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9

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9

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Charis Messis and Ingela Nilsson

Byzantine descriptions of hunting have a rich narrative potential that can be interpreted across several literary forms and which convey, in addition to practical information on hunting itself, different messages of an aesthetic, moral or ideological kind.[1] In Greco-Roman Antiquity, hunting was a subject in mythological narratives or in the particular genres of bucolic poetry and didactic literature.[2] In Byzantium, however, these two literary forms were replaced largely by the epideictic genre. Descriptions of hunting appear either as independent *ekphraseis* adopting the form of *progymnasmata*, poems or letters, or as descriptive episodes within larger narrative texts of historiography, hagiography, romance or didactic poetry. In such contexts, hunting becomes another way to speak of political power, to praise or reprimand an emperor or a general, to reveal a hidden characteristic in a person, or simply to create or stage adventure. There are also more neutral references to hunting activities in various texts and hunting descriptions can be found in *ekphraseis* of certain animals, especially in those devoted to dogs.

All these different forms and uses turn descriptions of hunting into a broader reflection on Byzantine literature and its way of conceiving and representing man, beast and nature. Here we will deal with autonomous and semi-autonomous *ekphraseis* and some other descriptions characteristic of the way in which hunting metamorphoses into a literary motif. In order to avoid a merely generic categorization, we offer in the following a discussion based on three social and ideological functions of hunting: first, the 'ordinary' hunt; second, the heroic-'imperial' hunt; and third, the sportive-'aristocratic' hunt. The first category spans the entire Byzantine period, while the other two belong to specific historical periods.

The 'Ordinary' Hunt

Hunting was originally perceived as an economic activity, either performed by ordinary people in their need for food or carried out by servants of wealthy people in order to add varied and 'exotic' meat to an already rich table.[3] The game would be hares, partridges or deer, and the hunters most often remain anonymous. This kind of activity, widespread in the countryside, does not leave many literary traces in Byzantine culture; it is considered

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a banal activity of no relevance to literature. Exceptions may appear when the hunt is part of a setting that aims to present an exceptional fact or person, especially in hagiography; or when nature is a source of pleasure or fear, especially if hunting is described through the lens of a city man imagining the countryside and the emotions it evokes. In such descriptions, the economic aspect of hunting is often overshadowed by the glorification of human activities in nature. Let us look at a few examples, keeping in mind that these scenes play a specific narrative role in each story.

It is important to note that nature is constructed as an emotional landscape, especially in the literary register of *progymnasmata* and epistolography. The model description of an ordinary hunt, written by Libanius, dates to Late Antiquity. The author here emphasizes the beauty of the hunt and the emotions it provokes in the spectators. The hunters are people who live off or for this activity and who reside in the neighbouring town.[4] The hunt is carried out with the use of horses and dogs, but the game is not specified – Libanius speaks of a beast (θηρίον) living in the mountains. However, it becomes clear that he is not describing a specific, but a 'typical' hunt; he concludes his rhetorical exercise: "these things are a delight to hunters in view of the danger, but a crime on the part of those watching if kept silent."[5] Libanius designates the relationship that lingers throughout the Byzantine period between intellectual and hunter, between man of letters and man of action. The one is nourished by the emotions that the dangers of the hunt provide, the other is overwhelmed by the thrill of a sight worth describing. The only animals that receive any attention here are the ones who help men in hunting; the game seems to be of minor importance.

The idyllic staging of nature, which is only just touched upon in Libanius' *progymnasma*, will later become a key element in another literary context in the Byzantine period. The number of autonomous *ekphraseis* and *progymnasmata* declined considerably in Middle Byzantine literature and epistolography came to cultivate this rhetorical tradition. The tenth-century author Theodore Daphnopates, in a letter addressed to Nikephoros, *xenodochos* of Pylae, offers an idealization and idyllization of life in the countryside, where "everything happens in such a way as to rejoice the heart. Any cause of sorrow disappears, everything comes to fill the soul with joy and gaiety."[6] The hunt that Daphnopates describes lingers on the border between that of anonymous people and that of the aristocracy, to be examined below. In the framework of the bucolic autumn happiness that he depicts, hunting ranks among the most popular country activities alongside vintaging, harvesting and fishing:

> It is also the season to organize hunting parties (κυνηγέσια); weapons are supplied against wild animals, the club is raised, the cutlass is sharpened, the spear is sharpened, the lance is prepared. The troop of connoisseurs is formed – servants, free men, hired servants, relatives, in a word all those who are capable of taking part in the pursuit; with you they attack the hills and jump into the wooded valleys; they explore the forests and the cover of thickets, ranged in line at a short interval and sometimes closing in a circle, they search the thick bushes to distinguish the game, they rush in pursuit. All the dogs capable of running and scouting accompany you without difficulty and guide you straight to the desired game.[7]

This image of a large-scale organized hunt gives way to the detailed description of a hare hunt.[8] The author again insists more on the beauty of the sight than on the usefulness of the game ("it is a most pleasant and exciting spectacle"[9]); his gaze is aesthetic and the reactions of the participants are limited to their sensations and not to any material profit: "So what a

day for you when you caught the game! How could the word capture the intensity of your joy? It is as if the whole soul were rushing out, tense with the attention to the hunt and jubilant at its victory."[10] This literary hunt is an urban construction, an amusement and an aesthetic experience.

A different image prevails in the hunts depicted in hagiography. In the *Life of Theoktiste* (BHG 1724), written in the tenth century by Niketas Magistros, an eminent scholar at the court of Leo VI, and reproduced by Symeon Metaphrastes in his *Menologion*, the hunters organize themselves as a company (ἑταιρεία).[11] They go from the island of Euboea where they live to the desert island of Paros, "for the island [of Paros] has an abundance of game, deer, and wild goat."[12] This second type of animal offers the opportunity for a little *ekphrasis*, for these animals are "a marvel to behold and describe."[13] The purpose of this hunt, carried out by simple people and lasting for days (ch. 19), taking place in the forest (chs 12 and 18), was to stock up on meat, hunting being seen as a central activity of the countryside micro-economy. Even if the author constructs this part of the story in implicit dialogue with Dio Chrysostom's *The Euboean Discourse, or the Hunter*,[14] the image of the hunt – beyond the impression of a marvelous and idyllic nature – corresponds to what we would call an ordinary hunt.

The meeting between the hunters and Theoktiste exemplifies a topos of monastic literature: the discovery of the concealed holiness of a hermit. There are several variations on this theme and the hunters play the same role as in the *Life of Theoktiste*. In the *Life of Theodore of Cythera* (BHG 2430), the inhabitants of Monemvasia, having arrived in the desert Cythera to hunt wild donkeys and goats discover the intact corpse of the saint.[15] In the *Life of Peter the Athonite* (BHG 1505), a hunter discovers the saint in a remote place and becomes a channel of his holiness: "a hunter (θηρευτής), taking his bow and his quiver, went out towards the mountain to hunt." He came across an extraordinary deer: "Seeing that the deer was very large and very beautiful, he abandoned everything and followed it throughout the day … looking for a way to catch it."[16] The deer – the Christological animal *par excellence* – finally led him before the saint, first perceived as a terrifying vision; the saint then told his own story to the hunter, who became the means for Peter to transmit his paradigm of holiness.

The encounters between hunter and saint can also take a different turn, as in the *Life of Paul the Younger* (10th century). Here, a hunter named Theophanes takes his dogs to hunt in the nearby reeds. When the dogs sense the saint's presence they start to bark and Theophanes, thinking they are barking at an animal, urges them to attack; he takes his bow and shoots three arrows at him.[17] In the *Life of Barbaros the Younger* (BHG 220), rewritten by Constantine Akropolites, there is another version of the same theme.[18] Barbaros retires to the mountains after a military defeat and becomes a fearsome brigand; after various mischiefs and a miraculous encounter, he converts to the true faith and lives the life of wild animals. He finally meets the punishment of his former deeds by the arrows of hunters who take him for a beast. These arrows are his 'martyrdom' and, at the same time, the means of expiation for his misdeeds: "Drink, Barbaros, the cup that you have offered to others," says Barbaros to himself before dying.[19]

In hagiography of the ninth and tenth centuries, the hunter thus becomes the mediator between the civilized world (of the faithful) and the 'wild world' (of the saints). He is a liminal figure who can handle the margins and he is accordingly transformed into a powerful literary image, embodying the anonymous countryman whose main activity is to provide food.

All these texts (*progymnasmata*, letters, hagiographical narratives) show that hunting is part of a utilitarian countryside logic, subordinated to the requirements of an agricultural and pastoral economy. It is a hunt that most often takes place collectively. But these texts also share the two images that define nature in the Byzantine imagination: peaceful and idyllic, yet at the same time threatening and bloodthirsty, hospitable and inhospitable – an ambiguous space.[20] In fact, the hunting space is an uncultivated space, most often wooded and partly inaccessible to the inhabitants of neighboring towns and villages.[21] Countryside hunting is primarily a hunt for small or medium-sized animals (hares, stags) and birds (partridges), rarely for aggressive wild animals such as boars, wolves and bears. Such beasts cause problems for agricultural communities when they approach villages and monasteries or when they harm the crops. Paul the Silentary, a poet of the sixth century, for example, speaks in one of his poems of a boar, "tireless destroyer of plants laden with fruit," killed by a hunter,[22] and several *Lives* of saints mention harmful beasts that surround the community.[23]

The Heroic-'Imperial' Hunt

The hunt for large beasts (lions, bears, wild boars, large deer) is the privilege of heroes, courageous figures of legend or imagination. With this kind of hunt, we move away from food and economy; we are now dealing rather with a rite of passage that lends different forms of power to its performer.[24] It is an obligatory part of a valiant person's journey to supreme power, related to one of the oldest myths in human history and, in our case, one of the founding myths of the political ideology of the Middle Byzantine period. According to this political mythology, hunting is for man a sacrament of royalty, because power is attributed like a kind of game to the most valiant, to the best of the community. There are no *ekphraseis* proper of this kind of hunt, but the descriptions often adopt ekphrastic elements. The case of Basil I (r. 867–886) offers the most characteristic episode in historiography and will serve as our example here.

