
Book Section:
Perisanidi, M. orcid.org/0000-0002-7077-8497 (2024) Gregorios Antiochos: Disabled Bodies and Desired Becomings. In: Masculinity in Byzantium, c. 1000–1200: Scholars, Clerics and Violence. Cambridge University Press ISBN 9781009499781

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009499781

CHAPTER 3

Gregorios Antiochos
Disabled Bodies and Desired Becomings

Compared to Michael Psellos and Ioannes Tzetzes, Gregorios Antiochos (fl. 1160 and d. after 1197/8) comes across as a much less confident scholar.[1] In his letters, he expressed his exaggerated fear that he would forget how to read and understand; he repeatedly complained that he lacked time to devote to the study of rhetoric, and he worried that he would be forgotten by other learned men.[2] It is this anxious self-reflection that renders Antiochos such an interesting person to study within the framework of scholarly masculinity. His intense desire to remain a scholar, despite his many non-scholarly distractions, makes him explain in unusually clear terms what being a scholar meant for his identity. As we will see, Antiochos emphasised the impact of his various occupations on his gendered body, talking fondly of the weakening that came with hours of immobility bent over books, and lamenting the labours that accompanied his administrative and judicial roles. His descriptions bear many similarities with scholarly masculinity as we have come to understand it through the writings of Psellos and Tzetzes, but they also express Antiochos' personal experience of gender, especially as it was shaped by his own disabled embodiment. As such, they reveal the importance of another intersection, adding disability to gender and religious status as a characteristic that co-constructed one's masculine subjectivity. At the same time, Antiochos' letters present us with unexpected configurations of human and non-human bodies, and, despite their emphasis on rationality, speech and self-determination, paradoxically help to decentre the man and blur the lines of separation between organic and inorganic. In doing so, they posit the Eastern Roman scholar, with his books and study furniture, as a kind of antipode to the Western knight and his horse.

[1] It is also the case that Tzetzes appears to be self-deprecating, but this is taken as irony. See D'Agostini and Pizzone, 'Clawing Rhetoric Back', pp. 131–5.

[2] See, for example, his letters to Eustathios of Thessalonike (E6) and to the abbot of the monastery on the island of Antigonos (E15) in A. Sideras (ed.), *Gregorii Antiochi Opera, Orationes et Epistulae* (Vienna, 2021), pp. 976, 1082.

Who Was Antiochos?

Gregorios Antiochos was probably born in Constantinople, sometime around 1130–40.[3] We know nothing about his mother, but his father was a man who thought highly of learning and made sure to transmit his appreciation to his son.[4] Antiochos' studies began when he was very young, something he emphasised in his letters and speeches with expressions such as ἐξ ὄνυχος ἁπαλοῦ (literally 'since my fingernail was tender'), and are described in idyllic terms as a stay in paradise.[5] He received an excellent education under at least three teachers: Nikolaos Kataphloron (fl. 1140), Eustathios of Thessalonike (b. c. 1115–d. 1195/6) and Nikolaos Hagiotheodorites (d. 1175). It was on the advice of the last of these that he decided to abandon his literary career and enter the civil service.[6] He began his administrative career as imperial secretary to the emperor Manouel I Komnenos (r. 1143–80), quickly rose through the ranks and moved from the imperial chancery to a role in the judicial administration.[7] We know that he became judge of the velum, while the highest office he attained was that of *protonobelissimohypertatos*, sometime after 1176 and before 1196.[8]

Although Antiochos was not a military man, he is mentioned in relation to two military operations. The first took place around 1173 in Bulgaria, and he probably participated as a member of the imperial chancery, a role that would have included more than an involvement in bureaucratic affairs, as we will see from his many negative references to his encounters with horses. Some years later, probably around 1176, we see him again, this time in Lopadion, preparing to follow the emperor on another campaign, but we never find out whether he ended up participating in that expedition.[9]

Many of Antiochos' writings survive: encomia, consolation and funerary speeches, as well as letters. In them he often discussed his poor health. He seems to have become severely ill in 1177, shortly after the death of his father, to which he partly attributes his own bodily suffering: 'because I have shed tears at length out of my very great sorrow for him, and have been drawn into

[3] For what follows, see M. Loukaki, *Grégoire Antiochos: Éloge du Patriarche Basile Kamatèros* (Paris, 1996), pp. 3–28; and Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, pp. 15–25.
[4] F3, ll. 121–2 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, pp. 634–6.
[5] L3, ll. 167–71 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 172.
[6] E10, ll. 46–8 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 1016.
[7] Loukaki, *Grégoire Antiochos*, p. 25.
[8] Loukaki, *Grégoire Antiochos*, pp. 26–7; Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, pp. 19–22. On the duties of a judge of the velum, see A. E. Gkoutzioukostas, *Administration of Justice in Byzantium (9th–12th Centuries): Judicial Officers and Secular Tribunals of Constantinople* (Thessalonike, 2004), pp. 138–59 and 172–8. On the *protonobelissimohypertatos*, see F. Dölger, *Byzantinische Diplomatik* (Ettal, 1956), pp. 28–33.
[9] Loukaki, *Grégoire Antiochos*, p. 27.

some mortal disease by frequent torrents of weeping'.[10] He experienced periodic fevers which caused trembling, especially of his limbs; his skin developed a cadaverous pallor; his flesh was emaciated; his hands and feet weakened, and he could hardly walk or stand.[11] The worst of it lasted for three months, but even after the illness had abated traces remained.[12] His knowledge and experience of poor health, however, was not limited to this more acute bout of illness.[13] In his letter to the Patriarch Basileios Kamateros, Antiochos relates the bodily troubles of his son and describes them as 'a nasty inheritance' (δυσκληρία) that meant that 'from birth to this age there has never been a time when he has not wrestled with some disease'.[14] Antiochos' own situation does not seem to have been very different. In his encomium for John the Baptist (1187), he mentions the many physical ailments he endured from a young age (ἐξ ἔτι νεάζοντος), describing himself as 'being carried off as a pitiable prey of disease' (νοσημάτων λάφυρον οἰκτρὸν ἀπαγόμενος).[15] Both he and his son seem to have experienced chronic illness, and, as we will see, this embodied experience influenced the way Antiochos understood himself as a scholar and expressed his gender.

Rejection of Military Prowess

Antiochos seems to have gained little satisfaction from his positions in the imperial and judicial administration and describes his duties in vague terms as never-ending chores. For example, in a letter to Eustathios of Thessalonike (spring 1173), he refers to his role in the following terms:

> There is no escaping this evil. Toil constantly follows toil, effort effort, and sweat sweat; and before we properly wipe away the drops of the present one, another comes along on top, as if we were being taken out of the sea and thrown into a river, or vice versa.[16]

[10] F4, ll. 9–10 (written in 1178). See Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, pp. 22, 678: ἐκ τῆς περὶ ἐκεῖνον πλείστης ἀνίας δακρυρροήσας μακρὰ καὶ ὑπὸ συχνοῖς κλαυθμοῦ ῥεύμασιν ἐς θανατηράν τινα νόσον παρασυρείς.

[11] F4, ll. 14–18; 42–7; and 67–70 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, pp. 678–82.

[12] F4, ll. 70–4 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 23; F5, ll. 179–85 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 734; F5 ll. 889–97 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 780.

[13] See also his references to bad health in his speech to the Emperor Manouel Komnenos: L2, ll. 32–9, 54–9, 66–9 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, pp. 144–6.

[14] E18, ll. 16–18 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 1108: ἐς τόδε γὰρ ἡλικίας ἐκ γενετῆς, οὐκ ἔστιν ὅτε μὴ οὐχὶ προσεπάλαισεν ἀρρωστήματι.

[15] L8, l. 60 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 362.

[16] E3, ll. 73–6 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 920: τὸ γὰρ κακὸν ἀναπόδραστον. ἀεὶ δὲ διάδοχος πόνου πόνος καὶ κόπου κόπος καὶ ἱδρῶτος ἱδρώς· καὶ πρὶν ἐς ἀκριβὲς ἀπομόρξασθαι

Antiochos talks about the violence and tyranny which diverted him 'away from better things' (τῶν κρειττόνων) and, preventing him from engaging with rhetoric, forced him to be occupied 'with trifles' (τοῖς δὲ ματαίοις).[17]

He seems particularly unimpressed with the military associations of his position.[18] In another letter to Eustathios, written from Bulgaria (autumn 1173), he complains about the harshness of life in the military camp, the sounds of the bugle and the bell that forces him to rise from bed at daybreak.[19] Similarly, in a letter from the same period to Nikolaos Hagiotheodorites (1173/1175), he emphasises the physical pains that his body has had to endure and compares his sufferings to Abraham's sacrifice:

> Only one thing is lacking in the image of that wonderful sacrifice of Abraham; namely, that there the feet of the one who was to be slaughtered were bound together and he was thrown down with bent knees like a sacrificial animal, but we suffer this kind of sacrifice every day, without bending our knees [οὐ γόνυ κάμπτοντες], without bringing the hollows of the knees together, without being tied, but, like those slaves that stand in attendance day and night with unflexed legs, we endure it erect and in an unwavering posture.[20]

The image of the unbent knee (οὐ γόνυ κάμπτοντες) was used by Antiochos to emphasise that there was no hope for rest or the cessation of his tortures. It comes up again in Antiochos' letters to Euthymios Malakes (after 1173) and Demetrios Tornikes (1175), both times in reference to the many hardships of his role in the imperial administration.[21] In the letter to the former, it is specifically connected to the torments of the Aeschylean Prometheus, whose body was condemned to suffer all day and all night as he stood 'sentinel, erect, sleepless, the knee unbent'.[22] The same

τὰς τοῦ παρόντος ῥανίδας, ἕτερος ἐπεισήρρηκεν, ὥσπερ ἂν εἴ τις ἡμᾶς, θαλάσσης ἀναρπάσας, εἰς ποταμὸν ἐμβαλεῖ καὶ τὸ ἔμπαλιν. Similarly, in a letter to Hagiotheodorites, Antiochos talks about his 'vain simmering toils and the sweat that floods from head to foot'. See E10, ll. 164–5 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 1024: τῶν ἐπὶ κενοῖς ἐκτηγανιζόντων καμάτων καὶ τῶν περιαντλούντων ἱδρώτων ἐς πόδας ἐκ κεφαλῆς.

