by windows in the drums of the domes and by a tripartite window in the north wall.¹⁷³

Exonarthex

The outer narthex of the Chora monastery consists of seven bays of different sizes. Six of them constitute the west façade of the church and the seventh turns the corner on the south side in order to meet the parekklesion. In this way, an L-shaped form is created,

¹⁷² Ousterhout, *The Architecture of the Kariye Camii in Istanbul*, p. 51.

¹⁷³ Ousterhout, *The Architecture of the Kariye Camii in Istanbul*, p. 70.

by the exonarthex and the parekklesion, which envelops the church on two sides. The first, second, fourth and fifth bays are rectangular and are crowned by domical vaults. The third bay is nearly square in form and is covered by a domical vault without additional lateral supports. Bays six and seven are larger and domical vaults cover the whole area of each of these two bays. The exonarthex connects to the esonarthex to the east and to the parekklesion to the south, through the seventh bay that appears to be a natural extension of the parekklesion towards the west.¹⁷⁴

Parekklesion

The parekklesion was built by Metochites in the fourteenth century and it is situated to the south side of the main body of the church. Research suggests that it functioned as a funerary chapel, containing the tombs of Theodore Metochites and others. The parekklesion is rectangular and single-aisled and is divided into two square, domed bays that are expanded to the east and west by short, barrel-vaulted units, ending in a semicircular apse to the east. The first (west) of the two squares is covered by a dodecagonal, ribbed dome on a freestanding drum, which is pierced by twelve windows. A lower domical vault crowns the second square, while the conch of the apse is even lower. In this way, the eyes of the viewers are led from a tall dome to a short dome and then to a half dome, thus having a panoramic sweep of the chapel's frescoes. Inside the chapel there are also four tomb arcosolia placed on each side of the central bays, two in the south wall and two in the north wall.

¹⁷⁴ Ousterhout, *The Architecture of the Kariye Camii in Istanbul*, p. 71.

The entrance to the parekklesion is from the west, i.e., from the exonarthex, through a triple arched doorway, supported on two columns. Two other doorways in the north wall, lead to passageway B and the diaconicon. There are also two other internal windows in the north wall; one of them opens to the storeroom and the other opens into a gallery-level passage.



Figure 7: View of the parekklesion. Looking east.

In the south wall, there are two tripartite windows, set at the centre of each bay, above the cornice. The tomb arcosolia in the south wall are marked as Tomb C and D on the building plan (fig. 6). Tomb C is placed in the eastern bay, where a rectangular niche is, and it is crowned by an arch. The lower part of the niche was slotted in order to include

a closure slab and a lid, forming in this way a sarcophagus. Even though the marble slabs are lost, the slots still survive. The identity of the person in tomb C is not known. Tomb D is placed in the western bay and it carries the inscription: Michael Tornikes.¹⁷⁵ The form of this tomb is very similar to that of tomb C, except that it is topped by a marble arch. The slabs are missing here too, as are the columns that used to support the arch.

In the north wall, there are two other tomb arcosolia, tomb A and B. Tomb B, situated in the eastern bay, is similar to C and D in form. Tomb A is the largest arcosolium and it is situated in the western bay of the north wall. It is topped by an arch and researchers tend to believe that this was the tomb of Metochites, due to its size and privileged position.¹⁷⁶ As Ousterhout suggests, the position of tomb A is ‘the optimum spot for burial in the chapel’: the light provided by the tripartite window and the twelve windows in the drum of the dome is concentrated on this spot. This spot is also the best position for viewing the chapel in its entirety; it offers a clear view of the dodecagonal dome, of the second lower dome and of the conch of the apse.

In the east wall is a semicircular apse. The apse’s width nearly matches the width of the chapel itself. At the east end, there is a triple-arched, mullioned window, and Megaw suggests that the lights of the window were in all likelihood filled with coloured glass.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Michael Tornikes was a friend and associate of Metochites. See Paul Underwood, 'Notes on the Work of the Byzantine Institute in Istanbul: 1955-56', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 12 (1958), 269-87, 271.

¹⁷⁶ Ousterhout, *The Architecture of the Kariye Camii in Istanbul*, p. 59.

¹⁷⁷ A. H. Megaw, 'Notes on Recent Work of the Byzantine Institute of Istanbul', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 17 (1963), 349-71, 364.

The Programme and Layout of the Parekklesion

The parekklesion consists of an apse at the east end, which is the bema, and two square bays, which comprise the naos. The chapel could be divided into three zones, in order for the analysis of the programme to be more comprehensive. The lower zone consists of the vertical walls and is decorated with figural representations. The second zone consists of the arches, lunettes and vaults of the chapel and is decorated mainly with narrative scenes. The third zone consists of the dome in the western bay and is decorated with figural representations.

The chapel is decorated with fresco paintings and its decoration is considered to be an excellent manifestation of the Palaeologan style.¹⁷⁸ These frescoes were first uncovered by the Byzantine Institute of Istanbul between 1951 and 1958 and were published in a succession of four reports, as they were coming to light.¹⁷⁹ The paintings in the parekklesion, together with those in the rest of the church, except the decoration of the

¹⁷⁸ Øystein Hjort, "'Oddities" and "Refinements": Aspects of Architecture, Space and Narrative in the Mosaics of Kariye Camii', in *Interaction and Isolation in Late Byzantine Culture*, ed. by Jan Olof Rosenquist (Istanbul: The Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 2004), pp. 27-43, 28.

¹⁷⁹ Paul Underwood, 'First Preliminary Report on the Restoration of the Frescoes in the Kariye Camii at Istanbul by the Byzantine Institute, 1952-54', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 9-10 (1956), 255-88; Paul Underwood, 'Second Preliminary Report on the Restoration of the Frescoes in the Kariye Camii at Istanbul by the Byzantine Institute, 1955', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 11 (1957), 175-220; Paul Underwood, 'Third Preliminary Report on the Restoration of the Frescoes in the Kariye Camii at Istanbul by the Byzantine Institute, 1956', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 12 (1958), 237-65; Paul Underwood, 'Fourth Preliminary Report on the Restoration of the Frescoes in the Kariye Camii at Istanbul by the Byzantine Institute, 1957-58', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 13 (1959), 187-212.

arcosolia, were funded by the *ktetor* of the monastery, Theodore Metochites.¹⁸⁰ According to Underwood and Demus, practical and stylistic issues suggest that the frescoes of the parekklesion were executed after the completion of the mosaics of the naos and the narthexes, ca. 1320–1321.¹⁸¹

In order for the underlying purpose of the iconographic programme to be comprehended, one should take into consideration the function of the parekklesion. Even though there is no written evidence for the actual function of the chapel, the majority of researchers suggest that the parekklesion was designed to be a funerary chapel. This assumption is based mostly on two factors. As Underwood underlines, there are certain structural elements inside the parekklesion that indicate that the chapel was the mortuary chapel of the monastery. In particular, four tomb arcosolia, actually used for sepulchral purposes, are built inside the parekklesion, within the thickness of the walls, attached to the main body of the church.¹⁸² The general iconographic programme of the chapel is a reflection of its mortuary function, with certain inscriptions in paintings even quoting funerary hymns.¹⁸³ The iconographic programme of the parekklesion is designed around two major themes, Incarnation and Salvation.¹⁸⁴ The theme of Incarnation is projected in the western bay and the theme of Salvation in the eastern bay, and in this way the themes unfold chronologically and spatially inside the chapel as the beholder enters from the west

¹⁸⁰ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 188.

¹⁸¹ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, pp. 15-16 Otto Demus, 'The Style of the Kariye Djami and Its Place in the Development of Palaeologan Art', in *The Kariye Djami*, ed. by Paul Underwood (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), IV, pp. 107-61.

¹⁸² Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 189

¹⁸³ The images of the four hymnographers in the pendentives of the dome of the western bay of the parekklesion carry inscriptions from funerary hymns. Those inscriptions are discussed in the Introduction.

¹⁸⁴ Robert Ousterhout, 'Temporal Structuring in the Chora Parekklesion', *Gesta*, 34.1 (1995), 63-76.

and moves towards the east. These themes are spatially and conceptually framed by a frieze of saints that runs along the lower zone of the chapel.

Lower zone

The lower zone is occupied by a frieze of portraits encircling the chapel on the walls below the cornice. Starting with the eastern wall, the wall of the apse, there is a series of six portraits of Church Fathers, or Patriarchs, as is customary in churches decorated with frescoes:

An unidentified Church Father

St. Athanasius

St. John Chrysostom

St. Basil

St. Gregory the Theologian

St. Cyril of Alexandria

The Church Fathers are here depicted in almost frontal view. This fact, according to Der Nersessian, signifies that the liturgy was not regularly held in the parekklesion.¹⁸⁵ The Church Fathers are present here more as saints who participated in the formulation of the liturgy and the definition of the Christian doctrine.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ S. Der Nersessian, 'Program and Iconography of the Frescoes of the Parekklesion', in *Kariye Djami*, ed. by Paul Underwood (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), IV pp. 303-49, 319.

¹⁸⁶ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 246.

Behind the arch of the bema, on the southern and northern wall, appear life-size portraits of The Virgin and Christ respectively, originally facing each other. The portrait of Christ on the northern wall of the bema has been destroyed but the portrait of the Virgin holding the Christ Child (Virgin 'Eleousa', i.e. Merciful) is well preserved. As Underwood suggests, there is no indication that an iconostasis was ever erected in the parekklesion.¹⁸⁷ In this way, it could be claimed that, based on their position, the two icons replace the portraits of Christ and the Virgin that usually appear on the Byzantine templon. Indeed, as research suggests, the image of the Virgin was actually venerated as an icon as there are blemishes and discolorations at the level of the Virgin's feet caused by heat and smoke probably coming from candles.¹⁸⁸

The south, north and west walls of the two bays of the naos are decorated with a series of life-size portraits of saints who, in spatial terms, stand among the faithful, joining them in praying and representing the body of Christ on earth. The portraits of the saints in the lower zone of the bays are mainly portraits of martyr saints, with the majority of them being military saints, dressed in full armour. As Underwood notes, the fact that most of the figural representations in the parekklesion depict warrior saints is not unusual. Even though it is not clear when soldier-saints started being depicted in Byzantine monumental art, by the eleventh century their depiction in Byzantine churches was customary and the frequency of their appearance in the iconographic programmes increased in later centuries.¹⁸⁹ These saints are:

South wall, eastern bay:

¹⁸⁷ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 248

¹⁸⁸ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 248

¹⁸⁹ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 253.

St. George of Cappadocia

St. Floros (medallion)

St. Laurus (medallion)

St. Demetrios of Thessalonike

South wall, pier between eastern and western bay:

St. Theodore Tiro

South wall, western bay:

St. Theodore Stratelates

St. Merkourios

South wall, western pier:

St. Prokopios

St. Savvas Stratelates

West wall, southern pier:

An unidentified saint

West wall, northern pier:

St. David of Thessalonike

North wall, western pier:

St. Eustathios Plakidas

North wall, western bay:

St. Samonas of Edessa

St. Gurias of Edessa

North wall, pier between western and eastern bays:

St. Artemios or St. Nicetas

North wall, eastern bay:

St. Bacchos (medallion)

St. Sergios (medallion)

An unidentified military saint

An unidentified saint (medallion)

North wall, arch soffit:

An unidentified stylite saint

Second zone

The second zone, comprised of arches, lunettes and vaults is probably the richest one in iconographic terms, as it is decorated mostly with narrative scenes. There are two major themes present in this zone, which is dedicated to the redemptive powers of both Christ and the Virgin in a balanced way. The eastern half of this zone is dedicated to the Salvation of Man, projected through the victory of Christ over Death and His power to offer eternal life to the righteous and condemn the wicked. The vaults of the western bay (excluding the crowns of the transverse arches and the western tympanum) are dedicated to the role of the Virgin in the Salvation of Man as the instrument of Incarnation. Finally, the decoration of the west end of the upper zone, above the chapel's main entrance, reflects an attempt to create a connection between the theme of the Incarnation of the western bay and the theme of Salvation of the eastern half of the chapel.

Eastern half of the chapel

Starting with the eastern wall, the semidome of the apse carries the scene of the Anastasis of Christ. Christ is depicted as triumphant over Death, raising the progenitors of all mankind, Adam on the left and Eve on the right. In this scene, the doctrine of the *descensus ad inferos* is represented in pictorial terms, as it appears in the Apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus of the fourth or fifth century.¹⁹⁰ However, resurrection-related themes are seldom placed in the conch of the apse and Underwood suggests that certain aesthetic requirements could possibly have dictated such a decision on behalf of the painter.¹⁹¹ Moreover, if the theory that the parekklesion was designed to be a funerary chapel is accepted, then it can be suggested that the theme of the Anastasis naturally occupies the most prestigious space in the chapel, serving as the major scene of redemptive content.

The theme of Salvation, introduced by the depiction of Christ's Anastasis in the conch of the apse, is extended by two more scenes that cover the arch of the bema: The Raising of the Widow's Son and The Raising of the Daughter of Jairus. As Underwood suggests, there is an analogy between the two scenes and the Anastasis. In the Anastasis, Christ raises Adam at the left and Eve at the right, male and female, while in the two scenes of the resurrection miracles, Christ raises a male in the left side of the arch, the widow's son, and a female in the right side of the arch, the daughter of Jairus.¹⁹² The

¹⁹⁰ M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (London, 1924), p. 117.

¹⁹¹ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 201.

¹⁹² Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 202.

scene on the left is largely destroyed while the one on the right is in a rather good state of preservation.

The theme of Salvation and the freeing of the righteous from sin, most suitably closes with the depiction in the domical vault and lunettes of the eastern bay of The Last Judgment, or as known in Byzantine art, Christ's Second Coming. The composition is made up of various scenes that depict death, final judgment, and condemnation for the sinful or redemption for the righteous. It is a composition with unique characteristics and a special theatrical quality, in comparison to other examples of Byzantine art, as usually the elements of the scene are placed in superimposed horizontal zones in a rectangular format. Here, the painter, taking advantage of the structure of the vault, chooses to arrange the elements of the scene in groups that create a whole that envelops the viewer and gives the impression of the creation of a 'dome of heaven' within the painting.¹⁹³ As Underwood describes: 'using the angel rolling up the scroll of heaven and Christ in glory with his attendants as the central motifs, the painter has arranged the other celestial elements – the clouds of the elect, the *Etimasia*, and the fiery stream that issues from Christ's feet – in a circle about the lower slopes of the vault, making the vault, as it were, a 'dome of heaven'. The remaining motifs are placed in a lower zone, around the circle of heaven, in the four pendentives and the lunettes at the sides. Disposed in this manner the composition forms a three-dimensional canopy enclosing the beholder within it.'¹⁹⁴ The iconographic motifs that combine to comprise The Last Judgment scene are:

Domical vault:

1. The Scroll of Heaven (centre of the vault).

¹⁹³ Ousterhout, 'Temporal Structuring in the Chora Parekklesion', p. 72.

¹⁹⁴ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 204

2. Christ in Judgment accompanied by the Virgin, John the Baptist, the Twelve Apostles, Angels and Archangels (in a zone that covers the full width of the vault to the east of the centre).
3. Clouds bearing the Choirs of the Elect (arranged in an incomplete circle around the periphery of the vault).
 - 3a. Hierarchs/Bishops
 - 3b. Hosioi/Holy Men
 - 3c. Holy Women
 - 3d. Martyrs
 - 3e. Apostles
 - 3f. Prophets
4. The Etimasia, sided by Adam and Eve (centre of the eastern side of the vault beneath Christ's mandorla).
5. The Weighing of Souls (beneath the Etimasia and above the centre of the eastern arch).
6. The Fiery Stream and The Lake of Fire (area of the vault above the southeastern pendentive).

Southwestern pendentive:

The Land and Sea Giving Up Their Dead

Northwestern pendentive:

An Angel and a Soul

Northeastern pendentive:

Lazarus the Beggar in Abraham's Bosom

Southeastern Pendentive:

The Rich Man in Hell

Eastern half of the southern lunette:

The Torments of the Damned

- a. The Gnashing of Teeth (upper left)
- b. The Outer Darkness (upper right)
- c. The Worm That Sleepeth Not (lower left)
- d. The Unquenchable Fire (lower right)

Northern lunette:

The Entry of the Elect into Paradise

Western half of the chapel

The western half of the parekklesion is for the most part dedicated to the depiction of the theme of Incarnation that highlights the role of the Virgin in the Salvation of Man.¹⁹⁵ Starting with the vaults of the eastern bay, a series of five Old Testament subjects appears in this part of the chapel, in the arches and lunettes below the dome of the western bay. The majority of the scenes depicted here depict the Virgin Mary as an instrument through which the Incarnation and Salvation are made possible. In this way, certain objects, through which God manifests His presence, for example Jacob's Ladder, the Burning Bush or the Ark of the Covenant, are interpreted as prefigurations of the Virgin. The Marian cycle of the western half of the chapel starts from the northern lunette of the

¹⁹⁵ Ousterhout, 'Temporal Structuring in the Chora Parekklesion', p. 71.

western bay and continues in a clockwise direction down the soffits of the arches and the lunettes beneath the dome. In this order the paintings are:

Western half of the northern lunette:

Jacob's Ladder and Jacob Wrestling with the Angel

Eastern half of the northern lunette and the soffit of the adjoining arch:

Moses and the Burning Bush

Southern lunettes and the arch between them:

The Dedication of Solomon's Temple

- a. The Bearing of the Ark of the Covenant
- b. The Bearing of the Sacred Vessels
- c. Solomon and All Israel
- d. The Installation of the Ark in the Holy of Holies

Southern soffit of the western arch:

Isaiah Prophesying; The Angel Smiting the Assyrians before Jerusalem

Northern soffit of the western arch:

Aaron and His Sons Before the Altar

West end of the second zone

The surviving paintings in this side of the parekklesion serve to bridge the theme of Incarnation of the western half of the chapel with that of Salvation of the eastern half by depicting a redemptive subject, thus echoing the funerary function of the chapel. The Souls of the Righteous in the Hand of God is depicted in two parts, in the crown of the

western arch and in the western tympanum. This painting is a representation of an extract from the Book of Wisdom (3:1), which reads: ‘But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and the tortures of death shall not touch them’.

Crowns of the transverse arches

Four medallion portraits occupy the crowns of the transverse arches. At the centre of the vertical face of the western arch, in the narrow space below the dome cornice, there is the portrait of Melchizedek the Righteous. Melchizedek’s medallion faces a medallion portrait of Christ, in the corresponding position on the arch at the eastern side of the dome. On the same arch, on the horizontal surface in the centre of the soffit, there is a medallion portrait of Christ that is largely destroyed.¹⁹⁶ At the centre of the arch of the bema there is a large medallion containing the representation of the Archangel Michael. Michael, placed between the Anastasis to the east and the Last Judgment to the west, serves here symbolically his role as the conductor of the souls to judgment and as the guide of the righteous to paradise. The prestigious space that the medallion of Michael occupies can also be justified by an indication that Metochites specially venerated the Archangel Michael and had directed a request to the Archangel to intercede on behalf of his soul.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Underwood points out that the medallion of Christ is destroyed to the degree that it is impossible to identify the type of Christ that was represented. However, the painting of Christ’s hair indicates that the image was neither Christ Emmanuel nor Christ as the Ancient of Days but probably had the usual features of the historic Christ. See Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 241.

¹⁹⁷ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 242.

Third zone

The dome that crowns the western half of the parekklesion and the pendentives are dedicated to the Virgin and the theme of Incarnation and are related symbolically to the Old Testament scenes decorating the arches and lunettes of the western bay. At the centre of the Virgin related themes of the western half of the chapel is a medallion of the Mother of God holding the Christ Child depicted in the dome, which covers the full width of the chapel. The dodecagonal ribbed dome is pierced by twelve windows, above which, in the triangular spaces between the ribs, there are the representations of twelve Angels and Archangels, representing the celestial court of Christ and the Virgin. In the pendentives below the dome there are the portraits of four hymnographers in the act of composition.

These are:

St. John Damascene (northeast)

St. Cosmas the Poet/Melodos (southeast)

St. Joseph the Poet (southwest)

St. Theophanes (northwest)

The way that the hymnographers are depicted brings to mind the way that the four Evangelists are frequently found occupying the same space in Byzantine churches. However, the role of the hymnographers in this context is two-fold as the inscriptions that accompany their portraits relate both to the Virgin and to the funerary character of the

parekklesion.¹⁹⁸ In particular, two of the inscriptions, the one on John Damascene's scroll and the one on Theophanes' codex, are quotes from hymns composed for use in funerary services.¹⁹⁹ The inscription on Joseph's scroll, is an extract from his own composition, 'Canon for the Akathistos Hymn', which hails the Virgin, being related in this way with the cycle of Old Testament scenes that surrounds the space below the dome.²⁰⁰

Tomb Arcosolia

Following a Late Byzantine tradition, the patron of a church was permitted to provide a tomb for himself (and often additional ones for family members) in the church whose construction or renovation he sponsored.²⁰¹ The case of the Chora parekklesion follows this Palaeologan tradition. Each of the tombs of the chapel was an arcosolium, a wall niche that was high and deep enough to house a sarcophagus in its lower part. On the back wall of the niche, above the sarcophagus, there is a portrait of the deceased accompanied by family members (except for one case). An image of Christ or the Virgin, often accompanied by busts of saints or angels, was also included in the decoration of the sepulchral monument. The sarcophagi of the four tomb arcosolia in the parecclesion have not survived.

¹⁹⁸ Only the inscriptions on John's and Joseph's scrolls and on Theophanes' codex survive today.

¹⁹⁹ The inscriptions on the hymnographers' images are discussed in the Introduction.

²⁰⁰ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 224.

²⁰¹ Examples of this practice can be found in various churches in Constantinople. In the monastic church of the Pantocrator in Constantinople, which was completed before 1136, the patron, emperor John II Komnenos, created a burial chapel dedicated to the Archangel Michael to contain his tomb and those of the empress and other members of his family. In the church of St John the Baptist, founded at the end of the thirteenth century by the widow of the emperor Michael VIII Palaeologos, empress Theodora, wall tombs were constructed for Theodora, her daughter, her mother and other members of the family. See Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 269.

The arcosolium in the southeast wall

The decoration of this tomb is still relatively intact, in contrast to the rest of the tombs in the chapel. On the niche wall of the southeast arcosolium, there are paintings of four figures depicted frontally and standing side by side above the sarcophagus level. The two principal personages, a man and a woman, are portrayed at the centre of the composition and they are dressed in princely costumes. They are most probably the portraits of the deceased man and his wife. At the far left there is a woman dressed similarly to Tornikes' wife, as depicted in the back wall of the southwestern arcosolium. The woman on the far right is, according to Underwood, depicted as a nun.²⁰² However, the identities of the owners of this tomb could not be determined. On the upper part of this niche arch, just above the portraits, there is a panel containing a bust of Christ. A seraphim is seen on the left side, whereas the depiction on the right side is not visible due to the deterioration here. On either side of the inner wall of the arch is a bust of an angel facing the portraits on the back wall.²⁰³

The arcosolium in the southwest wall

On the niche wall, above the sarcophagus level, only the shoulders of the Virgin Mary and the hand of the Christ Child raised in benediction can be seen, because most of the tiles of the mosaic depiction have fallen down. On the right side, Michael Tornikes, who is resting in this tomb, is depicted standing and wearing court clothes. The lower part of the figure has been destroyed and only the part above the shoulders is visible. The

²⁰² Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 272.

²⁰³ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, pp. 272-75.

inscription on the upper section reads, ‘*same person, monk Makarios*’. On the right side is the figure of Tornikes’ wife, turned towards the Virgin Mary and praying with upraised hands. The inscription on the upper section reads, ‘*same person, nun Eugenia*’. The feet of this figure have also been destroyed. Both figures are frescoes. The upper part of the arcosolium arch is decorated with a mosaic cross motif inside nested circles. On the left side of the inner wall of the arch is the mosaic portrait of Tornikes wearing monastic clothes, and on the right side is the mosaic portrait of his wife. Since the lower parts of both mosaics are destroyed, only the parts above the waists are seen. On the monumental marble frame of the tomb, there are archangels on both sides of Christ, and a long inscription (epitaphios) above this composition.²⁰⁴ This tomb belongs to Michael Tornikes, the close friend of Metochites who was the “Great Constable” at the court of Andronikos II. The original decoration was made of mosaic, but it was complemented with frescoes after having been destroyed in the Byzantine period. The Virgin Mary

²⁰⁴ The inscription on Tornikes’ arcosolium reads: However many applauses one may collect upon this earth, when they are all dead, Tornikes, a man of myriad victories or Grand Constable, who lies buried here, will put them to shame as, good friend, a lion shames mimicking apes. He who was by birth of royal blood, presented also a manner of life conformed to that descent. For what form of virtue did he not possess such as the fitting occasion demanded each? Therefore he was a councillor before the usual age, and a popular leader and an acute judge, and upon enemies he breathed a strategic flame, and was an irresistible thunderbolt upon their serried ranks. He presided over the army like a father, guarding the commonweal lest any advantage to it should be stolen. And securing thus again royal affinity, and leaving his life as a splendid example, he lies a poor monk among bones! O sun, O earth, O final applauses! Well-nigh the whole Roman race laments of him, as much of it as is not ignorant of him. But O only living One and transformer of natures, if perchance he did aught that was not fitting for him, granting him pardon, give him Eden as his inheritance. See Alexander Van Millingen, *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1974), p. 30. For a detailed analysis of the inscription see Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, pp. 276-78.

figure at the centre of the niche and the figures inside arches are made of mosaic and the two figures on the sides of niches are frescoes.

The large arcosolium in the northwest wall

The tomb in the north wall of the western bay exceeds the other three tombs of the chapel in terms of the width and depth of its arcosolium and the size of its sarcophagus. In order to highlight the importance of the tomb, an arched marble frame was formed, decorated with acanthus leaves in high relief. At the centre of the arch, there is a relief of Christ, and reliefs of angels looking toward Christ on either sides of the arch. The monograms of the figures on the marble indicate that they are the archangels Michael and Gabriel. The heads of the three figures are largely destroyed. The names of Christ and the archangels are inscribed in relief. On the marble frames of the tomb niches in the parekklesion, the background is painted blue and the carvings were gilded. Behind the back wall of the niche, there is an interior vaulted chamber, which is 1.65 m long and 1.98 m wide. This chamber was entered through a door in the east wall of the passageway that connected the parekklesion with the naos. In the north wall of the chamber there was a small rectangular window that opened into the naos. In the chamber's east and west walls there were small niches flanking the back wall of the tomb. Even though the function of the chamber is uncertain, Underwood suggests that it was used either as a small chapel or as an oratory, where the monks kept icons and perpetually burning candles and votive lamps.²⁰⁵ If it is presumed that Metochites' tomb was one of the four tombs placed inside the space of the parekklesion, then his tomb must have been one of the two tombs

²⁰⁵ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 271.

attached to the north wall, given the decoration of the two tombs in the south wall. Out of the two arcosolia in the north wall, the size and the special features of the northwestern tomb suggest that this might have been the tomb of the patron.

The arcosolium in the northeast wall

The tomb in the northeast wall was never adorned with marble facings. Since there are neither frescoes nor mosaic decorations inside the arch, nor an inscription, the owners of this tomb are not known. Underwood suggests that the decoration of this arcosolium possibly resembled the decoration of the tomb attached to the southeastern wall, with a portrait panel above the sarcophagus and an image of Christ of the Virgin in the soffit of the arch.²⁰⁶

Having discussed terminology, methodology and space, I now turn to the larger subject of the interaction between icon and beholder in the space of the parekklesion. In the chapter that follows, I look at the way that the faithful communicates with the divine through the holy image, I explore different ways of experiencing divine presence through visual means and I examine how the conceptual space of the icon is transformed into a chora space in between that calls for the beholder's corporeal participation.

²⁰⁶ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 272.

Chapter 2: The icon as a space-in-between

In this chapter, I will examine the creation of a conceptual chora space of becoming formed within the limits of the holy image and I will seek for traces of the chora in the way that the icon is produced and used. Following the story of the icon as a cultural product, I will engage in a dialogue between recent scholarship on the conceptual and formal characteristics of the holy image and the writings of the major iconophile Fathers who supported the use of icons. Based on the teachings of the defenders of the icons of the eighth and ninth centuries that ultimately dominated Byzantine thinking on the holy image until the fall of the Empire and were being actively discussed in Metochites' day, I will create a foundation on which my reading of the Palaeologan icon will later be supported. In examining the role of the holy image in the act of worship and in the faithful's experience of sacred space, my point of departure will be the work of John of Damascus,²⁰⁷ because the impact of his theological work stretches from the Iconoclasm to the fall of the Empire and because he summarised the development of the Christian

²⁰⁷ St John of Damascus (645/680–747/787), monk and theologian, was one of the first to defend the icons during the era of the iconoclastic controversy. His lengthy and systematic work on iconology leads modern scholars to regard him as the icon defender par excellence. In his three *Apologies Against Those who Attack the Divine Images* he sets the foundations of the iconology of the Orthodox Church, contributing greatly to the iconoclastic controversy. See *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 2, p. 1063.

doctrine up to his time he is often called the last of the Church Fathers.²⁰⁸ As Louth points out, by the eleventh century John had emerged as a prominent representative of the Byzantine theological tradition, and in the twelfth century the importance of his work was widely recognised not only in Byzantium but in the West, too.²⁰⁹ John's theological work, and his work on defending the use of icons in particular (*On the Divine Images*) focused on concepts mainly discussed by the Cappadocian Fathers, such as Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzos,²¹⁰ and depended largely on them for definitions and language.²¹¹ The impact of Cappadocian thinking within Byzantine theological tradition can indeed be traced through the centuries from Maximos the Confessor, to John of Damascus and the fourteenth-century hesychast Gregory Palamas.²¹² Further evidence for the role of the Cappadocian Fathers as prominent theologians in the fourteenth century can be found in the iconographic programme of the parekklesion of the Chora, as well as in Metochites' own writings. In the parekklesion, the Church Fathers are depicted on the eastern wall below the Anastasis. The 'Three Hierarchs', Basil, John Chrysostom,²¹³ and Gregory of Nazianzos occupy a prominent position at the centre of the wall.²¹⁴ In fourteenth-century Constantinopolitan churches, the customary locus for the depiction of the Church Fathers

²⁰⁸ *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 1, p. 458.

²⁰⁹ Louth, Andrew, *St John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 16.

²¹⁰ The impact of Cappadocian thinking on the adaptation of the concept of chora in a Christian context is discussed in the Introduction.

²¹¹ Louth, Andrew, *St John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 22, 48-49, 90-91, 94-96.

²¹² Louth, Andrew, *St John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 48.

²¹³ My main focus here will be on the Cappadocians, as John Chrysostom is distinguished mostly as an orator rather than a theologian. See *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 1, p. 458; *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 2, p. 1057.

²¹⁴ Underwood, Paul, *The Kariye Djami* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966), vol. 1, pp. 244-245.

was behind the altar, below the image of the Communion of the Apostles, where Christ is depicted as the officiator of the Holy Communion. There, the Church Fathers are portrayed as officiators, leaning towards the altar and holding scrolls describing the rites they perform.²¹⁵ As Underwood points out however, in the naos of the Chora, the walls below the cornice are decorated with marble revetments. The Church Fathers are depicted in the *parekklesion* instead: ‘far removed from the sanctuary and from proximity to the altar, the Fathers are depicted not as officiators but as the chief representatives of the ecclesiastical hierarchy; they are the great Church Fathers’.²¹⁶ Metochites’ admiration of the Cappadocians Basil and Gregory is expressly stated in his writings. Their ecclesiastical authority in matters of faith is recognised in his *Logoi* and in his *Poems*.²¹⁷ The work of John of Damascus systematised and refined the Christian dogma, as that was formulated by the Cappadocians,²¹⁸ shaping in this way a theology of the holy image that would function as the foundation for the defence of the use of icons. John’s principal role in Byzantine thought is highlighted in the iconographic programme of the Chora, as there are two depictions of him in the monastery. In the first case, John of Damascus together with Cosmas the Poet flank a bust portrait of the Virgin carrying the infant Christ in the arch soffit of Tomb E in the exonarthex. In the second case, a full-length portrait of John appears in the northeastern pendentive of the dome of the western bay, above the tomb that probably once belonged to Metochites (Tomb A), among three hymnographers (Joseph

²¹⁵ Underwood, Paul, *The Kariye Djami* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966), vol. 1, p. 244.

²¹⁶ Underwood, Paul, *The Kariye Djami* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966), vol. 1, p. 244.

²¹⁷ *Logos* 6, original text and translation in Ševčenko, 'Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time' p. 53. *Logos* 6 was written according to Ševčenko before 1294/1295. *Poem* 47 is dedicated to Gregory of Nazianzos and *Poem* 6 – the longest in his collection – is dedicated to the Three Hierarchs.

²¹⁸ Louth, Andrew, *St John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 12.

the Hymnographer, Cosmas the Poet and Theophanes Graptos).²¹⁹ As Underwood records, the poses of the four hymnographers and their settings in the pendentives are strongly reminiscent of the seated portraits of the four Evangelists frequently found in Byzantine churches.²²⁰ In the parekklesion, John occupies the most favoured of the four positions, a fact that highlights his great fame as theologian, defender of icons and hymnographer.²²¹

In the Introduction, John's hymns were studied in relation to the use of the term *chora* as an epithet for the Virgin. In this chapter, John's theological work will function as the point of departure for the study of the role of the holy image in the interaction between Imaged and beholder. John's image theology, his definitions and ideas had a lasting impact on Byzantine thought, a fact that can be attested to by the number of major theologians and scholars who cite his work during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, including John XI Bekkos, George Pachymeres, Manuel Philes, Barlaam of Calabria, Nikephoros Gregoras, Gregory Palamas, Nicholas Kabasilas.²²² The role of images in worship and the concept of 'εἰκὼν Θεοῦ' (icon of God) were of central importance to the

²¹⁹ Ousterhout, *The Architecture of the Kariye Camii in Istanbul*, p. 59.

²²⁰ Underwood, Paul, *The Kariye Djami* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966), vol. 1, pp. 217-218.

²²¹ Underwood, Paul, *The Kariye Djami* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966), vol. 1, p. 218.

²²² John XI Bekkos, patriarch of Constantinople (1230/40-1297). *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 2, p. 1054; George Pachymeres, historian (1242-1310). *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 3, p. 1550; Manuel Philes, court poet (ca. 1275 - ca. 1345). *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 3, p. 1651; Barlaam of Calabria, theologian (1290-1348). *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 1, p. 257; Nikephoros Gregoras, historian and scholar (ca. 1290/1-1358/61). *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 2, p. 874; Gregory Palamas, theologian, archbishop of Thessalonike (ca. 1296-1359). *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 3, p. 1560; Nicholas Kabasilas, writer and theologian (1322/3-1391). *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 2, p. 1088.

theological debates of the fourteenth century.²²³ The hesychastic controversy that characterised the fourteenth century was centred around the notion of hesychasm, employed to describe a method of monastic prayer and contemplation (hesychia) designed to achieve communion with God through interior quietude. The hesychastic tradition was unified in Palamism, the doctrinal synthesis of Gregory Palamas.²²⁴ Palamas (1296-1359), a theologian and archbishop of Thessalonike, became the leading spokesman for the hesychasts and engaged in a debate with Barlaam of Calabria, who attacked Palamas and the monastic spirituality of hesychasm.²²⁵ The image of Christ's Transfiguration assumed a prominent role in the hesychastic controversy, and the way through which the faithful can experience divine presence was discussed in this context in relation to the difference between essence and energy of God.²²⁶ During the conflict over the use of icons and in the debate about hesychastic beliefs, the relationship between spirit and matter, essence and form, divine presence and absence, was a main theme.²²⁷ The important role of sacred art in the hesychastic controversy is also reflected in the impact that the victory of hesychasm had on artistic production, especially in relation to the image of the Transfiguration. Numerous fourteenth-century images of the Transfiguration depict a dramatic release of 'divine energy' understood in the context of the uncreated, divine light as discussed by

²²³ Karahan, Ann, *Byzantine Holy Images - Transcendence and Immanence: The Theological Background of the Iconography and Aesthetics of the Chora Church* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), p. 10.

²²⁴ *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 2, p. 923.

²²⁵ *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 3, p. 1560.

²²⁶ Woodfin, Warren, *The Embodied Icon: Liturgical Vestments and Sacramental Power in Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 77-78.

²²⁷ Nes, Solrunn, *The Mystical Language of Icons* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 103.

Palamas.²²⁸ Ćurčić underlines that hesychasm produced a new visual expression of divine light and re-activated a discussion on ways of communicating things immaterial by visual means, through sacred images.²²⁹

The prominence of the discussion of the experience of divine presence by visual means and the role of iconic representation in communicating with the divine in the fourteenth century are also reflected in the work of Nicholas Kabasilas.²³⁰ Kabasilas (1322/3-1391), a Palamite writer and theologian, wrote two spiritual treatises, *Explanation of the Divine Liturgy* and *The Life of Christ*.²³¹ Kabasilas' work, influenced by Palamism, builds on a christocentric tradition shaped in the patristic era and summarised by John of Damascus and examines how divine presence is manifested and experienced in church space through images and the liturgy.²³² In studying the difference between iconic representation and true presence, he explores the role of the image in worship and discusses remembrance as a means of communication with the divine.²³³

In this chapter, the holy image will be interpreted as a conceptual chora-space, shaped by dualisms of form and essence, presence and absence, immediacy and

²²⁸ Ćurčić, Slobodan, 'Divine Light: Constructing the Immaterial in Byzantine Art and Architecture', in *Architecture of the Sacred: Space Ritual and Experience from Classical Greece to Byzantium*, ed. by Bonna Wescoat and Robert Ousterhout (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 307-37, 310-312.

²²⁹ Ćurčić, Slobodan, 'Divine Light: Constructing the Immaterial in Byzantine Art and Architecture', 312.

²³⁰ Woodfin, Warren, *The Embodied Icon: Liturgical Vestments and Sacramental Power in Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 118.

²³¹ *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. by Alexander Kazhdan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), vol. 2, p. 1088.

²³² Woodfin, Warren, *The Embodied Icon: Liturgical Vestments and Sacramental Power in Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 117.

²³³ Woodfin, Warren, *The Embodied Icon: Liturgical Vestments and Sacramental Power in Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 119.

mediation.²³⁴ The first question posed here is: what is it that an icon presents and represents in the post-Iconoclasm era? This is discussed by taking into consideration the way that the formal and the essential relate to each other in the context of the holy image. While arguing for a definition of the icon that abolishes essentialist notions, in examining the limits of representation in the icon from a theological point of view, this chapter touches upon the duality of presence and absence in the holy image and explores various modes of the projection of this duality in and through the chora-space of the icon. The study of the icon as an object would not be complete however, if we did not consider the implications of its use by the faithful. The conceptual chora-space created within the holy image will be regarded here as expanding through art towards the viewer. The space of the icon is reinterpreted within the conditions of its relation to the beholders and their participation in it, with the act of communicating with the Imaged placed at the centre of attention. Through studying issues related to interactivity and corporeality, I explore here how the space of the icon, the space-in-between separating beholder and Imaged is shaped and bridged through the act of interacting and inscribing meaning.

²³⁴ The concept of the holy image as chora is also explored by Pentcheva. In her book *The Sensual icon* she identifies chora in the context of the Byzantine relief icon. In examining the spatial dynamics of the holy image, she highlights the role of the relief icon and the implications of its use in the faithful's interaction with the divine. Pentcheva's work will be studied in chapters four and five in relation to the concept of church space as chora. See Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium*.

Portrait and portrayed

Hans Belting opens his book *Likeness and Presence: a History of the Image Before the Era of Art* by saying that ‘a history of the image is something other than a history of art’.²³⁵ Belting suggests that an image should be perceived in terms of its cult function because ‘it usually represented a person, and therefore was treated like a person’.²³⁶ This fusion between portrait and portrayed, constructed within cult practice, is a typical characteristic of the *image*, in Belting’s sense of the term. Belting is interested in the ‘Holy Image’, and it is this image that will be at the centre of this chapter. For Belting, the holy image is ‘rooted in religion’ and is that of a person. In contrast to the narrative image, it ‘represented a person and therefore was treated like a person, being worshipped, despised, or carried from place to place in ritual processions: in short, it served the symbolic exchange of power and, finally, embodied the public claims of a community’.²³⁷ The story of the image begins in late antiquity for the West and lasts until the sixteenth century, when a significant shift in the paradigm is performed in Western Europe, allowing for the emergence of a different story, that of *art*.²³⁸ Consequently, according to Belting’s conception of the difference between work of art and image, Byzantine painting

²³⁵ Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. xxi.

²³⁶ Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, p. xxi.

²³⁷ Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, p. xxi.

²³⁸ Belting suggests that art is ‘acknowledged for its own sake’; it is ‘invented by a famous artist and defined by a proper theory’. These are the main formal differences between image and work of art. Other major differences can be traced in the way images were perceived and treated, as extensively analysed by Belting. See Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, pp. xxii and 11-27.

belongs to the latter both chronologically and essentially. Apart from the chronological aspect of the issue that is more or less apparent, Belting justifies the essential placement of Byzantine art into the ‘era of the image’ by claiming that in Byzantine times there existed a fusion between portrait and portrayed, a notion that is crucial in his work, as it is treated as one of the stronger indications of the fact that a portrait functions as an image and not as a work of art.²³⁹ The supposition of the fusion between portrait and portrayed lies at the heart of many modern theories on ways in which Byzantine art was interpreted by its contemporary beholders. The holy image was ‘treated like a person’ and for many researchers it was perceived as such. The notion of the fusion between portrait and portrayed is in fact an essentialist notion: portrait and portrayed appear to be connected to each other in an essential manner. In other words, the portrait is thought to contain or share with the portrayed part of the latter’s essence and therefore the icon seems to be conceived as a container of some kind of divine presence. I will expand here further on the relationship between portrait and portrayed in order to understand how the conceptual space of the icon is shaped through the essence-form dualism, as different scholars perceive and describe it in different ways. The analysis of the form-essence relationship will ultimately bring me back to the fundamental issue of the image-work of art relationship, revisiting in this way Belting and interpreting his argument under a different prism.

²³⁹ Certain researchers underline the importance of the notion of the fusion between the portrait and the portrayed in Belting’s *Likeness and Presence*. For example see: Charles Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Charles Barber, ‘From Image into Art: Art after Byzantine Iconoclasm’, *Gesta*, 34.1 (1995), 5-10; *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium: Studies Presented to Robin Cormack*, ed. by Antony Eastmond and Liz James (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003).

Demus commenting on the relation between portrait and portrayed suggests that ‘the icon is magically identical with the prototype... The picture, if treated in the right manner is a magical counterpart of the prototype, and has a magical identity with it. To achieve this magical identity with the prototype, the image must possess similarity... If this was done according to the rules a magical identity was established, and the beholder found himself face to face with the holy persons... He was confronted with the prototypes’.²⁴⁰ Demus here suggests that the fusion between portrait and portrayed is rooted in the notion that the image can function as a magical replacement for the prototype. Thus, the portrait, under certain circumstances, becomes the equivalent of the portrayed and consequently the former possesses the power of the latter. Demus, by erroneously interpreting St Basil’s statement that ‘the honour given to the image is transferred to the prototype’,²⁴¹ assumes the establishment of a magical link between portrait and portrayed in the holy image. St Basil’s statement was largely used by the iconophile Fathers in order to justify theologically the use of images in worship. The adaptation of the statement in the context of icon theory, led the iconophile Fathers to suggest that in the same way that the Son is a natural and identical image of the Father, the icon is an identical image of its prototype, according to form. John of Damascus in the third Oration of his *Apologies Against Those who Attack the Divine Images* discusses this issue:²⁴²

²⁴⁰ Otto Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium* (New York; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1997), pp. 6-7.

²⁴¹ Basil of Caesarea, 'De Spiritu Sancto' p. 149 C.

²⁴² St John of Damascus (645/680–747/787) was one of the first to defend the icons during the era of the iconoclastic controversy. His lengthy and systematic work on iconology leads modern scholars to regard him as the icon defender par excellence. In his three ‘Apologies against those who attack the divine images’ he sets the foundations of the iconology of the Orthodox Church,

Εἰκῶν μὲν οὖν ἐστὶν ὁμοίωμα καὶ παράδειγμα καὶ ἐκτύπωμά τινος ἐν ἑαυτῷ δεικνύον τὸ εἰκονιζόμενον, πάντως δὲ οὐ κατὰ πάντα ἔοικεν ἢ εἰκῶν τῷ πρωτοτύπῳ τουτέστι τῷ εἰκονιζομένῳ—ἄλλο γὰρ ἐστὶν ἢ εἰκῶν καὶ ἄλλο τὸ εἰκονιζόμενον—καὶ πάντως ὁράται ἐν αὐτοῖς διαφορὰ, ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἄλλο τοῦτο καὶ ἄλλο ἐκεῖνο. Οἶόν τι λέγω· Ἡ εἰκῶν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, εἰ καὶ τὸν χαρακτήρα ἐκτυποῖ τοῦ σώματος, ἀλλὰ τὰς ψυχικὰς δυνάμεις οὐκ ἔχει· οὔτε γὰρ ζῆ οὔτε λογίζεται οὔτε φθέγγεται οὔτε αἰσθάνεται οὔτε μέλος κινεῖ. Καὶ ὁ υἱὸς εἰκῶν φυσικῆ ὦν τοῦ πατρὸς ἔχει τι παρηλλαγμένον πρὸς αὐτόν· υἱὸς γὰρ ἐστὶ καὶ οὐ πατήρ.²⁴³

Even though Demus mentions the similarity according to form versus similarity according to essence distinction, he maintains that the relation between the icon and its archetype is deeper than merely a formal one. The conditions of the creation of the magical link are

contributing greatly to the iconoclastic controversy. See *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. by Alexander Kazhdan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), vol. 2, p. 1063.

²⁴³ ‘An image is therefore a likeness and pattern and impression of something, showing in itself what is depicted; however, the image is certainly not like the archetype, that is, what is depicted, in every respect – for the image is one thing and what it depicts is another – and certainly a difference is seen between them, since they are not identical. For example, the image of a human being may give expression to the shape of the body, but it does not have the powers of the soul; for it does not live, nor does it think, or give utterance, or feel, or move its members. And a son, although the natural image of a father, has something different from him, for he is son and not father. John of Damascus, ‘Contra Imaginum Calumniatores Tres’, in *Die Schriften Des Johannes Von Damascus*, ed. by B. Kotter (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1975), vol. 3, III 16. Translation of this extract comes from John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, ed. by Andrew Louth (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), p. 95. Translations of all other John of Damascus’ texts comes from: John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images: The Apologies against Those Who Attack the Divine Images*. trans. by David Anderson (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980).

not clear in Demus' approach either. The establishment of the link is not the product of an intellectual or spiritual process from the beholder's side, that is, a conceptual necessity. In contrast, it is the painter who achieves the establishment of the 'magical identity' by painting 'according to the rules' in order for the portrait to be an exact likeness of the portrayed. For Demus, the right manner of painting that would lead to the desired effect is as follows:

*[the icon] must depict the characteristic features of a holy person or a sacred event in accordance with authentic sources. The sources were either images of supernatural origin, contemporary portraits or descriptions, or, in the case of scenic representations, the Holy Scriptures. The outcome was a kind of abstract verism, governed by a sacred iconography...*²⁴⁴

Demus maintains here that accuracy of definition and accordance with historic facts was enough for the image to possess likeness with its prototype, which is the condition for the establishment of a magical link between them. The distance between form and essence is bridged through likeness, which establishes a space in between the purely essential and the purely formal. It seems that for Demus the potential power of the image lies in the hands of the painter, as it is through art that likeness is achieved. Art provides the missing link between the image and its archetype, as it manages to transform the former into a container for the latter. Therefore for Demus the holy image is not regarded as a space in

²⁴⁴ Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium*, p. 7.

between form and essence but as a space where the formal becomes a receptacle for the essential through art.