In the *Life of Basil* – an account of the first emperor of the Macedonian dynasty, written in the circle of his grandson Constantin VII – hunting offers a setting for each decisive stage in the hero's life and all dynastic issues are 'resolved' during a hunt. Basil's first exploit took place during a hare hunt organized with great pomp by Michael III. In this episode, the game does not matter – only the circumstances. During this hunt, Basil manages to ride the emperor's horse, on whose back usually only the emperor is permitted to ride. Leaving aside all the connotations that such an act could have for the reader-listener of the story, we will simply note that the success gives Basil visibility and a position in the imperial entourage as *protostrator* (responsible for the hunt).[25] The second hunting episode follows in the next chapter: it takes place at the Philopation, the imperial reserve of animals outside the walls of Constantinople.[26] This is a ritualized hunt, organized by the new *protostrator* Basil himself, carrying "the imperial club" (τὸ ρόπαλον τὸ βασιλικόν). The appearance of a wolf creates panic in all participants and only Basil confronts it and kills it with his club (ch. 14). In the first episode, Basil rides the imperial horse; in the second, he uses the imperial club – he thus takes over all attributes with which Michael was exclusively invested. According to the author, that is why the uncle of the emperor, as well as Leo the Philosopher, have reason to see the result of this hunt as a bad omen for the fate of Michael's dynasty.

The third hunting scene offers the setting for a failed murder attempt that Michael's entourage is preparing against Basil (ch. 24). The hunt also, in an indirect manner, seals the

death of the emperor: his death is the result of an illness caught by a fall during the hunt (ch. 102). Basil's contact with power is thus always defined in relation to hunting, which in the *Life* becomes almost a metonym for court and royalty. This is a choice of the biographer; in another tenth-century biography of Basil, the *Reign of the Emperors* by Genesios, Basil's hunting exploits do not play the same narrative and ideological role. In this text, the taming of the horse is disconnected from the hunting context, whereas Basil's hunting prowess is summarily presented: "Basil exceeded even the Centaurs in hunting."[27] There is also a cursory reference to his killing a deer and a wolf in the presence of the emperor and to the fact that his death was provoked by a fall while hunting.[28] In the *Chronicle* of Symeon the Logothete, the taming of the horse has no connection with hunting and there is no reference to the hunting exploits of Basil; Basil, on the other hand, is presented as defeated by a large deer and dead from the fall this caused.[29]

As we have seen, hunting in political discourse may serve as both a means of legitimization and of delegitimization. Hunting can be a sign of bravery, but also one of vanity, frivolity and lack of seriousness – signs of a tyrant. Let us return once more to the example of Basil I and the way in which he is represented in the *Life of Patriarch Euthymios* (first half of the tenth century). Whereas in the *Life of Basil*, the hunt assured the hero's ascension to the throne, here the hunt ridicules Basil – not only because it turns into a lethal situation, but because there is a complete reversal of the codes that preside over a heroic hunt:

> It was August and the emperor Basil had gone out for hunting (θηράσων) into Thrace … when, finding a herd of deer, he gave chase, with the Senate and the huntsmen (κυνηγετῶν). They were all scattered in every direction in pursuit, when the emperor spurred after the leader of the herd, whose size and sleekness made him conspicuous. He was giving chase alone, for his companions were tired; but the stag, seeing him isolated, turned in his flight, and charged, trying to gore him; he threw his spear, but the stag's antlers were in the way, and it glanced off useless to the ground. The emperor now, finding himself helpless, took to flight; but the deer, pursuing, struck at him with its antlers, with the result that it carried him off. For the tips of the antlers having slipped under his belt, the stag lifted him from his horse and bore him away.[30]

The hero who, in the *Life of Basil*, killed wolves and stags with his bare hands, is here transformed into the unfortunate toy of a royal stag. The stag leads Basil to an almost grotesque punishment and everyone present is a witness to Basil's 'downfall', some making desperate efforts to save Basil from the horns of his adversary. And it does not end there:

> They all began running hither and thither, and just managed to catch a glimpse of the object of their search, carried aloft by the beast. They gave chase with all speed but without success; for the stag, when they were well out-distanced, stood panting and breathing hard, but when a rush brought them nearer, straightway bounded off to a good distance. So they were at a loss, till some of the Bodyguard, as it is called (τῆς καλουμένης ἑταιρείας), cut off the stag from in front before it was aware, and, scattering circle-wise in the mountains, put the stag up again by shouting. Then one of the Farganese, managing to ride alongside the deer with a naked sword in his hand, cut the horn-entangled belt through. The emperor fell to the ground unconscious.

> When he returned to himself, he ordered the man who had delivered him from danger to be arrested, and ordered the cause of such insolence to be investigated. 'For', said he, 'it was to kill me, not to save, that he stretched out his sword'.[31]

Basil, in losing in his fight with the deer, also loses the generosity and justice that should characterize an emperor; he completely delegitimizes himself.

If Basil is ridiculed in order to be delegitimized, other emperors carry the signs of the tyrant. This is the case of Constantine V, who devoted himself excessively to hunting. According to Patriarch Nikephoros, such behaviour discredited his participation in theological discussions.[32] The same indignation is shared by Stephen the Deacon, author of the *Life of Stephen the Younger*, who – in the context of iconoclasm – accused the emperor of having loved paintings of hunting scenes, another sign of thoughtlessness and inability to behave like a worthy emperor.[33] The connection between the performance and painting of hunting appears in the case of Andronikos I, narrated by Niketas Choniates; we will return to this below.

In hagiographical accounts and beyond the imperial context, hunting becomes a means of punishment in texts which were written from the perspective of those who favored the veneration of icons. Thus, for example, the iconoclast bishop of Nicomedia, Eusebios: he was out hunting when he encountered a bear that knocked down his horse, he fell to the ground and was devoured by it.[34] On a more limited scale, the husband of Mary the Younger, Nikephoros, was punished for his arrogance in a hunting accident. He once saw a hare that he went after without restraints: "His horse slipped and Nikephoros fell with it, his right shoulder was displaced and his right hand has since remained inactive."[35] Ultimately, hunting imposes morality on any kind of abusive power.

The Sportive-'Aristocratic' Hunt

The third kind of hunting is playful and sportive, a hunt that, unlike the previous examples, does not attribute power, but yet illustrates it well, embellishes it and makes it explicit. This sort of hunt becomes useful in the re-elaborations of supreme power that takes place in Byzantium with the establishment, from the end of the eleventh century, of the military families of the eastern provinces of Asia Minor; it does not, however, eradicate the 'heroic' hunt in which several Komnenian emperors, such as John II (r. 1118–1143) or Manuel I (r. 1143–1180), continued to engage, as we will see later. It should be noted that this hunt becomes legitimate and escapes criticism because it is said to be a preparation for war.[36]

If the heroic hunt is carried out by the strength and skill of the hunter, the sportive and playful hunt is a spectacular hunt, carried out with the use of 'war machines'. The aristocratic hunter, always on horseback, is a director rather than a protagonist and his machines are the dogs, the leopards and the falcons – this is to say, he organizes a slaughter between animals. His game are large birds (cranes, herons) and small and medium-sized animals (hares, deer). Dogs had been hunting companions since Antiquity and falcons had appeared in literature in the late tenth century (but in practice certainly earlier); leopards or cheetahs seem new to twelfth-century Byzantium.[37] While hunting with dogs is shared by poor and rich, aristocrats and common people, hunting with a falcon or a leopard requires a considerable investment and becomes the privilege of an elite wishing to hunt with elegance. In ethnological terms, one could speak of 'passive hunting', carried out with "l'utilisation d'un objet technique <qui> introduit une distance par rapport au gibier, éloignement qui se

traduit par une dilution de la responsabilité du meurtre."[38] While heroic hunting is depicted as individual encounters or as encounters of a small group of people, the playful hunt is a highly performative act that mirrors all of society. It is made up by a) specialized and auxiliary personnel (animal trainers such as falconers); b) aristocrats or the emperor, under whose auspices the hunt takes place; c) invited spectators, especially in the case of bird hunting (aristocratic women, men of the court not taking part in the actual hunt, intellectuals who immortalize the scene in their eulogies).[39]

The first trace of this kind of hunting in Byzantium appears in the tenth-century letter of Daphnopates, discussed above. The letter offers an image that falls between two representations: the anonymous and ordinary hunt of the countryside, on the one hand, and the aristocratic hunt, performed to offer leisure and amusement to Nikephoros, on the other. In another letter by the same author, addressed to Emperor Romanos II (959–963), who was a most devoted fan of hunting,[40] there is a description of this latter kind of hunt. The letter is presented as a response to a gift that the emperor had sent to the author: a wild goat and a hare. The actions of the emperor are divided into three categories according to the weapons used to catch the game: the spear that kills the goat, the dogs that attack and scare out the hares, and the falcons that fight and bring down the partridges. In order to legitimize the hunt at this rather early date, the author underlines the imperial exploits: "As for me, I saw there signs and symbols of your victorious and powerful reign against the barbarians."[41] The hunted animals represent the enemies, while the animals that assist in the hunt (dogs and falcons) represent the means available to the emperor to accomplish his exploits.

This tendency is confirmed in the eleventh-century writings of Michael Psellos. His hunting protagonists are the first emperor of the Komnenian dynasty, Isaac I (r. 1057–1059), and John Doukas, a member of the high aristocracy of the capital.[42] Psellos' description of Isaac as a hunter is seminal for the texts of the following century and worth citing in full:

> Isaac was passionately devoted to hunting. No one was ever more fascinated by the difficulties of this sport. It must be admitted, moreover, that he was skilled in the art, for he rode lightly and his shouts and halloos lent wings to the dogs, besides frightening the coursing hare. On several occasions he even caught the quarry in full flight with his hand. He was, too, a dead shot with a spear. But crane-hunting attracted him more, and when the birds were flying high in the air, he still refused to give up the hunt. He would shoot them down from the sky, and truly his pleasure at this was not unmixed with wonder. The wonder was that a bird so exceptionally big, with feet and legs like lances, hiding itself behind the clouds, should, in the twinkling of an eye, be caught by an object so much smaller than itself. The pleasure he derived from the bird's fall, for the crane, as it fell, danced the dance of death, turning over and over, now on its back now on its belly.[43]

Isaac engages in an athletic hunt that demonstrates his courage and skill; he prefers the hunting of cranes and small animals to that of wild beasts. This text heralds the framework of imperial hunting in the twelfth century: the heroic hunt (of wild beasts) turning into pleasure hunting, even though both types are practiced and literarily depicted in the Komnenian period. Crane hunting becomes a specialization, at least according to the texts that have come down to us – the most noble kind of hunt for an aristocratic society.