[17] E3, ll. 101–6 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 922.

[18] Cf. Psellos' statement about the role that he was forced to play in the second of Romanos' expeditions (1069), in n. 57 (Chapter 1).

[19] E5, ll. 200–1 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 954.

[20] E10, ll. 82–9 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, pp. 1018–20: ἑνὸς ἡμῖν τούτου δέει πρὸς τὴν εἰκόνα τῆς ἀβραμιαίας ἐκείνης θαυμασίας θυσίας· ὅτι ἐκεῖ μὲν συμπεποδισμένος ἦν ὁ σφαγιαζόμενος καὶ ὑπ' ὀκλάζουσι γόνασι χαμαὶ δίκην ἱερείου βαλλόμενος, ἡμεῖς δὲ τὴν τηλικαύτην ὑπέχομεν καθ' ἑκάστην σφαγήν, οὐ γόνυ κάμπτοντες, οὐ συνάγοντες τὰς ἰγνῦς, οὐ συμποδιζόμενοι, ἀλλά, κατὰ τὰ νύκτωρ καὶ μεθ' ἡμέραν ὑπὸ σκέλεσιν ἀκλινέσι παρεστηκότα τῶν ἀνδραπόδων, ὀρθοστάδην διακαρτεροῦντες καὶ ἐν ἀπαρεγκλίτῳ τῷ σχήματι.

[21] For Euthymios Malakes, see E7, l. 41. For Demetrios Tornikes, see E12, l. 225.

[22] Aesch. *Prom.* 31–2: τήνδε φρουρήσεις πέτραν ὀρθοστάδην, ἄυπνος, οὐ κάμπτων γόνυ, in D. L. Page, *Aeschyli Septem Quae Supersunt Tragoedias* (Oxford, 1972).

image also occurs in Antiochos' funerary oration for Manouel Komnenos (1180), where military exertions are deemed appropriate and praiseworthy for an emperor who is said to have subdued the barbarians and to have done so without rest: 'there was no turning-post, no rest or recovery from running, nowhere was the knee bent'.[23] But even in Manouel's case, Antiochos continues to emphasise that some rest would have been advisable and could have gone a long way towards maintaining the emperor's health, allowing him to rule and benefit his subjects for longer.[24] As such, Antiochos challenges ableist ideologies that would praise the strong indefatigable bodies forged in the military camp.[25] This is something that we will see him do again in his juxtaposition of these bodies with the body of the scholar.

As we can see, Antiochos did not attempt to gain masculine capital through association with the manly hardships of the soldier's life. This attitude presented a challenge to martial masculine ideals, and it was not the only one we find in his writings and way of life. Like Psellos and Tzetzes, Antiochos too rode mules, and when he had to ride horses, he complained about them.[26] On one occasion, he emphatically tells us that while riding his beast of burden (ὑποζυγίῳ), he had a book in his hands to read on the way.[27] This was not meant to show his riding prowess, but rather his indifference towards the whole military lifestyle; amidst it all he remained a scholar. Antiochos occasionally employed metaphors of physical strength to describe his scholarly activities. For example, he compared the work of the scholar to skilful horse-riding and spoke of his use of the stylus and reed as spear and arrow, and the use of limp sheets of paper as a shield and breastplate.[28] Yet such metaphors are not very common in his writing, and they are also applied negatively to his work as part of the imperial administration. In an oration for Konstantinos Angelos (after 1185), he refers to his 'ironless weapons' (ἀσιδήροις ὅπλοις), the 'flimsy bits of paper' (ἀφαυροῖς τισι χαρτιδίοις) and 'thin reeds' (γραφίσι δονακίσι

[23] F6, l. 404 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 820: *νύσσα δὲ καὶ παῦλα καὶ τοῦ τρέχειν ἀνάπαυμα καὶ γόνυ καμπτόμενον οὐδαμοῦ*.
[24] F6, ll. 801–14 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 849.
[25] Ableism has been defined as 'a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human. Disability, then, is cast as a diminished state of being human.' See F. Campbell, 'Inciting Legal Fictions: Disability's Date with Ontology and the Ableist Body of the Law', *Griffith Law Review*, 10 (2001), pp. 42–62, at p. 44.
[26] For Antiochos riding mules, see E12, ll. 175–6, 252–3 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, pp. 1050, 1054.
[27] E6, ll. 19–20 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 976.
[28] E13, ll. 55–8; E5, ll. 204–5 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, pp. 954, 1066.

λεπταῖς) which he used as 'shields and breastplates' (θυρεοῖς μὲν καὶ θώραξιν), 'spears and arrow-shafts' (δόρασι δὲ καὶ βελῶν ἀτράκτοις).[29] This was, however, a futile rather than a heroic battle; the weapons were ineffective and he ended up deeply dissatisfied with his long struggle. These metaphors do not express the same type of lingering appreciation for the military life that we can detect in Psellos or Tzetzes. Antiochos does not masculinise the scholarly through reference to the martial. In fact, it seems that his displeasure with the non-scholarly parts of his work marred even those aspects of his role that involved reading and writing. In his letter to Demetrios Tornikes (1175), he describes his sleeves as being 'weighed down with whole sheaves of paper' (χαρτιδίων ὅλοις φακέλοις τὰ τῶν χειρῶν βαρούμεθα περιβλήματα) which are in fact 'nothing but useless burdens on the hands' (ἐτώσια ταῦτα μόνον ἄχθη χειρῶν) and simply deceive the viewers into believing that he is happy.[30]

Antiochos also presents us with an interesting reversal in a description of metaphorically hunting two speeches of his teacher Eustathios (1173). Such hunting, he claims, requires agility and a nimble and lightly clad body. But Antiochos' current occupation has made him a poor hunter. His non-scholarly responsibilities drag him down to earth and make him incapable of reaching Eustathios' winged speeches. As such, he asks his teacher to help him, by halting their soaring: 'for speech, too, is of such a nature that it can be captured, with a small piece of paper; its wing too is captured by pen and ink as by lime sticks'.[31] Given that war and hunting were closely related, life in the military camp should have made Antiochos fitter to hunt real-life birds, but this is not the kind of hunting that he was interested in. Like Tzetzes and Psellos, he was more concerned with exhibiting his rhetorical, rather than his physical, prowess.

Servitude and Bestialisation

Antiochos masculinises the scholar by contrasting the freedom to engage in intellectual endeavours with the servitude that he associates with his role in the imperial and judicial administration. More specifically, in his letter to Demetrios Tornikes (1175), he lamented the many demands that were put upon him, and which did not allow him a minute of rest:

[29] L7, ll. 41–5 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 334.
[30] E12, ll. 262–9 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 1056.
[31] E3, ll. 42–52 and 131–2 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 918: ἁλωτὸς γὰρ ἔφυ καὶ λόγος ὑπὸ χαρτιδίῳ βραχεῖ· ἰξεύεται δέ οἱ καὶ τὸ πτερὸν καλάμῳ καὶ μέλανι.