Demus' approach however raises certain questions. Being an essentialist approach, it accepts the fusion between portrait and portrayed not only in the context of cult practice but at a formal level, that of production. It is thus suggested that the icon was not simply perceived as a 'magical replacement' of the prototype by the faithful, but it was primarily created in order to function as such, a view that Byzantine sources show to be untenable. Moreover, the role of the painter in Demus' work is also questionable. The fact that the painter seems to have the ability to create magical objects raises questions about his talent and abilities. Demus does not explain comprehensively the process through which the painter creates a form that can contain the divine essence due to the formal likeness between the image and the prototype. It is not made clear whether it is the painter's special abilities that transform the image into a container for divine essence or whether it is the divine that enters the space of the icon to manifest itself essentially.

The issue of the significance of likeness is one that should not be ignored either in Demus' theory. If likeness is the precondition for the magical link between portrait and portrayed, the question of what happens in the case of icons of lower artistic quality where the similarity between portrait and portrayed is perhaps not very high remains unanswered. Demus' conception implies that an image of lower artistic quality is arguably less of an icon than an image of high artistic quality, as it does not fulfil the preconditions for divine essence to be transferred into it.

The conception that the viewer is confronted with the prototypes through the icon can also be found in Liz James' work. In particular, in 'Senses and Sensibility in

Byzantium', while describing ways in which the faithful venerated images, she claims that 'everyone knew that... touching an icon was touching a saint, that the image of Christ meant Christ was there'.²⁴⁵ James, echoing Belting to some extent, stresses the faithful's essentialist approaches towards icons and comes to the conclusion that for the faithful the limits of representation in the icon were unclear, and for this reason the holy images were treated like persons.²⁴⁶

However, what distinguishes James' work is her concept of the icon as a 'gateway to the divine',²⁴⁷ or a 'means of access to the divine'.²⁴⁸ As a portal that can lead to the spiritual world, the contact with the portrayed through the icon is given high significance here. Interaction with the Imaged is regarded by James as the link between the human and the divine in the space of the icon. In this way, the holy image can be interpreted as a locus of mediation, existing in a space between the two realities that facilitates their communication. James' statement that 'the worshiper... was transported into a visionary world where the differences between the artist's imitations and their objects was erased'²⁴⁹ raises the question of whether or not it is the essence of the divine that is revealed through

²⁴⁵ Liz James, 'Senses and Sensibility in Byzantium', *Art History*, 27.4 (2004), 523-37.

²⁴⁶ In particular, James claims that after the victory of the iconophiles, it was accepted that 'the material could convey the divine... material objects became not-art so that they could function as gateways to the divine'. See James, 'Senses and Sensibility in Byzantium', p. 533.

²⁴⁷ James states that the believer passes through the senses 'beyond the physical realm to the spiritual'. See James, 'Senses and Sensibility in Byzantium', p. 533 Elsewhere she claims that 'the worshiper... was transported into a visionary world beyond objects, to the point where the ontological differences between the artist's imitations and their objects was erased: there was no boundary between the object and the living body, between the physical realm and the spiritual'. Moreover, she mentions that 'Art's installation in the sensory and spatial allows the viewer to cross between this world and the next'. See James, 'Senses and Sensibility in Byzantium', p. 533.

²⁴⁸ *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium: Studies Presented to Robin Cormack*, ed. by Eastmond and James.

²⁴⁹ James, 'Senses and Sensibility in Byzantium', p. 533.

the icon. And if the answer to this question is affirmative, then how can the form of the prototype contain information that would lead to the potential revelation of its essence through the corporeal interaction between image and beholder? Even though James highlights the importance of the role of the body in the interaction between the human and the divine and perceives the holy image as a space in between the two realities, the process of being ‘transported into a visionary world’ and ‘accessing the divine’ is somewhat obscure in her work, as there is no clear indication of whether she refers to a type of identity between the image and the prototype, following Demus’ essentialist approach, or whether the term ‘means of access to the divine’ refers to the icon as a means of remembering and contemplating the holy persons depicted in the icon.

Thomas Mathews, in his reading of the Byzantine icon in the context of the liturgy, attempts to adapt a paradigm of transformation that, according to him, applies for the liturgy in the context of the icon.²⁵⁰ Mathews suggests that in the same way that Christ is present within the Eucharistic gifts, He is also present within the church through His images.²⁵¹ In this way, for the participant in the liturgy, the act of looking at an icon

²⁵⁰ See Thomas F. Mathews, 'Psychological Dimensions in the Art of the Eastern Christendom', in *Art and Religion: Faith, Form and Reform*, ed. by O. Overby (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1986), pp. 1-21; Thomas F. Mathews, 'The Sequel to Nicaea II in Byzantine Church Decoration', *Perkins Journal*, 61 (1988), 11-21; Thomas F. Mathews, 'The Transformation Symbolism in Byzantine Architecture and the Meaning of the Pantokrator in the Dome', in *Church and People in Byzantium. Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies. Twentieth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Manchester 1986*, ed. by Rosemary Morris (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies, 1990), pp. 191-214. In these articles, Mathews suggests that the liturgy is a ‘site of transformation’, in the sense that the participant can identify with Christ in corporeal terms through the Mystery of the Eucharist. By consuming His body and blood, Christ becomes present to the faithful and the faithful carry Christ within them.

²⁵¹ Mathews, 'Psychological Dimensions in the Art of the Eastern Christendom'; Mathews, 'The Transformation Symbolism in Byzantine Architecture and the Meaning of the Pantokrator in the Dome'.

becomes a sacramental reality equivalent to the act of consuming the gifts. For Mathews, the faithful are given the opportunity to experience the divine presence through the icon in sacramental terms. Thus the icon is regarded as being of equal significance to the Eucharistic gifts concerning the experience of divine presence. The icon is understood by Mathews as another ‘site of transformation’.²⁵² It is a locus where Christ comes to presence and identifies with the faithful. In the sense that the bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood, the formal representation is transformed into an essential presence in the icon. The space of the icon is therefore a space of conceptual fusion between form and essence, as form receives and contains essence. Mathews’ essentialist approach might differ from that of Demus but eventually leads to an area of confusion, failing to clarify the way that the divine essence is transferred into the icon. The Holy mystery of the Eucharist, signifies the ‘transformation from the invisible to the visible, from the absent to the present’,²⁵³ as Christ becomes manifest in the flesh within the Eucharistic gifts. However, the limits of representation in Christ’s image remain a locus of ambiguity for Mathews. He does not clarify either whether Christ is truly present in the image or the process through which Christ’s presence can potentially be achieved in His image in the manner of the Eucharist. The connection established within the space of the icon between form and essence is for Mathews of sacramental/mystical nature. However, the way that the image is transformed into a receptacle and the way that the divine essence is ‘transferred’ into the icon is unclear and most importantly is

²⁵² The term ‘site of transformation’ appears in Charles Barber’s comprehensive analysis of Mathews’ approach. Barber counters Mathews’ arguments. See Charles Barber, ‘From Transformation to Desire: Art and Worship after Byzantine Iconoclasm’, *Art Bulletin*, 75.1 (1993), 7-16, 8.

²⁵³ Barber, ‘From Transformation to Desire: Art and Worship after Byzantine Iconoclasm’, p. 9.

unjustifiable in theological terms, as there is no Mystery equivalent to that of the Eucharist that could be performed in order for the icon to be transformed into a container for Christ's essence. Mathews' essentialist transformation paradigm is controversial as it raises – mostly theological – questions for which it cannot provide answers.

Tracing different approaches to what it is that an icon represents, I have presented different concepts aiming to shed light on the question. Demus' explicit essentialism is found at the level of art production, whereas Mathews' essentialism is rooted in the role that the holy image plays in the liturgical life of the Church. On the other hand, Belting and James underline the fusion between portrait and portrayed existent among laymen by focusing mostly on the cult function of the icon in order to map the beholder's expectations from the holy image and draw conclusions as to what the icon represented for its users. However, for Demus and Mathews the essence-form duality is understood in terms of content and container, as they regard the icon as capable of receiving divine essence and becoming a space of fusion between image and archetype. For this reason, their approaches cannot be used in order to describe comprehensively exactly what it is that an icon really represents and, most importantly, why. James' approach is more apt as it establishes the space of the icon as existing in between form and essence and in between human and divine, with interaction providing the link that connects the two ends. The relationship between form and essence however, remains ambiguous in James' work and so does the way through which the beholder can use interaction with the Imaged to reach the divine. The flaws in these concepts and the ambiguities to which they eventually lead, arguably emanate from differences in the way that the theological background of the icon as set out by Byzantine thinkers during the Iconoclastic era is interpreted. The lack

of clarity that characterises many approaches is partly a result of a misinterpretation of St Basil's statement on the relation between portrait and portrayed, as noted above in the case of Demus. In fact, St Basil's statement, found in his work *De Spiritu Sancto*, refers to the inter-Triadic relationship of the Son with the Father. However, it was largely used by the iconophile Fathers of the Orthodox Church of the 8th and 9th centuries and also by the 7th Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (787) in order for the use of icons to be theologically justified and, in particular, in order for theologians to explain the relationship between the icon and its prototype. Indeed, as various researchers underline, the core of the teachings of the iconophile Fathers on icons is largely based on the Triadology of St Basil.²⁵⁴ The adaptation of the statement in the context of icon theory, led the iconophile Fathers to suggest that in the same way that the Son is a natural and identical image of the Father, the icon is an identical image of its prototype. However, a very important distinction is made by the iconophiles. The Son is an image of the Father according to essence, while the icon is an image of its prototype according to form only.²⁵⁵ In other words, there is no other link between the icon and its prototype apart from the similarity of their external form and therefore the former cannot function as a container for the latter. This crucial distinction between the formal and the essential is the cornerstone of the Church's

²⁵⁴ Liz James, 'Introduction', in *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture*, ed. by Liz James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 1-12; Mathews, 'The Sequel to Nicaea II in Byzantine Church Decoration'; Robert S. Nelson, 'Image and Inscription: Pleas for Salvation in Places of Devotion', in *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture*, ed. by Liz James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 100-19, 101; Dimitrios Tselengidis, 'The Triadology of St Basil as the Foundation of the Dogmatic Teachings of the Church', (2010) <http://egolpion.net/triadologia_m_basileiou.el.aspx> [accessed 11/10/2013].

²⁵⁵ Tselengidis, 'The Triadology of St Basil as the Foundation of the Dogmatic Teachings of the Church'.

teachings on the holy image,²⁵⁶ and even though scholars do recognise this distinction, their work makes the relationship between the formal and the essential rather ambiguous. In the discussion that follows I will turn to Byzantine views on the subject of the relation between portrait and portrayed. By following the works of three major iconophile Fathers and analysing parts of the Acts of the 7th Ecumenical Council in Nicaea (787) I aim at shedding light on the way that the iconophile thinkers developed their approach on the limits of representation in the icon.²⁵⁷

I begin with St John of Damascus (645/680–747/787) who was one of the first to defend the icons during the era of the iconoclastic controversy. His lengthy and systematic work on iconology (the doctrine of the Church on the veneration of sacred images) leads modern scholars to regard him as the icon defender par excellence. In his three ‘Apologies against those who attack the divine images’ he sets the foundations of the iconology of the Orthodox Church, contributing greatly to the iconoclastic controversy.²⁵⁸ In particular, in his third Oration he states:

*Εἰκὼν μὲν οὖν ἐστὶν ὁμοίωμα καὶ παράδειγμα καὶ ἐκτύπωμά
τινος ἐν ἑαυτῷ δεικνύον τὸ εἰκονιζόμενον, πάντως δὲ οὐ κατὰ*

²⁵⁶ However, it should be noted that there must have been a gap between religion as officially prescribed and religion as practiced in everyday life, even after the iconoclastic era and the Restoration of sacred images. The official stance of the Church concerning images after iconoclasm has arguably been different from the way that laymen regarded icons.

²⁵⁷ On the theology of the icon see: J. Trinick, 'St Gregory of Nyssa and the Doctrine of the Image', *Eastern Churches Quarterly*, 9.4 (1951), 175-84; Gerhart B. Ladner, 'The Concept of the Image in the Greek Fathers and the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 30.7 (1953), 1-34; V. Lossky, 'The Theology of Image', *Sobornost*, 3 (1957-1958), 510-20; George A. Maloney, *Man the Divine Icon: The Patristic Doctrine of Man Made in the Image of God* (Pecos, N.M.: Dove Publications, 1973).

²⁵⁸ Tselengidis, 'The Triadology of St Basil as the Foundation of the Dogmatic Teachings of the Church'.

*πάντα ἔοικεν ἢ εἰκὼν τῷ πρωτοτύπῳ τουτέστι τῷ εἰκονιζομένῳ—
 ἄλλο γὰρ ἐστὶν ἢ εἰκὼν καὶ ἄλλο τὸ εἰκονιζόμενον—καὶ πάντως
 ὁράται ἐν αὐτοῖς διαφορά, ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἄλλο τοῦτο καὶ ἄλλο ἐκεῖνο.
 Οἷόν τι λέγω· Ἡ εἰκὼν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, εἰ καὶ τὸν χαρακτηῖρα
 ἐκτυποῖ τοῦ σώματος, ἀλλὰ τὰς ψυχικὰς δυνάμεις οὐκ ἔχει· οὔτε
 γὰρ ζῆ οὔτε λογίζεται οὔτε φθέγγεται οὔτε αἰσθάνεται οὔτε
 μέλος κινεῖ. Καὶ ὁ υἱὸς εἰκὼν φυσικὴ ὢν τοῦ πατρὸς ἔχει τι
 παρηλλαγμένον πρὸς αὐτόν· υἱὸς γὰρ ἐστὶ καὶ οὐ πατήρ.²⁵⁹*

John begins by defining the image as the likeness of a prototype, thus stressing the interdependent nature of the relationship between the two. The element of likeness emerges once more as the bridge that covers the distance between form and essence and places the icon in the gap between the two. However, the image here emerges as an object partly detached from the prototype. Even though for the Damascene there is a clear distinction between the portrait and the portrayed, as ‘the one is not the other’, on the other hand he states that the image ‘shows in itself what it depicts’, a phrase that could possibly lead to ambiguities regarding the nature of the relation between image and

²⁵⁹ ‘An image is therefore a likeness and pattern and impression of something, showing in itself what is depicted; however, the image is certainly not like the archetype, that is, what is depicted, in every respect – for the image is one thing and what it depicts is another – and certainly a difference is seen between them, since they are not identical. For example, the image of a human being may give expression to the shape of the body, but it does not have the powers of the soul; for it does not live, nor does it think, or give utterance, or feel, or move its members. And a son, although the natural image of a father, has something different from him, for he is son and not father. John of Damascus, ‘Contra Imaginum Calumniatores Tres’, III 16. Translation of this extract comes from John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, p. 95. Translations of all other John of Damascus’ texts comes from: John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images: The Apologies against Those Who Attack the Divine Images*.

prototype. The obscurity of the extract arguably intensifies when John presents the reader with an example: a son is the ‘natural image’ of his father, but he is also different from the father because he is not the father. In John’s example, father and son share the same essence, an argument that, when transferred to the context of the discussion on the holy image, can indeed raise questions about how clearly defined the relation between portrait and portrayed is.²⁶⁰

In an attempt to find a clearer definition of the relation between the holy image and its prototype, I turn to the Acts of the 7th Ecumenical Council, held in Nicaea in 787. The Council of Nicaea dealt with the issues of iconoclasm and established the following concerning the icon:

Οὐδὲ γὰρ εἰκόνα τις ἀναζωγραφῶν ἀνθρώπου τινὸς, ψυχὴν ἐν τῇ εἰκόνει ζητεῖ... Οὐ μόνον γὰρ ψυχῆς ἐστέρεται εἰκὼν, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτῆς τῆς τοῦ σώματος οὐσίας... Εἰ γὰρ ταῦτα ἐν τῇ εἰκόνι καθωρᾶτο, ἄνθρωπον ἂν αὐτὴν ὀνομάσαιμεν, καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώπου εἰκόνα.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm*. For a detailed discussion of John’s contribution to the iconoclastic debate see: Pelikan, *Imago Dei: The Byzantine Apologia for Icons*; Moshe Barasch, *Icon: Studies in the History of an Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1992); Ladner, 'The Concept of the Image in the Greek Fathers and the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy'.

²⁶¹ ‘If someone draws a man, he does not seek his soul in the icon... [because] the icon is not only deprived of [the prototype’s] soul but also of the essence of his body. If these two could be seen in an icon then we would call the icon a man and not the image of man’. *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova Et Amplissima Collectio*, ed. by Giovanni Mansi, Domenico, 31 vols (Florence - Venice, 1759-1798), vol. 2, p. 244 BC. Translations of all texts of the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council are my own.

Gradually, the teachings of the Church on iconology start becoming clearer by abolishing essentialist overtones. Here the distinction made between image and prototype marks the final detachment between portrait and portrayed. By setting out the limits of formal representation in the icon, the iconophile Fathers delimit the beholder's expectations of the holy image by stating that 'if someone draws a man, he does not seek his soul in the icon'. There is no expectation of presence within the man's icon; the suggested relation between portrait and portrayed is at last a formal one, as the holy image is 'deprived of the prototype's soul and essence', remaining a mere likeness of the prototype. Introduced by the Damascene, the element of likeness is therefore established here as the only point of contact between the image and its archetype, denying the possibility of the former to transform into a container that could receive the latter.

In the work of St Theodore Studite the formalist paradigm becomes more elaborate and the relation between portrait and portrayed is analysed further. Theodore (759–826) contributed to the iconoclastic controversy by writing three orations against iconoclasts, under the general title 'On the Holy Icons'. His theological contribution is highly valued as in his work he defended the icons in an analytic and systematic way, during the second period of iconoclasm (814–841). In the following extract from his first Oration he states:

Οὐκ ἂν ποτε μανείη ἂν τις τοσοῦτον, σκιάν καὶ ἀλήθειαν, φύσιν καὶ θέσιν, ἀρχέτυπον καὶ παράγωγον, αἰτίον τε καὶ αἰτιατὸν, ταῦτόν ὑπολαμβάνειν κατ' οὐσίαν, καὶ λέγειν ἐν ἑκατέρῳ ἑκατέρα, ἢ θάτερον, ὡς ἂν Χριστόν καὶ αὐτοῦ τὴν εἰκόνα ἐν κατὰ τοῦτο ὑπολήψεσθαι ἢ φράζειν, ἀλλὰ ἄλλο Χριστόν, καὶ

*ἄλλο εἰκόνα Χριστοῦ κατὰ φύσιν, εἰ καὶ ἡ ταυτότης κατὰ τὸ
ἀμεροῆς τῆς κλήσεως.*²⁶²

Here the Studite explains further the relation between portrait and portrayed. At a first level, he abolishes the notion of the icon as a container for divine presence by stressing that the holy person cannot be found within his or her image. His argument is supported by the assumption that a formal representation of a prototype cannot in any way contain the essence of the latter as the two are entirely different in terms of essence, and for this reason he states that ‘Christ is one thing and his icon is another thing by nature’. Here the Studite clarifies any ambiguities that have probably been created after reading the extract of John of Damascus’ work cited above. Even though the Damascene arguably fell into an area of ambiguity when comparing the relation between portrait and portrayed to the natural relation between father and son (*‘A son being the natural image of his father is somewhat different from him, for he is a son, not a father’*), the Studite comes to assert that there is nothing ‘natural’ about the relation between the prototype and its image as their relation appears here as strictly formal. Even though the formal is detached from the essential, there still exists a link between the two in the form of likeness. This idea places

²⁶² ‘No one could ever be so insane as to suppose that shadow and truth, nature and art, original and copy, cause and effect are the same in essence; or to say that each is in the other or either one is in the other. That is what one would have to say if he supposed or asserted that Christ and his icon are the same in essence. On the contrary we say that Christ is one thing and his icon is another thing by nature, although they have an identical name’ in Theodore of Studios, ‘Antirrheticus Primus Adversus Iconomachus’, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J. - P. Migne, 162 vols (Paris: Centre for Patristic Studies, 1857-1886), vol. 99, p. 341 BC. Translation of this extract comes from Theodore of Studios, *On the Holy Icons* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981), p. 35.

the conceptual space of the icon within the form-essence dualism, at a space in between the image and its archetype.

Patriarch Nikephoros I of Constantinople (758–828) is another theologian who wrote in favour of icons.²⁶³ His principal works are three writings that refer to the defence of icons (*Apologeticus Minor*, *Apologeticus Major* with the three *Antirrhetici against Mamonas – Konstantinos Kopronymos* and a refutation of the Iconoclastic Council of 815). In his first *Antirrheticus* he clarifies what it is that is depicted in icons. In particular, he states:

Καὶ γὰρ ἐν μὲν τῇ περιγραφῇ ἐξ ἀνάγκης πάρεστιν, ἐν δὲ τῷ γράφεσθαι οὐ πάντως πάρεστιν, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ περιγράφει προηγουμένως, κἄν τις οἴηται τοῦτο δοῦν... Ἄνθρωπος γὰρ ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ εἰκόνι γράφεται μὲν, οὐ περιγράφεται δὲ ἐν αὐτῇ, εἰ μὴ ἐν τῷ οἰκείῳ τῆς περιγραφῆς τόπῳ. Καὶ ὁ τρόπος δὲ τούτων παρὰ πολὺ διήνεγκε, γράφεται μὲν γὰρ ἄνθρωπος διὰ χρωμάτων καὶ ψηφίδων, ἂν οὕτω συνενεχθείη, καὶ ταῦτα ποικίλως καὶ πολυειδῶς σχηματιζόμενος, καὶ διηλλαγμένοις τοῖς ἄνθεσιν, οὐδαμῶς δὲ ἔνεστι διὰ τούτων αὐτόν περιγράφεσθαι, ἐπεὶ ἕτερον ἔχειν τὸ περιγράφεσθαι εἶρηται. Ἔτι ἡ γραφή τὸ σωματικὸν

²⁶³ Charles Barber has analysed Nikephoros' work extensively and concerning various aspects of the relation between art and worship. For example see: Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm*; Barber, 'From Image into Art: Art after Byzantine Iconoclasm'; Barber, 'From Transformation to Desire: Art and Worship after Byzantine Iconoclasm'. See also: Paul J. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople: Ecclesiastical Policy and Image Worship in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958).

*εἶδος τοῦ γραφομένου παρίστησι, σχῆμά τε καὶ μορφήν αὐτοῦ
εντυπουμένη καὶ τὴν ἐμφέρειαν. Ἡ δὲ περιγραφή, ἐν οὐδενὶ
τούτων ἐπικοινωνοῦσα τοῖς εἰρημένοις τρισὶ τρόποις, τὰ
ἐμπεριειλημμένα ὀρίζει, καὶ ἢ μὲν ἐν τῷ ὁμοίῳ τὴν σχέσιν ἔχουσα
πρὸς τῷ ἀρχετύπῳ ἐστὶ, καὶ ἀρχετύπου γραφή ἔστι τε καὶ
λέγεται.²⁶⁴*

Nikephoros here introduces the distinction between inscription and circumscription in order to speak about the relation between form and essence in the holy image. According to Nikephoros, the painting, the inscription, makes present to the beholder only the form of the portrayed, while the essence of the portrayed is by necessity absent. The inscription, as a material representation of the portrayed cannot contain the latter in any sense, apart from the formal, due to the fact that the inscription is man-made, created through colours and mosaic tesserae. Thus, the essence of the image is necessarily material and not divine and it is given to it by its creator, the painter. As Nikephoros states, the material means used by painters to create images cannot ‘capture’ the divine

²⁶⁴ ‘In fact, it is in his circumscription that he is of necessity present. In his painting he is not at all present... for while a man is certainly inscribed in his icon, he is not circumscribed there, only in the place proper for circumscription. And the means for these are clearly distinct. For one inscribes a man through pigments and mosaics, as the situation demands, so producing his figure with varied and many means, and differing in brilliances. Never but never is it a question of circumscribing by these means, since it has been said that circumscription is something else again. Moreover, painting makes present the corporeal form of the one depicted, imprinting its contour and its sensible form and its likeness. Whereas circumscription, having nothing in common with these three models of which we have spoken, delimits boundaries. Hence the inscription has a relation in terms of likeness to the archetype and is an inscription of the archetype’. Nikephoros of Constantinople, ‘Antirrheticus’, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J. -P. Migne, 162 vols (Paris: Centre for Patristic Studies, 1857-1886), vol. 100, p. 357 BC. Translation of this text comes from Barber, ‘From Image into Art: Art after Byzantine Iconoclasm’, p. 8.

essence within the work of art as ‘circumscription is something else’ from the image at an essential level. The only point of attachment between the image and its archetype lies in the concept of likeness, the resemblance of the former to the latter according to form. Nikephoros elaborates further the formalist paradigm and extends the repertoire of arguments against the fusion between portrait and portrayed in the holy image by thinking in terms of art in contrast to liturgy, sacramental essential presence in contrast to formal/pictorial presence. Barber claims that Nikephoros is the first to suggest a purely formalist paradigm in his discussion about the limits of representation in the icon.²⁶⁵ However, I would suggest that the development of a formalistic current of thought started when John of Damascus made significant efforts towards the establishment of a paradigm that would abolish essentialist notions. When the Fathers of the 7th Ecumenical Council stated that ‘the icon is not only deprived of [the prototype’s] soul but also of the essence of his body’, the development of a stable conceptual current that suggested a formalist paradigm was indeed a reality. The Studite adopted the formalist concept and became more specific by stating more explicitly that ‘Christ and his icon are not the same essence’. At the time of Nikephoros, I would suggest that the formalist paradigm had been developed to a satisfying level, a fact that certainly aided him in constructing his own, more elaborate arguments. The holy image is therefore a portrait, with the link between portrait and portrayed provided by the element of likeness. Image and archetype are detached in terms of essence but they still bare a likeness, as they are related formally in the icon. The image has the form of the prototype and it is therefore related to it and necessarily exists in relation to it. The icon embodies this relation and it is shaped by it.

²⁶⁵Barber, 'From Transformation to Desire: Art and Worship after Byzantine Iconoclasm', p. 15.

The ability of the sacred image to unite the realm of being/archetype with the earthly world of the beholder allows it to function as a bridge between the two, a chora space in between that facilitates the beholder's interaction with the divine through the icon.

The presence-absence dualism in the space of the icon

If the holy image is a space in between human and divine where meaning is made, then the question that arises at this point is arguably that of what kind of presence is suggested in the icon or is to be expected by the beholder. Following Barber's discussion of the iconology of Nikephoros, we come across the argument that Nikephoros was the first to distinguish between the icon-as-image, in Belting's sense of the term, and the icon as work of art.²⁶⁶ Barber suggests that for most theologians before Nikephoros, the icon as an object of worship functioned mostly as a cult image, due to the fact that it was treated as being a presence. His argument is based on the assumption that because the holy image is indeed an object of worship, used to venerate and communicate with the divine, the expectations from it are analogous to the expectations that the faithful have from prayer or from the consumption of the Eucharistic gifts, on a different level of course. In particular Barber claims that in worship, 'whether it is the consuming of the Eucharistic gifts or a prayer to the saints, there is an expectation of presence'.²⁶⁷ In this way, according to

²⁶⁶ Barber, 'From Image into Art: Art after Byzantine Iconoclasm', p. 7.

²⁶⁷ Barber, 'From Transformation to Desire: Art and Worship after Byzantine Iconoclasm', p. 15.

Barber, the worshippers, integrated within cult practice, expect the image to re-present the one depicted, in order for them to communicate with the prototype effectively. Indeed, the need for communication with the divine arguably creates a desire for the subject of worship to become present and connect in a direct manner with the faithful. Barber claims that in the era before Nikephoros, the holy image was thus transformed into a magical object, connecting the holy person, the icon and the viewer in a unity where boundaries between essence and form are blurry. Between Demus' 'magical' presence, Mathews' 'transformational' presence and Barber's 'expectation of presence', it seems that the source of power of the icon indeed is an element of presence, but a peculiar kind of presence. All three approaches suggest a peculiar presence, a different kind of presence outside of essential or formal presence. It is rather a third kind of presence between the formal and the essential. However, Demus and Mathews do not manage to provide satisfactory answers as to the way that presence is realised in the holy image; the process through which the icon is transformed into a magical object and the process through which the icon becomes a locus of sacramental transformation both remain obscure. Barber, in an attempt to avoid this conceptual pitfall, sees in the holy image the projection of an expectation of presence from the point of view of the beholder, thus distancing himself from the essentialist paradigm and suggesting the creation of a space outside of the formal-essential dualism. However, as Barber argues, with Nikephoros the concept of presence in relation to the icon was re-examined.²⁶⁸ As the paradigm gradually shifted from the essential to the formal, Nikephoros, commenting on the function of the holy image claimed that 'in painting there is nothing of presence'. However, I would suggest

²⁶⁸ Barber, 'From Image into Art: Art after Byzantine Iconoclasm', p. 7.

that even before Nikephoros, presence or the substitution of it was not the aim of the holy image. Even though the case of St John of Damascus might be controversial, one should agree that since Theodore the Studite the distinction between form and essence is established and therefore notions of presence in the icon are gradually abolished. Christ was not expected to be present in His icon because an icon was clearly only an image of Christ and not Christ Himself. Abolishing essentialist notions however, can arguably raise questions about the icon's ability to perform miracles. As miraculous icons were at the centre of Byzantine religious culture and were highly revered, one might wonder how the theology of the image after Iconoclasm can be reconciled with the concept of the miracle-working icon. Regarded as produced by God, or by a saint (with divine support), miracles were perceived as a sign of the supernatural. As the faithful direct their prayer and petition towards God through the medium of the icon, God would act in response to those requests by purely spiritual force and perform a miracle visible through the icon, as the medium of communication between Him and the faithful. Therefore, the official position of the Church was that God or the saints, in extraordinary cases, perform miracles that are perceived through the icon and not performed by the icon itself. The divine energy is transferred from the holy persons to the faithful through the icon, mirroring the way that 'the honour given to the icon is passed to the prototype' as Basil states. Even though divine energy is not permanently contained in the icon, at the time of a miracle the sacred image momentarily becomes the medium through which divine energy passes to reach the beholder.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁹ See *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, p. 1378; Cornelia Tsakiridou, *Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity: Orthodox Theology and the Aesthetics of the Christian Image* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 53-56.

However, if the holy image does not embody an element of presence for the Church then what is it that it signifies? Is it a space completely other, outside of the presence-absence continuum, or can it be placed somewhere in between the two realities? Barber claims that the icon is the ‘signifier of absence’ or a ‘directed absence’ or works to ‘deny presence’.²⁷⁰ Indeed, in the post-iconoclasm era the Church has worked very methodically in order for essentialist notions to be abolished and for a formalist paradigm to be established. The holy images are not ‘vessels of divine power’ anymore, as John of Damascus suggests, in the sense that they cannot contain the divine.²⁷¹ As Nikephoros comments, the holy person cannot be circumscribed in his or her inscription; the icon is not a vessel of divine presence in any way, as there is ‘nothing of presence’ in it. Nevertheless, even though the Church did manage to establish a formalist model, Barber’s approach presents the holy image as the embodiment of a void, as an intentional attempt for lack of connection between the beholder and the Imaged. By all means, the lack of physical presence of the holy persons is the reason for which the icon is created as the need for connection with a physically absent person calls for the creation of a channel of communication. The icon is a link between presence and absence; it exists because of the need for a space in between that would facilitate communication between the beholder and the Imaged. As Belting argues, images ‘live from the body’s absence’ either

²⁷⁰ On the concept of directed absence see: Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm*, p. 120 On the concept of the icon as the ‘signifier of absence’ and on the way that the holy image works to ‘deny presence’ see: Barber, ‘From Transformation to Desire: Art and Worship after Byzantine Iconoclasm’, p. 15.

²⁷¹ John of Damascus, ‘Contra Imaginum Calumniatores Tres’. For a detailed analysis of this extract see Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm*

temporary or permanent.²⁷² The icon is indeed created in order to function as proof that the Imaged once existed but, at the same time, it fulfils the purpose of its existence by functioning communicatively, contributing actively to the establishment of a relationship between the Imaged and the beholder. Therefore, in the case of Barber's approach the communicative function of the holy image becomes problematic, as the icon-as-absence loses a great part of its potency within the practice of worship.

I would suggest that approaches that focus on the element of absence in the icon, either in the sense of the icon as a signifier or remembrance of absence, as in Barber's case, or in the sense of the icon as a substitute for absence, as in Belting's case, are to some extent problematic as the way these arguments are phrased opens up certain ambiguities about the presence-absence duality in relation to the categories of memory, signification and substitution. Even though Barber speaks of the icon as the signifier or the remembrance of the body's absence while Belting regards the icon as a material substitution for the body's absence, they both regard the icon as primarily projecting an absence-related concept. The icon is thus placed in a space towards the absence end of the presence-absence continuum and it is not given the ability to function as a link between the two. In this way, I would claim that both approaches deal with a beholder who confronts absence when looking at an icon, and the implications of this concept are twofold.

From a theological point of view, the function of the icon as a substitute for absence is an intriguing one. According to the Orthodox iconology, the holy image cannot function as a replacement for absence as this would mean that the icon replaces absence

²⁷² Hans Belting, 'Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology', *Critical Inquiry*, 31.2 (2005), 302-19, 312.

with a type of presence, a fact that is clearly rejected by Byzantine thinkers.²⁷³ Moreover, the icon cannot replace anything, neither absence nor presence; it can function neither as presence nor as absence nor as a substitute for presence nor as a substitute for absence as in every case there would be an element of essence involved. Therefore, either there is presence in the holy image and, in this case portrait and portrayed share the same essence and contain one another or the icon signifies absence and, in that case, the icon depicts the absence of the essence. It is obvious, neither of the above can be performed according the Orthodox iconology, as divine essence cannot be depicted or contained in a material form created by humans.

From a communicative point of view, if one accepts that the holy image functions as a signifier of absence or as a remembrance of absence then its communicative potency is dramatically diminished and its functional role within the practice of worship is almost erased, as it remains a mere object used for instructive purposes. For the faithful, accepting the fact that they venerate nothing but absence and emptiness would be very difficult as the image-beholder communication is expected to be bilateral. Even though the icon is created due to physical absence, it should not signify a void. However, if the spectator is arguably unable to communicate with an image that signifies absence, then it might be reasonable to conclude that the icon has to signify presence in order for a channel of communication to be established between the beholder and the holy person portrayed. Nevertheless, this approach has been rejected.

On a theoretical level, drawing on the work of scholars such as James and Peers, in order to suggest an alternative to the icon-as-absence, I want to stress the importance of

²⁷³ Nikephoros' statement makes it clear that 'in painting there is nothing of presence'.

the role of the icon-as-memory, and I would maintain that the icon exists in order for the beholder to be able to contemplate the represented person,²⁷⁴ and remember their actions and sacrifices on behalf of God. This theme is evident in Metochites' writings as he discusses the role of the icon-as-memory. In particular he states: *'Looking upon these things and venerating them we are forced to remember and to think humbly and to act and to take thought for God's suffering on our behalf: how much gratitude we owe and how much we should do and suffer on His behalf'*²⁷⁵ In this way, the icon is placed neither towards the absence end of the presence-absence continuum nor towards the presence end. It is rather placed in another space, a space in between the two that links them together through memory and contemplation. The concept of remembrance of the portrayed through the mediation of the icon as expressed by Metochites was originally proposed in the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. As suggested by the Fathers of the Council, the aim of the icon is to help the faithful remember, love and relate to the holy persons. This conception is described in the following extract from the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (787): *ὅσῳ γὰρ συνεχῶς δι' εἰκονικῆς ἀνατυπώσεως ὁρῶνται, τοσοῦτον καὶ οἱ ταύτας θεωμένοι διανίστανται πρὸς τὴν τῶν πρωτοτύπων μνήμην τε καὶ ἐπιπόθησιν.*²⁷⁶

The holy image emerges here as a locus of remembrance of and desire for the ones depicted, where the space between presence and absence is filled by memory and desire

²⁷⁴ Glenn Peers, *Subtle Bodies: Representing Angels in Byzantium* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), p. 98.

²⁷⁵ Theodore Metochites, Poem 1, lines 1120-1130. For the original text in Greek see Theodore Metochites, *Dichtungen Des Gross-Logotheten Theodoros Metochites*, p. 31. For the English translation see Featherstone, 'Metochites's Poems and the Chora', pp. 226-27.

²⁷⁶ 'For by so much more frequently as they are seen in artistic representation, by so much more readily are men lifted up to the memory and desire of their prototypes'. *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova Et Amplissima Collectio*, ed. by Mansi, 377 D.

for communication. The icon serves here as a medium in order for the beholder to keep the once present holy persons in his or her memory and desire them. As James argues, the portrait is ‘a recollection and a means of recollection’ of the persons depicted.²⁷⁷ However, the term desire used in the Acts of the Seventh Council has proven to be quite controversial. Barber, interpreting the above extract, suggests that the holy image in the post-iconoclasm era becomes for the beholder a ‘site of desire’.²⁷⁸ The desire of the faithful for divine presence, for communicating and identifying with the portrayed is projected on and, at the same time, by the holy image. The icon for Barber ‘marks an absence into which spectators could project their own desires’.²⁷⁹ In this way, according to Barber, the communicative void created by the icon-as-absence is filled by the faithful’s intense desire for connecting with the Imaged. Therefore, the holy image works to intensify the need for communication with the divine but at the same time it does not facilitate communication; rather, as absence, it denies it, separating the beholder from the holy person and excluding the icon from the practice of worship.²⁸⁰

However, I would claim that the extract from the Acts cited above, arguably leads us in a different direction. The term desire can be interpreted as representing love and therefore need for connection with the Imaged. Thus, the statement cited calls for an interpretation of the holy image as being fully and profoundly integrated in worship, functioning as a channel of communication between Imaged and beholder. The icon seems to bring the faithful and the divine closer, connecting them in a ‘visual

²⁷⁷ Liz James, ‘Art and Lies: Text, Image and Imagination in the Medieval World’, in *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium*, ed. by Antony Eastmond and Liz James (Aldershot, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 59-72, 67.

²⁷⁸ Barber, ‘From Transformation to Desire: Art and Worship after Byzantine Iconoclasm’, p. 14.

²⁷⁹ Barber, ‘From Transformation to Desire: Art and Worship after Byzantine Iconoclasm’, p. 14.

²⁸⁰ Barber, ‘From Transformation to Desire: Art and Worship after Byzantine Iconoclasm’, p. 16.

communion' by allowing the viewer to make a connection between the presence of the image and the absence of the archetype through memory.²⁸¹ In contrast to Barber's approach, I would propose that the extract from the Acts suggests a model of union between Imaged and beholder by remembering, loving and relating to the holy persons through the mediation of the icon. Looking at an icon is here an act of remembering of and relating to the holy persons.

Keeping worship in mind, as a purely communicative act, one might challenge the concept of the icon as being a locus of contemplation and remembrance by claiming that this paradigm reveals a picture where the intellectual element is dominant, while the corporeal element seems to be absent. The faithful's bodies do not meet the body of the holy person depicted, but they rather communicate in a purely spiritual manner. However, how can one speak of corporeal communication between Imaged and beholder without getting trapped in essentialist notions? I would suggest that corporeal interaction between the Imaged and the beholder can indeed take place, this time not because the Imaged is essentially present in the holy image but because the Imaged is depicted in a way that facilitates communication between the two parts of the equation. It is through art that the Byzantines found the way to communicate corporeally with the holy person through the icon in the post-iconoclasm era. Art provides the link between beholder and Imaged as well as presence and absence in the icon. Artistic elaboration of the icon grants it a type of presence outside of essential or formal presence. Art allows the Imaged to manifest itself in pictorial presence by giving the icon interactional qualities through specific

²⁸¹ Archbishop Damianos of Sinai Faran and Raitha, 'The Icon as a Ladder of Divine Ascent in Form and Color', in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, ed. by Helen C. Evans (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 335-41, 338.

techniques.²⁸² The Imaged becomes through art able to participate in an act of interaction that includes the beholder. Through the facilitation of interaction between Imaged and beholder, art fills the space between the two and establishes the foundations for the creation of meaning. When there is no 'expectation of presence' anymore, the Byzantine painter introduces an icon that, through the use of certain painting techniques, acquires communicative power, as the form itself is now interactionally potent. In this way, the holy person depicted in an icon emerges as a body-in-between, existing in the gap between living bodies and lifeless images, as a lifelike image. The concept of the lifelike image will be understood here as referring to an image that is interactionally potent, as the form is imbued with pictorial qualities that allow it to interact with the beholder.²⁸³ Taking Edward Snow out of context and transferring his discussion of Vermeer to a Byzantine environment, it could be claimed that the icon 'counters longing and nostalgia [for the persons depicted] with a stable present'.²⁸⁴ Even though there is awareness of the lack of presence in the icon, in light of Snow's statement, I would suggest that the communicative process between Imaged and beholder is sustained by the pictorial principles that govern the form because through these principles the expectation of presence in the icon is fulfilled by bringing the form into the present. The Byzantine

²⁸² The exact way through which the icon acquires interactional qualities will be discussed in chapter three.

²⁸³ The concept of lifelikeness will be discussed further in relation to the application of rhythm in the third chapter. Lifelikeness in Byzantine art has been discussed extensively. For example see Cyril Mango, 'Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 17 (1963), 53; James, 'Senses and Sensibility in Byzantium', ;George Kordis, *Icon as Communion: The Ideals and Compositional Principles of Icon Painting* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010); Henry Maguire, *The Icons of Their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996). In a section that follows I will give an overview of this discussion and I will elaborate more on the concept of the lifelike post-Iconoclasm image.

²⁸⁴ Edward Snow, *A Study of Vermeer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 6.

painter introduces an image that does not contain presence but rather is of present tense, a communicatively potent image that happens here and now. Therefore, the formal paradigm remains effective, while the need for connection with the divine is also satisfied.

Ultimately, I would argue that the power of the holy image emanates from its ability to function in a multilevel manner within the practice of worship. While corporeal communication takes place between the holy person portrayed and the beholder here and now, the beholder is encouraged to direct his or her mind to the contemplation of the Imaged. At the same time, the memory of the Imaged becomes imprinted in the faithful's minds and hearts through their contact with the icon and in this way they are able to carry the image of the holy person within them, in order to love them and relate to them. Art and memory function as links between presence and absence as well as between Imaged and beholder, assisting in the establishment of a space of interaction and production of meaning in between realities.

The role of art in the space of the icon

Up to this point I have attempted to explore the way that Byzantine thinkers perceived issues concerning the relation between image and prototype. The above analysis has now brought us back to the point where the discussion initially began. Therefore the question remains whether the icon was perceived as a cult image, a container for presence, or as a work of art, a chora-space in between image and archetype,

in the post-iconoclasm era. Belting suggests that the Byzantine icon functioned primarily as a cult object, embodying a sense of presence emanating from the fusion between portrait and portrayed. However, as concluded in the above discussion, the formalist paradigm was arguably introduced in the seventh century but was certainly in effect by the eighth century while essentialist notions were gradually being abolished. Therefore, at the level of the official Church, Belting's generalised definition of the medieval image can indeed be challenged.

Nevertheless, even though it can be claimed that the icon was not regarded as a cult object by the Church, this does not necessarily prove that the holy image was regarded as a work of art either, as the two are not perforce mutually exclusive. An extract from the decree of the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (787) can be understood as attesting to the concept of the icon as work of art. The extract reads:

*οὐ ζωγράφων ἐφεύρεσις ἢ τῶν εἰκόνων ποίησις, ἀλλὰ τῆς
Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἔγκριτος θεσμοθεσία καὶ
παράδοσις...αὐτῶν (των Πατέρων) ἢ ἐπίνοια καὶ ἡ παράδοσις,
καὶ οὐ τοῦ ζωγράφου. Τοῦ γὰρ ζωγράφου ἡ τέχνη μόνον.*²⁸⁵

The holy image here emerges as an object that belongs to the wide stream of tradition. It is not a creation that projects the individuality of the painter's interpretation of the divine but it is rather an image on which and through which the communal spiritual

²⁸⁵ 'The making of icons is not an innovation of painters but [it is] a tradition of the Church... it is a notion and tradition of the Fathers and not of the painter. The art alone is the painter's'. *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova Et Amplissima Collectio*, ed. by Mansi, 252 bc.

needs are projected. As Yannaras would argue, ‘the Church has to recognize in the painter’s image the archetype of its truth... which is an event of communion’.²⁸⁶ Thus, according to the extract cited above, what the painter ultimately creates is an artistic elaboration of the archetype. In this way, it becomes clear that the prototype, detached from art, functions as an ‘autonomous visual discourse’ and by necessity precedes art.²⁸⁷ The painter, by exercising the art of painting, attempts to present the archetypal form in a pictorial way in order to bring it into pictorial existence.²⁸⁸ The distinction expressed here between the archetypal form and the artistic portrait, the signified and the signifier, has two primary extensions. Firstly, there is a distinction between portrait and portrayed, form and essence, and therefore there is awareness that the latter is not contained in the former. The first condition leads to the second, as there is also a distinction between the archetypal form, the signified, and the artistic process that makes it present to the beholder inside the

²⁸⁶ Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), p. 252.

²⁸⁷ Barber, 'From Transformation to Desire: Art and Worship after Byzantine Iconoclasm', p. 15. The term art in this context is probably not to be understood strictly in the contemporary sense of the term, where the focus is shifted more on the genius of the artist and on art as his or her invention (Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, p. xxi). The Greek word for art is *techne* and means ‘the science of fashioning anything’, ‘the fashioning of the work’ and it is concerned with ‘making, involving a true course of reasoning’ according to Aristotle. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. by Robert Bartlett, C. and Susan Collins, D. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), pp. 6, 4. The noun *techne* derives from the verb *teucho* which means ‘to build’, ‘to be the builder of a work’, ‘to create’, ‘to give reason to matter’. See Pierre Chantraine, *Dictionnaire Étymologique De La Langue Grecque* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2000), Vol. 4 Castoriades in *Les carrefours du Labyrinthe* explains: ‘the Greek word *techne* goes back to a very ancient verb, *teucho*, (attested exclusively but innumerable times by the poets...) whose central meaning in Homer is ‘to make’, ‘to produce’, ‘to construct’... Already in Homer the shift was accomplished from this meaning to that of causing, of making something to be, of bringing into existence, often detached from the idea of material fabrication, but never from that of the suitable and effective act’. See Cornelius Castoriades, *Les Carrefours Du Labyrinthe* (Paris: Seuil, 1978), pp. 222-23.