The other hunter hero in Psellos' writings is John Doukas. The image of Doukas that he puts forward in his *Chronographia* combines the heroic and the playful. Doukas thus anticipates, like Isaac, the 'heroes' of the Komnenian dynasty:

> He indulges in all kinds of hunting, observing carefully the flight of birds and the tracks followed by wild beasts. He urges on the dogs and chases the dappled hind. He is mad about bears, too – I have often reproached him for that, but all to no purpose, for the pastime never fails to give him amusement. His life is spent in two pursuits - books and hunting: in other words, his leisure hours are devoted to the latter, and when he works, the whole world is his study, everything in its place.[44]

Psellos also uses the imagery of hunting in three letters addressed to the same person. In the first, he expresses the distance between hunter and intellectual, before presenting a romantic image of his hero as ideal hunter:

> I used to ridicule hunting and make fun of such activities; and I tried to dissuade you from them and used to advise you to instead spend time with books. But now I have changed my mind, I am not that demented. What do I prescribe for you? Ride your horses, hunt, jump through trenches, traverse rivers, gallop downhill and run up steep paths! Carry the falcon to your right, sitting unbound on your arm, and send him against geese, against partridges, against pigeons. If he captures the game in his flight, don't expect the Laconian dogs to trace the escaped animal. But if the latter has taken refuge somewhere, surround the grove, urge the dogs and don't give up until you catch it.[45]

In a second letter, Psellos presents an account of a hunt that he has heard from someone else, involving the noble reaction of John Doukas faced with the loss of his brave hunting bird.[46] In a third letter to the same addressee, Psellos imagines himself as an aristocrat hunter carrying a falcon on his hand as a model of nobility.[47] Leisure in Psellos' texts is defined in two ways: books *or* hunting, and – much more rarely – books *and* hunting. The opposition between books and hunting becomes a powerful and tenacious literary image in the writings of intellectuals until at least the fourteenth century, to which we will return below.

As we move towards the end of the eleventh century and the solid establishment of the Komnenian dynasty, hunting becomes a legitimate and essential activity of the social group that runs the empire. Alexios I and his successors cultivated their image as hunters to the extreme. Indeed, this is how their eulogists immortalize them. In his poetic eulogy of John II, for instance, Theodore Prodromos underlines the hunting exploits of the emperor.[48] Manuel I, in the writings of John Kinnamos, becomes the hero of imperial hunting; this is often combined with his bellicose character, as in the case when he goes out to hunt, but comes across enemies.[49] The 'exemplary' hunting feat, lending him the aura of an epic hero, is when he kills a panther that looks like a lion:

> It (the animal) had a double nature, taking something from both, a leopard in a lion and a lion in a leopard, a monstrous mixture of qualities, terrible in valor, courageous in frightfulness, and all the properties belonging to both in each other. Such was this

> beast; most of those who attended the emperor fled when they saw it. For it was unendurable for many people to see. But when it came close, there was not one who then opposed it. But while they fled, the emperor drew the sword with which he was equipped, and rushed to strike the beast; bringing the blow down on its forehead, he drove it up to the chest. Such was the emperor in hunting.[50]

For the Komnenians, hunting guarantees their birthright to supreme power – an image that will prevail during their reign. When, after Manuel's death, the empire begins to crumble, writers rediscover old animosities towards the hunt. The picture that Niketas Choniates offers for the last years of the empire is notable: in his view, a century marked by refined hunting is now declining with hunter–emperors unworthy of power.[51] Finally, shortly before the fall, Euphrosyne, the wife of Alexios III Angelos, is turned into an indication of the complete denigration of hunting.[52] The figure of a woman-hunter – or rather a prostitute who plays with birds – personifies the decadence of an empire falling apart: long gone are the Komnenian emperors who practiced hunting as preparation for war, hunting is now pure decadence with no military purpose.

The Hunting *Ekphraseis* of the Twelfth Century

In addition to being a spectacular imperial and aristocratic practice, hunting also became an important aesthetic concern of the Komnenian period. This literary and artistic interest, expressed in *ekphraseis* and descriptions of paintings, goes beyond the narrow framework of hunting and reflects rather a new valorization of nature and the animal world.

The autonomous *ekphraseis* of hunting seem to be the result of a fruitful encounter that took place in the time of Manuel I Komnenos and his immediate successors: dazzling hunts organized under imperial auspices which gave authors the opportunity to rewrite the rhetorical tradition. These hunts allowed them to develop a metaphorical rhetoric that compared hunting with power. From this period we have two *ekphraseis* by Constantine Manasses, a teacher and rhetor in Constantinople;[53] an *ekphrasis* by Constantine Pantechnes, the bishop of Philippoupolis at the end of the century;[54] and an epistolary *ekphrasis* written by Basil Pediadites, bishop of Corfu, towards the end of the twelfth or the beginning of the thirteenth century.[55] There are also briefer hunting descriptions embedded in larger *ekphraseis*, such as in the description of a dog by Nikephoros Basilakes or the descriptions of the months in the novel by Eumathios Makrembolites.[56] In addition, there is a short *ekphrasis* embedded in the much longer historiographical narrative of Niketas Choniates that describes the paintings of hunting scenes that decorate the apartments of Andronikos Komnenos. In the following, we will offer a brief introduction to these Komnenian texts.

Two hunting *ekphraseis* by Manasses have come down to us, both on bird hunting. The first belongs to the tradition of countryside hunting as experienced by an astonished city scholar who discovers the delights of nature. This *Description of the Catching of Siskins and Chaffiniches* (ἔκφρασις ἁλώσεως σπίνων καὶ ἀκανθίδων) describes the hunting of small birds by means of glue traps.[57] The hunt is performed by a group of boys led by an old man in a place outside of Constantinople having all the characteristics of a *locus amoenus*.[58] Against this background, Manasses describes in great detail the different techniques of glue-hunting and the reactions of the participants to this sight.[59] The purpose of this hunt

was to capture pretty and singing birds to put up for sale and at the same time to prepare a spontaneous meal from the game that could not be sold:

> After collecting the captured birds, they sorted out the game. All female birds were killed and thrown in a pit; they had prepared for these poor creatures a trench that one could call Hades or capacious tomb. As for the male birds, they divided them and made some prisoners, plucked the others, roasted them and devoured them whole without sparing even the bones, because they had prepared a fire there in advance.[60]

The author encapsulates in his text three small *ekphraseis* of birds: an elegant goldfinch,[61] a falcon[62] and another unspecified bird. The latter is described as follows, showing off Manasses' attention to detail:

> I then saw a bird in the hands of a lime-hunter and I admired the bounty of nature and the richness of beauty it had abundantly provided. Its beak was sharp and thin, the head black, the back was all yellowish, the lower parts were the colour of saffron and looked as if someone had woven gold on very thin linen, all of its plumage was of a natural beauty, the neck and chest were gilded, the rear parts were white as snow with black spots in a few places. It was impetuous, it was agile; you would say that he was dancing a warlike dance.[63] From his chest rose a soft song. He was so graceful to see, so pleasant to hear.[64]

The central figure in this *ekphrasis* is, however, not the birds, but the old man who leads the troop of young boys. He constitutes a grotesque figure who provokes the laughter of listeners-readers of the text with his stubbornness for perfection, his manias and his anger, his bilious character, his vanity, his rigorous discipline, and his ridiculous and hilarious falls. Ever the subject of mockery, even his baldness is revealed by chance, something that makes the participants, including the narrator, laugh.[65] We have argued elsewhere that there is a possible relationship between glue-hunting and education in the twelfth century: this motif is a recurring feature in Manasses' authorship and we suggest that the *ekphrasis* of the catching of small birds is constructed like a metonymy or a mirror game between hunting and education. The relationship between the old man and the children would then be the relationship between teacher and students in an educational system which was becoming more and more competitive.[66]

The other *ekphrasis* by Manasses takes us away from the literary-pastoral of the classroom and inscribes itself into the praise of Komnenian power.[67] It is a description of a crane hunt with the help of falcons, taking place in the presence of Manuel I Komnenos. The irony and condescension that marked the description of the glue-hunt here give way to the magnificence of the participants and the grandiosity of the spectacle. In this *ekphrasis*, which depicts an aerial battle between falcons and cranes, Manuel becomes a replica of the founder of the Komnenian dynasty, Isaac, who according to Psellos excelled at this kind of hunt.

The structure of the text follows more or less the traditional composition of an *ekphrasis*: a narrative frame containing a series of descriptions of characters and events. The imperial hunt involves several types of birds of prey and is organized as a military campaign. The hero-fighter (Manuel) engages in single combat, supported by his multiple aids (a staff responsible for the organization of the hunt) and a crowd of spectators (among

whom is the narrator of the *ekphrasis*). The emperor carries a falcon, carefully depicted in much detail: it is an old noble female falcon with piercing eyes and greyish plumage. The other birds of prey fall into two categories: beginners and veterans, the latter being more valuable than the former. The hunt starts and quickly turns into a bloodthirsty war scene. The emperor does not release the female falcon, but uses another old and experienced bird for the hunt. The war goes on, a fierce battle between cranes and birds of prey:

> The cranes sensed war, and lining up and placing themselves in a phalanx, they backed away, like men who would neither dare to face the enemies in front of them nor rise up against them. They stretched out their wings, an almost gigantic thing that looked like a large shield, and after having straightened their necks like long spears and prepared the talons attached to their feet, they were ready to receive the attackers and defend themselves with beaks, talons and wings. When the old and experienced bird of prey was launched and, flying lightly into the depths of the sky, overtook the cranes and caught them in their flight, a joy mingled with fear took possession of the spectators and the part that was afraid felt joy and the part that rejoiced withdrew by fear. Such was the pleasure and at the same time the fear for the fate of that bird of prey![68]

Finally, after the intervention of other falcons, one particular crane is brought down. When the crane fell for the first time, they cut its talons and trimmed its beak before releasing it to fly and then sent young birds after it to learn to hunt without risk. The text closes with a traditional ekphrastic turn of phrase, defining the function of the description "for me as a vivid reminder of the event and for others as a clear representation of what they have not seen."[69] We will find identical phrases in all the autonomous *ekphraseis* which we will discuss in the following.