> And so I stand like another Orpheus in the midst of raging Thracian women tearing me to pieces. And if I open my lips and address words to someone, fully intending to turn to the others, they get annoyed, because I do not have tongues all over my body, and they seem to resent nature, because she did not make me a many-mouthed monster, and no voice, as someone has said, is found in my hands, hair, or the tread of my feet, and I am not, like the all-seeing Argos, completely covered with eyes.[32]

For Antiochos to properly fulfil his role would require an overabundance of the senses necessary for reading and writing. His speech and sight, multiplied beyond recognition, would then pose a risk to his identity not just as a scholar but even as a human. As it is, all the hustle and bustle afford him little time to devote to literary activities and leave him disempowered.[33] He continues in the same letter:

> But now the hectic activity, the din of battle that rings in my ears every day and the noisy and restless confusion of my affairs prevent me not only from picking up a pen to write a letter, but even from scratching myself with my finger; and when I prepare to lift my head from this useless occupation, then the inexorable plough-yoke pulls me down again.[34]

The image of having no time even to scratch an itch comes back in his shortest surviving letter, written to Nikolaos Hagiotheodorites (1173/5). There he apologises for his silence and the briefness of his current missive by stating 'I am not master of myself even to scratch.'[35] Being master of oneself (κύριος), having independence and self-determination, was an important marker of masculinity that Antiochos claims to have given up when he diverted his attention from scholarship.[36]

[32] E12, ll. 161–71 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 1048: ὡς ἄλλος Ὀρφεύς, ὑπὸ μέσαις Θράτταις μαινάσι σπαραττόμενος ἕστηκα. κἂν τῳ, διασχὼν τὰ χείλη, λόγον δοίην πάντως καὶ πρὸς τοὺς λοιποὺς μεταστραφησόμενος, οἱ δὲ δυσχεραίνουσιν, ὅτι μὴ κατὰ παντὸς ἐγλώσσωμαι σώματος καὶ νεμεσᾶν τῇ φύσει δοκοῦσιν, ὅτι με μὴ πολύστομόν τι τέρας ἐπλάσατο, μηδέ μοι γένοιτο, κατὰ τὸν εἰπόντα, φθόγγος ἐν χερσὶ καὶ κόμαισι καὶ ποδῶν βάσει, μηδὲ κατὰ τὸν πανόπτην Ἄργον ὠμμάτωμαι ἅπας.

[33] This is reminiscent of one of the few possible mentions of Psellos' role as a judge, where he describes his harassment by the nuns of a convent who had requested the renewal of a sigillion. See Riedinger, 'Quatre étapes', p. 8.

[34] E12, ll. 211–19 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 1052: Νῦν δὲ ἀλλ' ὁ περὶ πολλὰ τυρβασμὸς καὶ ὁ κατακροτῶν ὁσημέραι τὰς ἀκοὰς κυδοιμὸς καὶ τὸ τοῦ συρφετοῦ τῶν πραγμάτων θορυβῶδες καὶ πολυτάραχον οὐχ ὅπως ἐγχειρίσασθαι οὐκ ἐῶσι καλαμίσκον εἰς τύπον ἐπιστολῆς, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τῷ δακτύλῳ γοῦν κνήσασθαι. καί με, μικρὸν ἀνανεῦσαι τῆς ματαίας ἀσχολίας ἐπιβαλόντα, κατασπῶσιν αὖθις οἱ ἀπαραίτητοι κύφωνες.

[35] E11, l. 8 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 1034: ἅτε μηδ' ὅσον κνήσασθαι κύριος ὢν ἐμαυτοῦ.

[36] The word κύριος already had strong connotations of masculinity in the ancient Greek context. References to Christ as κύριος, combined with the analogy of Christ and man as the head, and the Church and woman as the body that is expected to be obedient and to receive help and protection, further reinforce the masculine connotations of the word in a Christian context. See also

Antiochos takes this image of subservience a step further, as in many of his letters he refers to his current state as one of slavery, telling us that through his decision to join the imperial administration he has made himself 'a willing slave' (ἐθελοδούλους) and one of the 'slaves bought with silver' (δούλους ἀργυρωνήτους), and that he has 'placed blissful freedom second to this wicked and useless slavery'.[37] This last statement, taken from his letter to Nikolaos Hagiotheodorites (1173/5), where he holds him accountable for his career choice, contrasts his current servitude with the freedom afforded by the life of the scholar. He continues: '[T]hough from the first we were born and brought up and raised free, later, like those wretched Karians, having given up liberty, we preferred this service and servitude for small wages.'[38]

The Karians were well-known as the first people to become mercenaries, and had the dubious fame of being the only people that Homer called 'barbarians' because of their speech.[39] Through this reference, Antiochos challenges once more the military ideal, by associating it with a lack of independence and by subtly referring to the importance of rhetoric and pleasant, rather than barbaric, speech. At the same time, he places himself in a position of superiority to those within the imperial and judicial administration who admitted to gaining fulfilment and gratification from their roles, creating thus a tripartite hierarchy with the most scholarly at the top.

But Antiochos was exaggerating the kind of freedom that scholars had.[40] Even the ones who worked as freelance professionals would have to

S. Constantinou, '"Woman's Head Is Man": Kyriarchy and the Rhetoric of Women's Subordination in Byzantine Literature', in *The Early Middle Ages*, ed. F. E. Consolino and J. Herrin (Atlanta, 2020), pp. 13–32.

[37] E3, l. 40; E6, l. 96; E10, ll. 46–8: ἐν δευτέρῳ τῆς πονήρου ταύτης καὶ ἀνονήτου δουλείας τὴν μακαρίαν ἐλευθερίαν ἐθέμεθα, in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, pp. 918, 982, 1016. Again, we can find a precedent in one of the few letters of Psellos that refer to his activities as a judge, in Papaioannou, *Epistulae*, p. 716: ἐξενοδοχήθην γὰρ παρ' αὐτοῖς ὁπότε τῷ Καταφλῶρον ἐκείνῳ εἰλώτευον, ἄρτι ἀφ' ἥβης γενόμενος καὶ τὴν εὐθὺ Μεσοποταμίας μετ' αὐτοῦ διϊών ('Indeed, I was their guest when, just after passing adolescence, I served the famous Kataphloros and accompanied him on the direct route to Mesopotamia'). See Riedinger, 'Quatre étapes', pp. 20, 24.

[38] E10, ll. 15–18 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 1014: εἰ γάρ, ὅτι τὴν πρώτην ἐλεύθεροι καὶ φύντες καὶ τραφέντες καὶ αὐξηθέντες, ἔπειτα, κατὰ τοὺς ἀθλίους Κᾶρας ἐκείνους, τὴν ἐλευθερίαν καταπροέμενοι, τὴν θητείαν ταύτην καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ μισθῷ δουλείαν εἱλόμεθα.

[39] Antiochos would have learnt this from his teacher Eustathios. See M. van der Valk (ed.), *Eustathii archiepiscopi Thessalonicensis commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem pertinentes*, vol. I (Leiden, 1971), p. 579.

[40] Indeed, we know that Antiochos tended to exaggerate. In the second letter that he sent to Eustathios of Thessalonike, he admitted that his first complaints about the desert that was Bulgaria were very much exaggerated. See E5, ll. 21–5 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, pp. 941–2: Πρώην γὰρ καὶ οὐ πάνυ τι πρώην περὶ τὴν Σαρδικὴν ποιούμενοι τὰς διατριβάς, γῆν ἐκείνην Βουλγάρων αὔχημα, χώραν ἐκείνην ἡμῖν τό γε νῦν εὐκταῖον κατάλυμα, κἂν εἰ τηνικαῦτα ἐν ἀποτροπαίοις ἠρίθμητο, μακρὸν ἴσμεν ταύτης τὸν ὕθλον, ὡς οὐκ ἔδει, καταχεάμενοι ἐν οἷς τηνικαῦτά σοι ἐπιστέλλοντες ἦμεν περὶ τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς· ('For we are aware that recently – and not so recently – when we were staying in Sardica, in that land that is

produce pieces that pleased their patrons.[41] In this respect, they were no less 'bound in their thought' (γνώμῃ δεσμίους), an aspect of his own role that he complains about.[42] Indeed, we have seen from the criticisms of Michael Khoniates that being a scholar could mean catering to patrons' preferences and exhibiting one's art in a way that could be considered selling out.[43] Nonetheless, there was scholarly precedent for this kind of complaint.[44] Notably, Psellos, who held similar positions as judge and imperial secretary, wrote in his satirical treatise on the misfortunes of imperial secretaries (ἀσηκρῆτις):

> First of all, the invitations to write and the efforts involved are so numerous that one can neither scratch one's ear, so the saying goes, nor lift one's head, nor taste drink or food on time, nor clean one's body in bathwater, unless one means those provided by nature – meaning the sweat that pours down forcibly from one's forehead and head.[45]

The two scholars describe in similar ways the hardships and lack of time associated with the imperial administration. But Psellos referred vaguely and little to his non-scholarly roles; this emphasis is much more pronounced in Antiochos' work.[46]

It is also in Antiochos' writings that fears of bestialisation were most pronounced.[47] These involved both real and figurative animals. For

the pride of the Bulgarians, in that region that from today's point of view was a desirable dwelling place – even though at the time we counted it as detestable – we poured out lengthy drivel about this area (which we should not have done) in the letter we wrote to you at the time concerning our affairs').

[41] M. Mullett, 'Aristocracy and Patronage in the Literary Circles of Comnenian Constantinople', in *The Byzantine Aristocracy: IX to XIII Centuries*, ed. M. Angold (Oxford, 1984), pp. 173–201; P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 343–52; M. D. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres: Texts and Contexts* (Vienna, 2003), pp. 37–9.

[42] E3, l. 40 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 918.

[43] See Chapter 2.

[44] There is also precedent for the defence of the incorruptibility and freedom of the proper scholar, notably by Tzetzes, who speaks of freedom of thought (ἐλευθέρα γνώμη). See V. F. Lovato, 'Living by his Wit: Tzetzes' Aristophanic Variations on the Conundrums of a "Professional Writer"', *BMGS*, 45:1 (2021), pp. 42–58, at pp. 45–6.