²⁸⁸ G. Kordis, *The Iconology of Photios and the Art of the Post-Iconoclasm Era* (Athens: Armos, 2002), p. 32.

church. On the relation between the archetypal form and the work of art, Barber comments that ‘the concern of the artist was with the art alone, while the content conveyed by the work of art was prior to the artist and not subject to intervention by the artist’.²⁸⁹ The archetype is thus a sign, a given form that cannot be changed as it is formed by a set of physical characteristics of the one depicted. Art then follows in the sense of artistic elaboration and attempts to help this given form achieve its role and function within the life of the Church. Consequently, as depicted in the decree of the 7th Ecumenical Council, there is a growing realisation of the fact that art is an act that charges the archetypal form in a communicative way. Art gives the prototype the ability to become interactionally potent by using a specific system of pictorial principles. Eastmond and James argue that ‘icons are images. Yet they are also art. What they looked like mattered. Aesthetics influenced both form and function’.²⁹⁰ Therefore, the icon in the post-iconoclasm era is for the Church a work of art.²⁹¹ Through artistic elaboration, the image is granted a type of pictorial presence, a type of presence in between essential and formal presence. It is through art that the prototype acquires pictorial form. The element of likeness between icon and prototype is established through art. In this way the holy image functions as a bridge between the Imaged and the beholder, as a chora-space in between human and divine, facilitating interaction between the two through the icon. As the analysis performed above shows, the concept of art was not a theoretical invention of the Renaissance as

²⁸⁹ Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm*, p. 112.

²⁹⁰ *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium: Studies Presented to Robin Cormack*, ed. by Eastmond and James, p. xxx.

²⁹¹ For an overview of the discussion on the meaning of the term art in the Middle Ages see Henry Maguire, 'Introduction', *Gesta*, 34.1 (1995), 3-4.

Belting suggests.²⁹² Under this prism, Barber's approach seems to be more appropriate: 'a history of the image is *sometimes* other than a history of art'.²⁹³

The icon as a space-in-between connecting Imaged and beholder

Art is the material link between the Imaged and the beholder as it establishes a space of interaction between the two and facilitates in this way the production of meaning. In this section I look at the conditions that affect the formation of the chora space of becoming between Imaged and beholder, such as interactivity and corporeality. Demus, recognising that the communicative function of the holy image is of significant importance to the Byzantine painter, argues that the aim of the painting is to establish a relationship between the 'world of the beholder and the world of the image'.²⁹⁴ In particular, he adds, the image should be related to the beholder in order for it to be 'functional', and to achieve this the picture must be 'visible, comprehensible, easy to recognize and to interpret'. Moreover, Demus points out that in Byzantine painting 'everything must be clear for the beholder to perceive'.²⁹⁵ In light of Demus' remarks, one understands that the holy image is not only aesthetically pleasant, in the sense of art for the sake of art, in Belting's terms. The holy image, while having the characteristics of a

²⁹² Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*.

²⁹³ Barber, 'From Image into Art: Art after Byzantine Iconoclasm', p. 8.

²⁹⁴ Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium*, p. 4.

²⁹⁵ Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium*, p. 7.

work of art,²⁹⁶ was also an object that functioned within the process of worship, and therefore it had to be functional. Functionality here is directly related to the degree of potential connection that can be achieved through the mediation of the space of the icon between the beholder and the holy person represented. Thus, in order for the holy image to serve its purpose, its content had to be of a nature that would facilitate interaction. For Demus, the necessary condition in order for the communicative process to be made possible is that the content of the holy image is represented in a clear and comprehensible manner, so that the beholder can relate to it straightaway, without having to pass through the labyrinth of personal interpretation.²⁹⁷ Even though I would argue that Demus' approach reveals only part of the picture concerning the process through which a Byzantine icon becomes functional, I would agree with him on the importance of functionality, as it is a major factor in making the space of the icon, the space in between Imaged and beholder, more accessible.

In order for the beholder to become able to relate to the Imaged, a communicative process between the individual viewer and the holy person depicted needs to take place within the conceptual space of the icon. The icon-viewer communication is a quite complex process however and it unfolds on different levels, as both Barber and James

²⁹⁶ As Eastmond and James point out in the introduction to the book *Icon and Word: the Power of Images in Byzantium*, icons 'are images but they are also art. What they looked like mattered. Aesthetics influenced both form and function'. *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium: Studies Presented to Robin Cormack*, ed. by Eastmond and James, p. xxx.

²⁹⁷ Demus' approach points us in the right direction concerning the importance of the role of the beholder in Byzantine painting, but it is not exhaustive. Even though he underlines the significance of the functionality of the holy image, he does not explain sufficiently the way through which functionality is achieved. While his statement that the image has to be 'visible, comprehensible, easy to recognize and to interpret' suggests an appealing approach, it is at the same time quite obscure. As Demus does not provide us with more information on the way that he perceives visibility, comprehensibility, and ease of recognition and interpretation in the context of icon theory, his approach does remain open to personal interpretation.

point out.²⁹⁸ The developing relation between the beholder and the Imaged is however of a bilateral nature or at least that is the expectation of the faithful. In this section of the chapter I am going to focus on two characteristics of the Imaged-viewer communication that create the conditions that regulate the interactional space in between. Exploring the way that interactivity and corporeality become involved will reveal the complexity of the conditions under which contact is made between Imaged and beholder and meaning is negotiated.

Interactivity: the active Imaged

The act of communicating that takes place between the Imaged and the beholder can be characterised as interactive, and as researchers suggest, neither the viewer nor the Imaged has a passive role in this communicative process. Communicating with the holy person represented through the icon is necessarily linked to the sense of sight and is consequently bound by the limitations of the visual. The complexity of viewing practices in Byzantium as commented on by various researchers, indicates a complexity in analysing the act of communicating through the visual field.²⁹⁹ Therefore one's focus concerning the icon-viewer communication should be on the way that different modes of

²⁹⁸ For example see Barber, 'From Transformation to Desire: Art and Worship after Byzantine Iconoclasm', ;James, 'Art and Lies: Text, Image and Imagination in the Medieval World'.

²⁹⁹ Robert Nelson mentions in relation to visuality in Byzantium: 'There could be no single interpretation that could ever account for something as complex as the viewing practices of a culture'. See Robert S. Nelson, 'To Say and to See: Ekphrasis and Vision in Byzantium', in *Visuality before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. by Robert S. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 143-68. On vision and its limitations in relation to the holy image see also Charles Barber, *Contesting the Logic of Painting: Art and Understanding in Eleventh-Century Byzantium* (Boston: Brill, 2007).

looking at the object of worship and being looked at affect the nature of the communicative process. The concept of interactivity emanates primarily from the Byzantine notion of vision as a phenomenon that works in two ways, through intromission and extramission.³⁰⁰ Optical rays emanate either from the beholder's eye and extend towards the viewed object, in our case the holy image, thus indicating an active beholder, or from the viewed object and expand in an optical cone towards the viewer, indicating in this way an active image.³⁰¹ However, due to the co-existence of both theories in Byzantium, the roles of the viewing subject and the viewed object can be perceived as being interchangeable, a fact that adds an element of interactivity to the space of the icon, connecting the Imaged with the beholder. Clemena Antonova, commenting on the interactive nature of the icon-viewer communication argues that in Byzantine painting the distinction between the subject and the object is blurred as the roles of the 'viewing subject' and the 'viewed object' are 'radically transformed'.³⁰² The interchangeability of roles during interaction between the transmitter and the receiver is a characteristic of the space of the icon that gives new meaning to the practice of worship, as the object of worship appears able not only to receive but also to reply. The image does not simply receive the beholder's requests but it rather acts and also reacts to his or her actions by transmitting energy, to which the beholder then reacts in order for a new cycle of communication to begin. In this way, the space in between Imaged and beholder can be considered to be an interactive domain, a space under negotiation where bodies interact to

³⁰⁰ James, 'Senses and Sensibility in Byzantium', p. 525.

³⁰¹ The concept of the optical rays forming a virtual cone whose apex is the source of the light and whose base is the boundary created by the viewed object is of Euclidean origin. For more details see Nelson, 'To Say and to See: Ekphrasis and Vision in Byzantium', p. 152.

³⁰² Clemena Antonova, *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon : Seeing the World with the Eyes of God* (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), p. 154.

produce meaning. The beholder and the pictorially present Imaged share the space in between and partake of it equally, activating it and charging it with meaning. However, it should be noted here that the image's active role should be perceived mainly at a pictorial level, otherwise one will be led to essentialist notions which will contradict the iconophiles' views on the formal character of the holy image, as discussed earlier.

The beholder can encounter and communicate with the holy persons depicted in the image effortlessly in his or her own spatial dimensions. Maguire suggests that the realm of the divine manifests itself into the visible through the icon. In his book *The Icons of Their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium* he states that 'it was the image, whether in icons or visions, that made the unseen world real'.³⁰³ In studying the formal qualities of Byzantine portraiture, Maguire highlights the importance of the careful definition of the holy person depicted and suggests that accurate definition is the catalyst behind Imaged-viewer communication as it provides the link between portrait and portrayed by facilitating the viewer's recognition of the saint. In Maguire's work, the purpose of the icon is the active facilitation of interaction between the realm of the divine and the human world and in this sense the holy image is regarded as a space of revelation, existing in between Imaged and beholder that functions as a bridge between

³⁰³ Maguire speaks of the revelation of the unseen world mostly from a symbolic and intellectual point of view, mainly through accurate definition of the saint depicted. See Maguire, *The Icons of Their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium*, p. 3. The realm of the divine is regarded as manifesting itself into the visible through the holy image in James' work as well. Although James recognizes that the icon is indeed a secure way through which the beholder can connect with the holy person depicted, her understanding of the interaction between Imaged and beholder is quite different, as it is the worshipper who is transported through the image into the realm of the divine. Therefore, the role of the viewing subject is regarded by James as more active than that of the viewed subject. See James, 'Senses and Sensibility in Byzantium', pp. 532-33.

the two worlds.³⁰⁴ Kordis also suggests that it is not the beholder who enters an autonomous pictorial virtual reality, through their contact with the icon, in order to come closer to the world of the Imaged; rather it is the ‘unseen’ and ‘hidden’ world of the icon that reveals itself by moving towards the viewer and entering their space.³⁰⁵ The fact that the act of revealing happens in and through the icon, aids in the establishment of a symbiotic relationship between medium and message, holy image and archetypal form, in the sense that it could be claimed that arguably ‘the medium is the message’.³⁰⁶ Taking this idea one step further, I would claim that the icon marks a locus of active mediation, emerging at the same time as medium, transmitter and receiver, in a network of interchangeable roles that *happen* during the practice of worship.

The complexity of the act of communicating with the holy image is suggested by Symeon the New Theologian. In particular, he suggests a paradigm of interactive communication where both the beholder and the image are active in their encounter with each other. Symeon (949–1022) was a monk and poet and was the originator of a theory of experiencing the divine on earth through spiritual vision. In the extract from his Second Thanksgiving that follows, he describes the way through which God reveals His image to the beholder and the way through which the beholder looks at the image:

³⁰⁴ See Maguire, *The Icons of Their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium*.

³⁰⁵ Kordis, building on Maguire, focuses more on the realization of the concept of revelation as the latter is performed through painting, that is at a more practical level. See Kordis, *Icon as Communion: The Ideals and Compositional Principles of Icon Painting*, p. 15.

³⁰⁶ McLuhan’s now-famous aphorism ‘the medium is the message’ was introduced in the first edition of *Understanding Media* in 1964. See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London: Routledge, 2001).

Ὡσπερ γὰρ ἐπὶ τυφλοῦ κατὰ μικρὸν ἀναβλέποντος καὶ τὸν χαρακτήρα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κατανοοῦντος καὶ οἶός ἐστιν ἐκ τοῦ κατ' ὀλίγον ἀνιστοροῦντος, οὐχ ὁ χαρακτήρ πρὸς τὴν ὄρασιν μεταποιεῖται ἢ μεταπλάττεται, ἀλλὰ τὸ ὀπτικόν μᾶλλον τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτοῦ ἀποκαθαιρόμενον, τὸν χαρακτήρα, οἶός ἐστιν, ὄρα, ἐντυπουμένης οἴονεὶ τῆς ἐμφερείας αὐτοῦ ὅλης τῷ ὀπτικῷ καὶ διὰ τούτου διῆκνουμένης καὶ ἀπομασσομένης καὶ ὡς ἐν πίνακι ἐγχαραττομένης τῷ νοερῷ τε καὶ μνημονευτικῷ τῆς ψυχῆς, οὕτω καὶ αὐτὸς ὠράθης, τῷ φωτὶ τρανώς τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος ἐκκαθάρας μου τὸν νοῦν ὀλικῶς. Κάκεινον τρανότερον καὶ καθαρότερον βλέποντος, αὐτὸς μοὶ ποθεν ἐδόκει ἐξέροχθαι καὶ λαμπρότερος φαίνεσθαι, καὶ χαρακτήρα μορφῆς ἀμόρφου ὄραν ἐμπαρεῖχές μοι.³⁰⁷

For Symeon, the act of looking at an image is of an interactive nature. On the one hand, the beholder's gaze seeks to see what is there to be seen. The viewer searches for their

³⁰⁷ 'When a blind man gradually recovers his sight and notices the features of a man and bit by bit ascertains what he is, it is not the features that are transformed or altered into the visible. Rather, as the vision of that man's eyes becomes clearer, it sees the features as they are. It is as though they wholly imprint themselves on his vision and penetrate through it, impressing and engraving themselves, as on a tablet, on the mind and the memory of the soul. You Yourself became visible in the same manner when by the clear light of the Holy Ghost You had completely cleansed my mind. Thence seeing more clearly and distinctly, You seemed to come forth and shine more brightly, and allowed me to see the features of Your shapeless shape.' Symeon the New Theologian, *The Discourses* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), pp. 374-76. Translation in Barber, *Contesting the Logic of Painting: Art and Understanding in Eleventh-Century Byzantium*, p. 23. For an analysis of Symeon's approach to vision in relation to the spiritual experience see Barber, *Contesting the Logic of Painting: Art and Understanding in Eleventh-Century Byzantium*, chapter 2.

object in the sense that they adapt and alter their vision in order to become able to see it. On the other hand, the viewed object reveals itself to the viewer by ‘coming forth’ and ‘shining’, by acting as a source of light, which emanates from it and reaches towards the beholder who then becomes able to see the object. In this case, it is as if the viewing subject is looked at by the viewed object, with the two roles being interchangeable. As the beholder becomes the object of the image’s illumination, accepting its light and using it in order to see its form, Symeon describes a process of interactive communication where the role of the transmitter and the receiver are blurred. The beholder seeks to see the image and at the same time the image makes itself available to sight; then the beholder accepts the image’s energy and allows it to imprint itself onto the mind and soul. This element of two-dimensionality of vision gives Symeon’s approach to the act of communicating with the icon an interactive character. As Barber underlines, for Symeon the term vision has two dimensions as it includes both the light that emanates from the image and the light that comes from the beholder’s eyes and illuminates the image.³⁰⁸ This exact theoretical fusion of two different theories of visual communication in one will lead us to the following section where I will be discussing the active role of the beholder in the act of communicating with the icon.

Interactivity: the active viewer

I would like to open the discussion of the role of the beholder in the communicative process by observing that when the potential relationship between the beholder and the

³⁰⁸ Barber, *Contesting the Logic of Painting: Art and Understanding in Eleventh-Century Byzantium*, p. 50.

Imaged is under consideration, the former, as well as the development and nature of the relationship are often interpreted in a generalising manner. As Leslie Brubaker points out, the fact that a beholder is a person who undergoes constant changes, a person who is not the same every time that he or she participates in the communicative process, is often disregarded.³⁰⁹ Different beholders have different degrees of spiritual capability and emotional availability at a given time and for this reason the shape of the space in between, unfolding in front of the beholder, can be regarded as a domain yet-to-be-written that accommodates endless revision and is deeply marked by the uncertainty of the act of interacting. The conceptual space of the icon lies in the realm of becoming, it is constantly under negotiation and therefore always in the making.

Byzantine sources reveal that the beholder is the one who can choose whether to be active or not, as far as he or she is given this opportunity. This is made evident in the writings of St Photios of Constantinople (810–893). Photios was Patriarch of Constantinople (858–867 and 877–886) and is recognised by many theologians as the most important intellectual of his time, as ‘the leading light of the ninth-century renaissance’.³¹⁰ The writings of Photios, and especially his *Biblioteca*, were well known to Metochites, as he quotes ancient authors from Photios in his fourteenth Logos.³¹¹ Photios in his 43rd Epistle suggests that the beholder indeed has an active role when it comes to his or her interaction with the holy image. In particular he states that ‘we [the viewers] lift ourselves up to reach the degree of knowledge of the Imaged and honour

³⁰⁹ *The Sacred Image East and West*, ed. by Robert Ousterhout and Leslie Brubaker (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), p. 5.

³¹⁰ Andrew Louth, *Renaissance of Learning East and West. Greek East and Latin West: The Church Ad 681-1071* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007), p. 159.

³¹¹ Ševčenko, *Études Sur La Polémique Entre Théodore Métochite Et Nicéphore Choumnos*, p. 255.

it'.³¹² The use of the verb in the phrase 'lift ourselves up' is very important because it indicates activity from the side of the beholder during the communicative process. Here the beholder is presented as being able to choose whether to relate to the prototype or not, as there is no clear indication that the image compels the viewer in order for him to connect with it. The term 'lift ourselves up' does not suggest that the image dictates anything to the viewer; instead the viewer, depending on his or her capability and spiritual availability at that moment, comes to a level of relating to the Imaged through the icon. The concept of the icon as expecting the beholder's invitation for interaction in order for it to become activated, interestingly survives in an eighteenth-century painter's manual written by Dionysius of Fournà. Dionysius (1670–after 1744) was an iconographer himself and he is the writer of *Hermeneia* of Byzantine Painting (1730–1734), a very detailed iconographer's manual that is in use by icon painters even today. The *Hermeneia* is among the oldest of the surviving iconographer's patternbooks and instruction texts and even though it was written in the 1730s it draws on much earlier material.³¹³ It is a very detailed guide and has been used by scholars as a relevant source in order to analyse the iconography of Byzantine churches of a much earlier date. As Underwood, Der Nersessian, Akyürek and Karahan have shown among others, Dionysius' guidelines were followed by the painters of the Chora centuries before the composition of the *Hermeneia*.³¹⁴ The way that Dionysius perceives the image-beholder

³¹² 'εἰς ἔννοιαν καὶ τιμὴν τοῦ εἰκονιζομένου ἀναγόμεθα' in Photios of Constantinople, *Φωτίου Τοῦ Σοφωτάτου Καὶ Αἰγιωτάτου Πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Ἐπιστολαί*, ed. by Ioannis Valettas (London: D. Nutt, 1864), p. 340. Translation of this extract is my own.

³¹³ Robert Scheller, *Exemplum: Model-Book Drawings and the Practice of Artistic Transmission in the Middle Ages (Ca. 900 - Ca. 1450)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995), p. 385.

³¹⁴ Akyürek, 'Funeral Ritual in the Parekklesion of the Chora Church', p. 103; Der Nersessian, 'Program and Iconography of the Frescoes of the Parekklesion', p. 302; Ann Karahan, *Byzantine*

relation is very similar to the way that this relation is perceived by the Byzantine theologians of the eighth and ninth centuries, suggesting in this way the survival of Byzantine theories of visual communication in the post-Byzantine era. Dionysius writes:

*..βλέποντες τόν καθένα ἅγιον εἰς τήν εἰκόνα ἱστορισμένον,
εὐθύς ἐνθυμούμεθα τά ἔργα αὐτοῦ καί τόν προσκυνούμεν καί
τόν δοξάζομεν, ἀνεβάζοντες τόν νοῦν μας εἰς τό πρωτότυπον.³¹⁵*

The beholder is for Dionysius active and can decide whether to take action after viewing an icon or not. Thus, it is implied that the viewer does not simply accept the energy of the Imaged as emanating from the holy image and acts as they are expected to. The beholder, in order to become able to relate to the holy person represented, has to act, to ‘raise his thought to the Imaged’ and establish in this way a channel of spiritual connection. As Nelson argues, ‘seeing was active, continuous and connected and took place immediately. Seeing implied continuity, connection, presence, immediacy and an active subject’.³¹⁶ The act of looking at an icon required from the beholder a degree of responsibility in order for him or her to be able to connect to the Imaged; the beholder had to be present in the sense of being readily available to remember the holy person and relate to it through the icon, which is regarded as a locus of encounter. As Brubaker

Holy Images - Transcendence and Immanence: The Theological Background of the Iconography and Aesthetics of the Chora Church (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), p. 18; Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 302.

³¹⁵ ‘[The viewer] when he sees an icon of a saint he immediately remembers the acts of the saint and honours him and raises his thought to the Imaged’. Dionysios of Fourni, *Ερμηνεία Της Ζωγραφικῆς Τέχνης* (Agion Oros: Hermeneia, 2007), p. 212. Translation of this text is my own.

³¹⁶ Nelson, ‘To Say and to See: Ekphrasis and Vision in Byzantium’, p. 155.

comments, the beholder is charged with a certain degree of responsibility during the act of interacting with the holy image. Establishing a channel for spiritual connection is the beholder's responsibility as it is necessary in order to progress from the veneration of matter to the contemplation of the Imaged.³¹⁷ The creation of a relationship with the Imaged is therefore necessarily a conscious and deliberate decision on the beholder's side and it should not be regarded as something that simply happens to everyone without effort being put into it.

James attempts to add one more dimension to the issue of the responsibility of the beholder in the establishment of a channel of spiritual connection between him or her and the Imaged. Commenting on the way that the relationship between the holy person depicted and the viewer is constructed, she argues that in order for the beholder to connect with the Imaged spiritually, he or she has to look at the image using a mode of sight that she calls 'correct'.³¹⁸ In her opinion, 'correct sight' is a condition that potentially aids the communication between viewer and prototype by allowing the viewer to penetrate through the icon as a medium and connect with the holy person represented spiritually. James, in order to support her argument, mentions an anecdote from the life of St Theodore of Sykeon, bishop of Anastasiopois in Galatia, Asia Minor. According to the story, Theodore sent an archdeacon to buy a vessel for communion from Constantinople. When the archdeacon returned and showed the vessel he had bought to the saint, it is said that Theodore, 'unlike those around him, was able to see that the silver of the vessel bought for communion was in reality blackened and tarnished, thanks to the

³¹⁷ *The Sacred Image East and West*, ed. by Ousterhout and Brubaker, p. 5.

³¹⁸ In particular, James mentions: 'correct sight allowed one to see with spiritual vision', that is to say to come to a level of understanding and relating to the Imaged. James, 'Senses and Sensibility in Byzantium', p. 528.

metal having previously been used as a prostitute's chamber pot'.³¹⁹ This incident from the life of St Theodore arguably attests to the conception of the significance of the individuality of the beholder in relation to his or her connection with the divine. In this case, 'correct' sight is associated with the beholder's spiritual capability, indicating the importance of the visual in the act of contemplating the spiritual. However, the concept of 'correct' sight and its implications concerning the beholder's relation with the divine could be questioned from a theological point of view, as it suggests a link between the visual and the intellectual that can indeed be challenged. Nevertheless, my main argument against James' approach is based on a purely communicative view. I would argue that using terms such as correct or incorrect to describe and understand the interaction between two parties and/or their relationship is problematic as it suggests an interaction whose outcome can be predicted. The question that is posed here concerns the degree of connection between the beholder and the Imaged and not simply whether there is connection or not. The degree of spiritual capability of the beholder will determine the degree of connection between him or her and the divine and therefore a categorical yes or no approach cannot shed enough light on the phenomenon. For this reason, I would suggest, that James' 'correct sight' should probably be described as 'effective sight', a mode of looking that implies the existence of varied degrees of spiritual capability and thus leads to varied degrees of relating to the divine.

The individuality of the beholder has become an object of study for Barber, too. His interpretation of the icon as a 'site of desire' takes into account the individuality of

³¹⁹ *Three Byzantine Saints: Contemporary Biographies of St. Daniel the Stylite, St. Theodore of Sykeon, and St. John the Almsgiver*, ed. by Elisabeth A. S. Dawes and Norman Hepburn Bayes (New York St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1977), chapter 42.

the beholder in order to form an approach that regards the relationship between the Imaged and the viewer and, consequently the communicative process in which they are involved, as a fluid situation. Offering the beholder a great degree of autonomy, Barber regards the icon as a locus that is 'not marked by fixed meanings or readings',³²⁰ therefore leaving more space for the beholder to project his or her own 'desires' onto the holy image. Barber describes a process where the icon 'happens' or 'takes place' in Belting's sense of the term,³²¹ as it is expected to react according to the beholder's expectations of it. The conceptual space of the icon is therefore regarded as fluid and moldable in the process of producing meaning. The bodies of the beholder and the Imaged are present in a site of struggle, where they interact to make meaning of their shared space and their relation. The chora-space of the icon that separates the beholder from the Imaged is negotiable and through interaction it is endlessly shaped and re-shaped in the process of it coming into being of meaning.

Corporeality in the space of the icon

As I have tried to show up to this point, the communicative process that takes place between the Imaged and the beholder is quite complex. However, apart from it being interactive, it can also be characterised as being primarily corporeal. The interactional area that the icon marks is dominated by the presence of bodies and their communication in the process of inscribing meaning on that space. The researchers, whose work I cite in

³²⁰ Barber, 'From Transformation to Desire: Art and Worship after Byzantine Iconoclasm', p. 11.

³²¹ Belting, 'Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology', p. 302.

order to explore the characteristics and the implications of the negotiation of the space of the icon among bodies, even though they agree that intellectual activity is necessarily required for a relationship to be established between Imaged and beholder, they do not underestimate the importance of corporeality in this process. As James points out, inside the Byzantine church, the place of worship par excellence, the body and ‘the body’s relation to the spiritual’ are placed ‘at the centre of religious experience’.³²² The corporeality of the act of interacting with the Imaged is a major concern for Byzantine thinkers as well, who emphasise the importance of the senses mostly in the beholder’s efforts to ‘approach’ and relate to the divine. In particular, St John of Damascus states that ‘we use all of our senses to produce worthy images of Him, and we sanctify the noblest of the senses which is that of sight’.³²³ Producing mental images of Christ in one’s mind, imprinting His image in one’s memory or connecting with Him spiritually begins with contacting Him at a visual level through the medium of the icon. Although potentially all senses could be used in communicating with the divine, the icon as a primarily visual aid favours sight. For this reason, in the Damascene’s discussion of images sight is ‘the noblest of the senses’ and the notion of its domination over the rest of the senses is evident.³²⁴ Therefore, whether one regards the act of looking at an icon as

³²² James, ‘Senses and Sensibility in Byzantium’, p. 525.

³²³ ‘τὴν πρῶτην ἀγιαζόμεθα τῶν αἰσθήσεων (πρῶτη γὰρ αἰσθήσεων ὄρασις)’ in John of Damascus, ‘Contra Imaginum Calumniatores Tres’, I 17.

³²⁴ John here links the corporeal to the intellectual in the sense that each requires the other in the cognitive process. The Damascene abolishes the division between the world of the ideal and the world of the empirical not only by recognising the important role that sight plays in the process of attaining knowledge but by admitting that the only way to knowledge passes through the corporeal senses. See Alain Besançon, *The Forbidden Image: An Intellectual History of Iconoclasm* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 127; Peers, *Subtle Bodies: Representing Angels in Byzantium*, p. 115; Leslie Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium: Image as Exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus* (New York: Cambridge University

a means towards perception of the form and knowledge or as a means towards spiritual connection with the Imaged, sight emerges as a primary means through which communication between the beholder and the viewed object is made possible and meaning is produced. In this section, I will explore these two parallel directions of visual experience through Byzantine sources.

The act of seeing as a means towards perception of form and production of meaning is commented on by John of Damascus. For him the role of sight in the communicative process is clearly of great importance. In sections 8–13 of his First *Antirrheticus* he speaks of the icon as a medium that renders the invisible visible and accessible and examines the role of sight and of the act of seeing in perceiving the subject of the icon and in connecting the viewer with the Imaged. Under this prism, the extract that follows should be read as John’s attempt to describe analytically the way that the beholder uses sight to perceive what he sees.

*Διά γάρ τῆς αἰσθήσεως φαντασία τις συνίσταται ἐν τῇ
ἐμπροσθίῳ κοιλίᾳ του εγκεφάλου καί οὕτω τῷ κριτικῷ
παρᾶπέμπεται καί τῇ μνήμῃ ἐνθησαυρίζεται.³²⁵*

In John’s text, it is sight that leads the beholder through a visual experience to the intellectual, as the visual stimuli are translated into a certain perception in the brain that

Press, 1998), p. 46; Parry, *Depicting the Word: Byzantine Iconophile Thought of the Eight and Ninth Centuries*, p. 37.

³²⁵ ‘A certain perception takes place in the brain, prompted by the sense, which is then transmitted to the faculties of discernment, and adds to the treasury of knowledge something that was not there before’. John of Damascus, ‘Contra Imaginum Calumniatores Tres’, I, 11.

ultimately enriches the beholder's knowledge of the viewed object. John claims that it is through sight that the beholder perceives the image and can relate to the viewed object. A mental image of the stimulus is perceived through sight and becomes imprinted in the viewer's mind. Through this process, this mental image is transmitted to the faculties of discernment, and finally it becomes a memory in the beholder's mind. Therefore, it is through sight that the viewer has his or her first contact with the Imaged. Sight, as the primary receptor of the visual stimulus plays an important role in the act of communicating with the Imaged. However, even though sight seems to function as a receptor only, its role is far more important than that of being just a channel of communication. According to the Damascene, it is through what the beholder sees that he or she can attain *knowledge* of the form of the Imaged, as the creation of the mental image of what has been seen is based on the act of perception through corporeal sight. The viewer relies on sight in order not only to perceive but also to understand the transmitted message and produce meaning within the space of the icon. The concept of the corporeality of knowledge is described even more explicitly in his third *Antirrheticus*, where he mentions:

*Εἰ γὰρ καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν λόγων ἔσθ' ὅτε κατανοοῦμεν σχήματα, ἀλλ' ἐξ' ὧν εἶδομεν, καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν τούτων ἐρχόμεθα κατανόησιν.*³²⁶

³²⁶ 'If we sometimes understand forms by using our minds, but other times from what we see, then it is through these two ways that we are brought to understanding', in John of Damascus, 'Contra Imaginum Calumniatores Tres', III 24.

For John the act of seeing as the step towards perception is directly related to knowledge, enhancing in this way the concept of knowledge to include aspects of the visual. Nikephoros' and Photios' writings also echo this notion while highlighting the role of sight in the communicative process.³²⁷ All three writers agree that it is not only through intellectual activity that one can attain knowledge, but through sight too, which is a corporeal sense. It becomes clear that sight does not function only as a channel of communication between the image and the viewer's mind, in other words as a mechanistic part of the communicative process. Bodily sight is identified as being a way to the production and inscription of meaning in the chora-space of the icon. It should be underlined however, that Nikephoros' conception could probably be characterised as the most revolutionary, as he highlights the immediacy of the process by stating that 'from the first sight and encounter, a clear and perfect image of these [the facts] is gained'. The conception of the corporeality of meaning production emerges as a very important element in Byzantine post-iconoclasm thought. In fact, St John underlines that if something cannot be perceived through sight then it cannot be understood at all and this is the exact reason for which, according to him, icons are created. In particular he states:

*Μή θέλων οὖν ὁ Θεός παντελῶς αγνοεῖν ἡμᾶς τα ἀσώματα
περιέθηκεν αὐτοῖς τύπους καί σχήματα καί εἰκόνας κατά τήν*

³²⁷ In particular, Nikephoros of Constantinople states in his *Antirrheticus*: '...[painting] directly and immediately leads the minds of the viewers to the facts themselves... and from the first sight and encounter, a clear and perfect knowledge of these is gained'. Photios, following a similar notion states: '...sight touches what is visible... and transfers this image to the faculties of discernment. From there a memory is produced in order [for the beholder] to attain knowledge'.

*ἀναλογίαν ἡμῶν σχήματα σωματικά ἐν αὐτῷ ὁράσει νοός
ὁρώμενα.*³²⁸

In this extract John explains that the viewer's access to the knowledge of the form of each bodiless, divine creature, can only be performed through images, only through forms that correspond to the beholder's nature and that they consequently can perceive and understand. In this extract, the importance of the role of icons is clearly revealed. For the beholder, according to the Damascene, there is no possibility of access to knowledge by using only his reasoning. Instead, it is only through images and the use of sight that the viewer can be led to knowledge because in this way theoretical and transcendental images are transformed into forms perceptible by the viewer's corporeal sense, in correspondence to his or her nature.³²⁹ However, I would suggest that the relation between sight and knowledge expressed in John finds its most pure expression in a very ambiguous phrase found in his first *Antirrheticus* (III, 23). There, John speaks of *σωματική θεωρία*,³³⁰ a corporeal and at the same time intellectual act that leads the

³²⁸ 'God wills that we should not be totally ignorant of bodiless creatures, and so He clothed them with forms and shapes, and used images comprehensible to our nature, material forms which could be seen by the spiritual vision of the mind'. John of Damascus, 'Contra Imaginum Calumniatores Tres', III, 24.

³²⁹ John expressed this notion elsewhere as well. 'Ἐπειδή γάρ διπλοὶ ἐσμεν, ἐκ ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος κατεσκευασμένοι, καὶ οὐ γυμνή ἡμῶν ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχὴ, ἀλλ' ὡς ὑπὸ παραπετάσματι καλύπτεται, ἀδύνατον ἡμᾶς ἐκτὸς τῶν σωματικῶν ἐλθεῖν ἐπὶ τὰ νοητά.' ('Because we are of a double nature, made of soul and body, and our soul is not naked but it is covered [by the body], it is impossible for us to reach knowledge without [using] our body') in John of Damascus, 'Contra Imaginum Calumniatores Tres', III 19. Elsewhere he states: 'Θεωροῦντες δὲ τὸν σωματικὸν χαρακτήρα αὐτοῦ ἐννοοῦμεν ὡς δυνατόν καὶ τὴν δόξαν τῆς θεότητος αὐτοῦ' ('By viewing the image [of Christ] we understand, as possible, the glory of God') in John of Damascus, 'Contra Imaginum Calumniatores Tres', III, 13.

³³⁰ 'διὰ σωματικῆς θεωρίας ἐρχόμεθα ἐπὶ τὴν πνευματικὴν θεωρίαν'. John of Damascus, 'Contra Imaginum Calumniatores Tres', III 27. The extract can be translated as 'Through corporeal

beholder to connect with the viewed object and engage in a process of producing meaning. The term sums up perfectly in my opinion John's notion of the corporeality of knowledge as it stands for a mental function that is mediated through, prompted or initiated by the act of seeing. In this way, sight should be thought of as having a primary role in the establishment of an intellectual connection between the beholder and the Imaged as it mediates and enriches his or her knowledge of it. One can therefore assume that production of meaning in the chora-space of the icon is thought to be an aesthetic 'experience' (aesthesis = sense), an experience for the beholder's sense of sight primarily. Consequently, active participation in the space in between that separates the beholder from the viewer is primarily a bodily experience, as 'access' to the intellectual realm 'passes' through bodily forms, through aesthetic experiences experienced through bodily senses.

Photios' approach enriches our understanding of the role of sight in the communicative process, as he speaks of the act of seeing as a means towards spiritual connection between Imaged and beholder. Photios' approach arguably favours more the spiritual implications of the beholder's visual experience of the icon. In particular, in his 17th homily that he recited during the unveiling of a mosaic of the Virgin in Hagia Sophia, he claims that 'it is through sight that the image is imprinted in the soul's

sense we come to spiritual understanding'. John also uses the term *αἰσθητὴ θεωρία* as an equivalent to *σωματικὴ θεωρία*. ('διὰ τε λόγου ταῖς βίβλοις ἐγγραφομένον–εἰκονίζει γὰρ τὸ γράμμα τὸν λόγον, ὡς ὁ θεὸς τὸν νόμον ταῖς πλαξίν ἐνεκόλαψε καὶ τοὺς τῶν θεοφιλῶν ἀνδρῶν βίους ἀναγράπτους γενέσθαι προσέταξε– καὶ διὰ θεωρίας αἰσθητῆς, ὡς τὴν στάμνον καὶ τὴν ῥάβδον ἐν τῇ κιβωτῷ τεθῆναι προσέταξεν εἰς μνημόσυνον αἰώνιον' in John of Damascus, 'Contra Imaginum Calumniatores Tres', III, 23). Translating the term *αἰσθητὴ θεωρία* is even more problematic as the term itself is quite ambiguous. *Θεωρία* can mean either the act of seeing or the act of assessment and evaluation. Therefore, the first definition refers to a visual experience while the second refers to intellectual activity. The word *αἰσθητὴ* indicates something that is perceptible by the senses.

canvas'.³³¹ Photios' focus is shifted from that of John towards the possibility of a deeper spiritual connection between the beholder and the Imaged, as he speaks of an image that becomes imprinted in the former's soul. In this way sight emerges as a means through which the establishment of a spiritual connection with the Imaged can be rendered possible.

In the process of shaping the interactional space of the icon into a chora space of becoming, there is nothing that is not related in some way to the body, even intellectual activity and spiritual connection with God. The body is the first receptor of every stimulus and it cannot be diverted for any reason because without the information that visual experience offers, the person cannot reach knowledge. Body, mind and soul together form a united entity, an organic unity that cannot be separated. The icon is created in a way that every form presented corresponds to the beholder's nature; it is 'appropriate for man's material nature' as Barber puts it, in order for it to be easily perceptible by him or her.³³² The chora-space of the icon, existing in between the Imaged and the beholder, has to facilitate the communication of the Imaged with the beholder and the production of meaning through interaction, as well as his or her spiritual connection with the divine, through visual experience.

However, is it possible to claim that the beholder's body as a whole is involved in the communicative process? James, in 'Sense and Sensibility in Byzantium' suggests that it is through all five senses that the beholder participates in the communicative process

³³¹ 'Ὡσπερ γάρ ο λόγος ό δι' άκοής, ούτω δι' όψεως ή μορφή τοίς τής ψυχής έγγαράττεται πίναξιν'. In Photios of Constantinople, *The Homilies of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople*, ed. by Cyril Mango (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 290 (Homily 17).

³³² Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm*, p. 19.

that takes place between him or her and the Imaged.³³³ James constructs her argument based on the Byzantine visual theory that favoured both intromission and extramission. The optical rays that emanate from the source of light, either the beholder or the object, form a virtual cone and as such move towards the object until they touch it so that the subject, the source of light, can become visible. Based on this account, James claims that sight for the Byzantines was a ‘tactile sense’, a notion that is also suggested by Nelson.³³⁴ In particular James suggests that ‘vision was believed to work through intromission or extramission, but both involved contact between the eye and the thing seen. One touches the world, grasps it and carries it back to the mind. Touching an icon becomes a form of seeing and vice versa’.³³⁵ Photios, when describing the way that sight is involved in the communicative process, seems to perceive it as a tactile sense. In particular he states that ‘sight, through intromission and extramission touches what is visible’.³³⁶ Therefore, by relating the visual to the haptic, Byzantine thinkers arguably propose a synesthetic paradigm, in the sense that through vision another sense is activated too, which allowed the beholder to experience the act of looking at an icon in a different, more rich in

³³³ James, 'Senses and Sensibility in Byzantium', p. 525. For an analysis of art and the role of the senses see: J. Ree, 'Introduction: From an Aesthetic Point of View', in *From an Aesthetic Point of View: Philosophy, Art, and the Senses*, ed. by Peter Osborne (London: Serpent's Tail, 2000), pp. 1-10. Also see Bob Raczka, *More Than Meets the Eye: Seeing Art with All Five Senses* (Brookfield, Conn.: Millbrook Press, 2003).

³³⁴ James, 'Senses and Sensibility in Byzantium', p. 525 See also Nelson, 'To Say and to See: Ekphrasis and Vision in Byzantium', p. 153.

³³⁵ James, 'Senses and Sensibility in Byzantium', p. 525.

³³⁶ 'και γὰρ και αυτή γε δήπου τῇ προχύσει και ἀπορροῇ τῶν ὀπτικῶν ἀκτίνων τὸ ὄρατὸν οἰονεῖ πως ἐπαφωμένη και περιέπουσα τὸ εἶδος τοῦ ὄραθέντος'. This extract can be found in Photios' 17th Homily. Original text in Photios of Constantinople, *The Homilies of Photios*, ed. by Vasileios Laourdas (Thessaloniki: Ellinika, 1959), pp. 170-71. Translation is my own. For a detailed analysis of this extract see Kordis, *The Iconology of Photios and the Art of the Post-Iconoclasm Era*, pp. 38-40.

sensual terms way. Sight is always dominant amongst the senses. However, it is undeniable that the act of worship involved the participation of the other senses, too. The faithful in order to venerate the Imaged would touch the icons, kiss them, decorate them with fresh flowers so that they smelled nice, kneel, sing hymns and read prayers in front of them. The veneration of the image embraced the whole body and was transformed from a strictly visual experience to a corporeal one, highlighting in this way the active nature of the act of worship through the icon.

At the beginning of this chapter I explored the way that the conceptual space of the icon is transformed into a space in between, by looking at the implications of the relation between the formal and the essential in the holy image. I suggested that the icon can be regarded as a chora-space as it unfolds in between the beholder and the Imaged and functions as a bridge uniting the two realities through the icon. Therefore, the space of the icon does not suggest a type of essential presence of the Imaged; it is rather created in order to function neither as presence nor as absence but rather as a recollection of the acts and the sacrifices performed by the holy persons depicted on behalf of God. In this way, its communicative function towards its user is not violently disrupted by the notion of the icon-as-absence and at the same time, the holy image's role is in accordance with theological necessities, as the notion of the icon-as-presence is rejected. The icon emerges as a recollection of the acts of the holy persons depicted, as described by Metochites in his writings, and it is consciously, for the era under discussion, a work of art. Following this conception, the icon, as a space in between shaped by art, suggests the emergence of a lifelike Imaged that is present not essentially but not non-essentially either. The Imaged within the conceptual space of the icon acquires a third kind of presence, as it becomes

pictorially present through art. The presence of the lifelike Imaged facilitates the expansion of the conceptual space of the icon towards the beholder and the establishment of an interactional space of coming into meaning between Imaged and viewer. Looking at the conditions that shape the space of the icon between Imaged and viewer, I suggested that interactivity and corporeality play a major part in the communication between the two parties. The chora-space of the icon, unfolding in front of the beholder, is therefore regarded as a space of interaction between the body of the faithful and the pictorial body of the Imaged. The space of the icon, in between the beholder and the Imaged, is a chora space under negotiation, shaped by the presence of bodies and always in the process of becoming meaningful. In the following chapter, I will analyse the way that pictorial presence is realised in the space of the icon and I will explore how this development affects the formation of the chora space in between Imaged and beholder, and the production of meaning.

Chapter 3: The role of form in shaping the space of the icon

The artistic elaboration of the image creates a third kind of presence within the space of the icon that can be regarded as pictorial presence, a development that aids the expansion of the space of the icon towards the beholder. In this chapter I look at how the design of the Palaeologan image affects the transformation of the space of the icon into a space in between Imaged and beholder. In the first part of this chapter, with the focus shifting from the theological and conceptual analysis of the second chapter to a formal analysis of the image, I explore the way that Byzantine painters of the Palaeologan era responded to the conceptual background of the icon through the design of images. The design principles, the particularities and the peculiarities of the Palaeologan holy image will be studied in detail in this chapter by analysing various approaches presented in recent scholarship and by using images from the Chora monastery as examples. The main aim of the first part of this chapter will be to identify a system of analysis of the Palaeologan icon that allows us to understand how pictorial presence is realised through painting and how the space of the icon is transformed into an interactional space of becoming. It will be argued that through the application of a specific type of rhythm, images are transformed into lifelike, pictorial bodies that facilitate corporeal interaction with the beholder within the space of the icon. The expansion of the space of the icon towards the beholder and his or her inclusion into it are two of the main characteristics of

the Palaeologan image. The space of the icon is thus regarded as a chora-space: it is a space in between – between visibility and invisibility, past and present, immediacy and mediation, presence and absence – where the interaction of the body of the beholder with the pictorial body leads to the re-shaping of space and the inscription of meaning. After establishing rhythm theory as the most appropriate tool for understanding the realisation of pictorial presence and the formation of a pictorial body within the space of the icon, the second part of this chapter will move to a hands-on visual analysis of two images in the parekklesion of the Chora monastery. My aim is to demonstrate the applications of rhythm and the way it affects the formation and the experience of the interactional space between Imaged and beholder inside the particular space of the parekklesion.

Identifying the pictorial principles of Palaeologan image design

Applying Byzantine theories of visual communication to practice can prove to be a challenging task. The lack of primary sources on the theoretical background of Byzantine painting makes its analysis and interpretation difficult, as researchers often disagree even on the identification of the basic principles of this type of art. Here, I will attempt to identify the fundamental compositional principles of post-iconoclasm Byzantine art, with a focus on Palaeologan art, through analysis of existing scholarship on the subject and observation of images from the Chora monastery. In focusing on tracing the underlying structure of the holy image, I aim to explore different views on reading and interpreting

Palaeologan painting in order to identify those most suitable for the study of the images of the Chora parekklesion. In this section I focus on the design principles of the image and not on other elements, as it would take me beyond the field of my enquiry to consider the implications of the use of pictorial light or colour in the images of the Chora. Generally, it can be noted that colour and light are used to help create a unified scheme of images within the chapel, as well as to create certain hierarchies within it, like for example in the case of the bright white garments of Christ in the Anastasis.³³⁷

One of the main characteristics of Byzantine art is that the identification of a single point where all pictorial forces meet in the painting surface is not possible. The paintings of the Chora monastery are characteristic examples of that technique. For this reason, one is necessarily led to follow a different approach in order to understand the design principles of the paintings of the Chora. The scene of the Enrolment for Taxation will serve as an example (fig. 8).

³³⁷ Hills, studying Byzantine luminism, argues that the Palaeologans used light as a dynamic external force that strikes the figures and functions as a metaphor for the fervour of the saints. See Hills, Paul, *The Light of Early Italian Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 28, 112.



Figure 8: The Enrolment for Taxation. Eastern lunette of the second bay of the exonarthex. Mosaic.

The design of the architectural structures depicted in this image demonstrates in an excellent way the lack of a single vanishing point inside the painting. As Oystein Hjort observes, the upper part of Cyrenius' throne, on the left side of the image, approximates an isometric projection, while at the same time the lower part of the throne approximates an oblique projection. The building to the right is also worthy of attention, as the upper part of it approximates an oblique projection while the lower part approximates an orthogonal projection.³³⁸ John Willats observes that in the scene as a whole, the dominating orthogonals move upwards and outwards from the centre of the image,

³³⁸ Hjort, "Oddities" and "Refinements": Aspects of Architecture, Space and Narrative in the Mosaics of Kariye Camii', p. 33.

creating an impression of ‘inverted perspective’.³³⁹ However, he also observes that the small building at the far left seems to be designed to move down towards the centre of the image, upsetting to some extent the theory of ‘inverted perspective’.