This grandiose description of an aerial hunt is composed of several small *ekphraseis* of people and animals: that of the emperor, as an ideal soldier and hunter in accordance with the rhetorical habits of Komnenian authors, that of the falcons involved in the hunt and that of the captured crane. In the following we will see several common elements in the descriptions of animals, which leads us to think that this kind of descriptions is the result of high-level rhetorical training. The text constitutes one of the most successful achievements in terms of its literary force, its finesse of description and the clarity of its ideological-political message. We read this description by Manasses as a demonstration of a new aesthetics of imperial power.[70]

The *ekphrasis* of Pantechnes is divided into two parts, of which the first is a description of a hunt with the help of "cruel hawks and mountain herons"[71] and dogs, while the second presents in great detail a hunt carried out with the help of cheetahs.[72] Pantechnes speaks of a hunt without the presence of the emperor, carried out instead by his staff under the orders of a great dignitary (ὁ μεγιστάν). This dignitary was at the same time "in charge of managing the imperial table" and the hunting party was looking in particular for "partridges and wild beasts." After having thus described the staff, the birds of prey and their equipment,[73] he offers a summarizing description of the hunt:

> They throw… the impetuous hawks for which they let go the straps. As they are used to, as soon as they are released from their bond, they take off, soar lightly into space and float from the air above in order to locate the hunted beast … the hawk makes a

> hissing sound, rushes on the animal, tears it with its talons and stops it from fleeing … The falconers then throw against the partridges the birds they have in their hands, trained for this purpose. Some flee, others attack; it is like a sort of struggle and combat between the hunter and the hunted. Most partridges finally manage to escape, but some have the unfortunate fate of being caught. The carnivorous birds dig the tips of their talons into the flesh of the partridges, tear them apart and kill them. These wretches cry out painfully and fill the air with the sound of their flapping wings. As for the proud hawk, it is perched proudly on the partridge, as if it takes pride in the spectacle, turning often to one side and the other, seeming to threaten those who would try approach at this moment.[74]

Pantechnes gives more detail than Manasses on the course of the hunt and he is more precise in the information he provides.[75] The second part of the text is a detailed depiction of a hare hunt with the help of a cheetah. This section begins with a description of cheetahs and an expression of the author's admiration, in biblical terms, for the human ability to tame wild beasts. Then follows the description of the hunt:

> The pard-trainers brought them on the gelded horses which they rode, binding their necks with leashes, so that the beasts should not get out of line when it was inopportune, and jump onto what they should not. If a hare springs forth from somewhere, and the pard-trainer thinks he should send the cheetah after it, the other hunters are immediately barred from loosing the hounds or the birds; for verily, the cheetahs would attack not just the wild beasts, but them as well. And the cheetah pursues the hare alone, and reaching it with swift-turning bounds not more than two or three in number, he entangles it; and striking it with its front feet, lifts it up with swift-acting palms; and faster than speech the hare ends up under the teeth of the beast.[76]

The author then describes the skillful and dangerous way in which the pard-trainer removes game from the cheetah's mouth and the reward to which the beast is entitled. The *ekphrasis* ends with an address to the addressee, a friend (ἑταῖρε) who remains anonymous and who is not the same as the high functionary who organized the hunt.

This *ekphrasis* is rather peculiar. It is not a hunting description that turns into direct or indirect praise of the emperor or a high official despite the fact that the author follows the hunt while looking for a noble dignitary, nor is it a hunting description in a bucolic setting. It is a detailed description of the hunting techniques that became widespread during the twelfth century, namely falconry and hunting with the cheetah. What is the function of the text and who is it really addressed to? Is it a school exercise in rhetoric that demonstrates the author's meticulous observational skills? The careful language and turns of phrases could point in this direction. The small inserted *ekphraseis* of the birds of prey and the cheetah follow traditional paths of rhetoric that lingers on the bizarre and the exceptional. The falcons of Pantechnes resemble those of Manasses in several respects, while the description of the cheetah recalls zoological treatises from Late Antiquity; in addition, however, this *ekphrasis* also expresses a scholarly curiosity for the wild fauna, which also lends it an encyclopaedic and didactic character.

The letter by Basil Pediadites is probably addressed to a member of the Doukas family,[77] or – if one adopts a dating to the beginning of the thirteenth century–, to the *doux* of Corfu, Demetrios Kataphloron. The letter accompanies a gift of encaged birds captured by the

author, as well as birds that serve as decoys.[78] The author describes in the first part of the letter the methods used to capture birds (glue sticks and nets), moving on to an *ekphrasis* of his garden. In the second part of the letter, he describes a hunt that he carried out in the same garden with the help of a glue stick held by himself.[79] In this *ekphrasis*, there is no precise description of the birds; their nature remains entirely undefined, beyond the title that speaks of goldfinches (ἀκανθίδες). The techniques of capture are also allusively presented and the participation of the author who, in Homeric terms, hides behind the foliage, moves on his knees and catches the bird with his spear, constitutes a very particular method of hunting. This small *ekphrasis*, which recalls in several ways Manasses' on the catching of small birds, or rather the school atmosphere which privileges the composition of such texts,[80] seems like a pure literary exercise and the gifts which accompany it could very well be imaginary birds, made of words and images.

Nikephoros Basilakes offers, among his progymnastic exercises, a praise of a dog. The dog acquired significant literary visibility in the twelfth century, especially in the writings of John Tzetzes who provides us in his *Chiliades* with moving stories of canine fidelity.[81] Basilakes confirms this tendency and offers an encomium, including all the warnings and excuses for such a choice of subject. The text describes the role of dogs in the hunt of deer and rabbit: "The dog chases down deer and rabbits and all the other wild animals upon the earth, from which he prepares a luxurious feast for the king's table."[82] The praise of the dog is linked to that of the hunt; let us not forget that the word which indicates hunting in Greek (κυνήγιον) means "to lead the dogs" and the ancient treatises on hunting are, in fact, treatises concerning the training of dogs. Also, in the case of Basilakes, hunting has both a spectacular and utilitarian character, since one of its main purposes is to bring meat to the imperial table. In addition, he proceeds to the *ekphrasis* of a hunt, as if he were describing a painting ("you also wish for me to describe for you in words, as if in a painting, the practice of hunting"[83]):

> The hunter rides around on horseback, urging on the hunt, and the dogs gather around him in a circle, like an army around its general as it readies for battle. At any given time you could see one dog rolling around at the hunter's feet, whining in a fawning manner, and another exercising his legs and eagerly competing against others in a race, and still another glorying in the collar on his neck, reveling in the gems and taking pride in the golden leash … When they arrive at the actual location of the hunt, by which I mean a plain that nourishes wild beasts or perhaps even a mountain ridge, the hunter stations the dogs all around him as they avidly watch for battle. Then, as though released from a starting gate, they all burst into the forest in a mob … Visualize, then, the dogs attacking deer and nobly slaughtering them; one dog striking at an entire phalanx of rabbits and always killing the hindmost; another ferociously attacking a terrifying boar and with spear-like teeth devouring it from all sides; and still others tangling with various other animals … visualize the very pleasant spectacle that happens then: no dog comes back empty-handed and unsuccessful, but each and every one comes dragging his quarry and bringing it to the master himself as if he were a tax collector.[84]

The hunt is described as a military activity, but from a specific point of view: the gaze of the author and, consequently, of the spectator, is focused on the activity of the dogs before, during and after the hunt, and the vision of the hunt is partial – it is a hunt in which the role

of the protagonist is played neither by anonymous hunters, by an aristocrat, nor by noble or less noble game, but simply by dogs.

In the Komnenian novels, the presence of hunting is rather limited. Theodore Prodromos' Dosikles, like all young aristocrats of the twelfth century, engaged in hunting with his friends and likened his elopement with his beloved to a hunting party: "Yes, yes, join me, my hunting companions, in this present pursuit of the girl."[85] In the novel by Niketas Eugenianos, the protagonist Charikles describes his adolescence in the following terms:

> I had already reached adolescence, / brought up according to the norms of well-born youths; / I was happy in the company of the young men with whom I associated; / I rode, I joined in sports, as is customary for young men, / I hunted hare, I became a skilled equestrian / – for I had highly skilled companions – / but I had as yet no experience of love, / nor had down begun to shadow my chin.[86]

As the narrator indicates, Charikles follows the typical path of any young man of noble birth: sports, hunts, riding. In the novel by Eumathios Makrembolites, the hero Hysminias is not a hunter, even if his pursuit of the young girl Hysmine is once compared to "excellent hunting."[87] However, the author offers two hunting descriptions inserted into an extensive *ekphrasis* of the twelve months, a series of paintings in the garden of the heroine's father. The first of the two describes an autumn month, represented as a fowler:

> The youth that came after him was just growing his first beard, his head was not uncovered but was covered by gossamer-fine linen over both his head and his braids … He is carrying cages for sparrows and is twisting cords, making traps for birds and keeping a close watch on their flight; he plants an entire meadow, and lets his sparrows out in the meadow but pulls them back often with a light line. The birds do not perceive the trap, they do not understand the trick; they see a pleasant meadow, with sparrows flying round on their line and others chirruping sweetly and delightfully in their cages; they come into the meadow, to the sparrows and are caught in the trap. The fowler who had set the trap catches and kills the birds and mocks their gullibility.[88]

The bird catcher is here presented as a preadolescent who uses decoy birds as his method. The game is killed, so we are dealing with an agricultural practice of hunting for food. The second description is of a spring month, presented as a typical hunter of small animals (hare) accompanied by his dogs:

> Following these there was depicted a youth with a vigorous body and a bold look, completely mad for hunting and the pursuit of game, with blood-stained hands and seeming to shout to his dogs … A hare dangled from his left hand and with his right he was fondling the dogs, who were all rolling around at the youth's feet as though playing with him.[89]

In this scene, too, it is not the aristocratic hunter who is the emblematic figure, but a typical hunter who seeks useful game for food. The *ekphraseis* of the months are not related to the exaltation of nobility, but to the conventional and idealized representation of nature and time.[90]

The *ekphraseis* of Makrembolites constitute a link between descriptions of hunting and descriptions of paintings that contain scenes of hunting. An example of the interaction between literary and pictorial representation is the small *ekphrasis* of the palace of Andronikos, inserted in the *History* by Niketas Choniates:

> [In the palace of Andronikos], in addition to chariot races, there were scenes of the chase, with clucking birds and baying hounds; deer, hare, and wild boar hunts; and with the *zoumbros*[91] run through with a hunting spear (this animal is larger than the high-spirited bear or spotted leopard and is bred and raised by the Tauroscythians). There were also scenes of rustic life, of tent dwellers, and of common feasting on game, with Andronikos cutting up deer meat or pieces of wild boar with his own hands and carefully roasting them over the fire. Similar scenes also depicted the way of life of the man who is confident in the use of bow, sword, and swift-footed horses and who flees his country because of his own foolishness or virtue.[92]

Niketas describes paintings which we are accustomed to seeing in the Roman villas of Late Antiquity, in certain Byzantine manuscripts, and in certain houses of private individuals who wanted to exalt the hunting exploits of Manuel I Komnenos[93] – paintings which abound in varied hunting fauna, composed of familiar and exotic animals. But Choniates adds a complementary element: Andronikos is not the aristocratic hunter that the literature of the previous generation exalted: he is a cook without nobility who cuts the meat of stags and wild boars into pieces with his own knife and cooks them on the fire, thus taking on a task without prestige. Andronikos is a particular Komnenian hero (namely, a failed hero) who restores to aristocratic hunting its utilitarian character: that of nutrition.

This portrait concludes an entire period which exalted the hunting prowess of the Komnenians and generated a varied literature which made hunting a subject of primary importance in the manifestation of literary culture and in the praise of power. These cultural, ideological and political conditions (the spectacular quality of oratory and patronage) are almost completely gone after 1204, even though the imperial hunting as a practice continued.

Digenis Akritis: A Case of Heroic Pleasure Hunting

Digenis Akritis is a warrior poem with romance flavour of uncertain date; the oldest manuscript version dates to the fourteenth century and the story ties in with the novels and romances of the previous centuries.[94] It is accordingly a text that lingers between the Middle and the Late Byzantine period and, more importantly, hunting completely invests the protagonist and hero Digenis. According to version G, the heroic fate of Digenis is first sealed when his father bestows on him the claws and teeth of a lion he has killed.[95] Then after his studies, Digenis desires to hunt and participates with his father and maternal uncles in his very first hunt – a kind of initiation rite where he confronts and successively kills a bear, a stag and a lion. To kill the first beast he uses a club, for the second his own hands, and for the third a sword.

In this episode there is scaling not only in relation to the game, but also in relation to the tools used (*Digenis* G, 4.102–86). The bear asks for the force of nature, that one transforms himself into a woodsman; the stag imposes the agility of feet and hands, while the lion – the noblest and least 'natural' of the three beasts – requires the sword. Defeating and killing a

lion implicitly refers to David and Samson and is "un rite de passage qui consacre les héros et les saints."[96] These three animals are killed to demonstrate heroic valour, not to provide food. It should be noted that the vapours and liquids of these beasts provoke miasma (μίασμα): "you will change what you are wearing, for it is stained with foam from the wild beasts and the lion's blood" (*Digenis* G, 4.206–7). After this hunt, Digenis becomes an adult and begins his own career among the brigands.

The other great episode in the career of Digenis is his encounter with an emperor who visits the region. What is most striking is that the hunting episodes that accompany this scene are drawn from the *Life of Basil* (ch. 13 and 14).[97] Digenis first tames an indomitable imperial horse (*Digenis* G, 4.1054–65) and immediately kills a lion which appeared and frightened everyone (in the case of Basil I, it was a wolf) and offers it to the emperor: " 'Accept,' he said, 'your servant's prey, lord, hunted for you.' " (*Digenis* G, 4.1066–75).[98]

In the sixth song, the hunt and the logic behind it become metaphorical language to indicate the abduction of a woman, in this case the attempted abduction of the wife of Digenis by Philopappous and his allies (*Digenis* G, 6.430–33 and 462). This is not an initiation hunt for wild animals and women, reserved for young men and found in the Escorial version of *Digenis* and in demotic songs, but rather a provocative hunt for pleasure, carried out by marginal beings who defy their fellow men. Once Digenis has decided to settle down and live as a lord, hunting takes on a similar character of amusement. The hunt is here no longer an initiation, nor an investiture, but a pastime of an idle social group in times of peace:

> He spent time with them for several days and achieved many outstanding deeds of valour, going out each day with them on the chase … for nothing had yet been found that could outstrip him, but everything that existed fell into his hands, whether it was a lion or deer or any other wild beast. He did not have dogs with him or fleet-footed leopards, he did not sit upon a horse, he did not use swords but his hands alone and feet were everything to him.
>
> (*Digenis* G, 8.20–22 and 25–30)

However, this description is far from a praise of the aristocratic hunt as it developed and legitimized itself from the eleventh century onwards, examined in some detail above. Digenis hesitates here to be related to the aristocrats, to be one among the others, refuses even to use the horse and the sword; he insists on remaining an eternal seeker of legitimization by pursuing a 'wild' and archetypal hunt – man against beast. Finally, in the hero's epitaph, where the great deeds of his life are summarized, hunting is among his exploits: Digenis was "fearsome to lions and all wild beasts … for if ever the marvelous young man went out to hunt, all the wild beasts ran for cover in the marsh" (*Digenis* G, 8.254 and 262–63). To sum up, we would say that *Digenis* G, the oldest version at least in relation to its manuscript, even if it polishes certain wild aspects of hunting, underlines the importance of hunting as a marker of social and sexual prerogatives of the hero.

In the Escorial version (E), hunting plays the same role: as an initiation and, once the trials have been passed, amusement and recreation in the life of the hero. Most episodes that deal with hunting are identical in the two versions, even if sometimes another light shines on certain episodes in version E. Among the guerrillas, hunting and its trophies are much more emphasized than in version G. Philopappous is resting on his hunting trophies: "There he found Philopappous reclining on his couch, with many animal skins all around him: he had

a lion and a boar for his pillow" (*Digenis* E, 646–48), while the trials the hero must perform consist in starving, killing and skinning a lion and kidnapping a young bride (*Digenis* E, 658–68). This last element underlines, better than in version G, the perception of women as game of choice. In version E, it is the mother of Digenis who addresses her son in this way, alluding to his obligation to marry in the following terms: "Welcome, my child, if you have brought me game from hunting," and receiving an answer from Digenis in the same register: "my marvellous game will come and you will see it" (*Digenis* E, 807–809).[99] The hunt becomes a metaphor of the amorous conquest, an imagery often employed in love poetry, novels and romances.

Digenis finally makes the distinction between countryside hunting and the heroic hunt clear, addressing his father: "How long shall I be hunting hares and partridges? Hunting partridges is what peasants do, but young lords and the sons of the high-born hunt lions and bears and other fierce beasts" (*Digenis* E, 744–47). Hunting edible game (rabbits and partridges) is utilitarian hunting and is carried out to put food on the table in agropastoral societies, whereas wild animal hunting is free and rewarding, with no economic value. Digenis, as a hero, consumes values, for values are the product of his hunting; the small game that he devours in his moment of rest comes from the sweat of his subordinates, the common people, the men who admire him.

The Literary Presence of Hunting in the Late Byzantine Period

In the Palaiologan period, despite the fact that hunting became widespread as an aristocratic and imperial practice, imperial hunting is treated with suspicion, as a symbol of decadence, and its literary presence is rather limited. In order to find any positive reference to hunting, we must turn to texts that praise military leaders of the countryside, such as Charles I Toccos at the end of the fourteenth century, who "with falcons, sparrowhawks, swift stone herons, / he hunts cranes, partridges and doves…".[100] Or we turn to the Palaiologan romance, where aristocratic hunting still lingers in the stories. In *Livistros and Rhodamne*, there is an image that draws on Manasses' depiction of Manuel I Komnenos in his *ekphrasis* of a crane hunt. The hero Livistros, "rode a war-horse, he held a hawk, behind him followed a dog on a leash," but unlike the emperor, Livistros lived from hunting in his wanderings: "living by my hawk and nourished by my hound."[101] Hunting with a falcon, his usual game was partridges; on one occasion, the heroine Rhodamne even has to go hunting with a falcon to meet the hero.[102]

In *Velthandros and Chrysanza*, there are also several hunting scenes and here, too, the hero hunts with a falcon:

> Velthandros and his squires mounted and joined in the hunt behind the prince. When they found a hare in a lofty place on a mountain, they released a falcon. A swift eagle appeared flying in the sky, swooped down and seized the falcon. The prince saw what had happened and was grieved and distressed but Velthandros quickly drew his bow. Taking good aim, he hit the eagle's wing. In its pain it released the unscathed falcon—it was completely without harm or injury. The prince marvelled at Velthandros's bowmanship and praised his great skill effusively.[103]

Apart from the romances, the literary occasions to exalt hunting are rare in this period. Demetrios Kydones makes the connection between hunting and literary pursuits, in the

same vein as Michael Psellos some three centuries earlier, in a letter to a certain Andreas Asanes.[104] The letter was written in 1373/1374 from Lesbos, where Kydones lived at the court of Francesco I Gattilusio, and it offers a short but humorous description of the hunting activities of local aristocrats:

> Will you not believe that I have neglected literary pursuits and my customary activities and am spending my time in hunting? Will you not believe that I set out with the hounds after the prey before daylight and, until the setting of the sun's rays, I wasted my time tracking it? I rode my horse along the cliffs, just about joining the falcon in their flight and filling the air with the cries of a madman. There was a time when I criticised you for these things; it seemed that you wanted to live with wild animals rather than with human beings. When others tell you these things about me, you will think it incredible. Yet, I am afraid that I might let everything lapse into oblivion and make hunting the sole purpose of my life.[105]

Kydones goes on to exalt the pleasure of hunting and the abundance of both hunting companions, horses, dogs, falcons, and game: "Here, the partridges are more numerous than the owls in Athens. As I told you, I am afraid to confuse education (παιδεία) with play (παιδιά) and become a laugh to you because of this exchange." The reason, he explains, is the lack of learning and city pleasures in Mitylene.[106] Kydones thus playfully laments his fate, which forces him to hunt instead of indulging in intellectual activities. The hunt he describes, carried out with the help of falcons, targets the partridges that apparently abound. Kydones underlines both the pleasure that hunting provides and its utilitarian aspect, as the game feeds a small society: the falcon-hunter to whom part of the game belongs by right, the participants in the hunt, and the neighboring farmers.