[45] A. R. Littlewood (ed.), *Michaelis Pselli, Oratoria minora* (Leipzig, 1985), p. 44: Πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ ὑπερπληθὴς ἡ ταλαιπωρία καὶ ἡ πρὸς τὸ γράφειν σύννευσις, ὡς μήτε τὸ οὖς κνᾶσθαι δύνασθαι, τοῦτο δὴ τὸ λεγόμενον, μήτε τὴν κεφαλὴν ὑπερᾶραι, μὴ ποτοῦ κατὰ καιρόν, μὴ βρώσεως γεύσασθαι, μὴ τὸ σῶμα καθᾶραι λουτροῖς, εἰ μή τις τοῖς ἐκ φύσεως φήσειεν (ἱδρῶσι, φημί, βίᾳ τοῦ μετώπου καὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς καταρρέουσιν).

[46] We have already seen that Psellos hardly refers to his own position as a judge, to the extent that it is difficult to establish whether he was forced into taking up the post or did so willingly and when exactly this took place. See Riedinger, 'Quatre étapes', pp. 5–30.

[47] Psellos expresses a similar fear in one of his few letters as a judge, in Papaioannou, *Epistulae*, p. 212: Σὺ μὲν ὁ ποθεινὸς καὶ φιλούμενος Ἀττικῇ τῇ γλώσσῃ πρὸς ἡμᾶς διείλεξαι. Ἡμεῖς δὲ ἁπλῶς καὶ ἀκατασκεύως καὶ προσφθεγγόμεθα καὶ προσαγορεύομεν· εἴ που γὰρ ἐνῆν τι γλαφυρὸν καὶ περινενοημένον ἡμῖν, ἀφείλατο τοῦτο ἡ μετὰ τῶν ἀμούσων καὶ θηριοτρόφων ἀναστροφή, καὶ ἐπηλήθευσεν ἡ παροιμία καὶ πρὸ ταύτης τὸ ἔπος, τὸ «ἦν δὲ κακοῖσι μιγῇς» φράζον «ἀπολεῖς

example, in one of his letters to Eustathios (autumn 1173), he plays with the polysemy of the word *logos*, meaning, among other things, literature, rhetoric and reason – and negative forms derived from it, which can refer to unreason and lack of care, but also to the 'dumbness' of non-human animals, most often horses. He writes:

> So we, who up to this age have been brought up with letters [λόγοις], and learned from our parents to engage in rhetoric [λόγους], have taken such little account [ἠλογήσαμεν] of ourselves, or rather we have foolishly arrived at such a degree of irrationality [ἀλογίας], that we do not care about anything in the universe except unreasoning [ἀλόγων] animals, horses and mules, both for riding and as beasts of burden. And although we were born to feed the soul with reason [λόγῳ], the food that is fit and proper for it, we have transformed ourselves into horse herders and grooms.[48]

Antiochos wrote this letter during the imperial expedition in Bulgaria, a period when he was forced to spend much time with real horses. These close encounters fuelled anxieties about his own status as a scholar, which are here expressed through wordplay – wordplay, however, that is not without serious consequences: the contrasts it created between *logos* and *a-logon* reflected and reinforced a long tradition of using speech and reason to define humans in opposition to animals, and to subjugate the latter in favour of the former.[49] Here this hierarchical thinking extends to humans who have been tainted through association with the animal: Antiochos disdains the idea of becoming a horse herder or a groom as the result of spending too much time with horses.

In other letters, his fears go a step further. He could lose not only his scholarly credentials and his rationality, but also his very humanity, as he

καὶ τὸν ἐόντα νόον». ('You whom I desire and love used the Attic language to talk to us. But we speak to you and greet you in a simple and unadorned style. For even if there was something elegant and refined about us, living among people who are not touched by the Muses and who raise wild beasts took it away from us; the proverb, and the line of verse before it, have come true, when it says "if you associate with the wicked, you will also lose your existing intelligence"').

[48] Ep. ll. 284–90 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 960: Οἱ δὴ ἐς ταύτην τὴν ἡλικίαν λόγοις ἐντεθραμμένοι καὶ λόγους ἐμπεπορεῦσθαι πρὸς τῶν τεκόντων δεδιδαγμένοι, αὐτοὶ δὲ οὕτως αὐτῶν ἠλογήσαμεν ἢ μᾶλλον ἐς τοῦτο ἀλογίας ἄφρονες ἥκομεν, ὡς μηδενὸς τῶν ἁπάντων μέλειν ἡμῖν, ὅτι μὴ μόνον ζῴων ἀλόγων, ἵππων, ἡμιόνων, ἱππασίμων ἅμα καὶ φορτηγῶν· καὶ λόγῳ τρέφειν <φύντες> τὴν ψυχὴν τῷ καταλλήλῳ ταύτῃ σιτίῳ καὶ προσφύει, εἰς ἱπποφορβοὺς καὶ ἱπποκόμους μετεταξά<μεθα>. See also C. Galatariotou, 'Travel and Perception in Byzantium', *DOP*, 47 (1993), pp. 221–41, at p. 237.

[49] This tradition goes back to Aristotle. See E. Meijer, *When Animals Speak: Toward an Interspecies Democracy* (New York, 2019), p. 3.

imagines himself turning into a dumb animal. In one of his letters to Eustathios (spring 1173), he describes himself as a man 'who has become an animal' (ἀποκτηνωθείς) and can now be assigned to grazing.[50] When complaining to Euthymios Malakes about the hardships of his non-scholarly work (after 1173), he compares himself to an animal dragged by the nose by its masters and led this way and that by means of gestures, rather than speech.[51] Similarly, in his letter to Demetrios Tornikes (1175), he refers to himself as someone who 'has joined the ranks of mindless livestock' (παρασυμβληθέντα κτήνεσιν ἀνοήτοις) and cannot be expected to 'act rationally' (λογικεύεσθαι).[52]

Such fears of bestialisation are prominent in Antiochos' work, even as they stand quite paradoxically next to scholarly references that showcase in writing the very education that moves him away from the animalistic and towards the rational and manly.[53] Contrary to Tzetzes, Antiochos' anxieties reveal a strong hierarchical thinking in which man ought to triumph over beast. This type of dominance was often invoked in the Middle Ages to help construct and buttress one's masculinity, and it was intimately linked to references to freedom.[54] As Karl Steel has argued using the example of Jewish–Christian relations in the West, dominant human groups tended to present subordinated groups as lacking reason and to claim freedom as one of their own main advantages. In the process, they animalised these groups, imagining them to be 'merely instinctual', living like cows or beasts of burden.[55] Antiochos complicates this kind of discourse by belonging (albeit unwillingly) to both groups: the rational and the irrational. the free and the unfree. Through his references to rationality and freedom, he reinforces the scholar's masculinity, placing him at the top of the human hierarchy. But he also reveals its unstable and temporary character: becoming a scholar was a process that continued throughout someone's life, and despite their previous education they were always in danger of losing its masculinising privileges.

[50] E3, l. 27 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 916.
[51] Antiochos uses the word κυρίων for the masters of the animal, bringing us back to questions of authority, self-determination and masculinity. E7, ll. 38–9 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 992.
[52] E12, ll. 190–1 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 1050.
[53] To get an idea of his scholarly references, one can look at the index of the edition of his works (e.g. his references to Herodotos, Hesiod, or Homer) in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, pp. 1163–6.
[54] For this theme, see also Chapter 2.
[55] K. Steel, 'Book Review Essay: Posthumanism and the Claim to Rational Action', *Postmedieval*, 11:1 (2020), pp. 137–48, at p. 138.

Subversive Bodies

The Body of the Soldier

Antiochos was writing at a time when the soldier's body had become an object of admiration. As Hatzaki has noted, in the twelfth century, soldiers were turned into 'a dazzling spectacle' as their weapons and corporeal splendour became the topic of histories, encomia and poems.[56] Their bodies were often described as tall, well-built and symmetrical, with powerful limbs, and were expected to withstand all hardships, as in Theodoros Prodromos' (c. 1100–60) description of Emperor Ioannes II Komnenos, who could defy heat and cold, thirst and hunger, sleeplessness, fatigue and illness.[57] Anna Komnene also commented on the preference of 'the rustics and the members of the military' (τὸ ἀγροικικὸν τοῦτο καὶ στρατιωτικὸν ἔθνος) for a man of brawn; instead of focusing on a man's virtue, they 'stand in awe only of his physical excellence, his daring, his strength, his speed, his size; according to these things they judge one worthy of the purple robe and crown'.[58]

Antiochos turned this masculine ideal of physical strength on its head, by juxtaposing the strong body of the soldier and the frail frame of the scholar, and willingly embracing weakness over military strength. He expresses this most clearly in his letter to Eustathios (autumn 1173), where he describes the effects of one's occupation on the body:

> For I believe – and perhaps I'm not overshooting the mark – that people are formed [συμμεταπλάττονται] according to their habits of life and the professions in which they are raised, and they morph into bodily natures appropriate for them. The proof is this: you can see in the stonemason or the coppersmith [λατύπον ἢ χαλκοτύπον] that he has thick and powerful forearms and strong palms and fingers to balance the heaviness of the hammer, and in a sense the overall form of his body is really made like stone or copper for his work. Similarly, one can see that a porter

[56] She also notes: 'In a world where real men were soldiers, where manliness was increasingly measured by feats of war, the manly and the unmanly were distinguished by their ability to fight or the lack of it; and the image of the soldier encapsulated what it meant to be male, potent and virile.' See Hatzaki, *Beauty and the Male Body in Byzantium*, pp. 119, 126.