The Enrolment for Taxation is a characteristic example of the Byzantine pictorial system that arguably places the vanishing point, if indeed there is only one, not inside the painting but outside of it. This method of organisation of the image’s pictorial forces, characterised by Hjort as a ‘fundamental convention’ of Byzantine, and specifically of Palaeologan art,³⁴⁰ has been labelled ‘inverted’ or ‘reverse’ perspective by Mathew.³⁴¹ Even though the term ‘inverted perspective’ is hetero-defining and therefore highly problematic, it has been widely used to describe the Byzantine compositional system. The definition of the term is also an area of debate. Mathew in *Byzantine Aesthetics* defines the system of ‘inverted perspective’ as one in which the vanishing point ‘is not behind but in front of the picture’.³⁴² The impression that the pictorial elements of Byzantine images in a way project towards the beholder is arguably one of the most common

³³⁹ John Willats, *Art and Representation: New Principles in the Analysis of Pictures* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 34; Willats, *Art and Representation: New Principles in the Analysis of Pictures*.

³⁴⁰ Hjort, "Oddities" and "Refinements": Aspects of Architecture, Space and Narrative in the Mosaics of Kariye Camii', p. 33.

³⁴¹ Gervase Mathew, *Byzantine Aesthetics* (London: J. Murray, 1963), p. 32. The terms inverted and reverse perspective seem to have the same meaning for art historians. Even though they are not necessarily interchangeable, they are both used to describe the phenomenon of a system of perspective that is characterised by a tendency towards the emanation of forces outside the painting surface rather than their concentration on a point inside it, thus giving the impression of lack of depth in the image.

³⁴² Mathew, *Byzantine Aesthetics*, p. 33. The same definition has been adopted by other scholars, too. See for example Michel Quenot, *The Icon: Window on the Kingdom* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992), p. 106; Stuart Robinson, *Images of Byzantium: Learning About Icons* (London: Loizou Publications, 1996), p. 20; Egon Sendler, *The Icon, Image of the Invisible: Elements of Theology, Aesthetics and Technique* (Redondo Beach, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1988), p. 127.

observations.³⁴³ Velmans for example in 'Le Rôle Du Décor Architectural Et La Representation De L' Espace Dans La Peinture Des Paléologues', highlights the Palaeologan tendency towards the projection of pictorial forces outwards, in the direction of the beholder.³⁴⁴ Pentcheva also comments on the impression of the expansion of the holy image towards the physical space in front of it.³⁴⁵

However, the term 'inverted perspective' is dependent on the linear perspective that characterised western art from the Renaissance onwards and therefore it would not be known by Palaeologan artists. It would thus be more fruitful to begin by looking at the image and perform an analysis of it without reference to the canonical terminology of western art history. Moreover, the definition of 'inverted perspective' itself, and consequently the adoption of the term in describing Byzantine art, is problematic as more often than not there is no single point where all pictorial forces meet in front of the painting surface. In order to tackle this latter problem and to create a theoretical framework that could systematise the Byzantine compositional system, various scholars have proposed different interpretations of 'inverted perspective'. Miriam Bunim for example, regards 'inverted perspective' as a system of 'hierarchic scaling' where the closer the figures appear to the spectator, the smaller they are and vice versa.³⁴⁶ Bunim's

³⁴³ The term has been used by many scholars to describe the Byzantine pictorial system. For example, see Mathew, *Byzantine Aesthetics*; Willats, *Art and Representation: New Principles in the Analysis of Pictures*; Pavel Florensky, 'Reverse Perspective', in *Beyond Vision: Essays on the Perception of Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002); Boris Uspensky, *The Semiotics of the Russian Icon* (Lisse: The Peter De Ridder Press, 1976); Antonova, *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon : Seeing the World with the Eyes of God*.

³⁴⁴ Tania Velmans, 'Le Rôle Du Décor Architectural Et La Representation De L' Espace Dans La Peinture Des Paléologues', *Cahiers archeologiques*, 14 (1964), 183-216, 306-07.

³⁴⁵ Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium*, p. 228.

³⁴⁶ Miriam Bunim, *Space in Medieval Painting and the Forerunners of Perspective*, [1st AMS ed.]. (New York: AMS Press, 1970), p. 7.

definition, while probably being closer to the Byzantine pictorial reality than Mathew's definition, is based on isolated observations and cannot be applied universally as characteristic of post-iconoclasm, and especially Palaeologan art, as a whole. Bunim's approach does not take into consideration the phenomenon of hierarchies of scale that very often appears in Byzantine painting. Under this principle, in certain images some figures are large even when they appear close to the spectator, as the painter wants to highlight the importance of the figure in the image.



Figure 9: The Raising of the Daughter of Jairus. Eastern half of the arch of the bema of the parekklesion. Fresco.

An example of this type of spatial organization is the image of the Raising of the Daughter of Jairus in the parekklesion (fig. 9), where Christ, the figure closest to the

spectator is at the same time the biggest one, because it must be clear that he is the most important one. Even though such hierarchies cannot be taken as rules they certainly challenge Bunim's approach and put it under question.

Hjort on the other hand, in 'Oddities and Refinements' attempts to enrich our understanding of the compositional system of Palaeologan art by proposing an 'enhanced inverted perspective' system. Studying mostly architectural elements in images, Hjort suggests that the system of 'inverted perspective' should be perceived in terms of multiple viewpoints that are present simultaneously. An example of this approach is the building in the image of Joseph Taking the Virgin to His House, where different parts of the building project towards the beholder at different angles (fig. 10).³⁴⁷

³⁴⁷ Hjort, "'Oddities" and "Refinements": Aspects of Architecture, Space and Narrative in the Mosaics of Kariye Camii', pp. 35-43.



Figure 10: Joseph Taking the Virgin to His House. Western half of the transverse arch between the first and second bays of the inner narthex. Mosaic.

Here, there is no single vanishing point but many, the number and direction of which varies from one image to another. Hjort's approach is based on observation and seems to describe the Palaeologan compositional system satisfactorily, as it focuses on tackling one of the biggest criticisms of the 'inverted perspective' concept, the single viewpoint. However, the high level of complexity of the compositional techniques employed by the Palaeologans, makes it difficult for one to use Hjort's approach systematically in determining the underlying structure of Palaeologan design, especially when it comes to figures, which are not the primary focus of his study.

Bunim and Hjort seek a solution to the problem of the identification and classification of the Byzantine compositional systems inside the painting surface, examining ways through which the image itself is designed. However, the problem that the definition of ‘inverted perspective’ poses is also approached by a different school of thought, one that seeks to understand the Byzantine holy image not in relation to itself, but in relation to the viewer. Demus for example, highlights the role of the beholder in our understanding of the design of the holy image by claiming that the Byzantine design system owes its character to the fact that the image is created in order to be seen by many people from many different visual positions. In this way, the painter designs the image in such way that it does not appear distorted from any angle.³⁴⁸ The multiple visual positions versus multiple viewpoints approach is also suggested by the so-called Russian school of thought, with Florensky being arguably the most prominent figure followed by Uspensky.³⁴⁹ Uspensky, for example, claims that the ‘inverted perspective’ system presupposes an image that does not move and a viewer that moves around it, whereas, in contrast, linear perspective presupposes an image that seems to move while the visual position is fixed.³⁵⁰ The concept of the painter taking the beholder and his or her use of church space into consideration when designing an image is indeed an important step towards the understanding of the main principles of composition in Byzantine art. However, this approach is not systematic enough to function as a structured system of

³⁴⁸ Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium*.

³⁴⁹ The most important works of this group of scholars are: Florensky, ‘Reverse Perspective’; Uspensky, *The Semiotics of the Russian Icon*. More recently, Clemena Antonova published a study that offers an overview and discussion of the main concepts of both Florensky and Uspensky on inverted perspective and spatial organisation in Byzantium. See Antonova, *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon: Seeing the World with the Eyes of God*.

³⁵⁰ Uspensky, *The Semiotics of the Russian Icon*.

interpretation of the compositional fundamentals of the holy image. Perhaps for this reason, Demus, Florensky and Uspensky, having the role of the viewer as their point of reference, moved on to produce two different interpretations of the 'inverted perspective' system.

The Russian scholars claim that 'inverted perspective' is used in order for 'distortions' to be avoided when the image is viewed from various visual positions. Antonova, offering an overview of Florensky's and Uspensky's work, mentions that the main characteristic of the system of 'inverted perspective' is 'the simultaneous representation of different planes of the same image on the picture surface, regardless of whether the corresponding planes in the represented objects could be seen from a single viewpoint'.³⁵¹ The theory of simultaneous planes can be applied for example to the building in the image of The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple (western half) that is designed in a rather peculiar manner, giving the beholder the ability to view at least two sides of the building simultaneously (fig. 11).

³⁵¹ Antonova, *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon : Seeing the World with the Eyes of God*, p. 105.



Figure 11: The Presentation of the Virgin to the Temple. Western half of the domical vault above the third bay of the inner narthex. Mosaic.

The concept of the ‘impossible viewpoints’ designed to facilitate the act of viewing is crucial in the work of the Russian school of thought, as their approach expands from the image itself, to the viewer and the act of viewing. However, this concept is largely limited to architectural elements in images and it cannot be used to analyse figures. This conceptual ‘expansion’ however, does not stop at the gaze of the viewer. Antonova in her analysis proposes the involvement in the holy image of God’s gaze, too. The final stage of the aforementioned expansion is therefore the participation of another, immaterial gaze in the creation of the image. According to Antonova, the Byzantine painter uses the technique of simultaneous planes in order to design objects in the way that God sees them, that is from a timeless, and spaceless, that is ubiquitous, point of view. By proposing the incorporation of God’s gaze into the image, Antonova suggests that the characteristics of the Byzantine compositional system should be understood in divine

terms, where the laws of nature as humans know them do not exist. This approach is notable in the sense that it is not simply descriptive but it seeks to find the reason that the painters designed images in such way. However, the concept of God's vision itself raises many questions. Firstly, as there is no way of knowing how God perceives things it is not possible to design things the way He sees them. Of course, it can be claimed that each person can perceive God's vision in a different way but this fact complicates things even more as it cannot explain the persistence of Byzantine painters of the later centuries to follow certain principles. Secondly, one might suggest that if icon painting was so closely linked with God's gaze in Byzantium then we should expect this fact to have been commented on and analysed by theologians of the time, as issues concerning the theology of the image have been extensively elucidated by Byzantine thinkers.

Demus on the other hand, even though focusing on the importance of the role of the beholder in Byzantine art, follows a different interpretive path. As Pentcheva has shown, Demus was influenced by the work of Alois Riegl on Dutch group portraiture,³⁵² when proposing the concept of the 'space icon':

'To describe these mosaics, encased in cupolas, apses, squinches, pendentives, vaults and niches, as flat, or two-dimensional, would be inappropriate. True, there is no space behind the 'picture-space' of these mosaics. But there is space, they physical space enclosed by the niche, in front; and this space is included in the picture. The image is not separated from the beholder by the 'imaginary glass pane' of the picture plane behind an

³⁵² Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium*, p. 227.

illusionistic picture begins: it opens into the real space in which the holy persons exist and act are identical, just as the icon itself is magically identical with the holy person or the sacred event. The Byzantine church itself is the 'picture-space' of the icons. It is the ideal iconostasis; it is itself, as a whole, an icon giving reality to the conception of the divine world order. Only in this medium which is common to the holy persons and to the beholder can the latter feel that he is himself witnessing the holy events and conversing with the holy persons. He is not cut-off from them; he is bodily enclosed in the grand icon of the church; he is surrounded by the congregation of the saints and takes part in the events he sees'.³⁵³

Riegl in *The Group Portraiture of Holland* studies the progressive evolution of group portraiture in Holland between 1529 and 1662. In his study, Riegl stresses the subjective involvement of the beholder in the image and in this way highlights the lack of independence of the work of art. For Riegl group portraits rely heavily on viewer involvement by entering into a dialogue with them. Riegl's framework is divided into internal and external coherence in reference to the work of art. In images with internal coherence, the figures of the scene form a unity, both psychologically and physically and exist in a finite space that is separated from the beholder. In images with external coherence on the other hand, the figures are psychologically detached from each other and the beholder is needed in order for them to be connected.³⁵⁴ This idea of the engagement

³⁵³ Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium*, p. 13.

³⁵⁴ Alois Riegl, *The Group Portraiture of Holland*. trans. by Evelyn Kain and David Britt (Los Angeles, California: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999), pp.

of the figures with the beholder versus the interaction among the figures themselves in a self-contained pictorial space influenced Demus, who expressed the idea of the interaction between the beholder and the Imaged as the fundamental principle of spatial organisation in Byzantine monumental painting. The space icon is an image that exceeds the limits of the painting surface and expands in the space of the beholder. This approach has the merit of beginning with the image and its relation to the viewer rather than with modern art historical terminology or expectations. The image of the Last Judgment in the parekklesion is a good example of Demus' space icon (fig. 12).



Figure 12: The Last Judgment. Domical vault above the eastern bay of the parekklesion. Fresco.

1-57. For a discussion of the role of the beholder in Riegl's work see for example Margaret Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), pp. 125-47.

As Robert Ousterhout points out, the spatial organisation of the scene in a three-dimensional manner, with its elements spread in the vault, makes the image seem to extend outside of the pictorial space and include the space it envelops.³⁵⁵ Demus' space icon concept is based on the spatial arrangement of images inside space and he does not examine the particular design of the images themselves. However, the idea of the interaction between image and viewer has been very influential for scholars studying Byzantine art.³⁵⁶ Demus, in his discussion of the images of the Chora, examines how the curvature of the surface affects not only the design of the image but also the beholder's experience of it. As Demus explains, the spatial icons of the Chora were designed to communicate with the physical space in front and below. In this way, he stresses that 'oblique projections' and changes in proportion of figures and architectural elements reflect the painters' intention to make use of the available space while producing, at the same time, images that would appear proportionate when being looked at from the ground level. Therefore, when analysing the images of the Chora, one should keep in mind that the location of the image in the building and the characteristics of the surface play an important role in the image's design.³⁵⁷

Kordis, drawing on the work of Riegl and Demus, focuses on a formal analysis of Byzantine painting, mainly of the Palaeologan era, that is centred around the crucial role of the beholder. Reflecting to some extent the categories of internal and external

³⁵⁵ Ousterhout, 'Temporal Structuring in the Chora Parekklesion', p. 74.

³⁵⁶ See for example the work of Bissera Pentcheva on the performative icon (Pentcheva, 'The Performative Icon', ;Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium*); the work of Kartsonis (Kartsonis, 'The Responding Icon' ; the work of Henry Maguire (Maguire, *The Icons of Their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium* ; and also the work of Nelson (Nelson, 'To Say and to See: Ekphrasis and Vision in Byzantium').

³⁵⁷ Demus, Otto, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium* (New York; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1997), pp. 80-82.

coherence that Riegl suggests, Kordis, abolishing the notion of ‘inverted perspective’ as hetero-defining, analyses Byzantine painting through the categories of internal and external rhythm. Similar to Riegl’s approach, Kordis regards internal rhythm as a technique that refers to the design of the objects of the composition in relation to each other. Through internal rhythm, each element of an image is organised in an X-shaped arrangement so that it relates to other elements following that type of arrangement. External rhythm is a technique that refers to the interaction of the pictorial objects with the beholder and aims at the creation of a three-dimensional effect by designing figures and architectural elements as projecting outwards, towards the space of the beholder.³⁵⁸ However, in Kordis’ approach internal and external rhythm co-exist in every image and constitute formal and not conceptual characteristics of the image, in contrast to Riegl’s analysis. In this study, rhythmic analysis will be the main theoretical tool that I will use in a formal analysis of the images of the parekklesion. The reason I have chosen this method lies mainly in the fact that rhythmic analysis is not hetero-defining and can be used to illustrate and understand the realisation of pictorial presence in the space of the icon and the formation of a pictorial body that can interact with the body of the beholder at a corporeal level. Rhythm theory can be applied almost universally to every image of the Palaeologan era, and to the images of the Chora monastery in particular. It is a theory that can be used for the analysis of any object of a composition, either a figure or an architectural structure, which makes it an even more powerful tool. Finally, the principles of this method can be clearly defined and illustrated.

³⁵⁸ Kordis, *Icon as Communion: The Ideals and Compositional Principles of Icon Painting*, pp. 18-44.

Rhythm and pictorial presence in the space of the icon

The first level of rhythm refers to the organisation of each painting as a whole and can be labelled internal rhythm. Internal rhythm refers strictly to what happens on the painting surface, and its use by the painter appears to aim at assuring that the relation between the elements of each painting is harmonious. In the context of Byzantine art, harmony could probably be best understood as a liminal locus, on the verge between movement and stability, and internal rhythm is possibly the way through which painters achieved this type of harmony, a harmony characterised by a strong internal dynamic balance. By realising the aim of creating a pictorially balanced image, in the Byzantine sense of the term, the painter managed to create a pictorial body that has the visual foundations to facilitate interaction in the space of the icon and thus be functional with regard to the beholder. Internal rhythm is created through the pictorial management of the elements of each image in relation to each other. Every element of a composition is related to the others; this is achieved in such way that a condition of dynamic balance is clear inside the painting. In order for dynamic balance to be realised, the painters organise every form of the image in such way, that it is characterised by various X shapes. Following the notion that a diagonal line such as this / is not balanced in itself and needs another line moving in the opposite direction, for it to become balanced, the elements of the images are arranged so that they form a series of Xs. The reason the X was chosen as a basis for the organisation of images lies in the concept that the X is a shape that conveys a sense of dynamic constant movement, in comparison to the shape of the cross, for

example, which is formed by a vertical and a horizontal line. The cross is too static and instead of creating movement it creates immobility. Thus, in order for images to be able to project an impression of balanced dynamic movement rather than immobility, use is made of the X shape in every element of each image, both on the micro and macro level. While the lower half of the X creates a triangle that offers stability to the figure or architectural element, at the same time the diagonal lines create the impression of dynamically balanced movement.

The second level of rhythm can be labelled external rhythm and concerns the relation between the Imaged and the beholder in a direct manner. This second step in rhythmic management is probably the most important one as through the use of external rhythm the painters of the parekklesion developed images that become pictorially present in the space of the icon and actively facilitate corporeal interaction between the Imaged and the viewer. Being imbued with external rhythm, the elements of each painting seem to move pictorially towards the beholder by extending outward into the actual space of the latter. In this way, the beholders find themselves visually enclosed by a virtual cone that radiates from the painting and develops outside of it, incorporating both the Imaged and the beholder and bringing them spatially into contact. The use of external rhythm by the painters adds a strong interactional component to the space of the icon and proves to be a major aid in their attempt to corporealise the relationship between God and the faithful. This level of external rhythm supplements internal rhythm to some extent, as it works in conjunction with the latter in order to increase the interactional potency of each image. While internal rhythm refers to those pictorial forces developed inside the painting and concerns its internal structure, external rhythm refers to those pictorial forces that are

developed from the painting surface outwards. In other words, internal rhythm is used for the management of pictorial forces within the painting's surface, while external rhythm is used for the management of pictorial forces directed towards the beholder. Essentially, external rhythm is the painters' communicative tool par excellence, as it is the one that actually seems to bring the Imaged closer to the beholder. Through its use, the painters managed to add a third dimension to the paintings of the chapel, that of space, by designing the images in such way that the elements of each painting seem as if they exit their space and move towards the actual space of the viewer standing in front of them. In this way, the Imaged are given the potential to 'acquire life' in pictorial terms and move inside the architectural space of the chapel, joining the community of faithful during the liturgy. In order to achieve this effect, the painters of the parekklesion depicted almost every element of each image, figures and architectural elements, in three quarter view. The use of three quarter view is organised so that a conical effect is created by the pictorial forces formed inside the painting. This effect extends outward into the space of the church, enveloping the beholder. External rhythm is used extensively in the church, including on images high above the level of the beholder, even though in those cases it is more difficult for the beholder to engage corporeally with the icon. Rhythm is used on flat as well as on curved surfaces. The curvature of the walls, as in the case of the Anastasis for example that will be studied later, enhances the effect of external rhythm as the viewer feels already as being a part of the image as he or she is physically enclosed within the curved surface.

Internal and external rhythm should be perceived as two highly essential communicative elements of the image and as two different levels of one and the same

category. They are tightly interwoven and they function essentially in harmonious collaboration in the communication of meaning. Their differentiation occurs mainly for better identification of internal pictorial forces and their classification into those that concern the internal structure of the painting as the source of its interactional potency, and those responsible for the projection of this potency towards the viewer. In this way, a comprehensive analysis of an image can be achieved, while at the same time the fact that these two levels of rhythm are interdependent can also be highlighted.

Applications of pictorial rhythm in the parekklesion

In addition to the first two main levels of rhythm, another level can also be added to the equation, in an attempt to enrich our understanding of the space of the Chora monastery in particular. That third level of rhythm refers to a certain rhythmic management of the iconographic programme as a whole and concerns the way that the paintings are designed and organised in relation to each other and, in the case of compositions, in relation to each element of the composition to another. The concept of relationality, in this case referring to the way that certain figures are depicted so that they function *in reference to* others, becomes evident mostly in the way that figural representation is managed inside the chapel. The Imaged are depicted in a way that gives the beholder the impression that the elements of the iconographic programme are related to each other not only conceptually but also in pictorial terms, and that this relationship

has a dynamic and not static character. In this way painters managed to create sets of pictorial bodies that invite interaction within the space of the icon. The painters followed a type of rhythmic organisation that seems to emanate from the concept of the wave, developing in this way a style of figural representation that could possibly be described as a rhythmic wave. The notion of the wave should be understood as an uninterrupted series of ‘kinetic pairs’, placed next to each other, with each one leading to the next. Each of these pairs consists usually of one figure in repose or a more rigid one next to a figure projecting a more vigorous sense of movement; or a group of figures in repose next to a group of figures that projects a stronger sense of movement. In order for a wave to be created, the painters place two or more of these pairs next to each other, creating the impression of a wave that can be demonstrated schematically with the use of the image below (fig. 13):

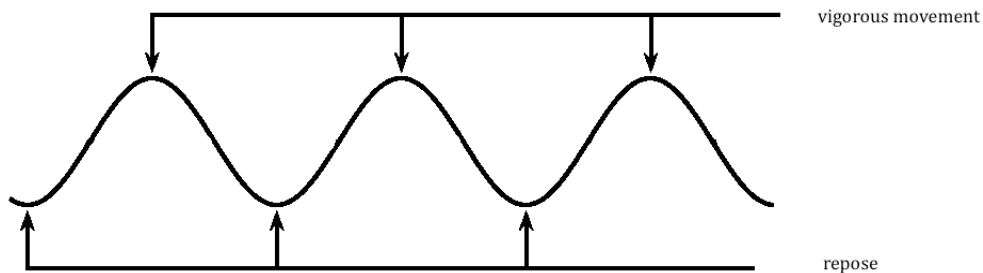


Figure 13: Schematic presentation of a rhythmic wave

The concept of the rhythmic wave formed through the alternation between motion and repose can be rooted in the art of classical Greece. In ancient Greek natural philosophy, order in the world is achieved through a dynamic balance between contrary

forces. In Anaximander's thought for example,³⁵⁹ the cosmos is understood as the attempt of contrary forces – wet and dry, hot and cold – to defeat one another. Balance in the world, as a condition of its well being, is therefore achieved by ensuring that none of the opposite forces will prevail over the others. The concept of harmony through the balance of contrary forces is also expressed in ancient Greek representational art. In sculpture for example, the construction of body parts was based on a self-conscious attempt to create a whole that would be characterised by a set of opposite concepts. In arranging a statue's limbs based on a biometrical system of 'weight bearing and weight free, engaged and disengaged, stretched and contracted, tense and relaxed, raised and lowered' parts, the artist was able to create a composition that would project harmony achieved through the balance of contrary forces.³⁶⁰ Excellent examples of this technique include the *Doryphoros* or 'Spear-bearer', originally executed in bronze by Polykleitos of Argos ca. 440-430 BC and the *Discobolos*, or 'Discus-thrower', executed by Myron of Athens ca. 450-440 BC.³⁶¹ The *Discobolos* is a representation of a discus thrower caught in mid-action and it is regarded as representing an abstract ideal of male beauty constructed in a series of binary opposites.³⁶² To this end, one arm extends behind holding the discus while the other hangs free; the torso is turned towards the beholder while the legs are in profile;

³⁵⁹ Anaximander (c. 610–c. 546 BC) was a pre-Socratic philosopher from Miletus, a city of the Ionia region, now situated in Turkey. Anaximander was one of the first to develop a systematic philosophical view of the cosmos. See James Evans, *Anaximander*, Encyclopaedia Britannica <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/23149/Anaximander>> [accessed 19/12/2013].

³⁶⁰ Ian Jenkins and Victoria Turner, *The Greek Body* (London: British Museum Press, 2009), pp. 13-14.

³⁶¹ Jenkins and Turner, *The Greek Body*, pp. 13-14.

³⁶² Jenkins and Turner, *The Greek Body*, p. 14.

one leg bears the weight while the other is weight-free. In this way, elements that are held in tension are juxtaposed with those that are relaxed.³⁶³

Rhythmic waves inside the parekklesion are most clearly seen in spaces where a sequence of figures that share certain similar characteristics has to be depicted, such as a sequence of saints of the same class. The use of rhythmic waves in this case helps the painters avoid the conveyance of a stagnant and repetitive effect inside the chapel, and adds a dynamic component to the space, as the individual elements of the iconographic programme combine to give the appearance of subtle motion. By creating a rhythmic wave, the painters of the parekklesion created pictorial relationships between adjacent images of the same spiritual class. The pictorial connection between figures is a dynamic one, a complementary balance between stability and motion. To this end, certain figures are depicted 'in action', that is in a way that highlights movement, while others are depicted in a more static manner, thus contributing to the maintenance of an equilibrium between forces. The result of this type of rhythmic management is a highlighting of the pictorial relations within the iconographic programme through movement, and the creation of a dynamic space into which the individual images are set.

Rhythmic waves differ from internal and external rhythm in the extent of their use, while the purpose of their use remains similar to that of internal and external rhythm. The use of rhythmic waves is limited and content specific, as they are almost exclusively used when the painters have to depict a sequence of figures with similar characteristics, usually saints of the same class. On the other hand, the use of internal and external rhythm, regarded as one category, is not content specific, but is applied in every image regardless

³⁶³ Jenkins and Turner, *The Greek Body*, p. 14.

of its pictorial content, and to every element of the painting, including figures, architectural and decorative elements. In terms of purpose of use however, all three techniques can be regarded as aiding the creation of an image that would be highly communicative and interactionally potent. The use of internal and external rhythm aims at creating dynamic, moving figures that can exit the painting surface and join the faithful in the space of the chapel. The result of the use of rhythmic waves is the establishment and projection of links – formal/pictorial and conceptual – between individual images. In applying both techniques, the painters of the parekklesion created images that are strongly oriented towards aiding the establishment of a relationship between Imaged and beholder.

The process of producing a rhythmic wave refers to the way that individual paintings relate to each other and here I will refer mostly to figural representations of saints),³⁶⁴ as well as to the way that certain elements of individual compositions relate to each other. Consequently, there are two levels of rhythmic waves that could be identified, a macro and a micro level; the first concerning the overall management of the frieze of saints that runs along the lower zone of the south and north walls of the chapel, where the creation of a wave is more notable, and the second concerning the rhythmic management of individual compositions, where smaller scale rhythmic waves can be identified.

³⁶⁴ Figural representations of saints within church space tend to be less studied than others in terms of their formal content and relation to each other. Maguire's work forms an exception to this general rule. In his book *The Icons of Their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium*, Maguire explores the formal qualities of Byzantine religious portraiture and analyses the way that artists managed these qualities to highlight the physical and spiritual attributes of different saints. See Maguire, *The Icons of Their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium*. Building on Maguire, I make use of the concept of the rhythmic wave, which can be regarded as adding to the other forms of difference/alternation that he has identified in series of similar images in sacred space.



Figure 14: View of the parekklesion, looking east.

The analysis of examples will begin from the macro level and move towards the micro level in order to offer a more comprehensive view of the rhythmic wave phenomenon inside the parekklesion. The frieze along the walls of the parekklesion contains two sequences of martyrs, most of which are full-length military figures, on the north and south walls, and a sequence of images of Church Fathers flanking the wall around the bema. The other two images on this section/zone of the church, on the piers beneath the arch of the bema, depicted facing each other at opposite sides, the image of

the Virgin on the south wall, corresponding to the image of Christ on the north wall, will not be analysed in terms of their participation in a rhythmic wave.³⁶⁵

The frieze consisting of martyrs covering the lower zone of the south and north walls of the parekklesion outside the bema is the starting point of this analysis. This zone was originally occupied by twenty-six figures, consisting of ten medallions and sixteen full-length figures. The medallion portraits painted above each arcosolium are busts of saints of rather small dimensions and for this reason they are depicted mostly frontally and in a rather static way. These busts of saints enrich the painting surface and give it a more dynamic look by creating a rhythm through their alternation with the full-length figures.

Structurally, the south and north walls are not identical. On the south wall, the eastern and western bays are symmetrical, both having an arcosolium in the centre. On the north wall however, each bay, in addition to its arcosolium, also has a door, reducing the space available for painting.³⁶⁶ For this reason, the painters were able to follow a symmetrical scheme of figure layout only on the south wall, which, as it will be shown, results in the rhythmic wave as such being more obvious on that wall of the chapel.

³⁶⁵ The reason for this decision is founded on the idea that these two images do not form part of a larger sequence of images organised in a way that forms a rhythmic wave. The images of Christ and the Virgin arguably constitute a set of images in their own right, a pair that does not actively participate in a rhythmic wave but that rather marks a transition or functions as a dividing point between the two sequences, that of the more rigid Church Fathers and that of the more vigorous martyr saints. Based on the concept that rhythmic waves are created in order to dynamically connect in pictorial terms sets of figures with similar characteristics that stand next to each other, the images of Christ and the Virgin do not seem to participate in a rhythmic wave in this sense.

³⁶⁶ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 250.



Figure 15: Southern wall of the parekklesion. Eastern bay. From left to right: Virgin Eleousa, St George, St Floros (medallion), St Loros (medallion), St Demetrios, St Theodore Tiro. Fresco.

Starting from the eastern bay of the south wall, the figures of the two military saints St George and St Demetrios flank the arch of the first arcosolium (fig. 15). St George, the first figure, marks the start of this sequence of saints. He stands with his body in an almost frontal pose, holding his spear upright in his right hand. With his spear emphasising the vertical axis, this figure seems like a stable pier standing at the starting point of the rhythmic wave that will follow. On the left side of the painting, the prominent spear parallels the vertical edge of the wall, giving an impression of immobility, while on the right side, the saint's sword extends slightly towards the right, creating a subtle movement towards the other side of the arcosolium, where St Demetrios stands. In this way, the figure conveys a balance between stability and motion, and moves our eyes on to the next figure. St Demetrios, on the right side of the arcosolium, is a figure that in pictorial terms opposes that of St George. Standing in a pose of acute contrapposto, St Demetrios is more dynamic. His spear inclines steeply towards the left. The pose both emphasises the curve

of the arc and suggests communication with the figure to his left. His body is turned toward the right and his head is turned toward the left. The diagonal line of his sword continues through his right leg, creating a V-shaped impression that adds an intense dynamic component to the figure. The diagonal line of the sword-leg directs the viewer's eyes to St Theodore Tiro on the right, as it is almost sharply paralleled in the line of the latter's spear and main body. The figure of St Theodore Tiro, depicted on the pier between the two bays, is characterised by an even more intense contrapposto than that of St Demetrios and gives the impression of a crest in the rhythmic wave (fig. 16). The saint seems to lean towards the left, communicating with the figure on that side. His spear, almost parallel to the one of the figure to the left, intensifies the effect of his movement, which is also highlighted by the line of his shield. However, the saint faces towards the right, balancing the acute leftward movement and uniting the two bays by relating simultaneously both to compositions on the left and the right.

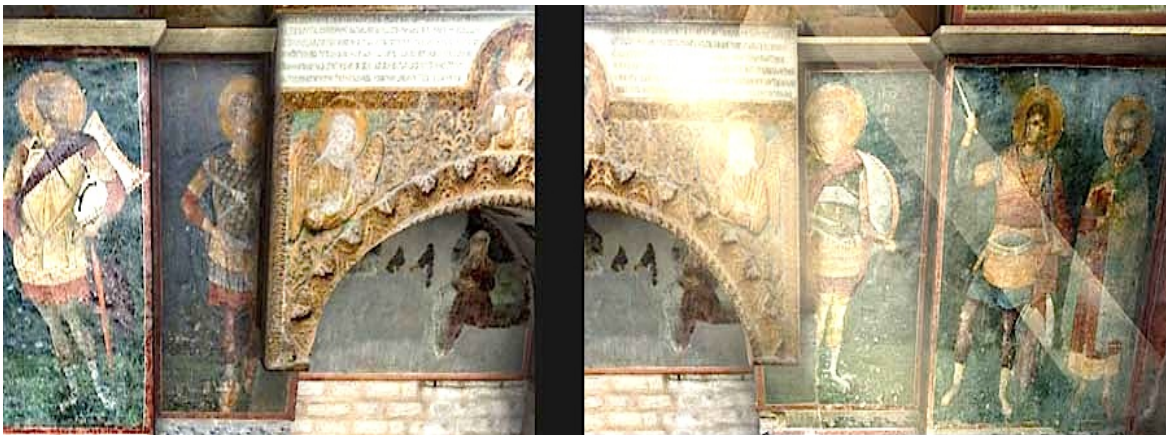


Figure 16: Southern wall of the parekklesion. Western bay. From left to right: St Theodore Tiro, St Theodore Stratelates, St Merkourios, St Prokopios, St Sabas Stratelates. Fresco.

The figure of the saint depicted on the left of St Theodore Tiro, in the western bay, is that of St Theodore Stratelates. This figure functions as a point of rest after St Theodore Tiro's intense movement. St Theodore Stratelates is depicted almost frontally, giving the impression of stability and functioning as the trough of the wave. His bent arm and the diagonal line of his spear are the only elements of the figure that slightly break the impression of stasis and create a sense of movement, also functioning to lead our eyes to the left, back to St Theodore Tiro.

On the right side of the arcosolium appears St Merkourios, a dynamic figure characterised by contrapposto, with his body turned towards the right, his head turned towards the left and his gaze towards the right. The movements of his body are subtle but he is depicted in the process of taking his sword out of its scabbard, a movement that adds a subtle dynamic element to the figure. While the scabbard of the sword points towards the right and the next figures in the frieze, the process of taking it out of the case itself creates a movement of the arm towards the left and the figure standing to Merkourios' left. The wave reaches a peak with the figure of St Prokopios, who is depicted in very dynamic motion. Both his right arm and leg are extended creating a strong movement of his body towards the figure on his left. His sword however, is depicted diagonally, creating a line that leads to the right, balancing the intense leftward movement of the figure and establishing a connection with the figure on his right. The terminal figure on the south wall, St Sabas Stratelates, functions as the ending point of the rhythmic wave of the south wall. Similar to the figure of St George that began the wave. St Sabas is depicted frontally and in a static manner, functioning as a stable pier that anchors the end of the wave.



Figure 17: Northern wall of the parekklesion. Western bay. From left to right: St Eustathios Plakidas, St Samonas, St Gurias. Fresco.

On the north wall of the chapel (fig. 17) the situation is quite different due to structural requirements. The relative symmetry that characterises the south wall allowed the painters to develop a rhythmic wave by using full-length figures. On the north side of the parekklesion however, the walls of the western and eastern bay are interrupted by the arcosolia, by two doors, one in each bay, and by one window in the western bay. In this way, the space available for painting was drastically reduced and, as Underwood points out, it was not possible for the painters of the chapel to apply the relatively symmetrical

scheme of decoration that was applied on the south wall to the north wall.³⁶⁷ For all of the above reasons, the rhythmic wave on the north wall is not as readily apparent. Nevertheless, the painters attempted to organise and manage the full-length figures on the north wall following the main principles of rhythmic waves where possible. On this side, the wave created is subtle and less consistent, in comparison to that of the south wall. At the west end of the north wall is a wide pier, pierced by an arched opening. The right side of the pier is occupied by the image of St Eustathios, depicted in a position of subtle contrapposto. One of his two spears stands upright, highlighting the vertical axis by being parallel to the edge of the wall. St Eustathios's figure is at rest and marks the beginning of the wave. One of his two spears and his sword are both depicted diagonally, in a line that points to the right, leading to the next figure; however, at that point the rhythmic wave is broken by an arched doorway. Two martyr saints are depicted in the restricted space above the door, with the lower parts of their bodies cut away by the arch. Regarding these two images as parts of the rhythmic wave indeed highlights the irregularity of the wave on the north wall. Based on the observations made on the south side, after one or two figures whose gestures do not strongly convey movement, we expect to see a more vigorous representation. In this case however, three figures with mild movement are depicted next to each other, in a way disturbing the regular alternations that are characteristic of the wave. St Samonas and St Gurias, painted above the arched opening, are depicted almost frontally, thus accentuating the vertical effect that a rectangular structure such as the door below them conveys. I would suggest that these two images function more as a set of figures in its own right, a whole with almost no external references to its surroundings

³⁶⁷ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 251.

that somehow interrupts the regularity of the rhythmic wave. St Gurias extends his arm holding a cross towards St Samonas, interacting with him in a way, but his left side remains still, without creating any link to the saint on the other side of the arcosolium, probably due to the lack of space.



Figure 18: Northern wall of the parekklesion. Eastern bay. From left to right: St Artemios/St Niketas, St Bacchos (medallion), St Sergios (medallion), Unidentified saint. Fresco.

On the left hand side of the arcosolium (fig. 18), there is a depiction of St Nicetas or St Artemios. This figure, dynamic and vigorous, functioning probably as the crest of the wave on that wall, seems to be the companion of St Eustathios in terms of the development of rhythm. The figure stands in a position of acute contrapposto, gesturing

boldly, with his body indicating a leftward movement, creating a connection with the saint on the left (St Gurias or probably even St Eustathios), and the head facing to the right, relating to the saint on the other side of the arcosolium. His bent right arm and leg and his spear, arranged diagonally, underline the strong movement of the figure and emphasise the curvature of the arch of the arcosolium on the right. Finally, on the right hand side of the arcosolium of the eastern bay of the north wall, stands the figure of an unidentified military saint. Functioning as the ending point of this irregular and somewhat inconsistent wave, this figure is depicted in a frontal standing position, with the exception of his head. The column like posture of the image gives an impression of stability, emphasising the verticality of the rectangular space on which it is depicted. The inclination of the saint's head towards the left signifies the figure's connection with the image of St Nicetas/Artemios, thus making him an organic part of the wave. His sword however, held upright, conveys a strong vertical effect and underlines the function of the image as the stable ending point of the rhythmic wave on the north wall.

Another series of images that can be studied in terms of rhythmic management is that of the church Fathers depicted on the wall of the apse behind the altar (fig. 19).



Figure 19: Conch and apse wall of the parekklesion. Apse wall from left to right: Unidentified Church Father, St Athanasius, St John Chrysostom, St Basil, St Gregory the Theologian, St Cyril of Alexandria. Fresco.

The six church Fathers are divided into two groups of three, separated by a triple-arched window at the centre of the wall of the apse. As Maguire points out, the church Fathers are usually depicted in more subtle, static poses than other classes of saints, such as warrior saints.³⁶⁸ Their movements tend to look alike to a great extent. The nature of the rhythmic waves in this sequence of figures is therefore more subtle in comparison to that of the saints on the south and north walls. The wave in this case is created largely by objects that the figures hold or through subtle differences in gesture. In this way, the painters managed to create a subtle rhythmic wave that would project a sense of

³⁶⁸ Maguire, *The Icons of Their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium*, pp. 50-57.

movement, while at the same time maintaining the status of the Fathers by not disturbing the impression of immateriality that the Fathers supposedly had to convey.³⁶⁹

Even though the gestures of the Fathers are subtle, they are designed in a way that gives a sense of movement to the composition and breaks the monotony of the frieze. The six figures hold closed Gospel books in their left hands, while gesturing freely with their right hands. The rhythmic wave is created through the alternating height of the saints' right hands and the alternating height of the books held in their left hands. From left to right, the movement of the right hands of the five figures could schematically be described as high-low-highest-low-high and the movement of the books as high-low-highest-low-lower. In this sense, the image of St Basil stands at the crest of the rhythmic wave, thus offering the frieze a sense of centre or reference point.

In the case of the full-length figures of the south and north walls, as well as in the case of the frieze of church Fathers, the painters enhanced the communicative capability of the figures through the use of rhythm and made them more 'approachable' to the beholder. The rhythmic wave creates the impression that figures standing next to each other belong to the same group and form a body of images. Overall, all the figures of saints in the chapel constitute a symbolic body of and in Christ that exists among the faithful inside the parekklesion. This conceptual body is given corporeality and a sense of life through painting and the development of rhythmic waves. The use of rhythmic waves highlights the role of each figure as a member of the pictorial body of images. The painters, instead of creating a frieze of images with no reference to one another that would stand still as witnesses of their own personal truth, created a body of images in which

³⁶⁹ Maguire, *The Icons of Their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium*, pp. 50-57.

each member functions in reference to another, in order to create a whole that would attest to the truth of Christ.

Moving from the macroscopic to the microscopic level of analysis, the development of rhythmic waves inside the chapel continues within individual compositions. There, rhythmic waves can be observed in spots where a sequence of similar figures has to be depicted, usually a series of saints of the same class. As one moves towards smaller scale compositions, the boldness of the rhythmic wave is reduced significantly, in comparison to the waves created through the full-length figures of the south and north walls, for example, but they still convey a sense of movement and highlight the relationship between the figures. An excellent example of rhythmic management inside a composition can be seen in the *The Last Judgment*, particularly in the section of Apostles and angels painted in the eastern half of the domical vault (figs. 20, 21).



Figure 20: The Apostles, left group. Part of the Last Judgment. Eastern half of the domical vault above the eastern bay of the parekklesion. Fresco.

The Apostles are arranged in two groups of six, flanking the image of Christ, and all hold open books. The similarities between the twelve figures are considerable, a fact that increases the risk of monotony and stiffness. For this reason, as Underwood underlines, the painters used rhythm to enliven the image,³⁷⁰ created through movements of their bodies and heads. In both groups, the two Apostles closest to Christ are turned towards him, placing emphasis on the centre of the image, while figures three and four as well as figures five and six (moving from the centre of the image outwards) form two pairs that communicate with each other.

³⁷⁰ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 202.



Figure 21: The Apostles, right group. Part of the Last Judgment. Eastern half of the domical vault above the eastern bay of the parekklesion. Fresco.

A similar type of pictorial management is observed in the case of the figures of the angels that surround the image of Christ in the mandorla, but to a lesser extent (fig. 22). The rhythmic wave is created here by the movement of the angels' heads.



Figure 22: The Deesis. Part of the Last Judgment. Eastern half of the domical vault above the eastern bay of the parekklesion. Fresco.

With the creation of rhythmic waves, the figures, even though they do not all form parts of one single composition, become integrated into one great whole, which could be characterised as a pictorial hypertext or narrative. This narrative functions as an organic whole integrating individual elements into a wider body of images. It is a collective body created through the interaction among individual bodies. This narrative or body of images is constituted by individual members that are designed in order to be able to function in relation to each other. The ability of the individual elements to relate to each other activates the energy of the interactional collective body. At the same time, the communicative potency of the collective body highlights the interactional qualities of each individual element that constitutes it. The use of rhythmic waves projects an image

of strong community bonds between the figures depicted, by highlighting their internal relations. However, relations are established among the figures depicted but also between the Imaged and the beholder. The Imaged is rendered communicatively potent not only internally, but externally too, in reference to the beholder. In order to achieve this, the images of the chapel are imbued with two more levels of rhythm, internal and external.

Internal and External Rhythm

In the analysis that will follow, various examples of images from the parekklesion will be studied in order to illustrate the use of internal and external rhythm. Each image will be studied as a whole, first examining the internal rhythmic elements and then the external, in order for this study to be more comprehensive. After performing this analysis, one should be able to apprehend the way that the images of the parekklesion function communicatively in reference to the beholder within the space of the icon. I will analyse two images, the Anastasis and the image of St Theodore Tiro. The analysis of images will focus here on rhythm and the implications of its use, therefore other elements of the images, such as colour will remain outside the scope of this thesis. As stated earlier, rhythm is applied in the church on both flat and curved surfaces, and here I will attempt to show how rhythm affects the way that the image is experienced by the beholder in both cases. In the case of the Anastasis, the curvature of the apse enhances the impact that external rhythm has with regards to the way that the image is experienced by the faithful, as there is already a sense of enclosure within the curved surface. In the case of St Theodore Tiro, one can notice the formation of a virtual cone that emanates from the

painting outwards, even though the surface is flat. An important thing to note here is that the figures in both images are designed in proportion to the beholder, as Christ for example measures 1.63 metres in height, while St Theodore measures 1.90 metres. As the space of the parekklesion is relatively small, no major optical distortions occur due to height or point of view, especially with regards to the images in question. Finally, it should be noted that rhythmic forces (internal and external) will be marked on the images that follow mostly as straight and not curved lines, mainly in order to achieve a more clear representation. Rhythmic forces should be thought of as following naturally the curvature of the pictorial lines.

The Anastasis



Figure 23: The Anastasis. Conch of the apse. Eastern Wall of the parekklesion. Fresco.

The Anastasis (fig. 23), filling the semidome of the apse at the east, occupies the most prominent position inside the chapel. Christ is here depicted triumphing over Death, through His own death and descent into Hell. The image is regarded as a pictorial presentation of the doctrine of the *descensus ad inferos*; Christ is portrayed raising Adam and Eve as progenitors of all mankind, an act that symbolises the redemption of all mankind through the descent of Christ into Hell. Christ is depicted surrounded by a pointed mandorla, resurrecting Adam and Eve from Hell. At the base of the image, right below the figure of Christ, lies an area of darkness, representing Hell, with its gates broken and Hades chained in a movement of eternal submission. Adam is depicted on the left and Eve on the right of Christ, both being raised from their sarcophagi and pulled by Christ towards Him. The figure of Christ is flanked by two groups of the resurrected righteous. On the left, the image of St John the Baptist emerges as slightly more prominent than the rest of his group, probably due to his capacity as forerunner. On the right, the image of Abel seems to be somewhat detached from the rest of his group. Abel stands inside the tomb of his mother, Eve, and he is given high importance as the first human to meet Death. The image of the Anastasis is completed by the rocky formations of the landscape, which tear the blue sky and envelope the figures of the composition.



Figure 24: The Anastasis. Internal Rhythm

Tracing the internal rhythmic elements should start with the central figure of the composition, that of Christ (fig. 24). The figure of Christ is characterised by acute contrapposto, with his body leaning towards the left and his head turned towards the right, while he gazes towards the left. With the core of his body functioning as a central axis, there are two main pictorial forces that can be identified. The first starts from the movement indicated by the head and is transferred diagonally towards the ground through the movement of His left leg. The second is indicated by the rightward movement of Christ's body, which is highlighted by the projection of His right leg towards Adam, and continues all the way inside Hell, where the right door functions as an extension of this strong rightward movement. In this way, a dynamic X is formed. This X shaped movement is also rearticulated by the movement of Christ's arms; each one follows the

direction of one of the diagonal lines described above, thus accentuating even more the dynamics of the figure.