Just like the letter of Kydones recalls Middle Byzantine epistolography, the praise for a dog by Theodore of Gaza, written in the fifteenth century, recalls the praise composed by Basilakes in the twelfth century. Like his predecessor, Theodore devotes considerable attention to hunting. He first underlines the etymological connection between hunting and dogs (κυνηγεσία and κύων) and then proceeds to a sort of history of the hunt through examples that refer to the gods and heroes of Antiquity – to the Homeric warriors, to the Spartans, to the Macedonians and the Persians – to demonstrate the contribution of hunting to the formation of an efficient and strong soldier. Theodore then cites Plato who, in *Laws* (6.763b 1–6) prescribes hunting with dogs so that young men learn well the territory of their city, and closes by underlining the contribution of dogs to hunting.[107] His conclusion paraphrases the *Oration on Artemis* by Libanius (5.13): "Without hunting there would be wild beasts all over, harming men and besieging them by keeping them locked up in the cities; we delivered ourselves from all these beasts thanks to dogs and the hunt."[108] Ultimately, hunting only assures the balance of nature, it is an activity synonymous with the civilizing intervention of man on nature.

Hunting is an almost universal economic and social practice which, in certain periods, in certain societies, and under certain cultural conditions, takes on the characteristics of a literary subject which signifies, conveys and figuratively expresses conceptions about political, economic, social, and literary values. Here we have followed some general lines of the Byzantine ideas on hunting and through them, we have touched upon the constants or

developments that concern both the reality and the imagination. A full history of hunting in Byzantium remains to be written.

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Notes

1 On hunting in Byzantium, see F. Koukoulès, *Βυζαντινῶν Βίος καὶ Πολιτισμός*, 6 vols (Athens, 1948–56), vol. 5, 387–423 (published previously as "Κυνηγετικὰ ἐκ τῆς ἐποχῆς τῶν Κομνηνῶν καὶ τῶν Παλαιολόγων," *Epeteris Etaireias Byzantinon Spoudon* 9 [1932]: 3–33). See also E. Patlagean, "De la chasse et du souverain," *DOP* 46 (1992): 257–63; L. Delobette, "L'empereur et la chasse à Byzance du XI^{e} au XII^{e} siècle," in *La forêt dans tous ses états: de la Préhistoire à nos jours*, ed. J.-P. Chabin (Besançon, 2005), 283–96; A. Sinakos, "Το κυνήγι κατά τη μέση βυζαντινή εποχή (7^{ος}–12^{ος} αι.)," in *Ζώα και περιβάλλον στο Βυζάντιο (7^{ος}–12^{ος} αι.)*, ed. I. Anagnostakis, T. Kolias and E. Papadopoulou (Athens, 2011), 71–86; C. Messis and I. Nilsson, "The *Description of a Crane Hunt* by Constantine Manasses: Introduction, Text and Translation," *SJBMGS* 5 (2019): 9–89, esp. 9–41.

2 On this literature, see in general. MacKinnon, "Hunting," in *The Oxford Handbook of Animals in Classical Thought and Life*, ed. G. L. Campbell (Oxford 2014), 203–15.

3 On the consumption of game in Antiquity, see C. Chandezon, "Le gibier dans le monde grec. Rôles alimentaire, économique et social," in *Chasses Antiques. Pratiques et représentations dans le monde gréco-romain (IIIe siècle av. – IVe siècle apr. J.-C.)*, ed. J. Trinquier and C. Vendries (Rennes, 2009), 75–95; for Byzantium, see H. Kroll, *Tiere im Byzantinischen Reich. Archäozoologische Forschungen im Überblick* (Mainz, 2010). See also the chapter on the consumption of animals and animal products by Kokoszko and Rzeźnicka in this volume.

4 Libanius, *Hunt*, ed. R. Foerster, *Libanii Opera. Vol. VIII. Progymnasmata – Argumenta orationum demosthenicarum* (Leipzig, 1963), 487:13.

5 Libanius, *Hunt*, ed. Foerster, 489:5–6; trans. C. Gibson, *Libanius's Progymnasmata, Model Exercises in Greek Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Atlanta, 2008), 451.

6 Daphnopates, *Letters*, no. 37:2–4, ed. J. Darrouzès and L. Westerink, *Daphnopatès Théodore, Correspondance* (Paris, 1978) 207. The attribution of this letter to Daphnopates is not certain; see ibid., 24–25 and cf. D. Chernoglazov, "Beobachtungen zu den Briefen des Theodoros Daphnopates. Neue Tendenzen in der byzantinischen Literatur des zehnten Jahrhunderts," *BZ* 106 (2013): 623–44.

7 Daphnopates, *Letters*, no. 37:52–62, ed. Darrouzès and Westerink, 211.

8 Daphnopates, *Letters*, no. 37:64–88, ed. Darrouzès and Westerink, 211–13.

9 Daphnopates, no. 37:69, ed. Darrouzès and Westerink, 211.

10 Daphnopates, no 37:86–88. ed. Darrouzès and Westerink, 213.

11 *Life of Theoktiste*, *AASS* Nov. IV, col. 224–33, trans. A. Hero, "Life of St. Theoktiste of Lesbos," in *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints' Lives in English Translation*, ed. A.-M. Talbot (Washington, D.C., 1996), 95–116. For ἑταιρεία, see chs 12 (τὴν ἑταιρείαν), 14 (τῆς ἑταιρείας), 17 (τοὺς ἑταίρους) and 19 (τοὺς ἑταίρους). This *Life* has been thoroughly studied; most recently, see C. Messis, "Fiction and/or Novelisation in Byzantine Hagiography," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography. Volume II: Genres and Contexts*, ed. S. Efthymiadis (Farnham, Surrey, 2014), 313–41, here 329–32; C. Høgel, "Beauty, Knowledge, and Gain in the *Life of Theoktiste*," *Byz* 88 (2018), 219–36.

12 *Life of Theoktiste*, ch. 11, trans. Hero, 108.

13 *Life of Theoktiste*, ch. 17, 112.

14 P. Desideri, "City and Country in Dio," in *Dio Chrysostom: Politics, Letters, and Philosophy*, ed. S. Swain (Oxford, 2002), 93–107. In the *Life of Mary of Egypt*, Zosimas is presented

metaphorically as a hunter; see A. Kazhdan, "Hagiographical Notes. 9. The Hunter or the Harlot?," *BZ* 78 (1985) 49–50.

15 *Life of Theodore of Cythera*, ed. N. Oikonomidis, "Ο Βίος του αγίου Θεοδώρου Κυθήρων (10ος αι.) (12 Μαΐου – BHG, αρ. 2430)," in *Τρίτον Πανιόνιον Συνέδριον, Πρακτικά* (Athens, 1967), 264–91, here v. 243–46 (289). On the relation between this life and that of Theoktiste, see S. Efthymiadis, "Hagiography from the 'Dark Age' to the Age of Symeon Metaphrastes," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography. Volume I: Periods and Places*, ed. S. Efthymiadis (Farnham, Surrey, 2011), 95–142, here 125.

16 *Life of Peter the Athonite*, ed. K. Lake, *The Early Days of Monasticism on Mount Athos* (Oxford, 1909), 18–39, here 31. The presence of an extraordinary deer as an indication of the holiness of a person is a recurring motif in hagiography; for further references, see Messis and Nilsson, "The *Description of a Crane Hunt*," 13–14.

17 H. Delehaye (ed.), "Vita S. Pauli Junoris," ch. 25, in *Der Latmos*, ed. T. Wiegand (Berlin, 1913), 105–57, here 119–20.

18 Note the distinction between the *Passion* of Barbaros, martyred under Julian (BHG 219), ed. H. Delehaye, "Les Actes de S. Barbarus," AB 29 (1910), 276–301, and the *Life* of Barbaros who lived in the time of Michael II, (re)written by Constantine Akropolites (BHG 220), ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἀνάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς Σταχυολογίας*, vol. I (St Petersburg, 1891), 405–20.

19 *Life of Barbaros*, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 416:24.

20 The same ambiguous representation of nature is clear in pictorial hunting scenes, e.g., in the illuminated Oppian; see I. Spatharakis, *The Illustrations of the Cynegetica in Venice. Codex Marcianus Graecus Z 139* (Leiden, 2004); see also E. Dautermann Maguire and H. Maguire, *Other Icons: Art and Power in Byzantine Secular Culture* (Princeton, NJ, 2007), 47–51 and 82–89.

21 See J. Lefort and J.-M. Martin, "L'organisation de l'espace rural: Macédoine et Italie du Sud (Xe-XIIIe siècle)," in *Hommes et richesses dans l'Empire byzantin*, 2 vols, ed. V. Kravari, J. Lefort and C. Morrisson (Paris, 1991), vol. 2, 11–26, here 24.

22 Paul the Silentiary, VI.168, ed. P. Waltz, *Anthologie grecque. I. Anthologie Palatine. Tome III, livre VI* (Paris, 1931), 93.