[57] Hatzaki, *Beauty and the Male Body in Byzantium*, pp. 116–18; Poem 16, ll. 25–51 in Hörandner, *Theodoros Prodromos: Historische Gedichte*, p. 278.

[58] *Alexiad* 1.7.2: ἀλλὰ μέχρι τῶν τοῦ σώματος ἀρετῶν ἵσταται τόλμαν καὶ ῥώμην καὶ δρόμον καὶ μέγεθος θαυμάζον καὶ ταῦτα κρῖνον ἄξια ἁλουργίδος καὶ διαδήματος. Although Anna wrote this with a sense of disapproval, her own account too was full of physical descriptions of strong warrior bodies. See A. Laiou, 'Introduction: Why Anna Komnene?', in *Anna Komnene and Her Times*, ed. T. Gouma-Peterson (New York, 2000), pp. 1–14, at p. 9.

> [ἀχθοφόρον] has powerful shoulders and a broad back, his forearms are swollen with plumpness [ἐκ πολυσαρκίας], his calf muscles appear to be pregnant [τὰς γαστροκνημίας ἐγκυμονεῖν ἐοικότα], with oversized heels and firm ankles; and on the whole he is a match for the burdens placed on his shoulders. In the case of the soldier one can see that his hands have learned the order of battle, his fingers war, that he has armoured his chest with firmness, wields his arms, according to David [Psalm 144], as a bronze bow, and boasts an entire figure fit for the task from head to toe, almost becoming iron himself for his equipment of iron weapons.[59]

This passage highlights the close association between doing one's job and becoming who one is, while focusing on the repetitive performance of acts associated with one's profession. In the examples given by Antiochos these repetitive acts produce deeply gendered bodies. On the face of it, the bodies described are particularly masculine, with the emphasis placed on muscles and the physical strength that was associated with the male anatomy. But the passage already offers some clues to Antiochos' subversion. The manly soldier finds himself in questionable company.

Although stonemasons, coppersmiths and porters would undoubtedly have had similarly strong musculature, their bodies would not have enjoyed the same kind of admiration. Of interest here is a poem by Theodoros Prodromos, in which, explaining his decision to become a scholar, he relates his father's advice to avoid certain professions: 'But it is unsuitable for you to turn out a cobbler or a weaver or a coppersmith (χαλκοτύπον), since you will bring shame upon me.'[60] Although the poet continues to lament the poverty of the life of the scholar and to claim that he should have belonged to 'a menial way of life' (βαναυσίδος ἀγωγῆς), his choice of words is telling since the term βάναυσος had strong derogatory

[59] E5, ll. 223–38 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 956: Οἶμαι γάρ, καὶ ἴσως οὐ πόρρω σκοποῦ, συμμεταπλάττονται ἄνθρωποι τοῖς σφῶν ἐπιτηδεύμασι καὶ ταῖς τέχναις αἷς συντετράφαται καὶ εἰς καταλλήλους τούτοις σωμάτων φύσεις μεταρρυθμίζονται. Τεκμήριον δέ· καὶ γὰρ ἴδοις τὸν μὲν λατύπον ἢ χαλκοτύπον ἔμπαχυν τοὺς πήχεις καὶ βρίθοντα, καὶ τὰς παλάμας ἁδρόν, καὶ τοὺς δακτύλους ἀντισταθμὸν τῇ τοῦ ῥαιστῆρος ὁλκῇ, καί πως ἁπλῶς τὴν διαρτίαν τοῦ σώματος πρὸς τοὐργὸν ἀτεχνῶς καὶ ἀπολιθούμενον καὶ ἀποχαλκούμενον· τὸν δὲ ἀχθοφόρον ὑπερωμίαν καὶ εὐρὺν τὸ μετάφρενον, τοὺς βραχίονας ἐκ πολυσαρκίας ἐξῳδηκότα, τὰς γαστροκνημίας ἐγκυμονεῖν ἐοικότα, περιττὸν τὴν πτέρναν, βάσιμον τὰ σφυρὰ καὶ ὅλως τοῖς ἐπιτιθεμένοις αὐτῷ κατὰ νώτου ἄχθεσιν ἁμιλλώμενον· τὸν στρατιώτην 'εἰς παράταξιν δεδιδαγμένον τὰς χεῖρας, τοὺς δακτύλους εἰς πόλεμον' αὐτόθεν τῷ στερεμνίῳ τεθωρακισμένον τὰ στέρνα, τόξον χαλκοῦν δαυϊτικῶς φοροῦντα βραχίονας, καὶ πᾶσαν αὐχοῦντα τὴν πλάσιν τῷ ἐπιτηδεύματι ἀξιόχρεων ἐς πόδας ἐκ κεφαλῆς, πρὸς τὴν τῶν σιδηρέων ὅπλων κατασκευὴν ὀλίγου καὶ αὐτὸν ἀποσιδηρούμενον.

[60] Poem 38, ll. 39–40 in Hörandner, *Theodoros Prodromos, Historische Gedichte*, p. 378: σκυτέα δ' οὔ σ' ἐπέοικε πεφηνέναι οὐδ' ἄρ' ὑφάντην // οὐδέ τε χαλκοτύπον· καὶ γὰρ ἐμὸν ἔσσεαι αἶσχος.

connotations in writings produced by the leisured elite; becoming a coppersmith was not an option that he would have considered seriously.[61]

Antiochos himself refers to the work of the porter in his funerary speeches for his father (1178 and 1179), whom he presents toiling alongside manual workers for the building and enlargement of a cloister. More specifically, he tells us that his father recruited as porters 'servants and household helpers' (αὐτῷ θεραπευτικὸν καὶ οἰκίδιον), and that, while acting as their 'taskmaster' (ἐργεπείκτην ἑαυτὸν ἐφιστάς), he also 'carried loads on his shoulders along with the thick-skinned and broad-shouldered servants'.[62] The low status of the porters is significant. The scene is meant to highlight the humility and sacrifice of Antiochos' father, who deigns to mingle with those of a lower social status for the benefit of the cloister. Even so, Antiochos distances his father, the servant of God, from the household servants: his father 'counted himself among the servants in words' rather than deeds, and is explicitly said to have 'lacerated his fingers, which were not hardy, and inexperienced in such matters'.[63] Again, we do not get the impression that 'thick-skinned and broad-shouldered servants' are admired. A further clue on how we should read the porter's body appears later on in his letter to Eustathios, where he describes his own unpleasant work as part of the imperial administration as:

> [L]ike that animal that is always carrying burdens, receiving beatings or working at the millstone, and is tied up all day and all night and goes round and round the same circle, at the same time always in motion and going nowhere, eager but deemed unworthy to advance, and with a thick patch tied over its eyes, so that it cannot even see what degree of baseness it has reached.[64]

The beast of burden is the ultimate porter. Antiochos, however, does not expect his readers to marvel with admiration at its body, but rather to pity its incapacity to perceive how burdensome its life is. This is not a masculinising parallel, and Antiochos makes this even clearer when he

[61] Poem 38, l. 68 in Hörandner, *Theodoros Prodromos, Historische Gedichte*, p. 379.

[62] F5, ll. 583–7 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, pp. 760–2: τὰ πολλὰ καὶ συννωτοφοροῦντα τοῖς παχυδέρμοις τῶν οἰκοτρίβων αὐτοῦ καὶ ὑπερωμίαις.

[63] F5, l. 587; F4, ll. 249–51 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, pp. 762, 694: καὶ τοῖς λόγοις ἑαυτὸν ἐντάττοντα σύνδουλον, and τούς τε δακτύλους, ἀτριβῶς ἔχοντας καὶ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἐμπείρους, δρυπτόμενος.

[64] E5, ll. 384–91 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, pp. 966–8: ὅπως ἐκεῖνο ζῷόν ἐστιν ἀχθοφοροῦν ἀεὶ καὶ ῥοπαλιζόμενον ἢ καὶ περὶ τὴν μύλην διαπονούμενον καὶ δέσμιον ὅλων ἡμερῶν καὶ ὅλων νυκτῶν καὶ περὶ τὸν αὐτὸν δινούμενον κύκλον, ἀεικίνητον ὁμοῦ καὶ ἀπρόϊτον καὶ τοῦ πρόσω ἐφιέμενον μὲν οὐκ ἀξιούμενον δέ, πρὸς δὲ καὶ παχείᾳ καλύπτρᾳ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς περιδούμενον, ὡς μηδὲ ὁρᾷ ὅπη ποτέ ἐστι κακοῦ.

uses the same imagery in his letter to Nikolaos Hagiotheodorites (1773/5), specifying that the beast of burden is a female donkey: 'we have taken upon ourselves the burden of the jenny (τῆς ὄνου), in other words of the more irrational common herd of those whose lot is to serve for hire'.[65] The choice to refer to a female, rather than a male, donkey further subverts the ideal of physical strength by getting to the root of its very association with masculinity; not only should men be focusing on the rationality that is particularly theirs, but if they insist on competing based on physical strength, they risk being reduced to female donkeys.