The figures of Adam and Eve are to some extent managed by the painters in a similar way in terms of internal rhythm. Adam's movement is intensely leftward as Christ pulls him upwards to raise him from his tomb. This diagonal leftward movement towards Christ starts from Adam's right leg, which extends outside of the sarcophagus and continues through the movement of his body. It passes to his arms, which are both extended towards Christ and it is completed with Adam's head that faces Christ directly. Both in literal as well as in symbolic terms, the act of raising Adam is so powerful and intense that the painters highlighted it as much as possible. For this reason, an acute X does not characterise the figure of Adam here, in order for his movement towards Christ to be even more accentuated. However, the painters manage to balance the figure to some degree by depicting Adam's left leg being projected diagonally in the opposite direction from the one that his body follows, creating in this way a subtle X that balances the figure out without reducing the leftward effect. Eve is depicted in a similar manner. Her figure is marked by a strong rightward movement towards the image of Christ, that is the consequence of raising her from the tomb. The whole body of Eve participates in this rightward movement. Starting from her left leg, projecting outside of the sarcophagus, her body moves diagonally towards the right, a movement that passes on to both of her arms and her head, turned towards the figure of Christ. Again in this case, the painters highlight the symbolic significance of Eve's being raised from the dead and for this reason her figure is characterised by an intense rightward movement that is intentionally not balanced out completely. As a means of balancing Eve's movement, her bent right leg

has been depicted projecting towards the left, a movement that is, on a second level, supported by the movement of her garment diagonally towards the same direction. In this way, a subtle X is created, offering a certain degree of balance to the figure, the overall movement of which continues to lead towards Christ, placing emphasis on the soteriological significance of the miracle of the Anastasis.

The secondary figures that surround the core of the composition, the two groups of the righteous, are also organised rhythmically. St John the Baptist, three kings and six anonymous figures of various types comprise the group on our left. The figure of John is characterised by intense contrapposto, with his body moving towards Christ and his head facing his companions. John's figure develops on a curved axis, as shown in the image (fig. 24), formed by the movement of the core of his body and accentuated by the movement of his head. An imaginary line formed by the movement of John's arms, which are bent and point in the direction of Christ, intersects the body-head axis and creates an X, adding a sense of dynamic balance to the figure. The figure on the right of John is that of king Solomon. This figure is to some extent managed in a similar way. Solomon's body seems to lean towards Christ, while his head is turned in the direction of King David, who stands behind him. Solomon's right upper arm and right leg are placed on the same axis and follow a diagonal pictorial force. His left leg however is placed on a second axis that intersects the first one and gives the figure an X shape. Solomon's bent arms highlight this contrast by being placed on a third axis that intersects the previous two diagonally, adding one more level to the X shaped internal rhythm of the figure. The figure of King David is created in a more or less corresponding manner, but it is not characterised by such acute contrapposto. In this case, an axis is created, through the

movement of David's right upper arm, right thigh and left leg, following an imaginary line that seems to lean towards the direction of Christ. A different pictorial force, developed through the movement of David's right leg, which is depicted bent and pointing towards the figure next to David on the left, crosses this axis. The figure next to David, at the far right corner, is again constructed on a system of two intersecting axes forming an X. The first axis starts from the figure's right arm and continues on to his right thigh and leg. The second one, cutting across the first one, is a curved axis formed by the movement of the figure's bent right forearm and left leg, which projects towards the right corner of the composition.

Abel and six other anonymous figures of prophets and forefathers comprise the left group of figures. The painters manage the figure of Abel in a rather modest way, in rhythmic terms, as it does not seem to be characterised by intense movement, in comparison to his companions on the right and on the left. The statue-like quality of his figure is highlighted even more by the verticality of his shepherd's crook and the parallel manner in which his legs are painted. Arguably, the only feature of the figure that conveys a sense of movement is his forearms. Each one of Abel's forearms is depicted on a different, intersecting axis, creating in this way the formation of a rather subtle X in front of the core of his body. In contrast to Abel's relatively static figure, the two full-length figures next to him on the left, seem to be much more dynamic, as they are depicted almost on the move. The figure right next to Abel indeed conveys a strong sense of dynamic movement, as it is designed on a system of two intersecting pictorial forces. The figure seems to lean in the direction of Christ, an impression that is highlighted by the pictorial force formed by the figure's left arm and right leg. However, this intense

rightward movement is balanced by another, contrasting pictorial force intersecting the first one. The second pictorial force is formed by the figure's left leg, which is extended towards the left corner of the composition. Finally, the third figure on the left is also an interesting example of rhythmic management by the painters of the *parekklesion*. In this case, there are three pictorial forces that mark the figure and give a sense of movement to it. The figure's back, depicted in a diagonal line forms the first axis and projects the leaning of the figure towards the centre of the composition, where Christ stands. Two other almost parallel axes cut across this axis, a fact that accentuates even more the figure's dynamics. The movement of the figure's left arm and right leg forms one of them, while the other is formed by the figure's left leg.

The decorative and architectural elements of the composition are also organised in a rhythmic manner. The sarcophagi of Adam and Eve, at the base of the image, are depicted diagonally, placed on two axes that, if they were to be extended, would intersect each other. The formation of an X by the two pictorial forces of the sarcophagi is used in order to convey a sense of dynamic movement of these objects in accordance with the rhythmic management of the rest of the elements of the scene. The rock formations at the background of the composition are also designed according to the principles of internal rhythm. Imitating to some extent the curvature of the apse, the painters of the chapel created two curved axes by the use of each of the bare mountains. Extending the two axes formed by the mountains would lead to the formation of a shape similar to that of a spherical triangle that would envelop the scene.

Analysis of the internal rhythm of the scene of the Anastasis, leads to the conclusion that internal rhythm is applied to every element of the composition, figures, decorative

and architectural elements. In this way, the painters of the parekklesion create a composition that is characterised by dynamic movement. Even though the elements of the scene are well balanced in themselves and in relation to each other, at the same time, through rhythmic management, they manage to convey a strong sense of motion. However, it should be noted that not every element of the scene is given the same potency, in terms of movement. While some figures convey a strong impression of movement, others are designed to convey a less intense impression of movement, depending on their role in the scene. In this way, even though the method of managing each figure is similar, as the painters use internal rhythm on every figure, the degree of movement of each figure differs. While the main principles of the system remain the same, each particular element is managed in a modal way in order to achieve different outcomes. The figures of the righteous for example, are not designed in a different way from those of Christ or Adam and Eve, as their design is based on an X-shaped mode of development. However, they convey a not so intense impression of movement, in comparison to the figures of Christ or Adam and Eve, the protagonists of the scene. The degree of movement of every figure is therefore adjusted according to the needs of the scene. Thus, what is observed is a type of communicatively directed hierarchy based on the differences in the degree of movement of every figure. According to this notion, the most important figures of the scene, in other words the ones who are supposed to be more powerful in communicative terms due to their symbolic significance, are depicted as being more dynamic, in terms of movement. The figure of Christ is the most dynamic, while the figures of Adam and Eve follow on a second level, conveying a sense of milder movement to the beholder. The figures of the righteous are on a third level in this sense,

as they are characterised by even milder gestures. The figure of Christ, the most prominent one in the composition in symbolic terms, emerges as the most vigorous of the scene. His extremely dynamic figure places Him at the centre of attention, as His symbolic significance is highlighted even more through pictorial means. The raising of Adam and Eve from their sarcophagi, symbolises the redemption of all mankind and for this reason, the figures of Adam and Eve are also imbued with dynamic movement through rhythm, with their symbolic importance in the composition being actively projected. In this way, the core of the composition is created by three figures that convey a very strong sense of movement, Christ at the centre, flanked by Adam and Eve. The figures of the righteous that surround them are of course managed in a rhythmic manner, but they are not characterised by intense movement in order for them not to distract the beholder's attention from the central figures of the composition. In this way, the symbolic hierarchy of the scene is rearticulated and highlighted in pictorial terms through internal rhythm.



Figure 25: The Anastasis. External Rhythm (Christ)

The image of the Anastasis is also an excellent example of the use of external rhythm. The figure of Christ (fig. 25) is managed in a highly rhythmic manner and it can be characterised as a figure that creates its own microenvironment outside of the painting. In order to explain this, I will analyse the pictorial forces that are developed from the figure outwards. The image of Christ at the centre of the composition is designed in a multilevel three quarter view, instead of being depicted frontally. His head, the core of His body and His left leg are designed in three quarter view and seem to move towards the left. On the other hand, His gaze and His right leg are designed in three quarter view but seem to move towards the right. This antithesis in movement of different body parts is indeed highlighted by the way that Christ's feet are depicted; the right foot points rightwards, while the left foot points leftwards, thus indicating that the figure could potentially move simultaneously towards both directions. By adopting the three quarter

view, instead of a frontal manner of depiction, the painters managed to design an image that does not seem to move inside the painting surface, as it is depicted neither frontally, developing a vertical relation with the surface, nor in profile view, developing a horizontal relation with the surface. It is depicted in dual three quarter view instead, giving the beholder the impression that it sticks out of the painting surface and moves towards them, in a twofold manner, as it extends towards two different directions. In this way, the painters managed to create an image governed by two contrasting pictorial forces that develop outwards forming a virtual cone that extends inside the space of the chapel and envelops the viewer who stands in front of the figure of Christ. For this reason, the figure of Christ can be regarded as one that creates a complete microenvironment in reference to the beholder, as it forms its own virtual cone to include the beholder.



Figure 26: The Anastasis. External Rhythm (Adam and Eve)

The majority of the elements of the composition are designed in a similar manner (fig. 26). Adam is depicted as moving towards Christ, while being raised by Him. However, instead of him being depicted in profile view, essentially moving in the direction of Christ, paradoxically, he is depicted in a leftward three quarter view. This fact seems to convey the impression that Adam, instead of moving towards Christ, moves outwards, towards the space of the beholder, an impression that is further accentuated by the way that his left foot is depicted. This exact rhythmic management is applied to the figure of Eve, too. Christ pulls Eve out of her sarcophagus, in His direction. However, the painters of the parakklesion depicted Eve in a rightward three quarter view, instead of profile, leading the beholder to sense that her movement is actually outward and exits the painting surface. In this way, the figures of Adam and Eve supplement each other in a way and create in collaboration a virtual cone formed by the two pictorial forces that govern the two figures. These two forces intersect each other in front of the painting and create a conical, enveloping environment for the viewer.



Figure 27: The Anastasis. External Rhythm (The righteous)

Moving away from the centre of the composition towards the sides, a similar rhythmic management is observed (fig. 27). The painters treat the secondary figures in a rhythmic way by imbuing them with external rhythm. Such is the case of the figure of Abel for example. His body should be expected to be pointing towards Christ, while in actuality he is depicted in three quarter view, on the axis of Eve's figure. In this way, another level is added to the pictorial force that governs the figure of Eve, with the figure of Abel conveying the impression that he exits the painting surface and moves rightwards towards the beholder. Three other figures are placed on the same axis, adding a degree of multidimensionality to the pictorial force that moves leftwards outside of the painting. The three figures of prophets or forefathers depicted next to Abel are portrayed in three quarter view, too, accentuating the rightward movement of Eve and Abel in the direction

of the viewer. In an attempt to balance the intensity of the rightward movement of Eve and of the left group of the righteous, the painters add a figure to the group that moves leftwards outside of the surface, forming a contrasting pictorial force. The three quarter figure behind Abel seems to move towards the left, distancing itself from the rest of the group to some extent. However, the head of the figure faces rightwards, following the pictorial force that characterises the rest of the figures of the group, and in this way retaining a point of contact with them and with the centre of the composition.

The right group of righteous is designed in a similar manner. King David imitates the movement of Adam, as he is depicted in three quarter view facing leftwards in the direction of the viewer. In order to add another level to this pictorial force, the painters of the chapel depicted the core of king Solomon's body in the same angle and thus moving in the same direction. This strong force is further accentuated by the core of the body of St John the Baptist, also depicted in three quarter view. However, in order for the acuteness of the leftward pictorial force to be toned down to some extent, the painters created, inside this group of righteous, a rival pictorial force, that points rightwards. The movement of St John's and king Solomon's head, who turn their faces rightwards, creates this force. Hence, the painters managed to create a virtual cone inside the right group of righteous, adding in this way to the multidimensionality of the image.

It should be noted that the architectural elements of the composition are also designed in reference to the viewer. The broken doors of Hell, depicted below Christ's feet, at the base of the image, also participate in rhythmic organisation, as they are depicted in a way that highlights the projection of the pictorial forces that govern the figure of Christ, as shown in figure 20. The sarcophagi of Adam and Eve are also treated

rhythmically. The pictorial forces emanating from them accentuate even more the central cone created by the figure of Christ, as they seem to add another level to the pictorial forces that originate from Christ's figure.

In this way, it becomes clear that external rhythm adds a communicative dimension to the image of the Anastasis and makes the pictorial body capable of interacting with the beholder in the space of the icon. The figures, as well as the architectural elements of the scene, are depicted in reference to the beholder. Indeed, through their rhythmic elaboration, as described above, the pictorial elements convey to the beholder a sense of movement into the actual space of the chapel. However, the elements of the composition do not simply seem to exit the painting surface individually. Instead, their design allows them to participate in a complex system of virtual cones, developed in front of the painting surface, that organises and frames their movement in a sense, in order to make it more powerful in interactional terms. In this way, the pictorial elements are managed rhythmically in order for their movement to create a conical effect that envelops the beholder and facilitate interaction between both parts mainly through the decrease in the distance that separates them. The multidimensional system of cones, embraces not only a viewer who would stand right in front of the centre of the image, but every viewer, regardless of the angle from which they look at the image, extending the image's accessibility and enhancing its communicative dynamics.

The element of internal rhythm emerges as one of the basic tools for the design of the image. Its use fundamentally affects the way that the image functions in the space of the icon. The Anastasis conveys a strong sense of movement that takes place inside the painting. This impression is achieved through the way that the Imaged relate to each

other. Internal rhythm transforms the composition into a pictorial body by making every element of each scene into an active component of a potential interaction. While internal rhythm is responsible for the inner movement and consistency of the pictorial body, external rhythm translates the internal movement into an event that would involve the beholder in the space of icon. The principle of the X-shaped pictorial relation is expanded through external rhythm and it is used in order to make the interaction between the Imaged and the beholder possible by reducing the distance that separates the two components.

The question that emerges at this stage is: how is rhythm used in the case of single-figure images? The answer will be provided through the analysis of one characteristic example.

St Theodore Tiro

The figure of St Theodore Tiro (fig. 28) occupies the pier between the western and eastern bay of the south wall and can be considered to be the counterpart of the image of St Artemios/Nicetas (fig. 18). St Theodore is a soldier saint and for this reason he is depicted here carrying his weaponry. In his right hand he holds a long spear, while in his left hand he holds his sword. His shield is hung from a baldric over his right shoulder and hangs behind his figure in the opposite direction.



Figure 28: St Theodore Tiro. Internal Rhythm. Pier between the western and eastern bays of the south wall of the parekklesion. Fresco.

Starting with the internal rhythm of the figure, there are clearly intense juxtapositions created inside it. The saint's chlamys, tied in a knot below his chest to the right, is drawn across his chest reaching his left shoulder, creating a diagonal axis that marks the saint's upper body. The baldric of his shield is another, counterpart axis that is formed in the same area of his body. The intersection of the two in front of the saint's chest creates an X-shaped. The baldric of the saint's shield however, participates in the formation of another juxtaposition, too, as the diagonal line that it creates, cuts across the

axis of the spear, which crosses the figure at an angle. The linear antitheses continue with the participation of the saint's arms in the rhythmic organisation. In particular, the extension of the line formed by the saint's right upper arm is cut across by the diagonal axis drawn by his arm, while at the same time the latter is traversed in its extension by the axis of the spear. The same axis, that of the spear creates an X-shaped juxtaposition with the saint's left upper arm too, which moves towards the left side of the painting. At the same time however, the left upper arm participates in another antithesis, this time in relation to the left arm, which moves rightwards towards the core of the saint's body. The spear, emerging as a major rhythmic component in the image of St Theodore as observed, relates rhythmically to the shield as well, by traversing its width and creating another X. In an attempt to examine the figure in macro-level, one has to zoom out and study the way that the figure itself is designed. Leaving elements such as the saint's weaponry aside, one notices that the body of the figure is itself managed rhythmically. The intense leftward movement of the core of the saint's body, contributing to an impression of an almost dance-like pose, is contrasted to the leftward movement of the lower half of his body, creating a macro-X that involves the figure as a whole. Thus, it becomes clear that the image of St Theodore Tiro is even richer in terms of internal rhythm, in comparison to that of St Artemios/Nicetas. Embodying more antitheses and juxtapositions of pictorial forces, the figure of St Theodore is marked by an even higher degree of inner intensity that leads to the conveyance of a strong impression of dynamic but yet perfectly balanced movement.



Figure 29: St Theodore Tiro. External Rhythm

The complexity of internal rhythm cannot but be reflected in the external rhythmic organisation of the image (fig. 29). In the case of the image of St Theodore, the painters increased the complexity of external rhythm in order for the intensity of the internal pictorial antitheses to be exteriorized and projected towards the beholder. The saint's head is depicted in three quarter view facing to the left and outwards, creating the first pictorial force that radiates from inside the painting surface towards the space of the beholder. The

counterpart of this force is the one created by the core of the saint's body. The core of Theodore's body is portrayed in three quarter view creating a rightward movement that, in its extension, would ultimately lead outside of the painting surface. In this way, the head and the core of the body form a set of pictorial forces that exit the painting and envelop the viewer inside a virtual cone. Nevertheless, the complexity of the internal forces of the image arguably called for the further expansion of external rhythm. For this reason, the painters, by reusing one of the pictorial forces that participated in the first cone, managed to create a second virtual cone, emanating from the same image. In order to achieve this, they contrasted the rightward axis of the core of the saint's body, further accentuated by the three-quarter design of his legs, to the leftward axis indicated by the saint's left lower leg and foot, which are also depicted in three quarter view and seem to move outwards. As a consequence, one observes the formation of a second cone that expands towards the space of the beholder and invites them to interact with the Imaged. The figure of St Theodore is in point of fact a remarkable example of external rhythmic management; this image functions as evidence that a single-figure image can not only be self-sufficient in terms of its communicative function, but it can be as powerful in interactional terms as a composition involving many figures, due to the multi-dimensionality of its outward pictorial forces.

Conclusion

Through the rhythmic management of the image, the Imaged come closer to the senses of the viewer. In this way, the space of the icon is transformed into an interactional domain of communication between bodies. The space of the icon is filled by the pictorial presence of the Imaged and the physical presence of the beholder and, through their interaction, it acquires meaning, while being shaped and re-shaped. It is a chora space of becoming, existing in between realities and being constantly under negotiation between bodies. As a chora-space in between, it provides the link between visibility and invisibility, past and present, immediacy and mediation. The visible body of the saint, depicted on the wall of the chapel, pictorially present in his or her image, is connected through rhythm to his invisible body, the one that dwells in heaven, close to God. The lifeless image of the saint's body becomes lifelike when imbued with rhythm, and joins the space of the viewer, in a painter's attempt to merge the world of the lifeless visible image with the world of the eternally alive but invisible saint in heaven. The application of rhythm could probably be perceived as an attempt to make the concept of the 'ubiquity of the sacred', in Mondzain's terms,³⁷¹ into an experience for the senses. The invisible archetypes acquire pictorial form in their icons and through the rhythmic management of the image, the Imaged appear to move in space accompanying and following the

³⁷¹ Marie-Jose Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy: The Byzantine Origins of the Contemporary Imaginary* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 138.

beholder.³⁷² The holy persons depicted acquire pictorial bodies that can be seen and felt inside space, pictorial bodies that the beholder can communicate with and relate to, deconstructing in this way the wall that separates invisibility from visibility, sacredness from profanity, heaven from earth. Thus, the given ubiquity of the sacred, as Mondzain perceives it, becomes, through rhythm, a corporeal experience for the faithful, realised through the potential interaction between Imaged and viewer in the chora-space of the icon.

The space of the icon can also be understood as a link between present and past. I would suggest that the image, when imbued with rhythm, exists in the gap between the present time of the beholder and the historic time of the holy person depicted, who is no longer present on earth. This gap, marked by the saint's actual absence from the world of the living, is filled by a space that can break the boundaries of time as traditionally perceived by people and exist in a locus that allows it to bridge the gap between both temporal realities. The image of the holy person is linked to the past through its sharing of likeness of form with the prototype. At the same time, the image is also necessarily closely linked to the present in its power to enter the space of the beholders and co-exist

³⁷² Through external rhythm, the Imaged seem to enter the space of the faithful, co-existing with them in the space of the chapel. The application of external rhythm on figures however, has another important consequence, as it creates the impression of an icon that seems to follow the viewer's gaze inside space. In single-figure paintings of the parekklesion, the face of the Imaged slightly turns towards one direction, while the eyes of the Imaged look towards the opposite direction. This design leads to the creation of a virtual cone – made of two forces exiting the painting surface in opposite directions – that includes the faithful standing in front of the image. In applying this technique, the painters of the parekklesion created images that followed the gaze of the faithful and moved through the movement of the beholder, thus accompanying them in the space of the chapel. This effect, Kordis suggests, is probably the reason for which the Byzantines used to characterise their icons as lifelike. See Kordis, *Icon as Communion: The Ideals and Compositional Principles of Icon Painting*, p. 33.

with them, sharing their own time frame and allowing them to communicate with the Imaged. Rhythm gives the space of the icon the ability to exist beyond or, even better, between the boundaries set by human perceptions of time, not as a liminal space but as a central one, as a space at the centre of religious experience, with the goal of communication between God and the faithful. This gap in time is created inside the chapel not only in conceptual terms but also in corporeal terms through rhythm in painting.

Rhythm also adds another dimension to our understanding of the function of the image. Mondzain argues that the space of the icon illustrates a paradigm in which immediacy and mediation are ‘alternately linked to each other’.³⁷³ As a medium itself, the icon provides the beholder with a physical image of a physically invisible holy person, who, in his or her turn, is expected to mediate in order for the faithful to communicate with God. The icon could thus be perceived as a medium of communication with another medium, given that the ultimate goal would be for the prayers of the beholder to reach God. In this way, God seems to become twice as distant because he can only be reached through the intermediacy of two mediums. I would suggest however that the painters of the parekklesion eliminate the barrier of the material nature of the image and bring the Imaged as a pictorial presence into direct contact with the beholder. For this reason, they paint images in such way that the Imaged can in pictorial terms relate and interact with viewers, offering them a stronger sense of immediacy than the one already inherent in the icon. In a post-iconoclasm world, where the concept of the immediacy of the icon is mostly restricted to the contemplation of the holy person through his or her image, the painters of the parekklesion created images that are able to gaze back at the viewer and

³⁷³ Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy: The Byzantine Origins of the Contemporary Imaginary*, p. 138.

follow his or her gaze, icons that offer the beholder an image of corporeal immediacy. In this way, that which is only conceptually intelligible, the immediate interaction with the Imaged, becomes corporeally experienced in the space of the icon through the application of rhythm. Thus, even though the icons of the chapel will always be images of mediation, constant reminders of the need for mediation due to the lack of physical presence of God, at the same time, they will also have qualities of real corporeal immediacy, co-existing among the faithful as companions in Christ.

It becomes clear that the chora-space of the icon exists in the gap between presence and absence. The dualities of visibility and invisibility, past and present, immediacy and mediation, all present themselves as aspects of the presence-absence duality. If Christ was physically present on earth, He would be visible and He would be sharing the same time frame as humans and there would be no need for someone else to act as a mediator in order for the faithful to reach Him. However, as this is not a reality, a gap exists between heaven and earth. I would suggest that painting, rhythmically organised, aims at closing to some extent this gap by bringing the two worlds close together within the space of the church. That which is eternally present in heaven becomes temporarily present on earth when the beholder, with his or her gaze, activates the interactional qualities of the image and establishes a relationship with it in the space of the icon. In this way, at least momentarily, the interactionally potent image abolishes the notion of the physical absence of the holy person by providing the beholder with an Imaged pictorially present. Thus, it could be claimed that the paintings of the parekklesion offer the beholder a glimpse of the eternal presence of the holy persons in heaven, functioning as a space/reminder not of eternal absence but of eternal presence, because that which is absent cannot engage in

corporeal communication and interaction. This potential pictorial interaction between Imaged and viewer in the chora-space of the icon seems to fill the gap that exists between human expectations of presence, visibility and time organisation, and the timeless, ubiquitous God. By bringing the holy persons closer to the senses of the beholder, giving them the potential to enter the beholder's physical space and interact with him or her, the paintings of the parekklesion seem to abolish the presence-absence duality. In its place, another kind of presence is projected, a concept of a chora-presence, situated in between absence and presence. That third kind of presence can be labelled the 'in Christ presence' of the holy persons, an idea that emerges as a central concept inside the chapel. This in Christ presence, expressed throughout liturgical texts, is realised through painting and becomes an experience for the senses of the viewer. The essence of the notion of presence in Christ lies in the deconstruction of the laws of nature as humans know them, and their rearticulation in divine terms. In this way, the holy persons inside the chapel are present and at the same time they are not, they are visible but at the same time they are also invisible, they are of the present but they are also of the past. This simultaneous existence of holy persons in a chora-space between two realities is marked by their status as inhabitants of heaven and companions of God. They exist and operate in two realms, filling the gap between them with their in Christ presence. In this way, they are present in the chapel conceptually as members of the community in Christ and as persons who lived in the past; but at the same time they are also pictorially present here and now through the application of rhythm, able to relate and interact with the inhabitants of space. The heavenly bodies of the holy persons are, through painting, united with the earthly bodies of the faithful into one concrete *soma*, the symbolic body of Christ. Even though they are

not physically present, their affiliation with God gave them the possibility of existing in eternity as corporeally invisible members of an existent visible community, breaking the boundaries of space and time.

The above analysis of rhythmic elements in selected paintings in the parekklesion aims at shedding light on the way that the design of these paintings affects the interaction between image and beholder and shapes the beholder's experience of worship and space. The antitheses and juxtapositions of forms and forces created through internal rhythm inside the paintings are exteriorized through external rhythm. In this way, a rather abstract and self-centred sense of dynamic movement of the figure is translated into an invitation to corporeal interaction. It is this exact notion of relation between elements that governs the design of the images of the parekklesion. Each element relates to another in an X-shape form, symbolising the dynamic balance between complementary forces. The rhythmic combination of elements, leads to the creation of antitheses, which, instead of resulting in the fragmentation of the image, bind the individual elements together in a pictorial body. Through the rhythmic organisation of images, each pictorial element relates to another in a dynamic way. Each element maintains its individual characteristics, while at the same time it engages in a creative 'dialogue' with other elements. This leads to the establishment of a strong active pictorial relation among them. With the concept of relation being at the centre of artistic production inside the parekklesion, each image becomes a locus for the projection of this concept. The ultimate expression of the notion of relation is the creation of functional bodies of images. Consisting of individual members that relate to each other, these pictorial bodies exist in order for the beholder to be able to interact with each image effectively, at a micro and at a macro level,

corporeally as well as conceptually. Each pictorial element becomes a member of a body, a component of a potential micro-level communication that involves the particular member and the beholder. Each complete image becomes in its turn a pictorial body, a component of a potential macro-level communication that involves the beholder and the image as a whole/body. Finally each pictorial body is integrated into a broader artistic body. This extended body is a locus of integration of every image of the chapel in a broader functional image or in more symbolic terms, a hypertext or a narrative. This narrative, conceptually projected inside the space of the chapel and formed pictorially by bodies of images, which in their turn function as members in the narrative paradigm, can be regarded as a 'spatial icon', in Aleksej Lidov's terms.³⁷⁴ Lidov defines 'spatial icon' as a 'spatial environment' inside sacred space formed by architectural forms, paintings, liturgical clothes and vessels, lighting, fragrance, ritual gestures and other factors that affect the formation of sacred space into a 'spatial complex'.³⁷⁵ Hierotopy is defined by Lidov as the creation of spatial icons inside sacred space and it is regarded as 'a special form of creativity'. Hierotopy is also understood as 'a field of historical research which reveals and analyses the particular examples of that creativity'.³⁷⁶ Lidov conceives all objects of religious art as elements of a hierotopical project and examines the way they

³⁷⁴ Alexei Lidov, *Hierotopy: Spatial Icons and Image-Paradigms in Byzantine Culture* (Moscow: Theoria, 2009), pp. 304-39.

³⁷⁵ Aleksej Michajlovic Lidov, 'Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces as a Form of Creativity and as a Subject of Cultural History', in *Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, ed. by Aleksej Michajlovic Lidov (Moscow: Progress-Tradition, 2006), pp. 33-58, 32.

³⁷⁶ Lidov, 'Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces as a Form of Creativity and as a Subject of Cultural History', p. 32.

participate in the formation of 'spatial icons' within sacred space.³⁷⁷ Even though hierotopy as a field of historical research deals with the factors that shape sacred space, I will not move to a wholesale adoption of Lidov's theory for two reasons. Firstly, Lidov's analysis focuses both on fixed elements of space (e.g., architecture, painting) as well as on ephemeral phenomena (e.g., sound, lighting conditions) in order to perform a reading of sacred space, while my focus is mostly on fixed elements of space, such as architecture and painting. Secondly, Lidov's approach is mostly concerned with the creator of space and his or her intentions and it does not explore the beholder's experience of space in depth, whereas I aim at placing emphasis on both areas in this thesis. Part of the 'spatial icon' of the parekklesion is in this case formed by the projection of a narrative in space in pictorial terms; a story that floods the space of the parekklesion in every aspect and fundamentally affects the way that its users think about and relate to it. In the case of the parekklesion, the narrative projected pictorially and spatially is that of Incarnation and Salvation. Lidov's view certainly seems appealing as it highlights the significance of the pictorial narrative inside space. However, I would like to adopt an approach that would involve the corporeal element of communication to a greater extent, an approach that would be able to highlight not only the conceptual and the spatial but also the corporeal dimension of the narrative, the one that brings the narrative to life in corporeal terms through the interaction with the beholder. Possibly, a supplementary suggestion to Lidov's view could be that of regarding the narrative as having the characteristics of an

³⁷⁷ Lidov, 'Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces as a Form of Creativity and as a Subject of Cultural History', p. 32.

artistic installation that marks the space of the chapel and holds it together, while serving the purpose of narrating the twofold story of Incarnation and Salvation.³⁷⁸

In this chapter, I aimed at identifying an interpretive tool that would illustrate the realisation of pictorial presence in the space of the icon. I showed that, through the application of rhythm, the Imaged becomes pictorially present and capable of participating in an act of interacting with the beholder. Through artistic elaboration of the form, the space of the icon is transformed into an interactional domain filled by bodies in the process of producing meaning. The chora-space of the icon unites the body of the beholder with the pictorial body and provides the link between visibility and invisibility, past and present, immediacy and mediation, presence and absence. The pictorial body expands inside the space of the parecclesion to form a narrative; it is a spatial icon or an artistic installation that involves the beholder, the pictorial and the architectural body in a wider, unified space of becoming through interaction between bodies. In the following chapter, I will focus on the way that the architectural body is formed and I will explore its participation in the Incarnation and Salvation narrative and in the formation of an extended chora-space within the space of the parekklesion.

³⁷⁸ James' work has shed light on the subject of Byzantine monumental art as installation. In her article 'Senses and Sensibility in Byzantium' in particular, she studies the way that the sacred image functioned inside church space as part of an installation that was created in order to be experienced with all five senses. See James, 'Senses and Sensibility in Byzantium'. The concept of art as installation in James' thought will be discussed in chapter four. My work builds on James' idea but my use of the concept of the chora takes it in a different direction.

Chapter 4: architectural space as body

In this chapter, I look at the way that architecture relates to the concept of the body to form a space of becoming inside the parekklesion and evoke the concept of the chora. While exploring the conditions that define the spatial code of church space, I begin by examining the interconnections between architecture, painting symbolism and the beholder. While analysing the way that those categories participate in shaping the space of the chapel, I focus here on two different but interrelated concepts of the body in relation to the architectural space: space as an artistic installation/body and space as a body of bodies. In the first section of this chapter, I explore the way that architecture relates to the pictorial body of images of the church and to symbolism to project the themes of Incarnation and Salvation and unify the space of the chapel. The space of the parekklesion will be regarded as an interactional space where architecture, painting and symbolism relate to each other to create an installation or artistic body. In this way, the faithful experience the space of the chapel as a chora-space of becoming; they interact with the artistic body in the process of producing meaning through establishing connections with its parts. In the second section of this chapter, I focus on the concept of space as a body of bodies. I look at the way that the space of the chapel relates to the concept of the collective body as a reflection of the Body of Christ. Based on theories of church space symbolism, the chapel will be regarded as a living body, a spatial and

symbolic body formed by the members of the Christian community. While arguing for an interpretation of space that is based on the concepts of interaction and relation between bodies, this chapter touches upon the dual concept of space as body and body as space and explores how the space of the *parekklesion* is shaped into an *ecclesia*. Space as *ecclesia* will be interpreted as a *chora*-space in between, bridging the gap between heaven and earth as well as past and present, and acquiring meaning through the interactions between its parts.

The formation of spatial narrative

The question of how church space can be perceived and analysed is a crucial one. In this section I look at the way that the interactions between form, function, symbolism and the presence of the beholder affect the formation of a spatial narrative in the space of the chapel. Sullivan's 'form follows function' is a famous statement and has dominated many researchers' views on space and its analysis. In fact, form and function are two major characteristics of space and one should not overlook either of them in the interpretation of space. However, the conception that 'the end determines the means' is overemphasised and reveals only one part of the image.³⁷⁹ Every space has many different apparent as well as indirect uses and meanings and as spaces are over-inscribed, they cannot be easily

³⁷⁹ E. H. Gombrich, *The Uses of Images: Studies in the Social Function of Art and Visual Communication* (London: Phaidon, 1999), p. 14.

defined by using only two simple parameters such as form and function.³⁸⁰ I agree with Ousterhout here, that in order to interpret sacred space one needs to apply more parameters, as church space does not serve only functional but also symbolic needs.³⁸¹ The analysis of church space should thus be performed in a three-dimensional way, taking into consideration form, function and symbolism, which are necessarily tightly interwoven both with form and function.

However, can space be interpreted without taking into consideration its usage and consequently its user? Often, the usage/user factor is undermined as, just like Ousterhout suggests, 'human movement is two-dimensional',³⁸² and thus probably an element of secondary importance in the process of analysing a three-dimensional space. However, it can be argued that the user factor is necessarily three-dimensional, as time should be perceived as a core element of human movement. For this reason, the role of the user in the interpretation of space should be highly important, as space cannot be conceived as not being inhabited. Space is, first of all, created in order to 'be lived',³⁸³ and if this is a primary purpose of its creation then the people that inhabit it should be considered as playing a major part in its formation, through the way that they move in and relate to space. A comprehensive analysis of sacred space would take into account form, function, symbolism and user; all of them united and interrelated. I am going to start by studying issues related to form and function. At this point, I choose to study form and function in a parallel manner in order primarily to examine their interrelation, leaving behind a few

³⁸⁰ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 142.

³⁸¹ Robert Ousterhout, 'The Holy Space: Architecture and the Liturgy', in *Heaven on Earth: Art and the Church in Byzantium*, ed. by Linda Safran (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), pp. 81-120, 81.

³⁸² Ousterhout, 'The Holy Space: Architecture and the Liturgy', p. 81.

³⁸³ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 143.

often generalising statements, such as Sullivan's 'form follows function'.³⁸⁴

As Ousterhout suggests, church architecture is very often analysed through the study of the liturgy and, under this prism, a general relationship between form and function is to be found in Byzantine churches.³⁸⁵ Krautheimer agrees that developments in Christian ritual are usually projected in architecture in the sense that liturgy and its needs often play an important role in the formulation of Byzantine architectural style.³⁸⁶ In the case of Byzantine church space, even though, generally speaking, form facilitates function, form's relation to function should not be understood as an 'oppressive' one, as there are many factors that affect the formation of the Byzantine architectural style apart from liturgy, such as aesthetics, location requirements and special functions.³⁸⁷ However, one should take into consideration that conceptual detachment of form from function would involve risk, as form is a highly communicative element of space and it is directly related to worshippers' experience of space. Space is created primarily to 'be lived'. Consequently, its form is crucial in order for the worshippers to be able to link the building with its function, and most importantly recognise space and thus recognise themselves in it and find their place in it. Form defines space in a vital way and even though it might not 'denote, describe, recount, depict or portray' anything,³⁸⁸ it still conveys a message; for the form itself is also a message, whether form is considered metaphorically representational or not. Indeed, form cannot be considered as an empty

³⁸⁴ Louis Sullivan, 'Form Follows Function', in *America Builds*, ed. by Leland Roth (New York: Harper&Row, 1983).

³⁸⁵ Ousterhout, 'The Holy Space: Architecture and the Liturgy', p. 81.

³⁸⁶ Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965).

³⁸⁷ Robert Ousterhout, 'An Apologia for Byzantine Architecture', *Gesta*, 35.1 (1996), 21-33, 25.

³⁸⁸ Nelson Goodman, 'How Buildings Mean', *Critical Inquiry*, 11.4 (1985), 642-53 p. 642

container free of meaning or significance. Because of its communicative function, form is charged with meaning for the user of space. In this way, recognition of form as being familiar is highly important, for it initiates a process of familiarisation with space and thus offers 'a way to live', and not just be, in a particular space.

Ousterhout suggests that the relation between form and function in the Byzantine church is characterised by 'responsiveness'. Byzantine architecture is responsive, it functions as an interactive frame in which relationships are established and chains of meanings are produced.³⁸⁹ The concept of the responsiveness of the architecture is emphatically projected inside the space of the parekklesion, which can be regarded as a space that perfectly manifests the interweaving of form and function both spatially and conceptually. Even though the exact events that took place in the parekklesion are not known to us, it is reasonable to suggest based on evidence that the parekklesion was used for the performance of rituals related to death and burial, that is funerary services and commemorative ceremonies.³⁹⁰ As Akyürek points out, funerary services in Byzantium were more often than not performed in the narthexes of the church. There, the body of the deceased was placed facing east in order for the relatives and friends to have the chance to say their last goodbye to him/her, a ritual called prothesis or last kiss. Dionysius of Fourni in his Painter's Manual, suggests that in the pendentives of one of the two domes of the narthexes the painter should depict hymnographers, such as John of Damascus and Kosmas the Poet. Also, Dionysios suggests that the Virgin with Child should be depicted in the cupola of the same dome in the narthex.³⁹¹ This exact decoration pattern is used in

³⁸⁹ Ousterhout, 'The Virgin of the Chora', pp. 92-93.

³⁹⁰ Akyürek, 'Funeral Ritual in the Parekklesion of the Chora Church', p. 91.

³⁹¹ Dionysios of Fourni, *Ερμηνεία Της Ζωγραφικής Τέχνης*, p. 85.

the dome of the western bay of the parekklesion, a fact that leads researchers to suggest that the spot directly below the dome might have been the place where the body of the deceased was placed during the prothesis.³⁹² The body of the deceased is placed underneath the dome, under the gaze of the Virgin as the supreme intercessor between him/her and God. It also faces east, towards the eastern bay and the image of the Anastasis, the ultimate expression of hope for the faithful.

The body of the deceased is placed in a spot inside the chapel that allows for communication with the images of the Virgin and Christ at the same time; in this way, it partakes of the mystery of the Incarnation, as symbolised in the dome and at the same time it is anticipating the day of and Salvation, as depicted in the eastern bay. During the funeral service, the deceased is placed at an intersection between the human and the divine, spatially and conceptually. While the congregation is praying for Christ and the Virgin to intervene in order for the soul of the deceased to be saved, the body of the deceased, being directly underneath the dome of the western bay, seems to be physically and symbolically enclosed by the miracle of the Incarnation, the ultimate expression of a union between the human and the divine. At the same time, the body of the deceased faces east towards the resurrected body of Christ, which exits the painting surface and moves towards the space of the deceased due to the rhythmic elaboration of the form discussed in the last chapter. In this way, the body of the deceased exists in a space in between, where the human space meets the space of the divine, in a chora-space between heaven and earth inside the parekklesion. This space is formed in two ways, with the participation of both the images of Christ and the Virgin as well as through the

³⁹² Akyürek, 'Funeral Ritual in the Parekklesion of the Chora Church', p. 100.

involvement of architectural space.

The formation of a space in between that bridges the gap between heaven and earth can be traced in the way that the spatial narrative of Incarnation and Salvation unfolds inside the parekklesion in the form of an installation. Various scholars have explored the concept of church space as installation. James perceives church space as an installation that aims at bringing the faithful into contact with God through the senses. In exploring the way that the beholder experienced the space of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, James argues for a sensory approach to the practice of worship and examines the interactions between senses in the process of communicating with God. Within this context, she problematises a reading of the Virgin and Child mosaic in the apse of Hagia Sophia as part of a sensory installation that invites the beholder's corporeal participation and places 'the body at the centre of religious experience'. In examining the factors that influenced the way that the apse mosaic was perceived and experienced by the faithful, James suggests that the painting interacted with its physical location. The way it looked varied – depending on the lighting conditions inside the church that changed based on the time of the day and the year – and the experience of it altered based on the faithful's engagement with the wider installation. In perceiving the apse mosaic as part of an installation, it becomes possible to engage with questions that address the transformation of the beholder into a participant inside church space, through a process of sensory engagement with the icon and other objects of worship.

In her article, James offers a variety of examples that illustrate the way that the Byzantines made use of the senses in the process of worship and in their interactions with God. While smell was thought of as capable of revealing 'the fragrance of the Holy

Spirit', tasting the Eucharistic gifts was an experience that could bring the faithful closer to God.³⁹³ Touch can also be considered as playing an important role in the faithful's attempt to communicate with the divine. The faithful's love and respect towards the holy persons was expressed through kissing their images, and also bowing and kneeling in front of them. Sound inside the church was another focal point of the experience of space, as chanting filled the space of the church and transformed it into a breathing container.³⁹⁴ Finally, the role of sight was also considered as very important in the process of communicating with God. As the interplay between light – either natural or candlelight – and colour altered the appearance of space throughout the day, the way that individual paintings and the church as installation were experienced by the faithful was also affected. As James points out however, each one of the senses did not act in isolation. In exploring the interactions between the senses, James sheds light on the formation of a sensory continuum that played an important part in shaping the experience of space by the worshipper and highlights the bodily dimension of sight as a means of communicating with God.

Alexei Lidov introduced the concept of hierotopy in order to describe and analyse sacred space as a performative installation that unfolds across space and time. The term hierotopy can be regarded as referring to a multisensory experience of space that is affected by changing ambient conditions. In Lidov's view, sacred images inside church space are thought of as integral parts of a spatial installation that ultimately aims at shaping the experience of the divine by the individual faithful. In regarding sacred images

³⁹³ James, 'Senses and Sensibility in Byzantium', pp. 525-26.

³⁹⁴ The concept of church space as a living container is analysed by Pentcheva. See Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium*, pp. 51-52.

as being actively involved in a spatial performance, Lidov becomes able to explore icons as co-creators of church space and of the viewer's experience of it.³⁹⁵ Sacred space is ultimately viewed as a 'vivid, spiritually intensive and concretely influential environment' that aims at revealing the divine.³⁹⁶ It can be thought of as a dynamic installation in which art, architectural interiors and liturgical objects interact through performance to create 'spatial icons' that invite the faithful's participation.³⁹⁷

Nicoletta Isar's work also explores aspects of the subject of art as installation in the context of sacred space. Isar analyses church space as a dynamic, performative locus experienced through the participation in ritual performances. The way that the human interacts with the divine inside church space through circular dance and movement (choros, from the Greek word *χορός* which means dance) is at the centre of her thinking about space as a performative installation. Concentrating on sixth-century ekphraseis of Hagia Sophia by Paul the Silentiary and Prokopios, Isar argues for a definition of sacred space that incorporates the concepts of chora and choros in order to study the interaction between space and beholder. In perceiving sacred space as a participatory installation activated through and experienced in movement, she becomes able to address the issue of the expression of divine presence in space and its experience by the beholder. Through

³⁹⁵ On Lidov's work see Aleksej Michajlovic Lidov, 'The Byzantine World and Performative Spaces', in *Spatial Icons: Performativity in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, ed. by Aleksej Michajlovic Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2011), pp. 17-26; Aleksej Michajlovic Lidov, 'The Flying Hodegetria: The Miraculous Icon as Bearer of Sacred Space', in *The Miraculous Image in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. by E. Thunoe and G. Wolf (Rome, 2004), pp. 291-321; Alexej Lidov, 'The Creation of Sacred Space as a Phenomenon of Byzantine Culture', in *L'Artista a Bisanzio E Nel Mondo Cristiano-Orientale*, ed. by Michele Bacci (Pisa: Edizioni Della Normale, 2007), pp. 135-76.

³⁹⁶ Lidov, 'Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces as a Form of Creativity and as a Subject of Cultural History', p. 39.

³⁹⁷ See Lidov, *Hierotopy: Spatial Icons and Image-Paradigms in Byzantine Culture*.

engaging with the spatial installation – including architectural spaces, art and ritual – the faithful perceive the divine energy and experience a fusion with the divine while in movement.³⁹⁸

Pentcheva's work on mixed-media icons has shed light on the way that the holy image functions as part of an installation in the context of sacred space. In analysing the concept of the performative icon, she explores the way that the sacred image reacted to its physical settings and how the faithful's perception of it changed depending on the image's surrounding conditions. The light of candles reflecting on gilded surfaces, burning incense creating layers of fragrance and smoke, human voices reverberating, drafts of air, natural light and shadows, all played a role in shaping the appearance of church space and transformed it into a constantly changing, dynamic installation that can be experienced through all five senses. In situating the luxury mixed-media icon within this ever-changing environment, Pentcheva explores the process through which the holy image becomes animated inside the church. In suggesting that the image's appearance and the beholder's experience of it change as the icon interacts with its space, she argues for a definition of the holy image as 'polymorphous', an ever-changing image that reflects 'inner life' and allows the beholder to experience the divine energy emanating from it. The phenomenal changes that affect the surface of the mixed-media icon transform it, in Pentcheva's terms, into an inspirited object that comes alive in the context of the spatial installation created inside the church. Ultimately, the faithful's multisensory participation

³⁹⁸ See Isar, 'Chora: Tracing the Presence'; Nicoletta Isar, 'Chorography (Chora, Choros): A Performative Paradigm of Creation of Sacred Space in Byzantium', in *Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, ed. by Aleksej Michajlovic Lidov (Moscow: Progress-Tradition, 2006), pp. 59-90; Isar, 'Chorography: A Space for Choreographic Description', ; Nicoletta Isar, 'Choros: Dancing into the Sacred Space of Chora', *Byzantion*, 75 (2005), 199-224.

in the performative space of the church called the divine to manifest itself into the visible and allowed it to appear in sound, fragrance, movement and in the icon, transforming in this way the spatial installation into a chora space of inspiration, an ‘empsychos naos’.³⁹⁹

The ideas discussed in the preceding section have been influential on my work on the way that the Chora parekklesion interior is transformed into an installation. The dynamics of space and the way it affects the beholder’s reading and experience of art, the participation of the body in experiencing sacred space, the role of the viewer as participant inside church space, the element of movement and its importance in engaging with a spatial installation, and the notion of space as chora are some of the concepts discussed by James, Lidov, Isar and Pentcheva that have helped me shape an approach to church space as installation. In regarding the space of the chapel as a locus of interaction between art, architectural space, symbolism and the beholder, I become able to argue for a definition of space as an installation or interactive narrative that incorporates the concept of the Platonic chora and addresses the issue of the participation of the body – human, divine, artistic, symbolic – in the process of experiencing and shaping sacred space. At the centre of my thinking about the space of the parekklesion as an installation is the concept of the chora. Both Isar and Pentcheva incorporate the concept of the chora in their discussions of sacred space. In Isar’s view, chora, in the context of sacred space, takes the form of and is expressed through circular movement, while Pentcheva regards chora space as an episodic reality that appears in sound and dance. My discussion of chora in the context of space as installation, even though it takes into consideration the role of movement in experiencing space, is mostly focused around the notion of chora as a space

³⁹⁹ See Pentcheva, 'The Performative Icon', ;Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium*.

in between, functioning as a bridge in order to connect bodies and elements across space and time. In exploring the interactions between art, architecture and symbolism and the way that the faithful experience them, I problematise a reading of space as a conceptual and material installation in the form of a chora space in between that places the body of the beholder at the centre of the interactive narrative formed inside the chapel. Following Ousterhout, I suggest that the installation inside the space of the parekklesion is structured around two major themes, Incarnation and Salvation.