23 On protection against wild beasts, see I. Anagnostakis, "Ο φράκτης, ο αγριόχοιρος και η άρκτος," in Anagnostakis, Kolias and Papadopoulou, *Ζώα*, 195–233.

24 Patlagean, "De la chasse," 257.

25 *Life of Basil*, ch. 13, ed. I. Ševčenko, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur liber quo vita Basilii imperatoris amplectitur* (Berlin, 2011). On the significance of hunting in this text, see Patlagean, "De la chasse," 258–59. See also C. Messis, "Est-elle possible une lecture subversive de la *Vie de Basile*? Stratégies narratives et objectifs politiques dans la cour de Constantin VII Porphyrogénète," in *Storytelling in Byzantium: Narratological Approaches to Byzantine Texts and Images*, ed. C. Messis, M. Mullett and I. Nilsson (Uppsala, 2018), 201–22.

26 On the Philopation, see N. Ševčenko, "Wild Animals in the Byzantine Park," in *Byzantine Garden Culture*, ed. A. Littlewood, H. Maguire and J. Wolschke-Bulmahn (Washington, D.C., 2002), 69–86; Delobette, "L'empereur," 286; H. Maguire, "The Philopation as a Setting for Imperial Ceremonial and Display," BF 30 (2011): 71–82.

27 Genesios, *History*, IV. 26 and IV. 39, ed. A. Lesmueller-Werner and I. Thurn, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor* (Berlin, 1978), 78 and 89.

28 Genesios, *History*, IV.40 and 42, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn, 89–90 and 91.

29 Symeon the Logothete, *History*, ch. 131:60–63 and 132:174–82, ed. S. Wahlgren, *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon* (Berlin, 2006), pp. 235 and 270.

30 *Life of Euthymios*, ed.-trans. P. Karlin-Hayter, "Vita Euthymii," *Byz* 25–27 (1955–57): 1–172, ch. 1, 8:2–17.

31 *Life of Euthymios*, ch. 1, 8:20, ed. Karlin-Hayter.

32 Nikephoros, *Against the Iconoclasts*, ed. J.-P. Migne, PG 82, 229cd.

33 *Life of Stephen the Younger*, ch. 26, 121 and 215, ed. M.-F. Auzépy, *La Vie d'Etienne le Jeune par Etienne le Diacre* (Aldershot, 1997). On representations of hunting scenes in which emperors take part, see A. Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin* (Paris, 1936), 57–62 and 134–44.

34 *Life of Kosmas and John Damascus*, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἀνάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς σταχυολογίας*, v. IV (St Petersburg, 1897), 271–302, here 228.

35 *Life of Mary the Younger*, *AASS* Nov. IV, col. 703b.
36 On this aspect, see Messis and Nilsson, "The *Description of a Crane Hunt*," 12–17.
37 The terminology is unclear, to say the least: T. Buquet, "Le guépard médieval ou comment reconnaître un animal sans nom," *Reinardus* 23 (2011): 12–47, has argued for the difference between leopards and panthers, while N. Nicholas, "A Conundrum of Cats: Pards and Their Relatives in Byzantium," GRBS 40/3 (1999): 253–98, proposes that the Greek word πάρδαλις corresponds to the cheetah. On the hunting with leopards/cheetahs, see A. Papagiannaki, "Experiencing the Exotic: Cheetahs in Medieval Byzantium," in *Discipuli dona ferentes: Glimpses of Byzantium in Honour of Marlia Mundell Mango*, ed. T. Papacostas and M. Parani (Turnhout, 2017), 223–57.
38 B. Hell, *Sang noir. Chasse, forêt et mythe de l'homme sauvage en Europe* (Paris, 2012), 30.
39 Unfortunately, the presence of women in the audience is reported only when linked to other significant events. We learn, for example, from Nikephoros Gregoras in the fourteenth century that Empress Irene was rendered sterile by a terrible fall from her horse, "when she went out with her husband and emperor to watch a hunting party;" Gregoras, *History*, ed. L. Schopen, *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina Historia* (Bonn 1829–1830), 44:7–10.
40 On Romanos II and hunting, see Patlagean, "De la chasse," 259.
41 Daphnopates, *Letters*, no 14:7–38, ed. Darrouzès and Westerink, 151. Our translation. On this letter, see also Messis and Nilsson, "The *Description of a Crane Hunt*," 14–15.
42 See also the letter addressed to Sagmatas, *synkellos* and *protonotarios* of the drome: Psellos, *Letters*, no 251, ed. S. Papaioannou, *Michael Psellus Epistulae* (Berlin, 2019), 623–26, on which see G. Dennis, "Some Notes on Hunting in Byzantium," in *ΑΝΑΘΗΜΑΤΑ ΕΟΡΤΙΚΑ: Studies in Honor of Thomas F. Mathews*, ed. J. Alchermes, H. Evans and T. Thomas (Mainz, 2009), 131–34, here 133–34.
43 Psellos, *Chonographia*, VII.72, ed. D. R. Reinsch, *Michaelis Pselli, Chronographia* (Berlin, 2014), 243; trans. E. R. A. Sewter, *The* Chronographia *of Michael Psellus* (London, 1953), 244. On this hunt, see also Patlagean, "De la chasse," 259, and Delobette, "L'empereur," 288. Cf. also the references to the same emperor in Psellos, *Letters*, no 142:56–64, ed. Papaioannou.
44 Psellos, *Chonographia*, VII.180–81, ed. Reinsch, 294–95; trans. Sewter, *The* Chronographia, 298.
45 Psellos, *Letters*, no. 54:3–14, ed. Papaioannou.
46 Psellos, *Letters*, no. 67, ed. Papaioannou.
47 Psellos, Letters, no. 76:36–39, ed. Papaioannou.
48 Theodore Prodromos, *Poems*, no 25:18–20, ed. W. Hörandner, *Theodoros Prodromos: historische Gedichte* (Vienna, 1974), 336. On the death of John II, caused by a wound he suffered at a wild boar hunt, see John Kinnamos, *History*, ed. A. Meineke, *Ioannis Cinnami Epitome rerum ab Ioanne et Alexio Comnenis gestarum* (Bonn, 1836), 24:10–23; Choniates, ed. A. Van Dieten, *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* (Berlin, 1972), 40.
49 Kinnamos, *History*, ed. Meineke, 189:2–23; see also 126–27.
50 Kinnamos, *History*, ed. Meineke, 266:22–267:13; trans. C. Brand, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus* (New York, 1976), 200.
51 For Alexios III, see Choniates, *History*, ed. Van Dieten, 223; for Isaac Angelos, ibid., 399. Cf. a different and very positive image of the hunting exploits of Alexios IV, the son of Isaac Angelos, in Nikephoros Chrysoberges, *Discourse to Alexios IV*, ed. M. Treu, *Nicephori Chrysobergae ad Angelos orations tres* (Breslau, 1892), 30:20–31:11.
52 Choniates, *History*, ed. Van Dieten, 520; on Euphrosyne, see L. Garland, *Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium AD 527–1204* (London, 1999), 210–24; Messis and Nilsson, "The *Description of a Crane Hunt*," 36.
53 On this author see I. Nilsson, *Writer and Occasion in Twelfth-Century Byzantium: The Authorial Voice of Constantine Manasses* (Cambridge, 2021).
54 Details are sparse and partly contradictory; see E. Miller, "Description d'une chasse à l'once par un écrivain byzantin au XIIe siècle de notre ère," *Annuaire de l'Association pour l'encouragement des études grecques* 6 (1872): 28–52, here 31, and K. Horna, "Die Epigramme des Theodoros Balsamon," *Wiener Studien* 25/2 (1903): 165–217, here 209.

55 Pediadites, *Letter*, ed.A. Karpozilos, "Βασιλείου Πεδιαδίτη Ἔκφρασις ἁλώσεως ἀκανθίδων," *Ηπειρωτικά Χρονικά* 23 (1981), 284–98. See also K. Manafis and I. Polemis, "Βασιλείου Πεδιαδίτου Ανέκδοτα έργα," *Ἐπετηρὶς Ἑταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν* 49 (1994–1998), 1–62, here 2–12.

56 For Basilakes, see A. Pignani, *Niceforo Basilace Progymnasmi et Monodie* (Naples, 1983), 133–38 (Greek texts) and 309–12 (Italian trans.); J. Beneker and C. Gibson, *The Rhetorical Exercises of Nikephoros Basilakes: Progymnasmata from Twelfth-Century Byzantium* (Cambridge, MA, 2016),130–41 (Greek text and English trans.). For Makrembolites, see M. Marcovich, *Eustathius Macrembolites de Hysmines et Hysminiae amoribus libri XI* (Munich, 2001). On ekphraseis in the literature of the twelfth century, see also I. Taxidis, *The Ekphraseis in the Byzantine Literature of the 12th Century* (Alessandria, 2021).

57 On glue-hunting in antiquity and Byzantium, see C. Vendries, "L'auceps, les gluaux et l'appeau. A propos de la ruse et de l'habileté du chasseur d'oiseaux," in Trinquier and Vendries, *Chasses Antiques*, 119–40.

58 *Description of the catching of siskins and chaffinches,* ed. K. Horna, *Analekten zur byzantinischen Literatur* (Vienna, 1905), 6–12, here lines 32–40. For a new edition with English translation, see C. Messis and I. Nilsson, "The *Description of the Catching of Siskins and Chaffinches* by Constantine Manasses: Introduction, Text and Translation," *SJBMGS* 8 (2022): 9–66.

59 On these techniques, see C. Messis and I. Nilsson, "L'ixeutique à Byzance: pratique et représentation littéraire," SJBMGS 7 (2021): 81-107.

60 *Description of the Catching of Siskins and Chaffinches,* 79–85, ed. Horna. To our knowledge, this treatment of male and female birds is not attested in any other text, but Manasses does not seem to make it up because this practice is common in modern bird hunting.

61 *Description of the Catching of Siskins and Chaffinches,* 55–61, ed. Horna.

62 *Description of the Catching of Siskins and Chaffinches*, 105–12, ed. Horna. This is a description filled with irony: "he who not long ago rose above the clouds was now touched by the hands of small children."