Indeed, if we look closely at the passage with which we began, we can see that the choice of words to discuss the physicality of the human porter's body is not neutral from a gender perspective. Antiochos uses the terms πολυσαρκίας ('plumpness'), γαστροκνημίας ('calf muscles') and ἐγκυμονεῖν ('to be pregnant') to refer to the swelling of the forearms and the calves from physical exercise; all of them are suggestive of a woman's body. The term γαστροκνημία next to ἐγκυμονεῖν makes one think of pregnancy: although the term itself refers to the calf of the leg, ἐγκυμονέω means 'to become pregnant' and γαστήρ, the first part of γαστροκνημία, means 'belly' or 'womb'. Similarly, πολυσαρκία stands for a plumpness that one does not associate with physical exercise, but with a curvy female body.[66] The porter, then, along with the stonemason and the coppersmith, are not doing the soldier any favours.

But even the words Antiochos uses to describe the act of fighting could be subversive. The soldier's actions are described with reference to Psalm 144, 'Blessed be the Lord, my rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle', using a quotation that we will see again in Chapter 5 in our discussion of clerics. This reference mingles the religious with the military by making one think simultaneously of prayer and warfare. The fingers and hands which learn the order of battle may be no different from those of a holy bishop clasped closely together as he supplicates God on behalf of his flock. In that case, the bishop's actions acquire something of the soldier's masculinity. But what is one to think of a soldier's body whose description is reminiscent of that of a cleric?

[65] Ep. 10, ll. 69–76 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 1018: καὶ τὸν τῆς ὄνου φόρτον εἰς ἑαυτοὺς ἀναθέμενοι, τῆς ἀγελαίας δηλαδὴ καὶ ἀλογωτέρας μοίρας τῶν λαχόντων μισθοφορεῖν.

[66] We find this last word in Lucian's *Anacharsis*, an entertaining dialogue about the advantages of gymnastic exercises practised in Ancient Greece, where we read about expert wrestlers: 'They show no white and ineffective corpulence [πολυσαρκίαν] or pallid leanness, as if they were women's bodies bleached out in the shade.' See A. M. Harmon (trans.), *Lucian with an English Translation*, vol. 4 (London, 1961), pp. 42–3.

The Body of the Scholar

Antiochos' subversion of hegemonic ideals of physical strength continues with his description of the body of the scholar:

> [He] who is engaged down to his fingertips in rhetoric, who was raised alongside reed-pens and sheets of paper, who constantly labours over them [διαπονούμενος], who is now fused with them, he is thoroughly assimilated to their natural weakness and flimsiness in the stature of his flesh, his hands, feet and all his frame. As far as susceptibility goes, he is made into a reed, his substance is altered to the nature of a thin sheet, and at the onset of a slight breeze he has perished, crumpled like a reed.[67]

This is a frail body, yet its frailty is not the result of passivity but of active and constant labour and self-control. Indeed, Antiochos highlights this by choosing the word διαπονούμενος ('the one who constantly labours'), which can also be used for physical exercise. These exertions and their resulting frailty are something to be sought after when one wishes to become a scholar, as he explains in the same letter:

> Such in fact is the nature of those who have voluntarily [ἑκουσίως] weakened their body through labours and rendered it faint, and overworked themselves by sweating over eloquence and the other ordeals of our nature, and by not looking up from a book practically all day and all night since infancy, but by being fastened to their lectern and sewn to their chair, people whom the zeal for education has consumed and sucked dry, 'crushing the marrow from their fat', as has been said.[68]

Antiochos is describing his own body through the lens of the body of the scholar as an ideal. His reference to infancy is important, as it shows again that the body's constitution is not accidental, but the result of a lifelong

[67] E5, ll. 239–48 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, pp. 956–8: καὶ ὁ περὶ λόγους ἐξ ὀ<νύχων καὶ> καλαμίσκοις καὶ χάρταις συντεθραμμένος καὶ ἀεὶ περὶ ταῦτα διαπονούμενος καὶ τούτοις προ<στε>τηκώς, εἰς τὸ συμφυὲς αὐτοῖς ἀσθενές τε καὶ ἀφαυρὸν τὴν τοῦ σαρκίου φυὴν καὶ δὴ ἀφωμοίωται καὶ χεῖρας καὶ πόδας καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν ὁλομέλειαν· ὅσον ἦκεν ἐς τὸ εὐπαθές, ἀποκεκαλάμωται καὶ εἰς χαρτίσκου φύσιν μετεστοιχείωται καὶ δὴ ἀνέμου μὲν μικροῦ προσβολῇ ᾤχετο καλαμηδὸν συντριβείς.

[68] E5, ll. 212–18 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, pp. 954–6: ὁποίως ἄρα καὶ ἐσχήκασι φύσεως οἱ τὰ σώματα ἑκουσίως ἐκνευρίσαντες πόνοις καὶ ἐξίτηλα θέμενοι καὶ τοῖς περὶ λόγους ἱδρῶσι κατειργασμένοι καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς ἀγκτῆρσι τῆς φύσεως· καὶ τῷ μὴ ἀνακύπτειν βίβλου βρεφόθεν μονονοὺχ ἁπάσης ἡμέρας καὶ ἁπάσης νυκτός, ἐμπεπῆχθαι δὲ τῷ ἀναγνωστηρίῳ καὶ συνερράφθαι τῷ σκίμποδι· οὓς ὁ περὶ τὴν παιδείαν *κατέφαγε* ζῆλος καὶ ἐξεμύζησε, *τὰ τούτων ἐκμυελίσας πάχη* κατὰ τὸν φάμενον'.

process.[69] This is further emphasised through his explicit contrast of the scholarly and the martial:

> Yet we are people clothed in the longest-suffering flesh, enclosing limbs that are frail and wrinkled, and are an easy target for any attack of disease, people who neither do the physical training of the military, nor are corpulent. Rather, our skin is stretched tight over our meagre flesh, and thinner than that shed by snakes; our ribs can be precisely numbered and show through the hide which is barely a film over them; in our arms and fingers we are threshed clean.[70]

One of the most interesting aspects of Antiochos' description of his body as a scholarly body is his use of medical language and imagery. His references to an emaciated body, to frail and wrinkled limbs, to frequent attacks of disease, make us think of restricted mobility, chronic pain and illness. This impression is intensified by other passages where Antiochos describes scholarly activities. In a different letter to Eustathios (end of 1173), he speaks of the scholar as someone 'who has bent over books (ἐγκεκυφώς) and fixed his eyes on them persistently (ἀτενές) and fixedly (πεπηγός)'.[71] The word ἐγκεκυφώς is related to 'kyphosis', the medical term for curvature of the spine, while the word πεπηγός is another medical term referring to visual impairment due to immobility of the eyes.[72]

What are we to make of this use of medical language in relation to the scholar and scholarly activities? What does it tell us about Antiochos' view of the scholar's gender as well as about his own embodied experience? First, it is important to note that Antiochos describes an embodied experience that was also his own; he was intimately familiar with the emaciation, the weakness and the pains. Yet he gives a positive meaning to the medical

[69] It is not only Antiochos who emphasises the importance of engaging with scholarship since infancy. Anna Komnene attempts to compromise the credentials of Ioannes Italos by pointing out that his formative years consisted of following his warlike father around. See *Alexiad* 5.8.1: τὰ μὲν οὖν πρῶτα τῆς ἡλικίας οὕτως εἶχε τῷ Ἰταλῷ καὶ ἡ πρώτη τοιαύτη τούτῳ καταβολὴ τῆς παιδεύσεως ('Thus did Italos spend the first years of his life, and such was the foundation of his education').

[70] E5, ll. 206–12 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 954: ἄνθρωποι ταλαιπορώτατα φοροῦντες σαρκία καὶ ἰσχνὰ τὰ μέλη καὶ ῥικνὰ περικείμενοι καὶ ῥάω πρὸς πᾶσαν νοσήματος ἐκβολὴν καὶ μὴ τὰ στρατιωτικὰ σωμασκοῦντες μηδὲ κατασαρκούμενοι, ἀλλὰ τὸ δέρμα τοῖς κρεϋλλίοις περιτεταμένοι καὶ λεβηρίδος λεπτότερον καὶ τὰς πλευρὰς ἐς τὸ ἀκριβὲς ἠριθμημένοι, διαφαινούσας τῆς μονονοὺκ ἐπαλειφούσης ταῦτα δορᾶς, καὶ τοὺς πήχεις περιεπτισμένοι καὶ τοὺς δακτύλους.

[71] E6, ll. 41–2 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 978: καὶ γὰρ ὁ βίβλοις ἐγκεκυφὼς καὶ ἀτενὲς μὲν ὄμμα καὶ πεπηγὸς αὐταῖς ἐπιβάλλων.