The themes of the Incarnation and Salvation, revealing God's plan for the salvation of man in all its dimensions, are projected in space temporally and spatially.⁴⁰⁰ The beholder entering from the western bay is led to journey through, revisit and appreciate God's plan from the preparation of the Incarnation, through the depiction of prefigurations of the Virgin, to the Incarnation and from there to the eastern bay on to Salvation, physically and mentally moving inside space while participating in the services.

Undoubtedly, the iconographic programme of the parekklesion is not a characteristic example of the Byzantine iconographic programme, given the fact that the parekklesion was not the main church of the monastery and that it was used as a funerary chapel. The iconographic programme of the chapel is unique and, reflecting its funerary character, it does not contain the themes that were usually included in the iconographic programme of a church. Its size, function and architectural plan played an important role in planning and structuring the programme. Moreover, the chapel's proximity to the main church should be noted too; the chapel, being so close to the main church, certainly posed

⁴⁰⁰ Ousterhout, 'Temporal Structuring in the Chora Parekklesion', p. 68.

a challenge for the painters, as they had to organise the iconographic programme of the parekklesion in such a way as to avoid major repetition of themes and scenes.

Entering the parekklesion from the west, the faithful find themselves in the western bay surrounded by images relating to the Incarnation and the role of the Virgin in God's plan for the Salvation of mankind. As the architectural body engages in a dialogue with the pictorial body, the beholder can see the symbol of the Incarnation – the image of the Virgin holding Christ – depicted in the dome, the most prominent spot of the western bay. Moving downwards, to the lower sections of the chapel, the beholder can see Old Testament scenes prefiguring the Virgin, occupying less prominent spots but participating in the narrative by highlighting the role of the Virgin in Salvation. The typological reference to the Virgin in Old Testament scenes underlines Her role in the plan of God for the Salvation of mankind and also gives a historic dimension to God's plan. Long before the birth of Christ, God had a plan for the redemption of the faithful, which was realised with the coming of Christ to earth. In order for God's plan to be realised however, He first needed to become human. The Incarnation, as the way through which Christ came to earth, could not happen without the instrumentality of the Virgin. Thus, the Incarnation, as a prerequisite for Salvation, emerges as a crucial concept inside the parekklesion because it is so closely linked to the desired redemption of Man.



Figure 30: Parekklesion. Dome of the western bay. Fresco.

Symbolically, the western bay, covered by the dome, is a space where heaven meets earth. The relation between heaven and earth as expressed through the dome and its decoration is also highlighted by the presence of the twelve windows at the base of the drum. The heavenly world of the dome is part of the earthly world of the architecture, but the ring of windows gives the impression to those down below that the dome is floating above them – and the architecture – on a ring of light.

The Virgin depicted in the dome, as the Mother of God, is the chora of the uncontainable. She is a bridge that connects the human with the divine; her presence in the dome signifies the existence of a chora-space in between heaven and earth, projected through her body as a container of the uncontainable. The role of the Virgin as a bearer of Christ is also projected through her symbolic depiction in the Old Testament scenes of the

lower zone (ark of the covenant, tabernacle, sacred vessels of the Temple, the Temple itself, the unbreachable walled city of Jerusalem).⁴⁰¹ Moreover, the complex role of the Virgin in the Incarnation-Salvation narrative of the chapel is also highlighted by the projection of the concept of the Virgin as the gate through which God entered earth. With the western bay being the point of entry to the *parekklesion*, the mind and the gaze of the faithful is led from the Virgin to Christ, as they move inside the space of the *parekklesion*. The concepts of the Virgin-as-container and the Virgin-as-portal are ultimately united through the words of Joseph the Hymnographer, depicted on the southwestern pendentive. Joseph refers to the Virgin as a *God-bearing portal*, highlighting in this way her complex, twofold role in the Incarnation.⁴⁰²

At the same time, the Incarnate body of Christ in the dome symbolises the bridging of heaven and earth in one body. Christ's placement directly in front of the Virgin is a reference to his having been contained within her. His depiction in gold and white, in contrast to the Virgin's dark robes, projects the concept of Him shining forth from the body of the Virgin with His divine light. Like the dome itself, the image of Christ is thus part of heaven and of earth. The human unites with the divine in one entity to form another *chora*, a space embodying a bridged opposition. Christ is the *chora* of the living, where the past of the deceased and the present of the living unite to create the ever-present body of the Church.

The formation of a space in between heaven and earth can also be traced in the way that architectural forms develop in the western bay. Prokopiou 'reads' church space through an architecture-based model, grounded on the conception that church space is

⁴⁰¹ Ousterhout, 'The Virgin of the Chora', p. 100.

⁴⁰² Ousterhout, 'The Virgin of the Chora', pp. 101-02.

made up of two elements: the square, symbolising the earth and the circle/sphere symbolising the sky/heaven.⁴⁰³ By combining these two elements with the cruciform typical plan of the Byzantine church, Prokopiou suggests that church space becomes a ‘miniature of the cosmos’, an ‘imago mundi’: the earth meets the sky/heaven and they get amalgamated in a space which facilitates the fusion between the two, a connection that finds its pure expression in the sign of the cross.⁴⁰⁴ Indeed, Prokopiou’s remark is felicitous, however, he does not go so far as to point out that the synthesis of the square and the circle is in fact not only an ‘imago mundi’, a symbol of probably secondary importance. It is also a visualisation of the Incarnation, of the unity of two natures in Christ, human and divine. In this architectural context, the square, the main body of the church, symbolises Christ’s human nature and the circle/sphere, the dome, symbolises Christ’s divine nature. The sphere–square unity in the chapel that symbolises the bridging between the divine and the human is expressed through the notion of heaven with its inhabitants moving downwards to meet earth in order for the holy persons to join the faithful in the latter’s spatial and temporal dimension. Keeping this in mind, one can observe the way that the sphere of the dome of the western bay seems to extend downwards towards the north and south walls. This movement can be thought of as a wave-like motion through which the spherical qualities of the dome are transferred lower and lower through the shapes of pendentives and apses, until the sphere reaches the square and enters its space. In this way, the two elements meet and form a body, architecturally and symbolically, an organic whole, with heaven descending towards the earth and the

⁴⁰³ Georgios Prokopiou, *Ο Κοσμολογικός Συμβολισμός Στην Αρχιτεκτονική Του Βυζαντινού Ναου* (Athens: Pyrinos Kosmos, 1981), p. 84.

⁴⁰⁴ Prokopiou, *Ο Κοσμολογικός Συμβολισμός Στην Αρχιτεκτονική Του Βυζαντινού Ναου*, p. 184.

earth receiving and incorporating heaven. In the same way that the Virgin received the divine and that Christ became human for the sake of mankind and came to earth, the dome of the chapel extends towards the main body of the parekklesion to symbolise the creation of a space in between that bridges the gap between the human and the divine.

Moving from the western to the eastern bay, the spatial narrative progresses from the Incarnation to Salvation as the faithful moves inside space. While in the eastern bay, the beholder's gaze is captured by the image of the Anastasis in the conch of the apse.⁴⁰⁵ This image, occupying the most prominent spot inside the parekklesion, dominates the space of the church and highlights the character of the chapel. The miracle of the Anastasis, the one that attests the most to the greatness of God and signifies the redemption of humankind through Christ's sacrifice, is at the centre of the Christian faith. In the same way, the image of the Anastasis is placed in the most prime location inside the chapel, revealing that the Salvation of Man is a dominant concept inside the parekklesion. The theme of Salvation in the spatial narrative is also projected through the depictions of the two miracles that Christ performed, resurrecting the widow's son and the daughter of Jairus.⁴⁰⁶ These two images, framing the depiction of the Anastasis, and placed in less prominent spaces, attest to the power of God to raise the dead and bring them back to life.

Entering a funerary chapel, the faithful know that they will have to deal with the concept of loss and death and confront the gap that separates the past of the deceased from the present of the living. However, for a Christian, God can offer consolation even at the event of a death. This exact hope for finding consolation in God is depicted in the

⁴⁰⁵ See fig. 18 in chapter three (p. 152).

⁴⁰⁶ See fig. 4 in chapter three (p. 114).

conch of the apse. For Christ suffered and sacrificed Himself in order to defeat death and offer eternal life to the members of the Christian community and the image of His Anastasis is a manifestation of His victory and of the Salvation of humankind. The Easter hymn reads:

Christ is risen from the dead

Trampling down death by death

And granting life

*To those in the tombs.*⁴⁰⁷

Christ, through His raising from the dead, becomes a locus of hope and symbolises the formation of a space where the past of the deceased is brought into the present of the living. The Resurrected body of Christ is the chora of the living; it is a space that exists in the gap between past and present. In Christ, the living and the deceased co-exist in an eternal present, united in one body, the Christian community. God's active role in the Salvation of mankind is also highlighted in pictorial terms. Through rhythmic elaboration, the resurrected body of Christ seems to exit the painting surface and enter the space of the faithful, inviting them into an interaction that could bring them closer to Him spiritually. The projection of the theme of Salvation within the spatial narrative transforms the space

⁴⁰⁷ 'Χριστὸς ἀνέστη ἐκ νεκρῶν, θανάτῳ θάνατον πατήσας καὶ τοῖς ἐν τοῖς μνήμασι ζητῶν χαρισάμενος' in *Pentikostarion*, (Athens: Apostoliki Diakonia, 2000), p. 87. Translation of this troparion is my own.

of the *parekklesion* into a *chora-space* in between, uniting the past with the present.⁴⁰⁸ Christ's passing from the world of the dead to the world of the living, symbolises the establishment of a connection between the two realities. The resurrected body of Christ as the *chora* of the living expands in the space of the *parekklesion* to form a *chora space* in and of the chapel, a space that bridges the gap between the living and the deceased.

The formation of the spatial narrative in the *parekklesion* concludes with *The Last Judgment*.⁴⁰⁹ *The Last Judgment*, dominating the higher zone of the eastern bay, depicts the Second Coming of Christ to earth and the judgment of the people according to their way of life. The image of the Last Judgment is here an illustration of Christ's Second Coming as described in Mathew 25:31: 'When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory'.⁴¹⁰ In the scene, the persons depicted act by placing themselves in front of Christ. The righteous are depicted moving towards Him and the sinful moving away from Him, indicating the quality of their relationship with Him. The design of the scene is, according to Ousterhout, an attempt to create a three-dimensional composition through the interaction between painting, architectural forms and symbolism. To this end, the heavenly bodies of the scene form a 'dome of heaven' arranged around the domical vault, while the 'earthly' elements of the composition are depicted lower, in the pendentives and lunettes. In this way, the faithful underneath the domical vault of the eastern bay find themselves standing in a space enclosed by the composition. They are placed in the middle of an event in

⁴⁰⁸ The coming together of time described here should be regarded as depending on the faithful's perception of the movement of images and spaces. The concepts of time and movement inside the space of the chapel will be discussed in greater depth in chapter five.

⁴⁰⁹ See figure 7 in chapter three (p. 121).

⁴¹⁰ Mathew 25:31 cited in Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 202.

progress, with God deciding who will be saved and who will be damned, while they stand in a conceptual space in between heaven and earth. The faithful exist in a space in between, a space that is constantly being re-shaped based on their actions, which will ultimately determine whether they will be saved or not. The immediacy of the scene and the way it unfolds inside space to include the beholder highlight the role of the faithful in Salvation, in spatial and symbolic terms.

The lower zone of the *parekklesion* is occupied by portraits of saints, framed by an image of Christ and an image of the Virgin, on the north and south wall of the *bema*, under the arch. Images of bishops and warrior saints form a frieze that runs around the chapel, covering the lower zone, including the sanctuary.⁴¹¹ Those images, participate in the spatial narrative in the sense that they offer the faithful an image of Salvation. The saints have experienced a relationship with God and they can attest to its benefits. They were human, but their relationship with God was so strong that they managed to win a place in heaven next to Him. By being depicted in the lower zone, the images of the saints become directly visible and accessible to the faithful, as they can be seen standing among the inhabitants of space and they can also be touched, and kissed directly. This effect is further accentuated by the rhythmic elaboration of the images, as discussed in the previous chapter. The images of the saints of the frieze extend inside the space of the chapel, enclosing the beholders in a virtual cone and uniting them with the Imaged. Through the interaction between architecture and painting, the presence of the saints establishes a visual and symbolic connection between heaven and earth and transforms the space of the chapel into a space in between where the divine unites with the human.

⁴¹¹ See figures 15-19 in chapter three (pp. 189-196).

The participation of architecture, painting and symbolism in the formation of an artistic installation in the form of a spatial narrative of Incarnation-Salvation results in the re-shaping of the space of the chapel into a space in between that evokes the concept of chora. The projection of the Incarnation-Salvation narrative through the architectural, pictorial and symbolic body in and of space transforms the parekklesion into a chora-space that exists between the human and the divine and functions as a bridge between the two realities. Formed in this way, the chora-space of the chapel appears in a conceptual gap between content and container. The architectural space contains the narrative and the images of the holy persons and at the same time it does not, as what they represent cannot be contained in material forms. Moreover, even though architectural space could be perceived as an empty medium, at the same time it forms a space-content, a body of space, in its interaction with painting and symbolism. The space of the chapel is a container, a building that houses certain functions and at the same time it is itself the content of the experience of the faithful, it is a constantly forming reality shaped in the process of the beholder producing meaning. In this nexus of relationships one finds various concepts interwoven. The content and container duality marks the chora-space of the chapel while appearing in different forms inside the parekklesion. In architectural terms, the notion of containment can be seen in the enveloping of the main church by the unified L-shaped space that the exonarthex and the parekklesion form. Moreover, the tombs of the deceased placed inside the chapel contain them and at the same time they do not, as their bodies can be contained but not their spirits. In the intersection between the pictorial and the symbolic, the Virgin in the dome holds Christ and is depicted as the chora-bearer of God while He remains uncontainable. The material and conceptual

environment of the parekklesion is shaped, through the interaction between the elements of space, into a space in between that links the concepts of content and container and acquires meaning through the projection of this duality. Therefore, inside the parekklesion meaning is produced by the faithful through their participation in a multileveled interaction with the architectural, the pictorial and the symbolic body. This interaction forms a nexus of relations that expands inside the chapel and transforms it into a chora-space of becoming through contact between bodies. Thus, the space of the parekklesion could be regarded as an interactional stage; it is a space in between human and divine, content and container, that, decorated in a way that reflects its function, interacts with it and encourages the beholder to become involved, establish links between bodies and produce meaning.

The space of the parekklesion as a body of bodies

The architectural, the pictorial, the symbolic and the human body participate actively in the formation of the space of the parekklesion into a chora-space of becoming. In this section, I look at the way that the collective body of the faithful interacts with the space of the chapel to transform it into a spatial body of bodies, shaped through art and symbolism. The concept of the church as a spatial living body calls for an adequate definition. As Ingold would suggest, sacred space, incorporating time and the concept of the body – collective, ecclesial and Christological – should be perceived in terms of an

environment,⁴¹² due to the fact that it is 'alive', it contains organisms, interacts with them and stages their interactions with each other; it is ever changing and fluid, never perfect but relationally balanced when all of its parts function properly in relation to each other. The church can thus be regarded as a multidimensional nexus in which space, time and bodies collide. It is a space of becoming in which meaning is produced through interaction between bodies. It is much more than space imbued with locational qualities; it is rather an *ecclesia*, the place where the essence of the community 'in Christ' is realised. The Greek word *ecclesia* (ἐκκλησία < ἐκ+καλώ) has been in use since ancient times and it means the coming together of the members of a community.⁴¹³ Through establishing a relationship with God and with each other, the faithful are united into one symbolic body and the realisation of this bond results in the creation of the Christian community, of the *ecclesia*, which is shaped into the body of church. The term *ecclesia* as a spatial body of bodies, placed in the centre of Christian faith, can be thus used when one refers to the complexity that is church space. The term *ecclesia* represents everything that church space is, contains and symbolises. It is an interactive stage of events and social relationships,⁴¹⁴ but also a reality in itself, content and at the same time container, it is both medium and result. It is a body of bodies marked by oppositions that exists in a space between dualisms and acquires meaning through the interaction between its parts. It is inside the *ecclesia* that the essence of the term community finds its pure expression, and it is this achievement that results in the creation of the *ecclesia* in the sense of a symbolic

⁴¹² Tim Ingold, 'Against Space: Place, Movement, Knowledge', in *Boundless Worlds: An Anthropological Approach to Movement*, ed. by Peter Wynn Kirby (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), pp. 29-44, p. 29.

⁴¹³ In Greek, the term *ecclesia* is used to describe the body of the church symbolically. However, in everyday language it is primarily used to describe the church as a building.

⁴¹⁴ Ousterhout, 'The Holy Space: Architecture and the Liturgy', p. 81.

Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is the most prominent symbol inside the ecclesia. Whether it is the Holy Communion symbolising the Body and Blood of Christ received by the faithful, or the members of the Christian community through the centuries forming a symbolic Body of Christ, the ecclesia is a space of interaction between the human and the divine.

In examining the relation between the concept of the body and the ecclesia, I turn to church space symbolism in order to reveal the complex characteristics of the interaction between the two. Byzantine church space, as almost every other sacred space, is often perceived as being made up of signs, in accordance with Lefebvre's observation that certain spaces are often 'looked upon as collections of symbols...or chains of signs'.⁴¹⁵ Of course, one has to admit that church space, as a 'house' for religious ceremonies, contains and represents series of symbols, and as a whole is probably a symbol in itself. However, perceiving church space merely as a sum of symbols is problematic as it leads to a fragmentation of space both conceptually and in practice. The symbolic function of church space is indeed important but it is not the only function that this space serves and for this reason it cannot be used as a single tool in order to interpret space. Space is made up of many different elements and its fragmentation could lead to the creation of a distorted image of its spatial code. One should always take into consideration that symbolism is tightly interwoven with other elements that form the church's spatial code: function, architecture, painting and the beholder; and for this reason symbolism cannot function as an interpretive tool in isolation, disconnected from the spatial code of which it is a part.

⁴¹⁵ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 223.

Even though direct symbolism in Byzantine painting was avoided during Iconoclasm, architecture, being a more abstract form of expression by its very nature, maintained its symbolism throughout the era. As Krautheimer underlines, medieval architecture should not be interpreted only according to the principles of function, construction and design.⁴¹⁶ “Symbolical significance” and “religious implications” were of great importance to the medieval architect and, as Krautheimer points out, they should be taken into consideration when studying Byzantine architecture.⁴¹⁷

In order to reveal the nature of the relation between church space and the body, I concentrate on the theories of church symbolism by Germanos of Constantinople and Maximos the Confessor. This decision is primarily founded in the conception that these two specific interpretations of church space are directly linked to the notion of the church as a living body of bodies, a concept that forms the basis for the transformation of the space of the chapel into an interactional chora-space of becoming.⁴¹⁸

The space of the parekklesion can be read or analysed according to Patriarch

⁴¹⁶ Richard Krautheimer, 'Introduction to an Iconography of Medieval Architecture', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 5 (1942), 1-33.

⁴¹⁷ Krautheimer, 'Introduction to an Iconography of Medieval Architecture'.

⁴¹⁸ There are various approaches to the symbolism of Byzantine church space. One of the most common theories of symbolic representation inside the church is that of the dome of heaven. See for example St Gregory the Theologian's 28th Oration. There, in an attempt to describe the dome, he states that 'at the top [of the building] is a gleaming heaven', an impression given to the viewer probably because the dome of the church had windows all around, as Mango suggests. See Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p. 58. Another symbolic reading of church space is grounded on the conception of the division of church space into parts that have different symbolic meanings depending on their degree of sanctity. See Sophronios of Jerusalem, 'Commentarius Liturgicus', in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J. -P. Migne, 162 vols (Paris: Centre for Patristic Studies, 1857-1886), vol. 87 p. 3984 C. Another influential theory is probably that of the vertical symbolic division of church space, as suggested by Demus. See Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium*, p. 12.

Germanos' interpretation of the church. Germanos' conception of the symbolic function of church space is a unifying theory of space. Germanos I of Constantinople (634–740) was Patriarch of Constantinople from 715 to 730 and he actively supported Dyothelitism. He was a writer and hymnographer. He was a defender of the icons and he was forced to resign by the emperor Leo III. He was buried at the Chora monastery.⁴¹⁹ In *Historia Ecclesiastica*, a liturgical commentary attributed to him, Germanos makes a detailed analysis of the symbolism of the church, offering multiple interpretations of the church, its parts and furnishings. Meyendorff has shown that the *Historia* was a highly influential text in the Byzantine world from the time of its composition until at least the time that Nicholas Kabasilas (ca. 1322/3 – after 1391) composed his *Explanation of the Divine Liturgy* in the mid-fourteenth century.⁴²⁰ Germanos' commentary was also included, together with the text of the liturgies of Basil and John Chrysostom, in the first printed edition of the Byzantine liturgy in Rome in 1526.⁴²¹ The number of manuscripts of the commentary that survive provides further evidence of its popularity and wide diffusion, as Meyendorff shows.⁴²² The *Historia* was for centuries the quasi-official explanation of the Divine Liturgy for the Byzantines.⁴²³ In his commentary of the liturgy Germanos states:

⁴¹⁹ Judith Herrin, 'Changing Functions of Monasteries for Women During Byzantine Iconoclasm', in *Byzantine Women: Varieties of Experience*, ed. by Lynda Garland (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 1-16, 10.

⁴²⁰ Paul Meyendorff, *St Germanus of Constantinople: On the Divine Liturgy* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), p. 9.

⁴²¹ Meyendorff, *St Germanus of Constantinople: On the Divine Liturgy*, p. 9.

⁴²² Meyendorff, *St Germanus of Constantinople: On the Divine Liturgy*, p. 9. The manuscripts are catalogued by Brightman. See F. E. Brightman, 'The *Historia Mystagogica* and Other Greek Commentaries on the Byzantine Liturgy', *Journal of Theological Studies* (1908), 248-67.

⁴²³ Meyendorff, *St Germanus of Constantinople: On the Divine Liturgy*, p. 10.

Ἐκκλησία ἐστὶ ναὸς Θεοῦ, τέμενος ἅγιον, οἶκος προσευχῆς, συνάθροισμα λαοῦ, σῶμα Χριστοῦ... Ἐκκλησία ἐστὶν ἐπίγειος οὐρανός ἐν ᾧ ὁ ἐπουράνιος Θεὸς ἐνοικεῖ καὶ ἐμπεριπατεῖ... ἐν πατριάρχεις προτυπωθεῖσα καὶ ἐν προφήταις προκηρυχθεῖσα, ἐν ἀποστόλοις θεμελιωθεῖσα, καὶ ἐν ἱεράρχαις κατακοσμηθεῖσα.⁴²⁴

In his conception of the church space is presented in a multidimensional manner, both in theoretical and practical terms: church space is a building, a sacred space, a community (existent and spiritual), a double symbol of Christ's body (as a building and as a community) and also a symbolic space, a 'heaven on earth'. Germanos focuses on the multivalent character of church space and highlights its complexity in order to present it in a comprehensive manner.

The church is firstly 'God's house'; symbolically God dwells in the church and makes His presence manifest to the faithful through the Holy Mysteries. This spiritual type of presence, the presence of God's Uncreated Energies, mostly evident during the Mystery of the Holy Communion through which the faithful are united with the Body of Christ, cannot be made perceptible outside the environment of the church, as it is only inside that space that the Mysteries are performed.⁴²⁵ In consequence, even if perceived

⁴²⁴ 'The church is God's house, sacred temple, house of prayer, congregation of people, body of Christ...The church is heaven on earth wherein the heavenly God dwells and walks... It was prefigured by the Patriarchs, foretold by the Prophets, founded by the Apostles and adorned by the Hierarchs' in Brightman, 'The Historia Mystagogica and Other Greek Commentaries on the Byzantine Liturgy', p. 257.

⁴²⁵ When speaking about God's presence in the Holy Mysteries, one actually refers to God's Uncreated Energies and not to God's essence. As St Basil states, 'the energies are numerous and the essence of God simple and what we know when we say God is in fact His energies. We do not presume to approach His essence. His energies come down to us, but His essence remains beyond

mainly as symbolic or representational space, in Lefebvrian terms, the church maintains its status as an architectural construction. Therefore, it is also a 'sacred temple' that houses the Holy Mysteries, with its sacredness emanating from the events that take place inside it. This 'sacralisation' of space, as Smith would put it,⁴²⁶ or the delineation of sacredness inside church space is based on the belief that God's presence is made manifest inside church space, for it could be claimed that God is everywhere and consequently every space could be considered to be sacred. Instead, it is the performance of the Mysteries that makes the revelation of God's Energies possible and for this reason the church building is considered to be sacred space. Moreover, through the performance of the Mysteries, the faithful are offered the opportunity to communicate with God and unite with Him. The church as a building accommodates this need, and functions as a 'house of worship' too, in which the faithful can interact with God. The act of worship however, should not be perceived as a personal practice, performed at an individual level. Worship should be perceived as being at the centre of an intersection between the individual and the collective; each person participates in it as an individual, but worship itself can be considered to be a social event in the Orthodox Church. As God would make His presence manifest through the Mysteries only in front of a community of people, a priest is not allowed to perform the liturgy alone. The faithful are initiated into the life of the church at an individual level through their participation in events of corporate worship, where the whole community comes together to praise God. Thus, through participating in worship, the faithful, even though they maintain their status as

our reach' (St Basil, letter 234) in Basil of Caesarea, *The Letters*, ed. by Roy J. Deferrari (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930), vol. 3, p. 386 .

⁴²⁶ Jonathan Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 6.

individuals, essentially become members of a community 'in Christ' and vice versa. This 'membership', the belonging to the community, is a condition in order for the individual faithful to unite with God through worship and it is also the outcome of the faithful's connection with God, the acquisition of the 'in Christ' membership. The importance of the existence of the community 'in Christ', the 'congregation of people', is such a crucial notion, that Germanos perceives the community as the church itself; the community of people that constitutes the main body of the church in symbolic terms, is also the one that inhabits and uses the church space in literal terms. Symbolically and literally, the church as an architectural construction contains the church as a community and the church as a community cannot function as such without the existence of an actual church building that will house the Holy Mysteries. Thus, the community of faithful is connected with the church in such an organic way that it leads Germanos to conceive it as being space, as having a spatial dimension, as being a type of symbolic church space. The community, as a collective body, is space, inhabits space and it is part of it. As a body, it also has space, produces space and gives meaning to it. The church's spatial dimension can thus be conceived in a threefold manner, through the notion of the body. The body of Man is transformed into a temple of the Holy Spirit, a symbolic church, through the participation in the Holy Mysteries. In order for the grace of the Holy Spirit to be given to the individual faithful however, a Mystery has to be performed with the participation of the whole community. This calling for participation in the Mysteries happened for the first time at Pentecost, when Christ asked the Apostles to gather at the yperoon in order to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the existence of a community 'in Christ', that will constitute the body in and of the church is essential in order for the existence of the

church as space and vice versa. In this way, the body of Man and the body of the church containing and mirroring each other constitute a church, a symbolic space where the Body of Christ, of which the church is a symbol, dwells. Germanos, moving between the literal and the symbolic realm, presents the body, either individual, collective or Christological, as symbolic church space and church space as a symbolic body, thus conceiving symbol in spatial terms and space in symbolic terms.

The church, like every other body in this sense, has members and these include not only those actually present but also those symbolically present inside church space. Church space is not only a product of the people who have constructed the actual building, but it is also a symbolic or conceptual product of the people who have contributed to the formulation of the church as a collective body. According to Germanos, the Patriarchs, the Prophets, the Apostles and the Hierarchs, they all participated in the process of producing church space in symbolic terms and for this reason they are considered to be prominent members of the community 'in Christ'. Thus, together with all the saints and the faithful they form a collective body, in which the past and the present are united in an organic way. The space of the church is transformed into a chora-space, a locus of interaction between the past and the present, the human and the divine. Church space manifests itself in the gap between the past of the holy persons and the present of the inhabitants of space, facilitating their communication through symbolic forms.

For Germanos, the 'in Christ' membership is not only symbolised inside church space but it is also realised as the faithful unite with God and the saints in a spiritual community, through which people expect Salvation and eternal life. This 'in Christ' community exists in liturgical time, where everything is brought into the present and time

as a continuum of past, present and future is collapsed into the present. While the Hierarchs depicted in the altar celebrate the liturgy together with the priest, the figural depictions of saints painted in a frieze around the parekklesion walls join the faithful as the body of Christ on earth and participate in the liturgy with them and with those who have died but still remain members of the community 'in Christ' both in spatial and symbolic terms. The deceased remain members of the body of the church as the image of the Anastasis reminds the faithful; for Christ with His Resurrection resurrected all mankind, as symbolically represented by Adam and Eve on the image of the Anastasis in the conch of the apse. Thus, the presence of the deceased in their tombs inside church space, among the rest of the members of the community 'in Christ', those on earth and those in heaven, reminds the faithful that it is through the relationship with God that a person's existence is integrated into a community and becomes a continuum. This sense of continuity of human existence that God offers makes the community form stronger bonds and feel united under the promise of Salvation in the future.

As the past and present converge in liturgical time, so does the future come closer to the present inside the parekklesion. The depiction of the Last Judgment gives the community a glimpse of the future in present time.⁴²⁷ Last Judgment images started to appear in Byzantine art as early as the ninth century,⁴²⁸ but Angela Volan points out that it was not until the eleventh century that the iconography and composition of the full Byzantine Last Judgment cycle emerged as a standard image in the Byzantine artistic

⁴²⁷ Ousterhout, 'Temporal Structuring in the Chora Parekklesion', p. 72.

⁴²⁸ Nancy Patterson-Ševčenko, 'Images of the Second Coming and the Fate of the Soul in Middle Byzantine Art', in *Apocalyptic Thought in Early Christianity*, ed. by Robert Daly (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), pp. 250-72, 251.

canon.⁴²⁹ The image was usually depicted in the narthex, outside the main church,⁴³⁰ visible by the faithful at the time of entering or exiting the church. That kept the scene relatively distant from the events and from the images of the naos. In the case of the parekklesion, the scene of the Last Judgment is depicted in the eastern bay, offering a full view of the image to the faithful who stand inside the chapel attending the liturgy. As the natural conclusion to the Anastasis, the eschatological image of the Last Judgment makes the future directly visible to the members of the community in the present,⁴³¹ continuously reminding them of the promise of God for a Second Coming. Through the interaction between painting, architecture and symbolism, the space of the community, symbolic and pragmatic, is used to set forth the cyclicity of the life of the body of the church, which is united in a continuum where the past takes part in the present, the future echoes the past and the present recapitulates all temporal dimensions in liturgical time, the time of the life of the community.⁴³² The eternal present of the chapel is a space of participation in the Body of Christ; it is a chora-space in which meaning is produced through connections established between the human and the divine, the living and the deceased, the past, the present and the future.

Symbolically, the community 'in Christ' lives in the present, thus in temporal terms

⁴²⁹ Angela Volan, 'Picturing the Last Judgment in the Last Days of Byzantium', in *The Kariye Camii Reconsidered*, ed. by Holger Klein, Robert Ousterhout, and Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Arastirmalari Enstitusu, 2011), pp. 423-48, 426.

⁴³⁰ Patterson-Ševčenko, 'Images of the Second Coming and the Fate of the Soul in Middle Byzantine Art' p. 257 A characteristic example of an image of the Last Judgment painted in the narthex is the church of Panagia ton Chalkeon in northern Greece. For more information on the church see K. Papadopoulos, *Die Wandmalereien Des Xi Jahrhunderts in Der Kirche Panagia Ton Chalkeon in Thessaloniki* (Graz and Cologne: Bohlau, 1966) And also: Demetrios Euangelides, *He Panagia Ton Chalkeon* (Thessalonike: Ekdoti Etaireias ton Philon tis Vyzantinis Makedonias, 1954).

⁴³¹ Ousterhout, 'Temporal Structuring in the Chora Parekklesion', p. 72.

⁴³² Ousterhout, 'Temporal Structuring in the Chora Parekklesion', pp. 72-73.

the time of the body of the church is *now*. The fifteenth antiphon sung during the Matins service of Good Friday reads: ‘*today He is hung upon the cross*’,⁴³³ while the first ode of the Christmas service canon reads ‘*today the Virgin beareth Him that is beyond all things*’.⁴³⁴ It is now that religious events happen, in order for the community of the faithful to experience them more directly. However, the temporal dimension of experiencing religious events is, according to Germanos’ interpretation, intensified by the addition of a spatial dimension into the religious experience. For the church is ‘heaven on earth’, it is the stage where liturgical events happen, in front of the eyes of the faithful. Church space, constituting a symbolically collective creation that brings together all the members of the Church, congregation and holy persons, by being transformed into a chora-space in between heaven and earth offers them the possibility of sharing the same holy space. It is inside church space that Christ is hung on the cross and resurrected, as shown on the image of the Anastasis, resurrecting all mankind and offering salvation to every member of the community ‘in Christ’. Thus it is not the worshipper that is transported into a different dimension in order to experience God’s Uncreated Energies, as Ousterhout would suggest,⁴³⁵ it is not church space, as a part of earth, that ascends and participates symbolically in what happens in heaven. As Germanos suggests, the church is heaven *on earth*; it is heaven as a whole, with all its inhabitants and its energies, that symbolically enters the chora-space of the church. Symbolically and pictorially (through the use of rhythm) the holy persons, as depicted standing among the faithful on the walls of the parekklesion, join the congregation inside church space during the performance of the

⁴³³ ‘*σήμερον κρεμάται ἐπὶ ξύλου*’ in *Pentikostarion*, p. 59. Translation of this extract is my own.

⁴³⁴ ‘*ἡ Παρθένος σήμερον τὸν ὑπερούσιον τίπτει*’ in *Minaion Dekemvriou*, (Athens: Apostoliki Diakonia, 1989), p. 68 Translation of this extract is my own.

⁴³⁵ Ousterhout, 'Temporal Structuring in the Chora Parekklesion', p. 63.

Mysteries. As Karahan points out, for the Byzantines the church was a sacramental communion that included not only the inhabited earth but the kingdom of heaven as well, with God, saints and angels.⁴³⁶ The church emerges as the scene of Christ's actions and of the celebration of the Christian sacraments,⁴³⁷ and becomes a chora space of extraordinary properties, where heaven descends and meets earth.

The participation in God's Energies by the members of the community could not happen some place else, apart from the chora-space of the community, as inside the body of the Church time and space are experienced in a unique way, that is through a spectrum that unites time (past, present and future) with space (heaven and earth) in an organic whole. It is this sense of 'here and now' that characterises the religious experience inside church space, and it is rather intensified inside the space of the parekklesion. As a funerary chapel containing the tombs of the deceased, the parekklesion could be claimed to function as a constant reminder of human perishability, as a space dedicated to grieving. However, conceptually, through Germanos' interpretation of church space and visually, through the projection of the spatial narrative, the space of the parekklesion is transformed into an eternal promise of Salvation. Through establishing a relationship with God, the faithful experience life as a continuum within the space in between of the chapel, without conceiving death as being an ending point. The living and the dead – contained inside the tombs of the parekklesion⁴³⁸ – interact inside the chora-space of the parekklesion and accept God's Energies as a living community, as members of the same

⁴³⁶ Karahan, *Byzantine Holy Images - Transcendence and Immanence: The Theological Background of the Iconography and Aesthetics of the Chora Church*, p. 80.

⁴³⁷ Karahan, *Byzantine Holy Images - Transcendence and Immanence: The Theological Background of the Iconography and Aesthetics of the Chora Church*, p. 80.

⁴³⁸ The tombs in the parekklesion contained the mortal remains of the deceased. See Ousterhout, 'Temporal Structuring in the Chora Parekklesion', pp. 72-73.

community 'in Christ'. The liturgical present unifies them in an organic unity, where eternal life is manifested and celebrated through the Holy Mysteries. The celebration of life and the Salvation of Man is also represented on the walls of the parekklesion. Open to the view of the faithful, as there is no iconostasis dividing the altar from the naos,⁴³⁹ Christ is resurrected, releasing the human race from the tyranny of death and offering relief to the pain of mortality. In this way the faithful have immediate access to the image of the Anastasis, the image symbolising the most crucial concept in Christian faith, that of Salvation. Thus in a way, the visual accessibility to the image of the Salvation of mankind is mirrored in the universal accessibility to Salvation that Christ offered the faithful, as, through His Resurrection, every member of the community is saved and will be resurrected during Christ's Second Coming. However, as the image of the Last Judgment, placed in a prominent position, reminds the community, it is the quality of the relationship of the faithful with the community 'in Christ' and with God that will be the guide for their final judgment, which will allocate them where they truly belong.

The church, temporally and spatially, has unique properties. For it is not simply space, it is also a community, a living body of bodies, a living organism. The church as a body, having the faithful as members, is so closely related to the church as a space that it can be claimed that the two are almost amalgamated in an inseparable entity. This notion is clearly present in Maximos the Confessor's theory of the interpretation of the church. Maximos the Confessor (580–662) was a monk and theologian, actively involved in the

⁴³⁹ Archaeological evidence shows that there was no iconostasis in the parekklesion. See Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, p. 248.

Monothelite controversy.⁴⁴⁰ In his *Mystagogia*, a commentary and meditation on the Eucharistic liturgy, he dedicates space to the analysis of the symbolism of the church building. The *Mystagogia* is the first extant Byzantine liturgical commentary and it has been highly influential as its impact can be traced from the time of its composition to at least the mid-fourteenth century, with Kabasilas performing a final synthesis of Maximos' and Germanos' ideas when composing his *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*.⁴⁴¹ Notably, Maximos' *Mystagogia* had been influential on Germanos when composing his *Historia*.⁴⁴² Maximos' commentary is possibly a more suitable text for the symbolic interpretation of monastic church space as it is directed more at monastic contemplation than at popular liturgical piety, given that Maximos was a monk himself.⁴⁴³ Maximos' mystical theology, which combined monastic spirituality and ascetic wisdom with the inheritance of Classical and Hellenistic philosophy, became very important to the hesychasts,⁴⁴⁴ a movement that deeply characterised the fourteenth century.⁴⁴⁵ The writings of Maximos were also known to Metochites, as he quotes Epicurus directly from Maximos the

⁴⁴⁰ F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

⁴⁴¹ Robert F. Taft, 'The Liturgy of the Great Church: An Initial Synthesis of Structure and Interpretation on the Eve of Iconoclasm', *Dumbarton Oaks papers*.34-35 (1981), 34-35, 45.

⁴⁴² Taft, 'The Liturgy of the Great Church: An Initial Synthesis of Structure and Interpretation on the Eve of Iconoclasm', p. 70.

⁴⁴³ Taft, 'The Liturgy of the Great Church: An Initial Synthesis of Structure and Interpretation on the Eve of Iconoclasm', p. 45.

⁴⁴⁴ Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 44.

⁴⁴⁵ Hesychasm is a term employed to describe a method of monastic prayer and contemplation (hesychia) designed to achieve communion with God through interior quietude. The hesychastic tradition was unified in Palamism, the doctrinal synthesis of Gregory Palamas. See *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. by Alexander Kazhdan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), vol. 2, p. 923.

Confessor.⁴⁴⁶ Maximos thinks of the church in terms of bodies, of living organisms that not simply inhabit space but constitute space itself. In this way, the church is symbolised as a cosmic, human or ecclesial body that has members and functions as a living organism. Maximos views the church as a space bridging realities: it is an image of the cosmos, consisting of heaven and earth:

*Καὶ αὐθις μόνου τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ κόσμου καθ' ἑαυτὸν τὴν ἁγίαν
τοῦ Θεοῦ Ἐκκλησίαν εἶναι σύμβολον ἔφασκεν, ὡς οὐρανὸν μὲν
τὸ θεῖον ἱερατεῖον ἔχουσαν, γῆν δὲ τὴν εὐπρόπειαν τοῦ ναοῦ
κεκτημένην.*⁴⁴⁷

It is also an image of man, consisting of body, mind and soul:

*...ἄνθρωπον εἶναι τὴν ἁγίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ Ἐκκλησίαν ἔλεγε, ψυχὴν
μὲν ἔχουσαν τὸ ἱερατεῖον· καὶ νοῦν τὸ θεῖον θυσιαστήριον, καὶ
σῶμα τὸν ναόν.*⁴⁴⁸

In this way, managing to conceive the church through thinking about living bodies,

⁴⁴⁶ Edmund Fryde, *The Early Palaeologan Renaissance (1261 - C. 1360)* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), p. 332.

⁴⁴⁷ 'God's holy church is in itself a symbol of the sensible world as such, since it possesses the divine sanctuary as heaven and the beauty of the naos as earth'. Original text in Greek in: Maximos the Confessor, *La Mystagogia Ed Altri Scritti*, ed. by Raffaele Cantarella (Firenze: Texti Christiani, 1931), p. 142. Translation in: Maximos the Confessor, *Selected Writings*, ed. by George Charles Berthold (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985), p. 189.

⁴⁴⁸ 'the church is like a man, for the soul it has the sanctuary, for mind it has the holy altar, for body it has the naos'. Original text in Greek in: Maximos the Confessor, *La Mystagogia Ed Altri Scritti*, p. 142; translation in: Maximos the Confessor, *Selected Writings*, pp. 190-91.

Maximos suggests a space that bridges oppositions and transforms them into complementarities. The cornerstone of Maximos' theory, whether cosmological or anthropocentric, is the fundamental principle of function of the whole in relation to its parts. The whole, either the cosmos, the body or the church, cannot function properly if it is not intact, if one part is missing or does not function properly, and for this reason the relations between the whole and its parts and between the parts themselves are of crucial importance. As Cooper suggests 'the Church for Maximos is not so much an objective thing as a realm of relations'.⁴⁴⁹ These parts, tightly interwoven with each other and integrated to the whole, cannot be perceived as functioning in themselves outside of the whole, a point on which Maximos places emphasis. The idea of the lack of self-sufficiency of the part outside of the whole leads Maximos to lay stress on the fact that through difference comes unity; that it is through the interaction of many self-insufficient parts that a self-sufficient whole is created, a functional body, 'cosmic, human or ecclesial' in Cooper's words.⁴⁵⁰ Thus, church space, like the cosmos and the body, obtains a dynamic character; it is not a single, self-defined 'thing', but a 'dynamic reality',⁴⁵¹ a chora-space in between human and divine, where meaning is produced through the interactions and relations between its parts. Massey would argue that a space like this should be called 'interactional space',⁴⁵² for it is a product of relations and interactions –

⁴⁴⁹ Adam G. Cooper, *The Body in St Maximus the Confessor: Holy Flesh, Wholly Defied* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 126.

⁴⁵⁰ Cooper, *The Body in St Maximus the Confessor: Holy Flesh, Wholly Defied*, p. 126.

⁴⁵¹ Dumitru Staniloae, *Introduction to the Mystagogia of Maximus*. trans. by Ignatios Sakalis (Athens: Apostoliki Diakonia, 1997), p. 57.

⁴⁵² Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), p. 11.

relational space –⁴⁵³ an ever-fluid ‘topos’ ‘where there are always connections yet to be made, juxtapositions yet to flower into interaction, relations which may or may not be accomplished’.⁴⁵⁴ Understanding the chora-space of the parekklesion through inclusion or exclusion, perfection or imperfection would only lead to the shaping of a distorted image. It would be more appropriate to try to perceive church space as a chora space in between, marked by the dualisms of human and divine, past and present, living and deceased. The space of the parekklesion can be regarded as not-yet-complete; it is a space that needs to be related to its users, its functions, its objects and its symbolisms in order to acquire meaning. As a living body of bodies, a space of becoming, the space of the chapel is always in the making, constantly in the process of being shaped by a ‘set of relations’ between subjects and objects. Church space lies in the realm of becoming and not in that of being.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I aimed at mapping the interactions between the architectural, the pictorial and the symbolic body in the space of the parekklesion and analysing the way that they affect the formation of a chora-space in and of the chapel. The analysis of the space of the parekklesion was marked by the notion of the body in relation to the chora

⁴⁵³ Relationality and the concept of relational space in the context of the parekklesion will be discussed further in chapter five.

⁴⁵⁴ Massey, *For Space*, p. 11.

and the concept of the space of becoming. I showed that the intersection between architecture, painting and symbolism creates a spatial narrative or artistic body inside the chapel in the form of an artistic body that actively invites interaction with the beholder. The space of the parekklesion was also regarded as an ecclesia, a living body of bodies, a community in Christ, that inhabits space, produces space and is space. In this way, the relation of space to the body became dual, as space was regarded as body and the body was regarded as space. The concepts of the formation of an artistic body/spatial narrative in and of space and the transformation of space into a body of bodies highlighted the importance of interaction between elements of space in the process of producing meaning. The space of the chapel emerged as an interactional locus of becoming where bodies establish connections and inscribe meaning. The production of meaning inside the parekklesion takes place in a space in between that exists in the gap between content and container, human and divine, living and deceased, past and present. I showed that the artistic body and the ecclesia are both realised in and through a chora-space that functions as a bridge between realities and unites bodies in a locus of interaction. In the chapter that follows, I analyse further the notion of space as body and the ways through which the concept of the chora as a space of becoming is realised inside the body-space of the parekklesion.

Chapter 5: Retracing the chora: the parekklesion as a space of becoming

The Chora parekklesion can be regarded as a body-space, a living ecclesia. It is a space of inclusion, where art, liturgy and the faithful come together to form a body, a living organism. The parekklesion is a body-space: various parts that relate to each other create an organism, through a complex system of relations and hierarchies. Each of the parts is an organism in itself, in the same way that the human body is formed by organs, muscles and bones. Architecture, painting, liturgy, symbolism and the faithful are components that I have identified as the main organs of the parekklesion as a body. These can be broken down into smaller and simpler bodies, so that one can imagine the parekklesion as a hyper-body formed by other, individual bodies, scaling down to create a pyramid of interrelated micro-bodies. From the notion of the body stem two other notions, equally important in the apprehension of the space of the parekklesion, those of relation and time. If the body symbolises here the ultimate unity, the synthesis of different elements into one organism, and highlights the importance of their interaction, then the notion of relation is what lies in the core of the space as body concept. Each part of the body exists in relation to another and as part of a whole, while it is considered to be somewhat incomplete or imperfect in isolation from its inclusion in the body. Therefore, the part fulfils its purpose through its relation to the other parts of the body and its participation in the formation of the whole. Moreover, on a greater scale, it is through the

development of relations that individual bodies, human, pictorial or architectural, come together to form a community, a wider and more diverse body. In addition to the notion of relation, I would like to highlight the importance of the concept of time within the space of the parekklesion. The time of the parekklesion as a living organism is the eternal present, a space where past and future collide in an ever-lasting moment in the present. The living body is present here and now: the bodies of the faithful, the body of Christ in the Holy Communion, the resurrected body of Christ in the image of the Anastasis. The presence of bodies in the parekklesion is not marked by an abstract sense of divine timelessness but by the dominance of the tangible present time. In this chapter, I look at how the concepts of chora and the space of becoming appear in and through the body, artistic, human and divine. I will analyse the interrelations between body, time and relation in order to understand the formation of the space of the parekklesion into a living body-space, a chora of interaction and participation.