63 πυρρίχην: on this military dance, attested since Antiquity, see J.-Cl. Poursat, "Les représentations de danse armée dans la céramique attique," *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 92 (1968): 550–61.

64 *Description of the catching of siskins and chaffinches* 190–98, ed. Horna.

65 On this figure, see also K. Chrysogelos, "Κωμική Λογοτεχνία και γέλιο τον 12ο αι. Η περίπτωση του Κωνσταντίνου Μανασσή," *Byzantina Symmeikta* 26 (2016): 141–61, here 149–51.

66 Messis and Nilsson, "The *Description of the catching of siskins and chaffinches*."

67 Edited, translated and commented in Messis and Nilsson, "The *Description of a Crane Hunt*."

68 Messis and Nilsson, "The *Description of a Crane Hunt*," 211–22; trans. 75.

69 Messis and Nilsson, "The *Description of a Crane Hunt*," 329–31; trans. 79.

70 For another interpretation, see H. Maguire, " 'Signs and Symbols of your always victorious reign': The Political Ideology and Meaning of Falconry in Byzantium," in *Images of the Byzantine World: Visions, Messages and Meanings. Studies Presented to Leslie Brubaker*, ed. A. Lymberopoulou (Farnham, 2011), 135–45.

71 Ed. M. Miller, "Description d'une chasse à l'once par un écrivain byzantin au XIIe siècle de notre ère," *Annuaire de l'Association pour l'encouragement des études grecques* 6 (1872): 28–52, here 47: τοὺς ἐπιβούλους ἱέρακας καὶ τοὺς πετραίους ἐρωδιούς.

72 On the terminology, see above n. 37.

73 Pantechenes, *Description of the Hunt*, ed. Miller, 47–48.

74 Pantechenes, *Description of the Hunt*, ed. Miller, 49; trans. Messis and Nilsson, "The Desciption of a Crane Hunt," 32.

75 Pantechnes speaks, for example, about the reward for the bird of prey after a successful flight (*Description of the Hunt*, ed. Miller, 49), and of a staff specialized in the care of falcons.

76 Pantechnes, *Description of the Hunt*, ed. Miller, 50–51; trans. Nicholas, "A Conundrum of Cats," 290–91.

77 Pediadites, *Letter*, 296:3, ed. Karpozilos: δουκικὸν κάρα τρισόλβιον.

78 Pediadites, *Letter*, 296:7–8, ed. Karpozilos: στρουθοὺς ἀνδραποδιστάς.

79 Pediadites, *Letter*, 298:66–68, ed. Karpozilos: ὃν ἐν ταῖς χερσὶ δόνακα, ἔχοντα προσαρμοστὸν λύγον ἀκροτελεύτιον, εὖ μάλα καλυμμένον ἰξῷ, τῆς τοῦ στρουθοῦ κατέφερον πτέρυγος.

80 Karpozilos, "Βασιλείου Πεδιαδίτη," 295, thinks that this *ekphrasis* was influenced by Manasses.

81 John Tzetzes, *Histories,* IV.160–290, ed. P. Leone, *Ioannis Tzetzae Historiae* (Naples, 1968), (six stories). On dogs in Byzantium, see A. Rhoby, "Hunde in Byzanz," in *Lebenswelten zwischen Archäologie und Geschichte. Festschrift für Falko Daim zu seinem 56. Geburtstag*, ed. J. Drauschke et al. (Mainz, 2018), 807–20. For dogs as diplomatic gifts, see the chapter by Drocourt in the present volume.

82 Basilakes, *Praise of the Dog*, 18–20, ed. Pignani, *Niceforo Basilace*, 133; trans. Beneker and Gibson, *The Rhetorical Exercises*, 131. See also C. Gibson, "In Praise of Dogs: An Encomium Theme from Classical to Renaissance Italy," in *Our Dogs, Our Selves: Dogs in Medieval and Early Modern Art, Literature, and Society*, ed. L. Gelfand (Leiden, 2016), 19–40, esp. 25–31 on Basilakes. See also Taxidis, *The Ekphraseis*, 56–57.

83 Basilakes, *Praise of the Dog*, 34–35, ed. Pignani, 134; trans. Beneker and Gibson, *The Rhetorical Exercises*, 133.

84 Basilakes, *Praise of the Dog*, 35–65, ed. Pignani, 134–35; trans. Beneker and Gibson, *The Rhetorical Exercises*, 135.

85 Prodromos, *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, bk. 2:415–16, ed. M. Marcovich, *Theodori Prodromi de Rhodanthes et Dosiclis amoribus libri IX* (Stuttgart, 1992); trans. E. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels* (Liverpool, 2012), 48. In this novel, there is also a tale of a "foolish and senseless" hunter: bk. 5:341–52.

86 Eugeneianos, *Drosilla and Charikles*, bk. 3:53–60, ed. F. Conca, *Nicetas Eugenianus de Drosillae et Chariclis amoribus* (Amsterdam, 1990); trans. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, 375.

87 Makrembolites, *Hysmine and Hysminias* 4.4.2, ed. Marcovich; trans. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, 201.

88 Makrembolites, *Hysmine and Hysminias* 4.12, ed. Marcovich; trans. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, 204.

89 Makrembolites, *Hysmine and Hysminias* 4.15, ed. Marcovich; trans. Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, 205.

90 In a poem on the twelve months, attributed to Kallikles (ed. R. Romano, *Nicola Callicle Carmi* (Naples 1980), no 37), October is represented as a fowler (v. 43–45), while December is a hunter (v. 55–56). In this case, the game is presented as nourishment for the rich.

91 On this animal, to be identified with the European bison, see A. Pontani, *Niceta Coniata Grandezza e catastrofe di Bisanzio*, Vol. II: *Libri IX-XIV* (Milan, 1999), 672–73, n. 81; for animals in Choniates, see L. Bossina, "La bestia e l'enigma. Tradizione classica e cristiana in Niceta Coniata," *Medioevo Greco* 0 (2000): 35-68.

92 Choniates, *History*, ed. Van Dieten, 333; trans. H. Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium, Annals of Niketas Choniates* (Detroit, 1984), 184.

93 See Kinnamos, *History*, ed. Meineke, 266:6–9 on the habit of high functionaries to have representations in their houses of the military and hunting exploits of the emperor.

94 On the dating of Digenis, see A. Goldwyn and I. Nilsson, "Troy in Byzantine Romances: Homeric Reception in Digenis Akritis, the Tale of Achilles and the Tale of Troy," in *Reading the Late Byzantine Romance: A Handbook*, ed. A. Goldwyn and I. Nilsson (Cambridge, 2019), 188–210, here 191–92.

95 *Digenis Akrites* G, 3.102–6, ed. and trans. E. Jeffreys, *Digenis Akritis: The Grotaferrata and Escorial Versions* (Cambridge, 1998), 50. On hunting in *Digenis*, see D. Ricks, "The Pleasures of the Chase: a Motif in Digenes Akrites," *BMGS* 13 (1989): 290-95 and A. Goldwyn, *Byzantine Ecocritism: Women, Nature, and Power in the Medieval Greek Romance* (Cham, 2018), 48–81.

96 M. Pastoureau, *Une histoire symbolique du Moyen Âge Occidental* (Paris, 2004), 62.

97 For a slightly different interpretation of this episode, see G. Prinzing, "Historiography, Epic and the Textual Transmission of Imperial Values: Liudprand's Antapodosis and Digenes Akrites," in *Reading in the Byzantine Empire and Beyond*, ed. T. Shawcross and I. Toth (Cambridge, 2018), 336–50.

98 On the affinities with the *Life of Basil*, see A. Markopoulos, "Ο Διγενής Ακρίτης και η βυζαντινή χρονογραφία. Μια πρώτη προσέγγιση," *Ariadni* 5 (1989): 165–71, here 170.

99 On women as game in the anthropology of hunting, see Hell, *Sang noir*, 288–89.

100 *Chronicle of Tocco*, 3466–67, ed. G. Schiro, *Ignoti auctoris Chronaca Tocchorum Cephalleniensium* (Rome, 1975).

101 *Livistros and Rhodamne*, 40 and 104, ed. P. A. Agapitos, *Ἀφήγησις Λιβίστρου καὶ Ροδάμνης* (Athens, 2006); trans. P. A. Agapitos, *The Tale of Livistros and Rodamne: A Byzantine Love Romance of the 13th Century* (Liverpool, 2021), 56 and 58.
102 *Livistros and Rhodamne*, 3377–78 and 2245–46, ed. Agapitos.
103 *Belthandros et Chrysantza*, ed. E. Legrand, *Bibliothèque grecque vulgaire I* (Paris, 1880), 770–79; trans. G. Betts, *Three Medieval Greek Romances* (New York, 1993), 19.
104 *PLP* 143.
105 Trans. G. Dennis, "Some Notes on Hunting in Byzantium," *Anathemata heortika: Studies in Honor of Thomas F. Mathews* (Mainz, 2009), 131–34, here 133.
106 Kydones, *Letters*, no 135, ed. R. Loenertz, *Démétrius Cydonès Correspondance* (Vatican, 1960), vol. II, 4–5. Cf. also *Letter* no 229:14–19, to the same addressee.
107 Cf. John Eugenikos on hunting and dogs in his description of a miniature illumination (?); ed. F. Boissonade, *Anecdota nova* (Paris, 1844), 331–35, here 232–33.
108 Theodore of Gaza, *Praise of the Dog*, ed. J.-P. Migne, PG 161, 985–98, here ch. 4, 992; I. Tziffa and K. Staikos, *Θεόδωρος Γάζης Κυνός ἐγκώμιον* (Athens, 2017), 56. On the author and the texts, see Tziffa and Staikos, 15–46 and 81–100; J. Kindstrand, "Notes on Theodorus Gaza's Canis Laudatio," *Eranos* 91 (1993): 93–105; Gibson, "In Praise of Dogs," 31–35. For the text of Libanius, see R. Foerster, *Libanii opera, v. I, fasc. I: Orationes I–V* (Leipzig, 1903), 308–9.