[72] See, for example, Galen's comment: τὸ δὲ πεπηγὸς ὄμμα διὰ τὴν ἀκινησίαν γίνεται τῶν κινούντων τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν μυῶν ('the eye becomes fixed through the immobility of the muscles which move the eyeball'), in H. Diels (ed.), *Galeni in Hippocratis prorrheticum I commentaria iii*, vol. 16 (Leipzig, 1915), p. 610.

language he uses. It is not employed to describe a problem in need of cure, nor does it present bodily difference as an individual, pathological, condition. Instead, he portrays these experiences, which we today could recognise to be disabilities, as the means to become a scholar and as an opportunity to produce new ways of knowing. He describes the frailty of the scholar's body, the curved back, the fixed eyes, the experience of pain, as part of what allows him to immerse himself in reading and writing, to understand the world, and ultimately to be a man rather than a dumb beast. As such, if we were to think of his descriptions in terms of disability, we would put the emphasis on pride and gain, rather than on any narratives of pity and tragedy. Antiochos' portrayal allows us to see how bodily differences can afford unusual pleasures and spaces of liberation.[73] His impairments may have been painful, making him describe his body as 'the longest-suffering flesh', but they were also seen as a necessary precondition for the attainment of the knowledge he held so dear. His body was as it should have been for his mind to engage perfectly with scholarship.[74]

These positive connotations of bodily weakness would not have appeared strange in the Middle Ages. A context that Antiochos does not explicitly invoke when talking about his scholarly body-building toils, but which may well have been in the minds of his readers, is that of the ascetic who emaciates his flesh and saps away its strength in the service of God. There are numerous examples that one could cite. I will give here just one, Simeon the Stylite, chosen both for its visual strength and for its posthuman possibilities (a topic to which I return later in the chapter).[75] Simeon appears in his hagiographies as a man who is willing to make his body suffer for God, a man who withstands pains and hunger, who merges his body with plants, rocks and insects, and even gives it up as food. In one of the episodes of his *Life*, which appears both in the Late Antique original and the tenth-century metaphrastic compilation, we read that Simeon fastened his foot to an iron chain, which was itself attached to a large rock, ensuring his confinement and relative immobility. When he was called upon by

[73] For how disability can 'allow for unique experiences, unexpected delights, and cunning knowledge bases', see Jennifer Eun-Jung Row, 'Marvelous Monstrosity and Disability's Delights: New Directions in Premodern Critical Disability Studies', *Exemplaria*, 34:1 (2022), pp. 87–101, at p. 95.

[74] The image of the scholar 'awkwardly hunched over, in contemplation' dates from at least the third century BCE, when Paul Zanker places a shift in the portraiture of intellectuals. See P. Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates: The Image of the Intellectual in Antiquity*, trans. A. Shapiro (Berkeley, 1995), p. 90.

[75] For a similar eleventh-century example, see the saintly monk Nikon from the *Life* of Lazaros of Mount Galesion, who had a sore on the upper part of his foot where maggots bred. See R. P. H. Greenfield (trans.), *The Life of Lazaros of Mt Galesion: An Eleventh-Century Pillar Saint* (Washington, DC, 2000), p. 263.

a bishop to remove the chains, it was found that the piece of hide (δέρμα) applied to his leg to prevent the iron from damaging it had fused with the flesh: it was 'sewn together' (συνερραμμένον γὰρ ἦν) and in it were 'nesting' (ἐμφωλεύοντας) 'more than twenty very large bugs' (πλείους ἢ εἴκοσι μεγίστους κόρεις).[76] In this context, too, but for different reasons, restricted mobility, chronic pain and suffering are embraced rather than rejected.[77]

This does not mean, however, that Antiochos was writing in a society that was immune to ableism. Indeed, we have already seen him fighting against the allure of indefatigability in the case of Manouel Komnenos, where expectations of compulsory and ever-present activity made only limited and conditional space for people who experienced illness, pain and bad health.[78] Similarly, Antiochos' prized hunched back was considered less kindly in the case of the Homeric character Thersites, with his 'rounded shoulders curving in toward his chest', whose example was used by Eustathios of Thessalonike to teach his students how to engage in mockery in a literary context.[79] In fact, it is likely that it is exactly this kind of discrimination that formed the backdrop against which Antiochos was writing. His description of the scholar's body could be a witty and spirited response to ideologies which devalued weak bodies like his. Within this context, a modern reader could recognise Antiochos as a person disabled by his society, trying to break away from discrimination and to enjoy his own embodiment. One way of achieving this was by explicitly

[76] R. Doran (trans.), *The Lives of Simeon Stylites* (Michigan, 1992), p. 74; Theodoret of Kyrrhos (BHG 1678–80): Vita 26, Section 10 in P. Canivet and A. Leroy-Molinghen, *Théodoret de Cyr: l'histoire des moines de Syrie*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1979). In his iconography Simeon the Stylite is represented with no feet, with the walled platform on the top of his pillar completing his lower torso, 'a hybrid of human and column'. See 'Saint as Posthuman Assemblage: The Life of Simeon the Stylite' in V. Burrus, *Ancient Christian Ecopoetics: Cosmologies, Saints, Things* (Philadelphia, 2019). In the metaphrastic *Life* the piece of hide is specifically 'sheepskin' (δορὰ προβάτου), and it is also reported that 'more than twenty bugs had made their nest in his leg' (κόρεις πλείους τῶν εἴκοσιν ἐμφωλεύοντες τῷ σκέλει). See *PG* 114, col. 345.

[77] More broadly these fit within the theory of philopassianism, the medieval conceptualisation of pain as useful and productive, rather than an experience to be avoided. See E. Cohen, 'Towards a History of European Physical Sensibility: Pain in the Later Middle Age', *Science in Context*, 8:1 (1995), pp. 47–74.

[78] 'The processes of ableism see the corporeal imagination in terms of compulsory ableness, i.e. certain forms of "perfected" materiality are posited as preferable.' See F. A. K. Campbell, 'Exploring Internalized Ableism Using Critical Race Theory', *Disability & Society*, 23:2 (2008), pp. 151–62, at p. 153.

[79] *Iliad* 2.217–8: τὼ δέ οἱ ὤμω // κυρτὼ ἐπὶ στῆθος συνοχωκότε. For mocking and Thersites, see M. Perisanidi and O. Thomas, 'Homeric Scholarship in the Pulpit: The Case of Eustathius' Sermons', *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 64 (2021), pp. 81–94, at p. 93. More broadly, these are complex issues which require more work and more space.

presenting this embodiment as an instance of the body of the scholar as a general category. Adopting this wider scholarly framework created a space of liberation, allowing bodies to diverge with pride from the martial ideals of physical strength that, as we have seen, were an object of admiration in the twelfth century.

But Antiochos himself also contributed to ableist narratives. If we look closer at his description of scholarly activities, we can see that he could not avoid claiming for himself the restlessness that he reproached in Manouel. He admits proudly to having 'overworked' himself 'by sweating over eloquence' (τοῖς περὶ λόγους ἱδρῶσι κατειργασμένοι); indeed, as we said, he purposely built his weak body – creating doubts about bodies whose weakness was less produced and productive.[80] There are also examples where he talks about bodily impairments in a negative way.[81] This is particularly the case when he describes situations which do not allow him to do his scholarly work, but also conditions of which he had no personal embodied experience. For one, he claims, in his letter to Demetrios Tornikes (1175) that, because of the hustle and bustle of his administrative job, his 'ears have become deaf' (ἐκκεκώφημαι τὰ ὦτα) from the rabble and his speech confused (τὴν γλῶτταν συγκεχυμένος).[82] Blindness also comes up, in a letter to Eustathios (spring 1173) where he requests two of his speeches. He describes them in the following terms:

> If you send me both, then, let me be comforted by them as with a staff and cane [ῥάβδῳ καὶ βακτηρίᾳ], and I will raise up both my mind and my tongue, which are falling, with these two supports, as with two pillars of fire and cloud, more steadfast than those old ones. If you give them to me as my guides [ὁδηγούς], they will precede me in rhetoric all my life, and not least in the journey I am about to undertake they will guide me and ease my path.[83]

Without these two speeches, Antiochos presents himself as a blind man, an implication that becomes stronger through his previous description of

[80] E5, ll. 213–14 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 954.
[81] 'A chief feature of an ableist viewpoint is a belief that impairment (irrespective of "type") is inherently negative which should, if the opportunity presents itself, be ameliorated, cured or indeed eliminated.' See Campbell, 'Exploring Internalized Ableism', pp. 153–4.
[82] E12, ll. 177, 182 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 1050.
[83] E3, ll. 170–7 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 926: ἀμφοτέρους οὖν μοι διαπεμψάμενος, ὡς ῥάβδῳ καὶ βακτηρίᾳ τούτοις με παρακάλεσον, ἑκάτερά μοι, καὶ νοῦν καὶ γλῶσσαν, ἑκατέροις τούτοις στηρίγμασιν ἀνορθούμενος καταπίπτοντα καὶ ὅσα καὶ δύο στύλους, πυρός τε καὶ νεφέλης, καὶ τῶν παλαιῶν ἐκείνων ἀπλανεστέρους, τούτους μοι διδοὺς ὁδηγοὺς καὶ παντὸς μὲν ἡμῖν τοῦ βίου τὰ ἐς λόγους προδραμουμένους, οὐχ ἥκιστα δὲ καὶ εἰς ἣν στελλόμεθα νῦν ἐκδημίαν ἡγησομένους καὶ τὰς τρίβους ἐξευμαρίσοντας.

these same speeches as the two eyes of rhetoric – 'without them she seems blind and unable to see'.[84] Here, the impairment is metaphorical and meant to highlight the healing power of scholarship. It is lack of access to these speeches that disables; by contrast, the books act as a disability aid: staff, cane and guide. In these examples, Antiochos presents bodily impairments such as blindness and deafness as undesirable and incompatible with learning, perpetuating their negative connotations.