The concept of the body in the parekklesion

The body is of central importance to the meaning of the space inside the chapel. Individual or collective, literal or symbolic, the body as an idea is echoed in almost every part and aspect of the space. However, every body in the chapel – literal or symbolic – relates and refers back to the body of Christ. The body of Christ is projected in various forms inside the parekklesion. The spherical shapes of the upper sections of the chapel are

symbolic of the divine, while the earthly squares of the lower sections symbolise human nature. In the paintings of the parekklesion the incarnate body in the dome of the western bay and the resurrected body in the conch of the apse both project the divine/human duality inherent in Christ; how God became flesh and came to earth for the sake of the people, how he died as human and was resurrected as God in order to save humanity. The community of the faithful is also a symbolic body of Christ on earth, while the communion of His body and blood is the most important moment of the liturgy. The body of Christ as the unbreakable unity of two natures is the archetypal body, literal and symbolic, on which the significance of all other bodies inside the space of the chapel depends. The coming together of different parts in order to form a whole is based on the unity of two natures in Christ, where the divine meets the human in an inseparable entity. Symbolically, the Body of Christ can be regarded as the supreme expression of the notion of the body; for the two natures, which are two completely different elements, are united in Christ and form an organic whole without suffering any changes or alterations in themselves. St John of Damascus summarises the Christological doctrine and offers a comprehensive analysis of the unity of the two natures in Christ:

*Διὸ δὴ ἐκ δύο φύσεων τελείων, θείας τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνης, φαμὲν
γεγενῆσθαι τὴν ἔνωσιν, οὐ κατὰ φύρμον ἢ σύγχυσιν ἢ ἀνάκρασιν,
ὡς ὁ θεήλατος ἔφη Διόσκορος, Εὐτυχῆς τε καὶ Σενηρός καὶ ἡ
τούτων ἐναγῆς συμμορία· οὐδὲ προσωπικὴν ἢ σχετικὴν ἢ κατ' ἀξίαν
ἢ ταυτοβουλίαν ἢ ὁμοτιμίαν ἢ ὁμωνυμίαν ἢ εὐδοκίαν, ὡς ὁ
θεοστυγῆς ἔφη Νεστόριος, Διόδωρός τε καὶ ὁ Μοψουεστίας*

Θεόδωρος, καὶ ἡ τούτων δαιμονιώδης ὁμήγουρις, ἀλλὰ κατὰ σύνθεσιν, ἥτοι καθ' ὑπόστασιν ἀτρέπτως καὶ ἀσυγχύτως καὶ ἀναλλοιώτως καὶ ἀδιαιρέτως καὶ ἀδιασπάστως καὶ ἐν δυσι φύσει τελείως ἐχούσαις μίαν ὑπόστασιν ὁμολογοῦμεν τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ σεσαρκωμένου, τὴν αὐτὴν ὑπόστασιν λέγοντες τῆς θεότητος καὶ τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰς δύο φύσεις ὁμολογούντες σῶζεσθαι ἐν αὐτῷ μετὰ τὴν ἔνωσιν, οὐκ ἰδίᾳ καὶ ἀναμέρους τιθέντες ἐκάστην, ἀλλ' ἠνωμένας ἀλλήλαις ἐν τῇ μιᾷ συνθέτῳ ὑποστάσει. Οὐσιώδη γὰρ φαμεν τὴν ἔνωσιν, τουτέστιν ἀληθῆ καὶ οὐ κατὰ φαντασίαν.⁴⁵⁵

As John clearly states, the divine and the human nature are present in Christ without 'confusion or intermixture...but by *synthesis*'. Christ combines the two natures in such a way that even though they both preserve their individual characteristics, they form a

⁴⁵⁵ 'And therefore we hold that there has been a union of two perfect natures, one divine and one human; not with disorder or confusion, or intermixture, or commingling, as is said by the God-accursed Dioscorus and by Eutyches and Severus, and all that impious company: and not in a personal or relative manner, or as a matter of dignity or agreement in will, or equality in honour, or identity in name, or good pleasure, as Nestorius, hated of God, said, and Diodorus and Theodorus of Mopsuestia, and their diabolical tribe: but by synthesis; that is, in subsistence, without change or confusion or alteration or difference or separation, and we confess that in two perfect natures there is but one subsistence of the Son of God incarnate; holding that there is one and the same subsistence belonging to His divinity and His humanity, and granting that the two natures are preserved in Him after the union, but we do not hold that each is separate and by itself, but that they are united to each other in one compound subsistence. For we look upon the union as essential, that is, as true and not imaginary'. Original text in John of Damascus, *Ἐκδοσις Ἀκριβῆς Τῆς Ὄρθοδόξου Πίστεως / De Fide Orthodoxa* (Athens Pournaras, 2009), p. 58. The translation of this extract comes from John of Damascus, 'An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith', in *Hilary of Poitiers, John of Damascus, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), vol. 9, 654-55.

unity, existing in one body at the same time. Even though they are not confused however, they do not remain alien to each other either, as they form in John's terms 'one compound subsistence', one, literal and symbolic, *body*, in which two different elements are *synthesised*. It is on this idea of the synthesis of elements in the creation of a concrete entity that the notion of the body expands inside the chapel.

The basic shapes of the sphere and the square create a stable architectural body that will house other bodies inside the chapel. The semi-sphere of the dome, the conch of the apse and the domical vaults meet the square shapes of the west and east bays and they come together to form a unified space. The heavenly sphere unites with the earthly square through a system of apses and conches and spherical triangles and together they create a whole that not only facilitates the functions of the chapel but also enhances the experience of the faithful in symbolic ways. The approach of heaven towards earth – that became possible through the Incarnation, as pictured in the domes and as celebrated through the Resurrection of Christ and the Salvation of Man, depicted in the conch of the apse – is symbolically projected in the architecture of the chapel in the way that the spherical shapes in the higher sections flow downwards to meet the square shapes of the lower sections and create a functional body that communicates with the faithful on various levels. However, the architecture of the parekklesion does not only project the formation of a space in between heaven and earth, between the divine body of Christ and the human body of the Christian community. It also highlights another unity, another synthesis of seemingly contrasting elements into one concrete, complete body. The presence of the arcosolia in the space of the chapel are highly significant in this case. The arcosolia contain the individual bodies of the deceased but their presence inside the chapel

highlights a merging of the private with the communal and of the past with the present and the future. The individual bodies of the deceased inside the communal space of the chapel are, through their symbolic and literal presence, still members of the Christian community that inhabits the parekklesion, forming with them a community in Christ, a symbolic body of Christ on earth. Even though the individual body is perishable, the symbolic, communal body of Christ is not, as it exists in the present, incorporating the past and the future. As the burial place of the individual is incorporated in a communal space, the individual body of the deceased forms part of a living community ever present inside its actual and symbolic space. The space of the chapel is thus transformed into a chora space in between where the private and the communal collide and the past of the deceased forms a part of the present and future body of the community in Christ.

The discussion of the body in the paintings of the parekklesion is again multi-dimensional. Starting from the more obvious, the faithful, entering the church, are surrounded by the bodies of the holy persons depicted. When entering the parekklesion from the west, the radiant resurrected body of Christ dominates the beholders' space. Christ in the Anastasis is depicted victorious over death; His body suffered on the cross as a human, and soon after He died as a human too, but in the image of the Anastasis in the chapel the faithful see how He resurrected as God in full glory and won the battle with death. Christ's resurrected body stands there as ultimate proof for the salvation of mankind and His image offers consolation to the faithful mourning for the death of the deceased and hope for the continuation of life in heaven.

The body of Christ however, has a strong symbolic function elsewhere in the parekklesion, too. In another prominent space inside the chapel, the dome of the western

bay, the image of the Virgin holding Christ prevails.⁴⁵⁶ The incarnate body of Christ is depicted in the dome as proof of God's intention to save mankind by sending His Son to earth in a miraculous way. The incarnate body stands there as proof of God's love for the people, as the ultimate way of showing the faithful how much He cares about them and that He wanted to save them from original sin. Christ's incarnate body is the ultimate expression of unity and the formation of a chora space in between, as in His body, as depicted in the image in the dome, the divine meets the human, the divine nature is miraculously united with the human nature in one entity. Christ's incarnate body as depicted in the dome is the cornerstone of Christian doctrine and this exact notion of unity and co-existence of different elements in one concrete and functional body is the foundation for understanding the space of the chapel as a living organism, a body-space. Nevertheless, the body of the Virgin is also of crucial importance here. In the image in the dome, the Virgin is depicted holding Christ and surrounded by angels. It is the Virgin's body that allowed God's plan to be realised. The Virgin carried God in Her human body and gave birth to Christ while miraculously remaining a Virgin due to the charis given to Her by God. The body of the Virgin is depicted in the dome as a miraculous bearer and at the same time as a gate through which Christ passed from heaven to earth for the sake of mankind. The body of the Virgin is thus sacred to the faithful, as the sacred chora that contained the uncontainable God and brought Him to earth. It is this bodily connection between Christ and the Virgin – like the one that a mother has with her child – that gives Her such power as a mediator in the hearts of the faithful. Therefore, the role of the image of the Virgin holding Christ in the dome symbolising the miracle of the Incarnation is

⁴⁵⁶ See fig. 30 in chapter four (p. 245).

twofold. On the one hand, the body of Christ is the ultimate image of the mystery of the Incarnation and of God's plan to save mankind. On the other hand, the body of the Virgin is the bearer of Christ, the vessel that miraculously contained the uncontainable and realised God's plan for the salvation of mankind; at the same time it is also the body of a loving mother, who embraces and offers protection, soothes the pain and offers consolation and, being the mother of God, acts as a mediator existing in a space in between the faithful and God, transferring their prayers to Him.

Of special importance in the chapel are, in my opinion, the resurrected bodies of the people who are miraculously resurrected due to God's intervention. Adam and Eve will always be marked as the first sinners and yet in the image of the Anastasis they are seen resurrected on the right and left of Christ, saved from sin and having won a place in Heaven.⁴⁵⁷ The daughter of Jairus and the son of the widow depicted in the vault above the sanctuary, are seen here resurrected even though they were people carrying sins as well, similar to the faithful gazing at their images from the naos of the parekklesion.⁴⁵⁸ The presence of the resurrected bodies of Adam, Eve, the daughter of Jairus and the son of the widow on the walls of the chapel highlights the fact that the miracle of resurrection is a reality that has been experienced not only by God but by humans too, people who sinned but at the end were saved. The resurrected bodies depicted in the conch and the vault above the altar stand there as witnesses of hope for the faithful, reminding them that salvation from sin is indeed offered to those close to God.

The saints of the south and north walls are arguably the most accessible bodies to the faithful, who stand among them as members of the community in Christ. Their

⁴⁵⁷ See fig. 23 in chapter three (p. 203).

⁴⁵⁸ See fig. 9 in chapter three (p. 168).

tormented bodies, witnesses to the truths of their faith, are depicted here in full glory, fully accessible to the sight and touch, and almost lifelike, forming together with the faithful the symbolic body of Christ and transforming the space of the chapel into a chora space in between heaven and earth. In their turn however, the saints of the frieze form a body among themselves. The rhythmic organisation of the figures of the frieze incorporates them in a type of rhythmic wave, which gives the beholder the impression that each figure is related to each other. In this way, every figure is designed in such way that it leads the gaze of the beholder to the next one, which in its turn leads to the one next to it and so on and so forth. A chain of figures is thus created, related to each other pictorially and not only symbolically, forming in this way a functional body consisting of individual members relating to each other, or, even better, existing in relation to each other. Pictorial bodies such as the one formed by the saints of the south and north walls can be found elsewhere in the parekklesion too, such as in the two groups of Apostles and the group of angels in the depiction of the Final Judgment.⁴⁵⁹ However, the creation of pictorial bodies is not limited to the area of the macro-body, that is to the incorporation of individual images in a wider pictorial body.

Through the application of rhythm, the painters of the parekklesion created micro-bodies too, that is individual images that constitute functional bodies in themselves. Internal rhythm, as explained in chapter three, aims exactly at the transformation of an image into a functional body. From single-figure images to complex compositions, the painters of the chapel managed the pictorial elements of each image in a rhythmic manner. The X-shape principle of internal rhythm aids in the development of integral

⁴⁵⁹ See fig. 12 (p. 176) and fig. 22 (p. 201) in chapter three.

relations between the constituent parts and results in the formation of a whole that consists of elements existing in relation to each other, supporting and highlighting each other in order for the final outcome to be a functional body. Internal rhythm targets the relations between pictorial elements themselves and assists in the creation of a body-image inside the space of the icon that is internally balanced and coherent, a body that can fulfil its purpose optimally. In single-figure images, such as the one of St Theodore Tiro analysed in chapter three, every element of the image participates creatively in the formation of the pictorial body of the saint that balances in the gap between stability and motion. In compositions, internal rhythm becomes increasingly complex as its use is expanded to cover not only the design of figures, buildings, or decorative elements but also the relations between them. An excellent example of compositional internal rhythmic management is the image of the Anastasis. There, each element of the composition, such as the figure of Christ for example, forms a micro-body in itself, as its parts are designed rhythmically, but also, each element interacts rhythmically with the elements that surround it inside the composition, thus becoming a body that is part of a wider compositional body. Internal rhythm floods the space of the icon from the inside towards the outside, from the smaller and simpler part to the bigger and more complex, and through its use the creation of pictorial bodies or unities is accomplished.

While internal rhythm aims at uniting the pictorial elements of each image into a coherent and functional pictorial body, external rhythm aims at the establishment of a foundation for the development of a relation between the Imaged and its beholder in the space of the icon. This is certainly a more complex task as it involves more parameters and aims at the facilitation of a relation between two entirely different types of bodies, the

human and the pictorial. The image, when imbued with internal rhythm acquires internal coherency and balance, which is the first step towards being able to relate to other bodies. The external rhythmic management of the image covers exactly that area as it transforms the image into an interactive body ready to communicate, to be gazed upon and to gaze back, to connect in a direct, bodily manner. External rhythm is used in order for the body-image, either a single-figure or one that is part of a larger composition, to expand and reach out towards the body of the beholder, inviting him or her to a sensory unity in the interactional space of the icon. The pictorial body of the holy person enters the space of the beholder and relates to him or her not only at an individual level, in a one to one session of communicating but also at a communal level, as it becomes an integral, tangible part of the Christian community inside the chapel. External rhythm targets the interactional space between bodies of a different kind and it is used in an attempt to fill that space-in-between, in between two bodies, two realities, two time dimensions. Through external rhythm the space of the icon is transformed into a space in between, bridging holy and profane, heaven and earth, past and present, absence and presence, and abolishing the boundaries between each of the above conceptual pairs by facilitating their communication.

Another prominent body inside the space of the chapel is that of the faithful. The bodies of the faithful come into contact and communicate with all other bodies, Christological, artistic, and liturgical. Experiencing the space of the chapel is a complex process that is defined by conscious and subconscious parameters. The human experience ranges from rudimentary feeling to clear conception and it is, most of the time, tinted by

emotion and thought.⁴⁶⁰ Also, it would be unreasonable to claim that when the faithful enter the *parekklesion* they are “clean slates”; for it is probably not possible for a person to be free from preconceptions or drained of emotions when entering a particular space. Consequently, the faithful’s ways of experiencing space will always be affected by their personal circumstances and limitations. For this reason, this analysis will not be focused on purely personal modes of experiencing space or on evaluative connotations that the users of space would probably make, elements that are inherently interwoven with emotions and depend greatly on personal circumstances. The body functions inside the *parekklesion* as a primary receptor, experiencing its own presence and the presence of other bodies through the senses. However, the term presence should not be regarded as a passive term. The notion of presence essentially indicates activity; when a person is present in a spatiotemporal sense, it means that they are able and available to *relate* to space and to others in space around them. Their presence signifies their ability to constitute an active element of space, a defining parameter of space, a fact that differentiates this state from the state of mere existence in space. Simply by existing, the users are elements *in* space, while by being present they are capable of becoming elements *of* space; the passing from existence to presence indicates a potential shift from the incidental to the integral. The faithful become integral parts of the space of the chapel, and consequently parts of its spatial code, by relating to other bodies through the senses or conceptually. The contact with other bodies signifies the inclusion of the faithful in the body space in essential terms. The faithful are not simply viewers inside the *parekklesion*, external observers, but participants in the formation of the body space. Inside the church

⁴⁶⁰ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2001), p. 18.

the faithful taste the body and blood of Christ and unite with God through this act that passes essentially through the body. The faithful gaze at the images of the holy persons and they can touch and kiss them, bow in front of them as an act of respect and pray to them for salvation. The bodies of the faithful come into contact with the holy bodies through a series of acts. Addressing God, the Virgin and the saints and chanting during services is another act of communicating with them too. The bodily contact between the faithful and the holy persons is further accentuated by the rhythmic properties of the images of the chapel. As the bodies of the holy persons exit the painting surface and enter the space of the chapel, the actual living space of the faithful, the faithful find themselves surrounded by the bodies of the holy persons, coming into contact with them and inviting them into interaction. Therefore, the contact with the bodies of God, the Virgin and the saints is not only a conceptual necessity but also a sensory and, ultimately, bodily reality, an event of the present where the merging of the holy and the profane into a community in Christ becomes possible inside the chora space of the chapel. The bodies of the faithful interact with the holy bodies in various ways and experience in this way their membership in Christ both conceptually and bodily.

The contact with the bodies of other faithful inside the space of the chapel is another important aspect in our exploration of the role of the body, conceptual, symbolic and literal, in the *parekklesion*. Contacting other faithful inside the chapel in a manner that actively involves the body is an integral part of the experience of that space and the functions that take place within it. The unified, uninterrupted space of the *parekklesion* aids the contact and interaction between bodies by offering to the faithful a high degree of visibility and accessibility to the bodies of the rest of the inhabitants of that space. The

faithful stand close to each other inside the limited space of the chapel during services and unite their voices in praying and chanting while addressing God. They also make the same movements at the same time all together, making the sign of the cross, bowing, kneeling, and standing up. They produce and at the same time they experience a gestural space, where the conceptual becomes part of and is expressed through the body, where the participation in the spiritual passes through the body.

However, the very nature of the chapel offers its inhabitants even more opportunities for bodily contact and interaction. If we accept that funerary services would indeed have taken place inside the *parekklesion*, and not in the *narthexes*, then the relation of the faithful to the bodies of other members of the community is further accentuated inside the chapel. The Last Kiss, a part of the funerary service of the Church, is one of the final stages of the service before the burial.⁴⁶¹ During the funeral, the body of the deceased is placed inside the church facing east, towards the image of the resurrected Christ, while the priests and the congregation pray for the salvation of the departed. Right after the funerary service finishes, it is time for the Last Kiss to the deceased, given as a final goodbye before the burial of the body. At that time, the faithful attending the service line up and one by one pass by the deceased and kiss him or her, thus saying goodbye for the last time, while the rest of the congregation prays to God and the Virgin for the salvation of the deceased. With the spirit having departed, all that is left to the people close to the deceased is the dead body. Their last chance of interacting with the deceased and experiencing his or her presence inside the same living space is to touch and kiss his or her dead body. This intense experience involves the body to the highest degree and shows

⁴⁶¹ Akyürek, 'Funeral Ritual in the *Parekklesion* of the Chora Church', pp. 94, 96, 100.

how important it is for the faithful to contact the deceased not only conceptually and spiritually through their mind and prayers, but also reveals their urgent need to physically touch the dead body one last time before saying goodbye, having one last interaction before his or her body becomes invisible and inaccessible inside the tomb and perishes forever. The intensity of the experience can be attested by anyone who has participated in a funerary service of the Orthodox Church even to this day, and the fact that this experience would take place inside the chapel highlights even more the role that contact between bodies played in shaping the experience of that space for its inhabitants. The space of the chapel is marked as a space where the living say goodbye to the dead, where they see and feel the bodies of the deceased for the very last time, where the two bodies, living and dead, are visible and accessible to each other for the last time.

However, the contact with the body of the deceased arguably does not end with the Last Kiss. It could be argued that the placement of the arcosolia containing the deceased inside the space of the chapel aids the conceptual and spiritual contact with the deceased even after their burial. The four arcosolia in the parekklesion, attached to the south and north walls, occupy prominent places inside the chapel. With the parekklesion being designed as a concrete, unified space, the way the arcosolia are placed arguably determines that the faithful attending services in the parekklesion would stand right next to them or at least very close to them, being able to read the inscriptions on them and see the designs in the space above them, that would possibly have included images of the deceased. Therefore, the conceptual and spiritual contact with the bodies of the deceased arguably never stopped, as the presence of their arcosolia in prominent places inside the chapel would bring to mind the presence of the deceased themselves in a shared

conceptual or even actual space. It can be claimed that the memory of the deceased as individuals is intensified by the presence of their arcosolia but at the same time, the placement of the tombs containing the deceased inside the space of the living indicates a desire to keep alive their memory not only as individuals but also as members of a community.⁴⁶² The memory of the deceased as individuals would arguably start fading after a generation or two and the faithful surrounding their arcosolia during services, reading the inscriptions on their tombs and seeing their images would not be able to relate on a personal level with them. However, even though the sense of personal contact with the body of the deceased might fade away, the contact in Christ will never fade away. The deceased are placed inside the space of the living and not away from it, inside the space of a living community, which includes not only the ones present in a given space and time. The community in Christ expands to include even those who are not present, because even though the deceased are neither visible nor accessible at that particular space and time, they continue to be members of the community in Christ and will always be included in its prayers until the Second Coming. The community in Christ is a wide body that extends in space and time to include the dead and the living, the ones present and the absent ones, the holy persons and the faithful in one entity, where each body functions as a part of a wider communal body, the symbolic Body of Christ.

The presence of the arcosolia works in symbolic terms in a similar way to the frieze of saints, offering the members of the community an image of an extended, ever-present community that survives through time and transforming the space of the chapel into a

⁴⁶² Geary argues that the deceased can be thought of as another age group among the people of the Middle Ages due to the increased opportunities of communication and interaction with the living. See Patrick J. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 78.

chora space in between heaven and earth, living and dead. At the same time, the sense of participation in an ever-living community in Christ offers the faithful consolation over the passing of the deceased but also brings hope to them concerning the end of their own life on earth. As the deceased remain symbolically present in the chapel through the presence of their arcosolia, the commemorating services taking place to honour their memory and the reading out of their names that physically evokes their presence, their membership in the community in Christ seems to be continuing even after their death, as they seem not to be forgotten, but at least passively involved in the life of the church and the community.

Given that the church of the Chora was part of a monastery, the inhabitants of that space, apart from occasional visitors, would be members of a monastic community. Therefore, the community bonds among the inhabitants of the space of the chapel would potentially be strong. However, it can be claimed that the sense of community was significantly expanded outside the walls of the monastery, in space as well as in time. The presence of the arcosolia inside the main area of the chapel and the frieze of saints along the south and north walls are two key elements strengthening the sense of community inside the parekklesion and contributing to the symbolic expansion of the boundaries of the community in order for it to include more people. The faithful attending services inside the chapel would not necessarily be members of the monastic community of the Chora and arguably the sense of community between them and the monks of the monastery might not be that strong. Nevertheless, by adding in to the equation the saints of the frieze, a third category familiar to both the other groups, the internal bond between the two groups might be strengthened. As they both relate to the saints of the frieze and they recognise them as members of an extended community in Christ, they arguably end

up feeling more connected to each other as well. The inclusion of the saints depicted in the chapel in the symbolic community of Christ contributes to the development of a sense of wider inclusion and participation in the community in Christ, which can exceed the boundaries of space and time and therefore can include those physically present and those only symbolically, spiritually or pictorially present. In this way, the collective body of Christ is formed by different groups into one entity; the faithful, physically present in the chapel, the deceased, occupying a space of peculiar visibility as the arcosolia containing their bodies are placed inside the living space of the faithful, and the holy persons, inhabiting heaven. The past of the deceased, the present of the living and the timelessness of the holy persons are united in the symbolic collective body of Christ that represents an ever-lasting liturgical present that extends from heaven to earth.

I would suggest however, that what is more important here is the realisation of the existence of such a body, formed by Christians across space and time, that is reflected in the design of the chapel. The image of the ever-present community in Christ is inside the *parekklesion* not simply a conceptual necessity but a physical experience calling for the active participation of the faithful's minds and bodies. Among the images of the chapel, one can identify ones that provide the faithful with an image of such membership, such as the two groups of the Apostles depicted in the Second Coming or the group of angels surrounding Christ in the same image. Another representation of such a body is the group of angels surrounding the image of the Virgin holding Christ in the dome of the western bay. However, through architecture and painting, with the addition of the arcosolia and the increased visibility and accessibility of the images of the saints in the frieze combined with the rhythmic management of the figures, the members of the community who are not

physically present can be felt, as their presence in the space is almost tangible. With the deceased symbolically occupying space inside the living space of the faithful through the presence of their arcosolia and the saints of the frieze entering the physical space of the chapel and joining the faithful in praying, the sense of absence of the ones that are not physically present is minimized and in a way replaced with a different type of presence, either symbolic or pictorial in order for the community in Christ to remain united and function as a collective body. The presence of God pierces through every part of this collective body, through every aspect spread in space and time. He is present in Heaven joined by the holy persons, in the chapel He is mystically present in the Holy Communion and pictorially present in His images that enter the space of the faithful, and as a promise for salvation in the realm of the deceased. His presence, symbolic, spiritual and pictorial, holds the members of the community together and unites them under His name inside His temple in an ecclesia. Crucial in Christian thought, the notion of the ecclesia, the Christian community that forms the symbolic body of Christ is rooted in a basic principle of the Divine Liturgy. The liturgy cannot be performed with the presence of one person only, even if that person is a priest. In order for the liturgy to take place in the church, two people are necessarily needed, so that the basic, simplest core of a community can be formed. Communication with God is therefore essentially not only a personal matter but first and foremost an experience whose presupposition and product at the same time is a community of faithful, small or large. It is through their participation in the reality of the ecclesia that the faithful realise their role as members of the symbolic body of Christ.

The ecclesia forms the body of Christ with Him being the head of it, functioning as an archetype and guiding it. In the parekklesion, Christ's symbolic role as the head of the

ecclesia is perceived not only in abstract conceptual, liturgical or sacramental terms but it is also highlighted spatially in an attempt to minimise the abstraction of the notion and offer the faithful an actual image of the community being formed in front of their eyes, in an interactional space of becoming. For this reason, Christ is here depicted victorious in the image of the Anastasis in the most prominent space of the chapel, visible from all spots and angles, dominating the *parekklesion* and attracting the gaze of the faithful towards the east, where the head of the ecclesia is placed. The body of the ecclesia is formed by the saints depicted on the south and north walls. The faithful walk in the chapel and join the saints as Christ's body, the body of the ecclesia, filling the space of the *parekklesion* – and the ecclesia – with energy and seeking interaction. The body of the ecclesia is formed by bodies belonging to different spatial and temporal dimensions; the holy persons inhabit heaven, the deceased are of the past, while the faithful experience the space of the chapel here and now. Yet all three collective bodies, each consisting of individual bodies, come together to form the ecclesial body, conceptually and spatially, with the faithful being in this way able to experience their place in the ecclesia through the senses.

The ecclesia is in Maximos' thought a creation – a body – that cannot be reduced to either the church building or the Christian community. The notion of the ecclesia contains both elements in an unbreakable unity as the existence of the one presupposes, for Maximos, the existence of the other. As in the centre of my thinking about the *parekklesion* is the notion of the body space, it can be argued that the ecclesia, as the space of the chapel and the community of faithful that inhabits it and interacts with it is a body that resolves binary oppositions; it is a symbolic, spiritual, conceptual and physical

body space. It is a chora space in between where heaven meets earth when the holy persons join the faithful inside the space of the chapel, the deceased co-exist with the living with their arcosolia occupying space inside their space, the boundaries of time are exceeded in order for the community of faithful to be united into the body of Christ, the notion of absence of the holy persons is abolished when replaced with the tangible concept of pictorial presence. Through various media and methods, the binary oppositions that mark the space of the ecclesia are transformed into continua, realities that stretch through space, time and modes of experience.

Architectural design, painting and liturgy develop and manage types of bodies – architectural, pictorial, sacramental – to make differences less apparent and create spaces in between that bridge oppositions. The faithful relate to those bodies/continua and activate them by using their own body to make contact with the realities that lie beyond their own space, time and spiritual circumstances. It is via the bodies of the faithful that the bridges built using other media are stabilised; it is the faithful that supply the energy so that the current can travel through the circuit already developed. The faithful provide the missing link between two opposing realities and are the ones who make the interaction between them possible, through their own bodies, through the relations developed between their bodies and the elements of their environment, spatial, temporal, abstract, and physical. It is the bodies of the faithful that attract the energies of the various opposing realities and add to their interaction the dimension of time by inviting them into the present, in the faithful's own spatial and temporal dimensions. The body of the faithful, individual and collective, is placed at the centre of the continua that mark the space of the chapel as it is for their sake that the saints join them in praying, that Christ in

the Anastasis reaches out to them and offers them hope of salvation. The faithful experience the activation of these chora spaces projected in the space of the chapel by means of the body. They experience their contact with the past, the holy persons and the deceased by using not just their mind but primarily their body, being able to almost touch what lies on the other side of the bridge.

And indeed, this bridging of opposite forces and their incorporation into one body, one functional entity, brings me back again to the bodies of Christ and the Virgin, a recurring theme throughout the space of the chapel. It is in the bodies of Christ and the Virgin that the bridging of opposing binary forces is rooted as the foundation for the establishment of unities, reflecting in this way Metochites' desire to dedicate the church to both Christ and the Virgin. The human body of the Virgin, having given birth to God, marks exactly this bridging between the world of humans and the world of God, the facilitation of the interaction between the two through the body, Her body, that brought God into the world of humans. The body of the Virgin, through the mystery of the Incarnation, symbolically depicted in the dome of the chapel, became the first bridge between the ultimate opposition, Heaven and earth. The body of the Virgin is a chora space in between that bridges heaven and earth, human and divine. Depicted in the western bay, the Virgin becomes a symbol of passage from Heaven to earth both conceptually and spatially as the mind and the gazes of the faithful are directed from her image in the dome to Christ's image in the conch of the apse, as they walk in the chapel and move from west to east. Being the portal through which Christ came to earth, the 'portal that contained God' according to the words of St Joseph the Hymnographer depicted in the spherical triangle below the dome, the Virgin emerges as the mediator par

excellence between the faithful and God, functioning as a chora space in between, a bridge that brings the two worlds closer. The body of Christ, radiating in the image of the Anastasis, emerges as the ultimate symbol of unity. His body is also a chora, marked by the bridging of two different elements; the unity between human and divine nature is perfectly realised in the image of Christ, where the human and the divine form one functional body. The body of Christ symbolises the ultimate bridging between human and divine, mortal and immortal, and functions as the archetype of the ecclesia. Its prominent place inside the chapel, in the image of the Anastasis, highlights this unity in conceptual and spatial terms, similar to the case of the body of the Virgin.

The concept of time in the parekklesion

The importance of the dimension of time in the parekklesion derives mainly from its close relation to the idea and figure of the body, a crucial concept in the formation of a chora space in and of the chapel. As I suggested in the first section of this chapter, the parekklesion can be experienced as a body space, a participatory artistic installation that calls for the involvement of all of its parts in such an essential manner that it is transformed into a living organism. The major parts that participate in the formation of the body space of the chapel include liturgy, architecture, painting, symbolism and the faithful, all of which are involved in that environment as bodies as well, with their respective parts. The temporal dimension is common to all five entities and links them

together by creating a temporal platform that points from all directions to the present. The dimension of time in the parekklesion highlights in my opinion the body – liturgical, architectural, pictorial – as a living organism, an organism that joins the bodies of the faithful here and now in order to create an environment that exists in the present. At the same time however, it is the body as a living organism and its operations within the space of the chapel that establishes the time of the parekklesion as the present. The presence of the human body is what makes this clear. The association of time with movement has been discussed by Psellos. Michael Psellos (1018 – ca. 1081) was an intellectual and writer. He received an outstanding education and became a court philosopher, holding the title of *Hypatos ton Philosophon (Consul of the Philosophers)*.⁴⁶³ He has been recognised as a Neoplatonic philosopher and prided himself on reintroducing the study of ancient Greek philosophy to Byzantine scholarship.⁴⁶⁴ Psellos' writings were known to Metochites as he uses Psellos as a source in a speech he composed in praise of Constantinople.⁴⁶⁵ Psellos composed a short encyclopaedia entitled *De Omnia Doctrina*, a collection of miscellaneous articles on God, the mind, the soul, physics, physiology and astronomy.⁴⁶⁶ In two articles on time and movement, Michael Psellos

⁴⁶³ *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. by Alexander Kazhdan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), vol. 3, p. 1754.

⁴⁶⁴ Michiel Meeusen, 'Salt in the Holy Water: Plutarch's Quaestiones Naturales in Michael Psellus' *De Omnia Doctrina*', in *Plutarch in the Religious and Philosophical Discourse of Late Antiquity*, ed. by R. Lancillotta and I. Gallarte (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 101-24, 103.

⁴⁶⁵ Metochites' speech in question is the *Byzantios*, composed no later than 1311/1312. Andreas Rhoby has shown that Metochites used Psellos as a source in his speech. See Andreas Rhoby, 'Theodoros Metochites' *Byzantios* and Other City Encomia of the 13th and 14th Centuries', in *Villes De Toute Beauté: L'ekphrasis Des Cités Dans Les Littératures Byzantine Et Byzantino-Slaves*, ed. by Paolo Odorico and Charis Messis (Paris: Centre d'études byzantines, néo-helléniques et sud-est européennes, 2012), pp. 81-99, 81.

⁴⁶⁶ Meeusen, 'Salt in the Holy Water: Plutarch's Quaestiones Naturales in Michael Psellus' *De Omnia Doctrina*', pp. 104-05.

associates time with movement and distance. In particular, he defines time through movement and movement through distance. Psellos mentions that ‘timeless beings are unchanging, while beings that move are fluid and subject to deterioration and for this reason movement is regarded as the measure of time by philosophers... and movement is not beginning nor end, but the distance between the two.’⁴⁶⁷ Time is associated with distance and it becomes perceptible, and thus exists, through movement. In this way, time is conceived as the duration of the movement, in other words the distance between two elements. Consequently, time acquires meaning by being conceived as a relationship between two elements that have the potential of ‘moving’ in order to ‘approach each other. The faithful have the ability to relate to the other elements of space, stable or fluid, by moving towards them, literally and metaphorically. It can thus be argued that the human element brings space to life and gives meaning to it by adding to it the dimension of time, by transforming a ‘timeless’ building into a living organism that, just as every other living being, is subject to time, it ‘has’ time. Thus, inside church space, space and time are intimately interwoven and interdependent.

The time of the *parekklesion* is the time of the body’s communication with other bodies; it is the time of bodily interactions and the time of the development of relations through the body. It is the time where the body negotiates its presence and its space with other bodies, where it establishes its position and starts negotiating its relation with other bodies, in order for a web of relations to begin to develop in the *parekklesion* until the

⁴⁶⁷ ‘Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ μὲν αἰώνια αἰεὶ ὄντα καὶ ἀκίνητά ἐστι, τὰ δὲ ὑπὸ κίνησιν ῥέοντα καὶ φθειρόμενα, αὐτὸ δὴ τὸ μέτρον τῆς κινήσεως χρόνον ὀνόμασαν οἱ φιλόσοφοι... ἔστιν οὖν ἢ κινήσις, οὔτε ἀρχὴ οὔτε τέλος, ἀλλὰ τὸ μεταξὺ τούτων’: Michael Psellos, *De Omnia Doctrina*, ‘On time’ and ‘On movement’. See Michael Psellos, ‘*De Omnia Doctrina*’, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. by J. - P. Migne, 162 vols (Paris: Centre for Patristic Studies, 1857-1886), vol. 122, p. 733.

whole space of the chapel is full, until every gap in the space of the chapel is filled by a body or by its energy towards another body, human, divine, liturgical, architectural or pictorial. The interaction between bodies and through the body has to happen in the present, as the present is the time of creation, the time of interaction and the time of establishment of relations. The space of the chapel as a living organism is produced in the present, with the entry of the faithful activating the dynamics of the installation and inviting all other bodies into interaction in their own temporal dimension. The bodies of the faithful as the only physical living bodies in the parekklesion add the dimension of time to the chapel and set their own temporal dimension as the default temporal dimension for all other bodies in the same space. The bodies of the faithful are placed in the centre of the experience of time inside the chapel and all temporal forces are attracted towards them. It is the inhabitants of heaven that come towards earth to reveal themselves to the faithful and join them in the parekklesion here and now.

The body in the parekklesion emerges as being somewhat free from the boundaries of temporality, of the linear progression of time that marks the course of life. In the parekklesion the body, symbolic, physical, artistic or Christological, exists and interacts with other bodies in the present, even though it is not visible or even present in the flesh. The space of the parekklesion is marked by the present tense of the body as a living organism, of the body that is alive inside the chapel in the sense that it invites interaction with and is able to relate to other bodies. The past and the future collide inside the chapel to form an eternal present that recapitulates the past and involves the future. The body in the chapel can move along a continuum of time, from past to present and to the future, free from the conventional boundaries of time due to its interaction with other bodies

from different temporal dimensions. The body can be of the past and at the same time of the present through its interactions, through the establishment of relations with the past in the present, through the development of routes of communication between bodies separated by time. The development of a temporal continuum in the parekklesion through the energies of and the interactions between bodies leads to the concept of a temporal body, a body that is characterised by the main principle that governs all bodies in the space of the chapel. The temporal body symbolises the unity of time in the present within the space of the parekklesion. The formation of the temporal body inside the chapel, brings about the importance of unity between the past, the present and the future and functions as a constant reminder that these temporal dimensions are indeed separated by being related, as one is necessarily present within the other and one cannot exist without the other. Admittedly, the interaction between bodies in the space of the chapel is deeply marked by the presence of a temporal body-continuum as its presence as an interactive temporal platform facilitates the interaction between bodies. At the same time however, it is also this bodily interaction with its consequent establishment of links between bodies and their expansion to a web of relations that fills the space of the chapel that facilitates the unity between present, past and future as it is these links that function as bridges over the different temporal dimensions. The time of the parekklesion can thus be seen as another body whose existence aims at uniting the past and the future in the present in order to facilitate bodily interaction and enhance the experience of contacting and relating to bodies in space and time.

However, an important distinction has to be made at this point. When referring to the present as being the dominant temporal dimension of the parekklesion, a present that

is ever-lasting and involves both the past and the future in a continuum, I speak of time not in an abstract sense that brings to mind the concept of timelessness as a characteristic of the divine. The concept of the eternal present refers here to an experience of time as being dominated by the sense of a tangible present, an interpretation of time that is so closely related to the body that it almost has haptic resonances, it is a temporal body-continuum that can be felt by the faithful in the space of the chapel through the liturgy, the architecture and the painting. It is a conceptual body, that can however be felt through the interaction of the bodies of the faithful with other bodies as a prerequisite for and at the same time as a product of this interaction. The eternal present of the chapel is the time of the living body as well; it is the time of active participation of and in the body, the time of bodily interaction and the time of developing connections with other bodies. The presence of bodies in the parekklesion is marked by the temporal dimension that the faithful add to space, that of the tangible present, and not by the sense of divine timelessness that characterises God. The eternal present of the parekklesion is a tangible present, a moment in the present that can be experienced through the body, the moment of interaction, the moment when two bodies are becoming one in space and in time. The tangible present is one that allows the body to move along a continuum of time while remaining in the present. It gives the body the ability to reach and touch and interact with other bodies by offering a fluid and boundary-free environment. That environment however is not timeless; the past of the deceased is acknowledged as a reality and the future of Christ's Second Coming is clearly differentiated from the present. Even though the existence of different temporal dimensions is highlighted, in the space of the chapel this division is rather a matter of complementarity and not a matter of opposition and

conflict. The tangible present of the chapel functions as a platform that facilitates the unity of all bodies of and in space into one living organism that exists in the present.

However, how is the concept of the temporal body-continuum expressed inside the parekklesion? The temporal body functions as an underlying net or platform that enables bodies to travel through time and establish relations with bodies that are not present or visible now. The temporal body could also be thought of as a bridge stretched over past, present and future uniting the different realities and allowing other bodies to pass from one dimension to another. The temporal body of the chapel can also be regarded as a texture in the experience of bodily interaction. It could also be seen as the fourth dimension of a map, a map of bodily interactions in space that already contains the three dimensions of space. In this way, time would be an additional layer in the experience of the faithful in contacting other bodies. The temporal body however, could also be seen not as an additional layer to a map of interactional experience dominated by space, but as a map of bodily interaction on its own. The fluid temporal environment formed and expressed by the temporal body could be translated into a temporal three-dimensional map on which bodies mark their interactions. This can be supported by the fact that the temporal body is a three-dimensional body, as it incorporates past, present and future into one conceptual entity that can however be experienced by bodies. The tangible sense of time in the chapel can thus be perceived not only as part of a spatial map of bodily interaction but also as a map independent from that of space, a map of its own, on which bodies leave their marks when interacting with each other in three temporal dimensions. The temporal body, in accordance with the spatial body of the chapel, can be thought of as an interactive map of bodily interactions, as one observes on it not only the interaction

between bodies that move on the areas of the map but also the interaction between the three dimensions of the map itself. The temporal map marks in this way interactions on two levels, one internal, between the different dimensions of time, and one external, that of the bodies that exist in time, move inside the temporal map and interact with each other. The concept of time in the space of the chapel as an interactive three-dimensional map of bodily interactions gives a sense of spatiality to time and re-connects it with the concept of space and that of the body. Time as a three-dimensional map partakes of the spatial in essential terms and emerges in the space of the chapel as another body; it is formed by parts that interact with each other, and in its entirety it constitutes a whole, a body that interacts with other bodies in space. More than a bridge, a platform or a texture of experience, time is another body in the chapel, conceptual and tangible, underlying and ever-present, a prerequisite for bodily interaction and a product of it.

The concept of the tangible present inside the chapel can be experienced through the interaction with bodies. As explained in a previous section of this chapter, the body of Christ intensely marks the space of the parekklesion and does so similarly in the case of time. The presence of the body of Christ inside the chapel adds to the temporal body-map the element of eternity; Christ is ever-present in the church, a presence that is marked by His images, such as the Anastasis, the Last Judgment, and the Virgin and Child image in the dome of the parekklesion. Even though the body of Christ is present in the parekklesion in multiple forms, human and divine, it is not His body alone that determines the eternal present time of the parekklesion. The bodies of the faithful add to the temporal continuum the dimension of the present, the tangible present of the body that relates and interacts here and now. Christ as God is a timeless, eternal being but the faithful are

perishable and therefore their existence is essentially dependent on time. Being there in the space of the chapel is a testimony to their existence in the present, the only temporal dimension immediately experienced through the body. The combination or, ideally, the unity between the body of Christ and that of the faithful transforms the space of the chapel into a space shared by both, a space where eternity meets the present to create a sense of a tangible eternal present that marks the space of the parekklesion.

The body of Christ, dominant within the space of the chapel, is first and foremost characterised by its ever-presence in the church in various forms. It is of course sacramentally present in the Holy Communion. It is also present symbolically during the liturgy, as in hymnography events that relate to His life are presented as happening inside the church, in front of the eyes of the beholders, here and now. Phrases such as ‘Christ is being born, glory to God’,⁴⁶⁸ or ‘today He is hung upon the cross’,⁴⁶⁹ are both examples of how the presence of Christ is evoked through hymnography in the present, to intensify the sense of connection to and interaction with Christ in bodily terms.

However, the presence of Christ and the holy persons inside the chapel is not only evoked through the liturgical texts or through the ritual re-enactments that take place during the services. It is also the images of the chapel that contribute to the intensification of the sense that the bodies of Christ and the holy persons are present here and now, existing in the same spatial and temporal dimension as the faithful. It can be claimed that through the application of external rhythm in the paintings of the parekklesion, the bodies

⁴⁶⁸ The phrase ‘Χριστός γεννάται, δοξάσατε’ is part of the 1st ode of the Christmas canon. Original text in *Triodion*, (Athens: Apostoliki Diakonia, 1996), p. 125. Translation of this phrase is my own.

⁴⁶⁹ The phrase ‘σήμερον κρεμάται ἐπὶ ξύλου’ is part of the 15th antiphon of the Matins of Good Friday. Original text in *Triodion*, p. 438. Translation of this phrase is my own.

of the holy persons become able, in pictorial terms, to co-exist with the faithful in the temporal dimension of the latter. The concept of the temporal co-existence of bodies in the parekklesion, bodies that belong to different realities and temporal dimensions, bodies that are human and divine, of the present and of the past, physical and pictorial, is constructed on and justified by a notion that involves the essence of bodily interaction and the relation of the temporal to the spatial. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, in Michael Psellos' thought time is associated with distance. According to him, the shorter the distance between two points in space, the shorter the time that separates them; in other words, the closer something is in space, the closer it is in time as well. Therefore, when something is present here, it will necessarily be present now, as existing in a given spatial dimension involves the existence in the temporal dimension determined by that space. In this way, time is linked to space in such a way that it almost acquires spatial qualities, as it seems to partake of space or adding another, very important layer to the spatial when it comes to experiencing one's presence.

Moreover, one should keep in mind the importance of bodily interaction and how this is performed inside the space of the chapel. A major aim in the parekklesion is the creation of wider or extended bodies formed by the contact and interaction of individual bodies. Throughout the space of the chapel, individual bodies are created with the aim of them being able to join other bodies inside the space of the parekklesion in the present. Liturgical, architectural and pictorial bodies aim at overcoming the boundaries of space and time and joining the faithful in the parekklesion in their temporal dimension. Bodily interaction can be performed when bodies can be felt inside space, when their presence is manifested through various means here and now, when they are present in space and time,

available to interact. Based on these two concepts, the space-time relation and the importance of the temporal dimension in bodily interaction, the use of external rhythm aims directly at minimising not only the distance that separates the bodies of the faithful from the bodies of the holy persons but also the temporal distance that marks their relationship, as the faithful exist in the present and the holy persons are of the past. For this reason, individual figures and whole compositions are designed in order to give the depicted the ability to exit the pictorial surface and move towards the space of the faithful, inside the chapel, when the faithful want to interact with them. By joining the faithful inside the parekklesion, therefore minimising the distance that separates them, the time that separates the two bodies is minimised as well, which is on the one hand a consequence of the spatial co-existence and on the other hand a prerequisite for bodily interaction. In this way, one can claim that with the facilitation of bodily interaction with the holy persons here and now, external rhythm adds the dimension of a tangible present to the paintings of the parekklesion, as it is through and for the body that the figures of the chapel come to the present and become tangible in pictorial terms, thus adding to the interaction of the faithful with the holy sensory qualities. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that the concept of the tangible present is arguably the most important aspect that rhythm adds to the paintings of the parekklesion. Without the rhythmic management of the paintings, the pictorial bodies of the holy persons would remain two-dimensional figures, conceptual entities imprinted on the wall being looked at, without being able to respond. With the application of rhythm, the holy persons not only become three-dimensional but they seem to enter the space of the faithful and co-exist with them. External rhythm gives pictorial figures the chance to acquire characteristics of a living

organism, as they are not only present here, they are most importantly present here and now, which means that they can interact and relate to the faithful. Even though the presence of the holy persons inside the chapel cannot be considered to be essential, that is in the flesh, one can claim that it is made the closest it could be to that by means of line and colour. The pictorial presence of the holy persons might not be real in terms of essence but it can be considered to be real in the sense that it can be experienced through the senses and the bodies of the faithful here and now.

This entry into the present of the chapel performed by the holy persons through the application of rhythm is extremely important in the process of becoming one with the faithful through bodily interaction. On the individual level, the act of coming to the present of the holy persons is experienced as an invitation to contact and communication between bodies. On the collective level however, the co-existence of the holy persons and the faithful inside the space of the chapel, signifies more than an invitation to one-to-one interaction. The presence of the holy persons highlights the existence of a community in Christ that surpasses the boundaries of time and unites those of the past and those of the present in an ever-present body. It could be claimed that what is arguably experienced as an extraordinary break in time on an individual level (in the sense that one realises that one can communicate with the divine here and now, disregarding in this way the fact that the holy person depicted is necessarily of the past), is experienced on a collective level as a manifestation of the fact that the unity of time is indeed possible within the church. On a collective level therefore, the presence of the holy persons through their paintings here and now, brings forth the concept of time in the *parekklesion* as a body-continuum, where past, present and future are united in one concrete entity that floods both space and the

body with its energies and interactions.

The reality of the tangible present of the parekklesion however is also projected through architectural elements. Death as a concept and as an experienced reality is an ever-present theme in the chapel, with the presence of the arcosolia highlighting the significance of the end of life for the community and for the individual. Death is regarded as the opposite of life; life is a celebration of the unity between body and soul while death symbolises the exact opposite, the break of this unity with the soul leaving the perishable body. The division between life and death however does not only refer to the changing status of the presence, visibility and accessibility of the body but it also relates deeply to the temporal and is associated with a temporal division, a breakage in time. The living have experienced the past and can envision the future while living and operating in the present; life in that sense is indeed a manifestation of the continuity of time in the living body. On the other hand however, the deceased are necessarily of the past, as they do not actively participate in the present. Keeping that in mind, the placement of the arcosolia inside the living space of the faithful is indeed an attempt to restore to a certain degree the sense of the unity of time. The bodies of the deceased lying next to the moving, active bodies of the living are of the past and yet they physically occupy space inside the space of the faithful, the living space of the tangible present. The deceased, through the presence of their tombs, can almost be touched by the living, they lie among them during the services, they have space and are parts of it. The deceased are, in a way, participants in the tangible present of the space of the chapel, even though they belong to the past and they can be thought of as having a future as well as members of the community in Christ. Moreover, building on Psellos' theory of time as being directly related to distance, one

can think of the placement of the arcosolia as an attempt to minimise the physical distance between the space of the living and the space of the deceased. Consequently, with the inclusion of the deceased inside the space of the living, the stretch of time that separates the two categories is also shortened, allowing the faithful to communicate with the dead in a more direct and physical manner, as if the dead were partaking not only of their own space but also of their own temporal dimension. In this way the unity of time inside the *parekklesion* that involves both the living and the deceased is expressed not only spiritually, for example through prayers to God on behalf of the deceased or by addressing the deceased directly during services, but also physically through the inclusion of tombs that can be seen, touched and felt inside the space of the chapel.

The unity of time regarded as a conceptual temporal body-continuum is achieved in and through space as well as in and through the body, highlighting in this way the interrelations between time, space and the body inside the chapel. Time becomes a body where past, present and future unite in one entity or a map of human experience where past, present and future form a three-dimensional interactive structure or even an invisible spatial installation that fills the space of the chapel with different layers of time through which the faithful move and interact. The time of the *parekklesion* can thus be regarded as experienced through the body and as a body itself, as having bodily qualities. The bodies of the faithful touch and interact with the temporal body through their interaction with other bodies and time as a body interacts with all other bodies in space, architectural, liturgical and pictorial by being a core element in their development and their interaction with the bodies of the faithful. The temporal body is ever-present in the space of the chapel and in this sense it could be thought of as an installation with spatial characteristics

set inside the parekklesion, an invisible three-dimensional structure on which bodies mark their movements and their interactions. Time can also be experienced as a reality whose centre is the tangible present, with concentric circles developing away from it, marking the past or the future. Either as a bridge, a reality, a map or a spatial structure, the temporal body of the chapel is deeply marked by the sense of unity between past, present and future. The temporal body is the symbol of a temporal unity, which facilitates the function of the community that inhabits the parekklesion. In a space where death and the consequent division between life and death, present and past, are so apparent, the unity of time in the present projected by and within the temporal body of the parekklesion seems to bring hope to the faithful by strengthening the bonds between the members of the community, human and divine, present and past.

Relationality and the body

The concept of relationality has been an object of study in various fields of research, including physics, psychology, aesthetics, economics, biology, sociology and geography. In physics, relational space-time frameworks regard physical systems in such a way that objects – as well as their positions and properties – are meaningful when they are relative to other objects. In this way, time does not exist without events and space does not exist if empty, void of objects. Space can thus be defined through the systems of relations

between the objects it contains.⁴⁷⁰ In psychoanalysis, relational approaches emphasise the importance of early formative relationships in the emergence of an individual's personality.⁴⁷¹ In art practice, relational aesthetics is a term coined by Nicolas Bourriaud to define 'a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space'.⁴⁷² Bourriaud suggests that 'the role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real, whatever scale chosen by the artist'.⁴⁷³ In relational art, the artwork creates a social environment in which viewers come together to participate in a shared activity. In this sense, the work of art instead of being envisaged as an encounter between an object and a beholder, is regarded as an intersubjective encounter. Through these encounters, and while the audience is regarded as a community, meaning is produced collectively.⁴⁷⁴ The concept of relationality has been employed in the field of science and technology studies as well. Within this framework, the development

⁴⁷⁰ See John Kineman, 'Relational Science: A Synthesis', *Axiomathes*, 21.3 (2011), 393-437. Relational approaches have been suggested in physics in the work of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Ernst Mach, among others.

⁴⁷¹ Patricia DeYoung, *Relational Psychotherapy: A Primer* (New York: Brunner - Routledge, 2003), p. 26. For a detailed analysis of the relational psychoanalytic approach see Lewis Aron and Maria Lechich, 'Relational Psychoanalysis', in *Textbook of Psychoanalysis*, ed. by Glen Gabbard, Bonnie Litowitz, and Paul Williams (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2012), pp. 211-24; Jon Mills, 'A Critique of Relational Psychoanalysis', *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 22.2 (2005), 155-88; Mills, 'A Critique of Relational Psychoanalysis'; Stephen A. Mitchell, *Relational Concepts in Psychoanalysis: An Integration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Stephen A. Mitchell, *Relationality: From Attachment to Intersubjectivity* (Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press, 2000).

⁴⁷² Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les Presses Du Reel, 1998), p. 11. The term relational aesthetics was used for the first time in 1996, in the catalogue for the exhibition *Traffic* that was curated by Bourriaud at the CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain in Bordeaux, France.

⁴⁷³ Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, p. 13.

⁴⁷⁴ Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, pp. 17-18.

of actor-network theory is an approach that regards objects as parts of social networks,⁴⁷⁵ and it can be described as a material semiotic approach.⁴⁷⁶ Actor-network theory is concerned with mapping the relational ties within social networks and it attempts to explain how material semiotic networks come together to form a whole.⁴⁷⁷ As Murdoch explains, the actor-network approach is centred on the complex relations between heterogeneous entities that trigger the emergence of scientific networks. In exploring how actors participate in networks, actor-network theory sheds light on an aspect of relationality that is concerned with the way that ‘spatial distinctions are carved out of broader social contexts, in this case networks’.⁴⁷⁸ The concept of relationality has also been of crucial importance in the field of human geography. As Marcus Doel states: ‘we will only unlock the power of post-structuralist geography to the extent that we embrace nothing but relations and co-relations, their folding and unfolding’.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁵ The actor-network approach was developed by researchers such as Bruno Latour, Michel Callon and Jon Law, among others. For a detailed analysis of the theory see Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); *Actor Network Theory and After*, ed. by John Law and John Hassard (London: Blackwell, 1999).

⁴⁷⁶ A material semiotic approach is concerned with relations that are material – established between things – and at the same time conceptual, between concepts. The actor-network theory is related to other material semiotic approaches, such as those suggested by Deleuze, Foucault and Donna Haraway.

⁴⁷⁷ See Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*.

⁴⁷⁸ Jon Murdoch, *Post-Structuralist Geography: A Guide to Relational Space* (London: Sage, 2006), p. 58.

⁴⁷⁹ Marcus Doel, 'Gunnar Olsson's Transformers: The Art and Politics of Rendering the Co-Relation of Society and Space in Monochrome and Technicolor', *Antipode*, 35.1 (2003), 140-67, 147.

Non-representational theory is an influential approach within the human geography field that has also employed the concept of relationality.⁴⁸⁰ Non-representational theory explores, among other things, the human body and its co-evolution with things. The body is not regarded as being separate from the world. Thrift argues that the body is the way it is because of its ‘unparalleled ability to co-evolve with things, taking them in and adding them to different parts of the biological body to produce something which...resemble[s] a constantly evolving distribution of different hybrids with different reaches’.⁴⁸¹ In regarding bodies and things as ‘not easily separated terms’,⁴⁸² non-representational theory explores the material relatedness of the human body to the world and its ever-developing ability to act and interact. An approach to relationality within the field of human geography that has proven to be very influential on my work is that of Doreen Massey. In exploring the processes that result in the formation of space, Massey interprets space as a process of becoming, as a realm that is always in the making: ‘...precisely because it is the product of relations, relations which are active practices, material and embedded, practices which have to be carried out, space is in a process of becoming... It is always, therefore, also in a sense unfinished. There are always connections yet to be made,

⁴⁸⁰ Non-representational theory has developing since the mid-1990s through the work of Nigel Thrift, J. D. Dewsbury, Derek McCormack, Paul Harrison, John Wylie and others. It is a post-structuralist approach weaving in the perspectives of Foucault, Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, among others. See for example Nigel Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* (London: Routledge, 2007); Nigel Thrift, *Spatial Formations* (London: Sage, 1996); also J. D. Dewsbury, 'Performativity and the Event: Enacting a Philosophy of Difference', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 18 (2000), 473-96; J. D. Dewsbury, 'Witnessing Space: Knowledge without Contemplation', *Environment and Planning A*, 35 (2003), 1907-32; Paul Harrison, 'Hows Shall I Say It? Relating the Non-Relational', *Environment and Planning A*, 39 (2007), 590-608; D. McCormack, 'An Event of Geographical Ethics in Spaces of Affect', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 28 (2003), 488-507.

⁴⁸¹ Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, p. 10.

⁴⁸² Thrift, *Spatial Formations*, p. 13.

juxtapositions yet to flower into interaction (or not), potential links which may never be established. 'Space', then, can never be that completed simultaneity in which all interconnections have been established, in which everywhere is already (and at that moment unchangingly) linked to everywhere else. There are always loose ends in space. It is always integrally space-time'.⁴⁸³ 'New spaces, new identities, new relations and new differences' continuously emerge, as space is shaped by co-existing and competing relations that give it an unpredictable character.⁴⁸⁴ For Massey, space is a 'meeting place', a locus where relations intersect and interweave.⁴⁸⁵ Therefore, space can be regarded in Massey's terminology as made up by relations, entities and processes: it is an open, dynamic domain where relations meet to form new relations and new identities.⁴⁸⁶

In the context of the chora, the concept of relationality will be regarded as referring to the way that bodies – material and conceptual – relate to space and to each other in space. The concept of relationality will also be a focal point in the process of reading space as a relational product. In the field of human geography, non-representational theory suggests that objects in space have agency and that art can have 'determinable but not determined effects' on the beholders, leaving them to suggest towards which paths the trajectories might point.⁴⁸⁷ For Dewsbury and Thrift, the assessment of the agency of objects, spaces and subjects can provide grounds for exploring the means by which social contexts transform the experience of space. In the context of the Chora, the notion of

⁴⁸³ Doreen Massey, 'Spaces of Politics', in *Human Geography Today* ed. by D. Massey, J. Allen, and P. Sarre (Cambridge Polity 1999), pp. 279-94, 283.

⁴⁸⁴ Massey, 'Spaces of Politics', p. 284.

⁴⁸⁵ Doreen Massey, 'A Global Sense of Place', *Marxism Today* (1991), 24-29.

⁴⁸⁶ Murdoch, *Post-Structuralist Geography: A Guide to Relational Space*, pp. 21-22.

⁴⁸⁷ Dewsbury, John and Nigel Thrift, 'Genesis Eternal: After Paul Klee', in *Deleuze and Space*, ed. by Ian Buchanan and Greg Lambert (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 89-108.

agency is touched upon by Ousterhout, but in different terms. He maintains that the space of the Chora is an artistic product elaborately designed by Metochites to appeal to the refined taste of his circle of aristocrats.⁴⁸⁸ The symbolic connotations of the iconographic programme and their interactions with the architectural structure, the embodiment of the concept of the chora in the monastery and the subtle artistic and spatial references to it, are according to Ousterhout designed intentionally, so that Metochites and his associates could find delight in exploring those trajectories when attending services.⁴⁸⁹ My understanding of the agency of space and imagery of the Chora works between those two uses of the term. I maintain that space and imagery have been designed by Metochites in order to affect beholders in a particular way. The experience of space is thus created through the relationality of patron, artists, images and beholders. Under this prism, the notion of space and objects exercising agency within the parekklesion should be taken into consideration when discussing the faithful's experience of space, particularly because in this study behind the generic terms 'faithful' and 'beholder' stands the educated patron of the monastery and members of the Constantinopolitan elite.

The importance of the notion of the body in the chapel and the ways it operates and interacts in and with space and time is in effect an introduction to the process of producing meaning and to the process of two or more bodies coming to a unity and forming a complete whole. For Maximos, the ultimate unity is the church – the body of Christ, the church as a building, the church as a community, the church as a liturgical reality – a unity that in any case is described in terms of the body. Maximos does not

⁴⁸⁸ Robert Ousterhout, 'Reading Difficult Buildings: The Lessons of the Kariye Camii', p. 99.

⁴⁸⁹ Robert Ousterhout, 'Reading Difficult Buildings: The Lessons of the Kariye Camii', pp. 99-100.

differentiate between the church as a building, community or liturgy and therefore one could think of the church in Maximos as a body of bodies, a wider body formed and defined by bodies, a spiritual, visible and collective body space. This ultimate unity for Maximos can be thought of as being visualised by a body formed by members and parts that have their individual function, their interrelations and their co-operation is so flawless that they create a concrete functional entity. Church space can thus be regarded as a body formed by interrelated members and therefore it would be more appropriate for it to be regarded not as one objective thing but as a realm of relations, as a body defined and marked by the interactions and interrelations of its parts. However, before attempting to understand the space of the chapel in its entirety, as a whole, it would be useful to look into the way that the parts of that space relate to and interact with each other.

As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, the body of Christ as a multivalent symbol of the church is the ultimate example of a perfect unity of two realities in one complete body. As John of Damascus explains, the two natures, the divine and the human are present in Christ without ‘confusion or intermixture... but by synthesis’. Christ combines in Him the human and the divine in such way that neither of them is altered, as they are both preserved intact in Him after the union. The two natures of Christ exist in one body without being confused with each other but at the same time without being alien to each other, otherwise there would not be a body. The human and the divine are united by *synthesis*, they come together to become a ‘compound subsistence’ maintaining at the same time their individual characteristics.⁴⁹⁰ It is in this contradictory notion of synthesis

⁴⁹⁰ ‘And therefore we hold that there has been a union of two perfect natures, one divine and one human; not with disorder or confusion, or intermixture, or commingling, as is said by the God-accursed Dioscorus and by Eutyches and Severus, and all that impious company: and not in a

in a chora space that the core of the concept of the relation between different parts in the space of the chapel is anchored. If one is to attempt to study the way through which different elements inside the parekklesion come together to become a body, the concept of synthesis should be a guide in identifying complete bodies and the way they are formed. In this context, I will interpret the concept of synthesis as a multidimensional nexus that incorporates various other concepts, such as interrelation, interdependence and interaction. In this way, it will become clear that the way that the parts of a structure relate to and interact with each other will determine whether this structure can be regarded as a whole, a functional body, a body that fulfils its purpose inside the space of the chapel. Before proceeding, one important point has to be made. The idea of synthesis of two different elements in the face of Christ provides an arguably vague image of what a body, architectural, pictorial, liturgical or collective should look like, as the case of the Incarnation is a miraculous one and the concept of synthesis in Christ can prove rather contradictory. However, what one should keep in mind is that the body of Christ will be here thought of as more of an example of a chora space in between realising a bridging between two different realities and not as a literal analogy. For this reason, the concept of synthesis is not interpreted and employed in strict theological terms here.

personal or relative manner, or as a matter of dignity or agreement in will, or equality in honour, or identity in name, or good pleasure, as Nestorius, hated of God, said, and Diodorus and Theodorus of Mopsuestia, and their diabolical tribe: but by synthesis; that is, in subsistence, without change or confusion or alteration or difference or separation, and we confess that in two perfect natures there is but one subsistence of the Son of God incarnate; holding that there is one and the same subsistence belonging to His divinity and His humanity, and granting that the two natures are preserved in Him after the union, but we do not hold that each is separate and by itself, but that they are united to each other in one compound subsistence. For we look upon the union as essential, that is, as true and not imaginary'. Original text in John of Damascus, *Ἐκδοσις Ἀκριβῆς Τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Πίστεως / De Fide Orthodoxa*, p. 58. The translation of this extract comes from John of Damascus, 'An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith', pp. 654-55.

The synthesis of elements in one body is performed in the parekklesion by maintaining each element's characteristics while at the same time each element becomes fully integrated in the whole. Given the fact that the formation of a body is primarily an attempt to make a structure as functional as possible, the role of each individual element is to contribute to the overall degree of functionality of the whole. In this case, the individual contribution to the structure's functionality can be seen as directly related to the strength of the relationship established between individual elements. Therefore, the closer and more functional the relationship between the individual elements of a structure, the higher the functionality of the whole, and the more the possibilities for it to be regarded as a body, an organism that functions as one concrete entity and not as a sum of elements piled together. What is probably the most important factor in the formation of a functional body from individual parts in the chapel is the manner in which the parts relate to each other, the nature of their relationship. In the case of the space of the parekklesion, the relationship between each part is founded on the ability of each element to lean towards the other, approach it and become dependent to it. It is the ability of an element to approach and give away a part of its self-sufficiency that allows it to become able to relate to other elements and participate in the formation of a functional whole. Relation, interdependence, interaction and ultimately unity in the concept of the body is a product of movement, the ability to approach the other and minimise the distance between the two in space and time. In this way, when a set of elements comes into unity in the form of a body, the body that is produced through this process can be thought of more as a dynamic entity rather than a static one, a reality constructed in and through movement, formed and defined by the interrelations and the interactions of the elements that constitute it.

But how are the bodies within the chapel formed and in which way do their parts relate to each other? In architectural terms, the sphere-square unity in the chapel that symbolises the bridging between the divine and the human is expressed through the notion of heaven with its inhabitants moving downwards to meet earth in order for the holy persons to join the faithful in the latter's spatial and temporal dimension. Keeping this in mind, one can observe the way that the sphere of the dome of the western bay seems to extend downwards towards the north and south walls. Another example of the process of becoming a body that takes place between the spherical and the square element can be seen in the way that the dome seems to move downwards to meet the apse of the eastern wall. This descent is performed on a larger scale than the dome's descent towards the south and north walls as the downwards movement in this case involves larger elements and runs through a wider area of the chapel. The descent takes place on an axis from the west to the east as the spherical element of the dome of the western bay seems to move towards the east to appear in the domical vault of the eastern bay. From the domical vault, the spherical element moves further east to appear in the conch of the apse of the east wall where it is ultimately directed towards the ground through the hemispherical vertical wall of the apse. In this way, the spherical element projected in the dome of the western bay as the highest point of the chapel, is transferred gradually to lower and then even lower points, passing in this way on from the top to the bottom of the parekklesion along the east-west axis.

In the case of the dome seeming to move downwards toward the south and north walls the movement is experienced by the faithful in the chapel when they face eastwards and they stand in front of or underneath the dome as well as when they move eastwards

from a position in front of the western bay towards the eastern bay. Similarly, in the case of the descent of the dome from the western to the eastern bay, the wave-like movement that seems to transfer the spherical element eastwards as well as downwards can be observed by the faithful in a corresponding manner. The movement of the spherical element becomes evident as the faithful walk facing eastwards from the entrance of the parekklesion and can be experienced as they progress towards the eastern bay while they continue to follow it until their gaze reaches the prominent spot of the conch of the apse and the eastern wall. In this way the relation established between the sphere and the square and their coming together into one complete structure is not only achieved through movement on the interior of the architectural body but it also becomes evident or, in other words, it becomes activated, through the faithful's movement inside the chapel. Especially in the case of the transfer of the spherical element eastwards, the faithful seem to experience the unity of the sphere with the square as it is being formed as they walk along the parekklesion from the entrance eastwards. The approach of the sphere towards the square follows the direction of the movement of the faithful, either as they walk towards the eastern bay or as they enter the chapel and their gaze follows the direction of the sphere's movement.

The architectural body is thus formed by two elements that symbolically and physically relate closely to each other in and through movement. On the one hand, in pragmatic terms, the spherical element, whose presence is more evident in the higher sections of the chapel, seems to approach the square that dominates the lower sections by means of the vertical walls and join it in an architectural unity. On the other hand, in symbolic terms, the movement of the sphere towards the dome acquires meaning that

transludes the boundaries of architecture as it attempts to represent the desired movement of heaven (the sphere) towards earth (the square). In this way, heaven with its inhabitants seems to reach towards the faithful in the church symbolically through architectural forms, join their space and invite them into interaction. It is thus through movement that a chora space in between human and divine can be formed and unity can be achieved between them in the form of an architectural body.

It can be argued however, that it is in the paintings of the parekklesion that the concept of relation between and unity of elements through movement finds its clearest expression. The formation of a functional body among the elements of a structure is performed in painting in different levels from a smaller to a larger scale. The establishment of a relation between pictorial elements can be observed in single figure images as well as in narrative compositions. Moreover, relations between pictorial elements can be seen on a larger scale, outside the boundaries of the individual image as well, such as in the case of individual images that relate to images next to them. In the case of the paintings of the chapel, artistic bodies are created in two ways, the first referring to the relation between elements belonging in the same image body and thus associated with the application of internal rhythm and the second referring to the relation between separate images and therefore associated with a technique that can be thought of as a rhythmic wave.

On a micro-level, that of the individual image, the use of internal rhythm targets specifically the relation between parts of the image, as explained in detail in chapter three. The painters, in the case of individual images, created the conditions for the transformation of the image into a functional body that would reflect and be defined by

the interrelations and the interactions of the parts that constitute it. The use of the X marks a relation characterised by the concept of dynamic balance; the core of this concept lies in the relation developed between two elements in and through movement that in their unity form a body that creates the impression of an internally balanced but at the same time dynamic entity. Through the emergence of a body in movement, the space of the icon is thus shaped into a chora space in between that exists in the gap between presence and absence and realises in this way the concept of pictorial presence. The pictorially present body is constituted by elements in movement, as this is indicated by their placement on a diagonal axis. The use of internal rhythm and the development of interrelations between pictorial elements in movement can be observed in all the images of the parekklesion. Characteristic examples of the application of internal rhythm include compositions such as the image of the *Anastasis*, as well as single figure images, such as the image of St Theodore Tiro.⁴⁹¹

The need for creating more extended or macro-pictorial bodies that would project the concept of chora through the notion of the body in movement within the space of the chapel arguably called for the expansion of the use of techniques related to internal rhythm to a larger scale in order to cover the relations between individual images. The most characteristic example of this attempt is the design of the figures of the frieze covering the lower section of the south and north walls, even though it can also be observed in a smaller scale within images, in the way that certain figures relate to each other, such as the groups of Apostles and Angels in the Second Coming. The development of a relation between the figures of the frieze is based on the principle that calls for the

⁴⁹¹ A detailed analysis of the *Anastasis* and the image of St Theodore Tiro can be found in chapter three.

movement of one element towards the other in order for them to become able to interact. In the frieze, each image seems to play a special role in the formation of a system of interrelations either by indicating movement or by acting as a border for it, in order to confine it within the given pictorial body. In this way, the concept of movement, in its presence or in its absence, contributes to the formation of an interactional space within the space of the icon that extends to include individual images into a wider pictorial body that would facilitate the needs of the community inhabiting the chapel. The space of the icon is thus transformed into a chora space in between that bridges the gap between the individual and the collective. The individual body of the saint is incorporated into a nexus of interrelations that connect images into a collective body, existing in an interactional chora space that can be thought of as being both in movement, as well as formed through movement.

The development of an extended pictorial body however can be observed not only within the boundaries of the image or the images themselves and within the boundaries of the painting surface. The pictorial body does not only extend along the walls of the parekklesion but it becomes three-dimensional with the application of external rhythm and its entry into the actual living space of the faithful. The space of the icon expands to include the beholder physically and the pictorial body opens up towards the faithful to aid the development of a unity or a body of mixed nature, consisting of the body of the beholder and the pictorial body of the saint. With the application of external rhythm the image acquires interactional qualities that allow it to relate to the beholder through movement and interact with him or her by means of the body, through the inclusion of both bodies into one unity. The energy of the image, indicated by the outward movement

of its members to the direction of the beholder, is transferred outside the painting surface in the form of a virtual cone that develops and expands inside the space of the chapel. In this way, the movement of the pictorial body becomes the messenger of an invitation for interaction and establishment of a relation between the two bodies, while it creates a special interactional space in the shape of a cone to contain the two bodies' unity. Moreover, the manner through which the movement of the Imaged is transferred outwards towards the space of the faithful in the form of a cone seems to target in interactional terms not only the individual but the collective body as well. The virtual cone emanating from the image becomes wider as it leaves the image and expands inside the parekklesion to include not only one the person standing in front of the image but more people within its limits. In this way, the collective body becomes the receiver of the pictorial energy of the Imaged and it can in its turn activate the process of communication and interaction with the Imaged. The space of the icon is thus shaped through movement into a chora space that exists in the gap between human and divine and functions as a bridge for the facilitation of interaction between Imaged and beholder. The space of the icon is an interactional chora that can be thought of as being formed in movement and through movement, transferring energy while in movement and receiving energy through its interaction with the movement of other parts or bodies.

Retracing the chora: the production of meaning and space

As mentioned in the previous three sections of this chapter, one can think about the space of the chapel and the parts that it consists of in terms of the body. The liturgy is a body, the architecture is another body, the paintings of the parekklesion form another body and the faithful bring the element of the living body inside space. Moreover, conceptual entities can be thought of as bodies, for example time in the chapel can be interpreted as functioning as a temporal body continuum. These bodies, present in the space of the chapel, are formed by individual elements, which relate to each other in a particular way, they exist by themselves but function together, they interact and communicate with each other, and together they constitute a complete whole. Being part of a functional whole requires the active participation of every element in the process of producing meaning and forming a unity, and as expected, at the same time, the function of each element has an impact on the function of every other element in the same structure. Therefore, it could be claimed that inside the chapel, every element of a body, pictorial, architectural, liturgical or even temporal and spatial, exists *in relation to* the other elements that surround it and belong to the same body and also in relation to the body as a whole. The individual element or member of a body can only be considered truly complete when put into relation with the other members of the body to form a larger functional whole. In this way, fulfilment of a member's purpose comes through its participation in a whole, through the ability to participate in the process of shaping a space of becoming and of becoming a body, a unity. Producing meaning and becoming a

body are thus a product of a synthesis of elements, based on their interrelations, their interaction, their degree of interdependence and co-operation. It is through the establishment of a relation with the other members and consequently with the body as a whole that the member is offered the opportunity to become perfect and to be considered fulfilled. In this way, the body in the space of the parekklesion, as well as the body space of the parekklesion as a complete entity, can be thought of as a multidimensional nexus, a web of relations between elements and bodies, dynamic and fluid, always in the process of reshaping themselves. The body in and of the chapel is a realm of relations between bodies and therefore it is always in the making. It takes place as elements and bodies negotiate their presence, their interrelations and interactions in space and in this sense it can be considered as an event, an act of interacting, a fluid reality that balances itself through relations and interactions, a space of becoming. The body in the parekklesion should be regarded as more of a verb than a noun, it is active and dynamic, it produces meaning and it happens through movement and interaction. It exists, acts and reacts in relation to the other – element or body – and for this reason it is never static, it is always moving, pulsating to the beat of its relations and interactions, and for this reason it is always in the process of becoming complete. The body of the chapel is a verb, an active dynamic reality that lies not in the realm of being but in the realm of becoming.

The body in the parekklesion can be thought of as a complex system of interrelations and interactions between parts. It is a nexus marked by the movement of its parts towards each other, the taking place of their communication and the tackling of otherness through the establishment of relationships. The space of the chapel can be perceived as a realm of relations between bodies, a space defining and defined by

relations between bodies of all sorts and natures. It is a locus of relationality and a relational space, it receives bodies and offers them the space to relate to each other and at the same time it is itself an object of their interaction as well as its product. The space of the parekklesion is a body of bodies, an extended body that receives all other bodies, an entity whose density or a container whose fullness depends on the complexity of the relations between its parts, on the distance that separates them from each other. The body space of the chapel is formed by bodies whose relationship with the bodies that surround them is so immediate that their existence becomes directly related to them; the other is a defining point in the process of their fulfilling their purpose, of their coming into presence and producing meaning. The bodies in the space of the chapel exist in relation to each other; they cannot be thought of as total or complete because they need to collide with the other in order to produce meaning, to reach a Christian teleiosis, a state of completion or totalness. In this way bodies in the parekklesion are interdependent, as they have to share their space and therefore themselves – their own presence. Architecture shares its space with painting, the living beings share their space with the deceased, the liturgy shares its space with architecture and the faithful share their space with the pictorial bodies of the holy persons. Under this prism it can be said that what is shared is negotiated; bodies negotiate meaning, their presence, their space and their relationship with it with the other, as well as their relationship with them. They need to approach, to move towards the other and enter a process of unification in order to inscribe meaning in space and reach the state of teleiosis, because they exist in relation to the other, meaning will always be negotiated within their interactions, mediated by the other, always underway, always fluid, in the process of becoming a definitive thing. Following this conception, the space that gives

birth to these bodies, that calls them inside it, contains them and becomes defined by them is in this sense destined to remain incomplete, always in the making, in a fluid state like the bodies and the interactions that mark its body. The space body of the chapel is always in the process of becoming a total space, of becoming a unified body of bodies and in this way it cannot be thought of as being static or having a determinate form. It is rather an ever-changing matrix that creates and is being created, it is definite enough to give space and at the same time ephemeral enough to take place, it is an event of spatiality that appears in the collision between other bodies, during the moment of their interactions. It is a reality in between, a space of becoming: becoming present, becoming meaningful, becoming complete.

The concept of becoming lies at the heart of my thinking about bodies, bodies in space and the body space in and of the chapel. It represents the uncertainty of the relation, of the act of interaction, in the process of producing meaning. It represents the fluidity and haziness of the act of interaction, the constant struggle for balance and definition, the yet unfulfilled need for unity, a state of ambiguity, a state in between, definite and indefinite at the same time, structured and chaotic. The concept of becoming stems here from thinking about space as a chora of relationality; it is a container for relations and at the same time a relational product, a body shaped by the relations between its parts. If the space of the chapel is thought of as floating in a state of becoming, it can be regarded as a space in between as it is neither completely definite neither absolutely indefinite, it is both and neither at the same time. It rather seems to fill the gap between the two realities, a bridge over the distance that separates two oppositions and at the same time a bridged opposition itself. The space in between is the receptacle in which the bridging takes place

and at the same time a catalyst and a product of the bridging. Thought of in this manner, the space of the parekklesion can be seen in the light of the concept of the chora, as having the characteristics of a matrix, a space body in between and always in the making, in the process of becoming meaningful. By extension, one can imagine the Chora parekklesion as a chora space in Platonic terms. In Plato's *Timaeus*, Socrates describes chora as a third kind of being; it is neither being nor nonbeing, it is rather an interval between the two, a receptacle or a milieu in which forms materialise. Chora is a disruption to binary oppositions, a transitional space between Being, the ideal intelligible model, and Becoming, the material sensible copy or form⁴⁹²:

τρίτον δὲ αὐτὸ γένος ὃν τὸ τῆς χώρας αἰεί, φθορὰν οὐ προσδεχόμενον,
 ἔδραν δὲ παρέχον ὅσα ἔχει γένεσιν πάσιν, αὐτὸ δὲ μετ' ἀναισθησίας
 ἀπὸν λογισμῷ τινι νόθῳ, μόγις πιστόν, πρὸς ὃ δὴ καὶ
 ὀνειροπολοῦμεν βλέποντες καὶ φαμεν ἀναγκαῖον εἶναί που τὸ ὄν

⁴⁹² Plato defines Being and becoming in *Timaeus*, before proceeding to a definition of chora as a third genus. The world of Being is described by Plato as follows: '...ὁμολογητέον ἐν μὲν εἶναι τὸ κατὰ ταῦτα εἶδος ἔχον, ἀγέννητον καὶ ἀνώλεθρον, οὔτε εἰς ἑαυτὸ εἰσδεχόμενον ἄλλο ἄλλοθεν οὔτε αὐτὸ εἰς ἄλλο ποιῖόν, ἀόρατον δὲ καὶ ἄλλως ἀναίσθητον, τοῦτο δὲ δὴ νόησις εἴληγεν ἐπισκοπεῖν' ('is always the same, uncreated and indestructible, never receiving anything into itself from without, nor itself going out to any other, but invisible and imperceptible by any sense, and of which the contemplation is granted to intelligence only') in Plato, *Timaeus*: 52a. Original text comes from Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 87. Translation of this extract comes from Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 41. The world of becoming is described as follows: '...τὸ δὲ ὁμώνυμον ὁμοίον τε ἐκείνῳ δεύτερον, αἰσθητόν, γεννητόν, πεφορημένον αἰεί, γιγνώμενόν τε ἐν τινι τόπῳ καὶ πάλιν ἐκείθεν ἀπολλύμενον, δόξῃ μετ' αἰσθήσεως περιληπτόν' ('there is another nature of the same name with it, and like to it, perceived by sense, created, always in motion, becoming in place and again vanishing out of place, which is apprehended by opinion and sense') in Plato, *Timaeus*: 52a. Original text in Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 87. Translation of this extract comes from Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 41.

ἅπαν ἔν τινι τόπῳ καὶ κατέχον χώραν τινά, τὸ δὲ μήτ' ἐν γῆ μήτε που
κατ' οὐρανὸν οὐδὲν εἶναι, ταῦτα δὴ πάντα καὶ τούτων ἄλλα ἀδελφὰ
καὶ περὶ τὴν ἄυπνον καὶ ἀληθῶς φύσιν ὑπάρχουσαν ὑπὸ ταύτης τῆς
ὄνειρώξεως.⁴⁹³

Viewing the space of the parekklesion in its entirety as a form of chora transforms it into a space that fills the gap between binary oppositions projected by bodies in the parekklesion. The chora space of and inside the chapel is a 'mediating bridge' between a series of binary oppositions, as expressed and becoming manifest by bodies in space; living and deceased, past and present, human and divine, symbolic and physical, private and collective, mortal and immortal, isolated and united. It is a space that disrupts the clear structure of oppositions and introduces the element of ambiguity, of the uncertainty inherent in the act of interacting with the other. By bridging the distance between oppositions, the chora space becomes a catalyst of transformation from opposition to complementarity. Antitheses become continua in and through the chora in the process of producing meaning.

The concept of the chora can be understood here (in part) as the womb of the Virgin, *ἡ χώρα του ἀχωρήτου*, the container of the uncontainable God, acting as a bridge between the human and the divine, a portal through which the divine enters the

⁴⁹³ 'The third nature is space (i.e., *χώρα/chora*), and is eternal, and admits not of destruction and provides a home for all created things, and is apprehended without the help of sense, by a kind of spurious reason, and is hardly real; which we behold as in a dream, say of all existence that it must of necessity be in some place and occupy a space but that what is neither in heaven nor in earth has no existence'. Plato, *Timaeus*, 52a-b. Original text in Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 87. Translation of this extract comes from Plato, *Timaeus*, p. 41.

human, an opposition that inside the womb becomes a complementarity, a synthesis. At the same time however, the notion of the chora can also be articulated in the space of the chapel through the image of the incarnated body of Christ. The chora space is thus not only a bridge covering the distance between two oppositions or two different realities, but it is also a bridged opposition in itself, as this is projected by the incarnate body of Christ inside the parekklesion. It is η χώρα των ζώντων, the dwelling place of the living, an event of spatiality that can only miraculously manifest itself in the visible as it partakes of two different realities, it exists in between certainties, a circumscribed body and at the same time an infinite domain. In this sense, the chora space promotes the bridging of oppositions and their transformation into complementarities as this act is suggested by the symbolic roles of the Virgin and Christ inside the chapel. In this way, the present and the past form a continuum, a prism of uninterrupted experience in which the faithful can mark their presence and inscribe meaning; the living and the deceased form together one community where the flow of communication can be continuous; the holy persons join the faithful in an act of bodily interaction and include them in an embrace projected through the interactional space of the pictorial cone. The interactional chora of becoming exists in between visibility and invisibility, immediacy and mediation, presence and absence as these are articulated by painting, architecture, symbolism and liturgy and experienced by the faithful. The intermediate nature of the chora leads one to think of it as being outside of presence,⁴⁹⁴ the space we ‘see without noticing and hold without possessing’.⁴⁹⁵ However, chora can be thought of as able of episodic appearances that penetrate the visible through its relation to the bodies it receives, through their movement and their acts

⁴⁹⁴ Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion*, p. 114.

⁴⁹⁵ Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion*, p. 114.

of interacting, in the process of them approaching each other and inscribing meaning in space. Chora arguably materialises only in movement, when the active, moving bodies collide with it and momentarily push it towards the visible.⁴⁹⁶ Chora appears episodically in the interaction between Imaged and beholder made possible through pictorial rhythm, in the contact of the living with the dead through the presence of the tombs of the deceased inside the chapel, in the physical and conceptual convergence of the architecture with painting, in the sense of community between those of the past and those of the present.

Chora manifests itself in the visible through and functions as a receptacle for the act of interacting and producing meaning, it receives bodies and offers them an interactionally active domain, and it only appears in movement, in their attempt to move towards each other, in the distance between them, in relation to them, in the process of them shaping their interrelations and becoming one. Chora, conceived in this way, gives space to bodies and their interactions; it receives them in the sense of a matrix,⁴⁹⁷ it can be thought of as a receptacle and a mother of them, their production of meaning and their coming together. It hosts and at the same time activates their interactions. It is a space shell that contains, and at the same time a moldable material that gives birth to bodies continua. As a moldable material, chora could be thought of as being a-morphon, which means without having a determinate form or shape of its own.⁴⁹⁸ As such, it rather molds into the shape of the relationships that the bodies within it establish, it is as dense as the richness of these relationships, and it is arguably this lack of conclusiveness that allows it

⁴⁹⁶ Isar, 'Chorography: A Space for Choreographic Description', p. 263.

⁴⁹⁷ Isar, 'Chorography: A Space for Choreographic Description', pp. 264-66. Also see Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion*, p. 114.

⁴⁹⁸ Malpas, *Place and Experience*, p. 138.

to receive all bodies. In the absence of a determinate shape, of a pre-constructed model, interactional events will absorb the essence of the chora and acquire their diversifying forms. In this way, the chora space defines the bodies and their relationships and at the same time it becomes defined by them, as they are of it and it is of them.

In the extension of the concept of chora as a moldable, originary matter, one can argue that it is this exact quality of chora being fluid that allows it to receive and sustain bodies in movement.⁴⁹⁹ Bodies in the space of the chapel relate to each other by interacting, an act of approaching, of moving towards the other and sharing or partaking of their space. Pentcheva highlights the importance of the relatedness of the body to other bodies in the process of shaping church space into a chora of participation. In examining the conceptual and material implications of the relation between the terms chora (χώρα) with choros (χορός),⁵⁰⁰ Pentcheva claims that chora space is experienced through movement and the relation of the body – individual and collective – with other bodies. The body of the faithful, the choir and the officiating clergy participated in a theatrical performance that aimed at bringing the divine closer to the senses of the viewer through movement, singing and the burning of incense. Thus for Pentcheva, the divine manifests itself in corporeal movement, sound and smell through a process of inspiritment of matter. Chora in this sense can be imagined as a vortex of bodies, human and divine, swirling around and episodically revealing themselves in moments of spiritual rapture triggered by

⁴⁹⁹ Alejandro Vallega, *Heidegger and the Issue of Space: Thinking on Exilic Grounds* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2003), p. 31.

⁵⁰⁰ The word χορός in Greek derives from the verb χορεύω which means to dance. Χορός can either mean dance/movement or it can indicate a group of people singing together in a church. For a historical overview of the term from Ancient Greece to Byzantium see Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium*, pp. 48-49. In Pentcheva's work, the association of the terms chora and choros is based mainly on the fact that they constitute a phonetic pair.

movement, sound and smell. Bodies, movement, sound and smell transform church space into a ‘breathing receptacle’ in Pentcheva’s terms.⁵⁰¹ In movement, in the attempt to communicate and become one with the divine and with other bodies, chora might episodically appear when one notices its peculiar non-presence, when one acknowledges the existence of a space in between that links the past with the present, the human with the divine and the living with the deceased. Pentcheva acknowledges the importance of the relatedness of the body to other bodies in experiencing space as chora, however for her, church space remains a receptacle that receives bodies – human and divine – and their energies. Even though space is not considered to be an empty medium, it is not a product either. It is a container of performativity and participation but it does not appear to be shaped and re-shaped based on the relations that are formed inside it. In Pentcheva’s chora, the faithful experience the presence of the divine inside an empsychos or inspired receptacle.⁵⁰² I would suggest that chora space is rather a purely relational product, a reality, an event of spatiality or *γίγνεσθαι*, and as such, it is always in the making, constantly being created by the faithful and through their relations with other bodies, material and conceptual. Church space as chora can be regarded as a fluid material of becoming.

In this final chapter I discussed the role of the body in the production of space and the role of space in the production of bodies within the parekklesion of the Chora. In analysing the way that the notion of the body relates to the concept of chora, I explored the way that the parekklesion is transformed into an intermediate space of becoming, that happens in present time and exists in the gap between human and divine, past and present,

⁵⁰¹ Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium*, p. 55.

⁵⁰² Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium*, p. 52.

living and deceased. I argued for a definition of space as a relational product, a *γίγνεσθαι*, a fluid reality governed and shaped by the movements of and the interactions between bodies across space and time.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The preceding chapters have provided a view of the parekklesion as a chora space of becoming, shaped by interactions between bodies. The art of the icon and its importance in the transformation of the holy image into a chora space; rhythm and its role in shaping the beholder's experience of space; space as an artistic installation and interactive narrative; space as ecclesia or body of bodies; space as chora and interactive locus of becoming where meaning is produced; and the production of space and bodies inside the parekklesion were some of the fundamental concepts discussed in this thesis. The space of the parekklesion has functioned as a platform from which to discuss concepts and contexts in and of church space and test theoretical approaches to the interpretation of church space. As a space shaped by the dialogue between architecture, painting, symbolism and the faithful, the chapel has been interpreted as a container and a catalyst for, and as the content and the product of interactions between bodies formed within it. In analysing the way that concepts are projected through material forms, I have here attempted to bring into dialogue the dual realms of the material and the theoretical. As I have argued throughout the preceding chapters, the space of the parekklesion is marked by the material concept of the body and it is this concept that ultimately brings chora into being in space and time. In order to explore ways through which the concept of chora appears in the unified space and the micro spaces of the parekklesion, I have

attempted to bring together a wealth of sources across both Byzantine and contemporary studies of Byzantine art and architecture. This has helped me to better understand the symbiotic relationship between chora as a space of becoming in between realities and the body in the space of the chapel. This thesis offers a way into the parekklesion of the Chora through following the production of bodies, meaning and space in a site of participation and interaction.

Starting from the space of the icon as the smallest part of the parekklesion where the concept of chora as an intermediate space appears, I argued for a formalist paradigm that places the holy image in between presence and absence. In analysing the realisation of pictorial presence in the image through the application of rhythm, I demonstrated how the space of the icon expands to include the viewer and establish itself as an interactional space of becoming between human and divine, where meaning is made through corporeal communication. As the study continued to zoom out of the space of the icon to include the architectural space of the chapel, I explored the way that bodies and meaning are produced in space through the interaction between architecture, painting and symbolism, and the faithful's experience of and participation in the bodies created. The space of the chapel was thus regarded as an artistic body and as a living ecclesia, a body of bodies, that shaped the parekklesion into an intermediate chora of becoming through interaction. Involving the concepts of time and relationality, the space of the chapel as a whole was finally understood as a realm of relations that took place in the present in order to form a body space that exists on the borders of heaven and earth, human and divine, past and present.

In this thesis the chora space of the chapel is understood not as an extension of space, a space beyond or another kind of space. It is rather space in space and space of space; it is space in between space and in between bodies, in between being and becoming. It fills the gap between oppositions and transforms them to complementarities. It can be articulated in terms of the womb of the Virgin and the incarnate and resurrected body of Christ. It is both a space shell and a moldable material that gives birth to bodies and interactions. It is a space under negotiation that can accommodate endless revision; a space of becoming, a locus of struggle where bodies combat to produce meaning. It is a circumscribed body and at the same time it is an infinite milieu. It is a space open, not confined, it opens upwards so that heaven can come to and be received by earth; it opens downwards so that the deceased can join the faithful in a community in Christ; it is open in time, so that the past can continue to exist through the present. It receives bodies in movement and gives space to them and their interactions and it is thus a space of expansion and contraction. It shapes and defines relationships between bodies and at the same time it is shaped and defined by them in the present, an ever-changing nexus of space, bodies and time. The chora space of the parekklesion is a relational space. It represents the freedom of relationality, the fluidity of the interaction between bodies, the lack of a determinate shape of things, the lack of an absolute truth and completeness in oneself. It comes to abolish the tyranny of being, the veridical case of 'to be so', the confined space and the pre-constructed model. It is a space of becoming, not of being, a space of negotiation and under negotiation, not a space of certainty and absoluteness. Chora is a relational and interactional body space that shapes and is being shaped, an open

domain. It is the fluid space of the uncertainty of interaction in the process of producing meaning and becoming complete through the other.

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