The contrast in Antiochos' attitude towards different impairments is not surprising. He creates a hierarchy of bodily difference, with his own featuring high up on the scale and those of others being presented as unwanted. This is another sign of the ableism that he had internalised. Indeed, it could be seen as a form of 'defensive othering' in which a marginalised person accepts a hegemonic norm, such as ableism, but only as it applies to others, judging their own circumstances to be exceptional.[85] This kind of thinking allows Antiochos to value his own impairment while maintaining that other impairments (here deafness, speech impairment and blindness) are unproductive and undesired.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that this is not the only framework in which Antiochos understands his own embodiment, and that genre is important. When writing letters as a scholar to other scholars, it is convenient, liberating and masculinising for him to describe his own body as an instance of the ideal body of the scholar. When writing a religious piece, however, he finds it more apt to relate his embodiment to established religious conceptions of illness. In his longest surviving work, an encomium to John the Baptist, which is also his only religious writing (1187), Antiochos gives thanks for healing and prays for future cures of both body and soul. In doing so, he presents illness in a very different light, associating it with sin – albeit in a positive way, focusing on its capacity to help keep one away from sinful behaviour; 'diseases are a bitter sort of astringent medicines' (πικραί τινες αἱ νόσοι φαρμακεῖαι καὶ στύφουσαι) or 'a scourge for educating and suppressing' (ἐπὶ παιδεύσει μάστιγες καὶ καταστολῇ) the soul's disorder.[86] This variety in Antiochos'

[84] E3, ll. 158–9 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 926: ὡς τούτων ἄτερ δοκεῖν καὶ ἀποτετυφλῶσθαι ταύτην καὶ ἀβλεπτεῖν.

[85] Partly citing M. Schwalbe, S. Godwin, D. Holden, et al., 'Generic Processes in the Reproduction of Inequality: An Interactionist Analysis', *Social Forces*, 79:2 (2000), pp. 419–52, at p. 425, in Campbell, 'Exploring Internalized Ableism', p. 155: 'the marginalized person attempts to emulate the hegemonic norm, whiteness or ableism, and assumes the "legitimacy of a devalued identity imposed by the dominant group, but then saying, in effect, *There are indeed Others to whom this applies, but it does not apply to me*".'

[86] L8, ll. 2104–10 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 498.

attitude towards illness, pain and disability does not take away from the subversive image of the scholar that he developed, an image which allowed him to masculinise his body and to change the narrative that would render it effeminate. There is no reason why he would not be capable of working with several competing frameworks of thought, depending on context.[87] Indeed, what is more interesting is to ask whether his subversive views were shared by his contemporaries and to identify potential lines of continuity in thought.

As I have argued, Antiochos' presentation of the scholar's body is closely tied to his own embodiment and disabled experience. But this does not mean that it would have appeared strange to other scholars who read it. A very similar idea can be found in Prodromos' poem which snubs cobblers, weavers and coppersmiths. There, he also cites his father as saying:

> for sure, battle brings a man glory, I don't deny it.
> But for you, Theodoros my son, the shoulders are weak
> for carrying a shield, the arms are weak
> for brandishing a spear, the shins are weak
> for you to go with bronze greaves among the fighters.[88]

Although this does not show the same kind of embrace of weakness, we do get the impression from the words of Prodromos' father that part of society associated embodiment with one's career choices and would have been familiar with the description of the scholar's body found in Antiochos' writings. Indeed, this poem rehearses less explicitly the argument we have seen in Antiochos' description of the soldier's body: being a soldier is good, but so is being a scholar, and there are other less preferable professions which are associated with strong bodies. Physical strength is not the be-all and end-all even in the writings of an author well-known for his appreciation of martial ideals.[89]

Similarly, a reference in Tzetzes' epistolography suggests that there were people who chose to advertise through their appearance their scholarly

[87] It would also be interesting to examine whether Antiochos' views towards religion, illness and disability changed with age. Written in 1187, his encomium of John the Baptist is one of his last surviving writings, with his first letter dating from 1157. For the dates of his works, see Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 32.

[88] Poem 38, ll. 34–8 in Hörandner, *Theodoros Prodromos, Historische Gedichte*, p. 378: ναὶ μὲν κυδιάνειρα καὶ ἡ μάχη, οὐκ ἀπόφημι· // σοὶ δέ, τέκνον Θεόδωρε, ἀνάλκιδες εἰσὶ μὲν ὦμοι, // ὥστε σάκος φορέειν, ἀνάλκιδες εἰσὶ δὲ χεῖρες, // ὥστε δόρυ κραδάειν, ἀνάλκιδες εἰσὶ δὲ κνῆμαι, // ὥστε σε μαρναμένοις χαλκοκνήμιδα μετελθεῖν.

[89] M. Bazzani, 'The Historical Poems of Theodore Prodromos, the Epic-Homeric Revival and the Crisis of Intellectuals in the Twelfth Century', *Byzantinoslavica*, 65 (2007), pp. 211–28, at pp. 222–5.

credentials. He favourably compares one of his addressees, Alexios Pantechnes, to some pseudo-philosophers who:

> scatter their hair in disorder, letting it flow down to their forehead with deliberated lack of deliberation, and adopt a pious fixed stare [ἀτενίζουσι], apparently hunched over [κεκυφότες], and involving many in deception with the treacherousness and canniness of their intentions.[90]

The words ἀτενίζουσι and κεκυφότες remind us of Antiochos' description of scholarly activities, only here they are used in a mocking tone to describe a group of scholars of whom Tzetzes did not approve.[91] The fact that some saw such bodily postures and gestures as affectations, while others embraced them willingly, is not surprising. Indeed, we saw something similar in Chapter 2 in our discussion of mules, which could be taken as signs of professional success, and thus masculinity, or of luxury, and thus effeminacy. The scholarly community need not have been unified, and scholars would have criticised each other both for their work and for their gender expression.[92] Nonetheless, Antiochos' descriptions of the scholar's stoop and fixed gaze would have been familiar to both their followers and their detractors.

Becomings

J. J. Cohen described the medieval knight as a posthuman assemblage of man, horse and equestrian objects. Each repeatedly changed the other; new types of bodily control had to be learnt by man and horse; new

[90] Epistle 93 in Leone, *Ioannis Tzetzae Epistulae*, p. 134: οἳ τὴν κόμην ἐπιτετηδευμένως ἀνεπιτήδευτον κεχυμένην ἀρρύθμως ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον ἐπισπείρουσι καὶ κεκυφότες δῆθεν εὐλαβὲς ἀτενίζουσι πολλοῖς ἐνιέντες ἀπάτην τῷ ὑπούλῳ τῆς γνώμης καὶ κερδαλέῳ.

[91] There was further literary precedent for such reproaches. Notably, Plutarch (c. 45–120 CE) in his *Moralia* described the bodily postures that tutors taught their students as part of their education. We read, for example, in *Can Virtue Be Taught?*, that children are taught to 'walk in the public streets with lowered head (κεκυφότας); to touch salt-fish with but one finger, but fresh fish, bread and meat with two; to sit in such and such a posture; in such and such a way to wear their cloaks'. See W. C. Helmbold (trans.), *Plutarch, Moralia, Volume VI* (Cambridge, MA, 1939), pp. 8–9: κεκυφότας ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς περιπατεῖν, ἐνὶ δακτύλῳ τοῦ ταρίχους ἅψασθαι, δυσὶ τοῦ ἰχθύος, σίτου, κρέως, οὕτω καθῆσθαι, τὸ ἱμάτιον οὕτως ἀναλαβεῖν. Plutarch's issue was with the trivial nature of such teaching, but such comments reveal the importance of bodies, their postures and gestures as social skills to be learned. See G. Davies, *Gender and Body Language in Roman Art* (Cambridge, 2018), p. 46. Similar sarcastic references to the great teachers' 'sickly pallor' and long beard can be found in Lucian's 'The Sky-man' (Section 5, ll. 6–7: προσώπου τε σκυθρωπότητι καὶ χρόας ὠχρότητι καὶ γενείου βαθύτητι ('the sullenness of the face, the paleness of the complexion and the length of the beard')) and in Theodoros Prodromos' dialogue *Xenedemos*. See Spyridonova, A. Kurbanov, and O. Y. Goncharko, 'The Dialogue Xenedemos', pp. 230, 264.

[92] A good example of this is Theodoros Prodromos' dialogue *Xenedemos*, which includes a personification of the false teacher of philosophy as well as one of a good philosopher. See Spyridonova, A. Kurbanov, and O. Y. Goncharko, 'The Dialogue Xenedemos', p. 233.

technologies were added to facilitate this: the stirrup, the saddlebow, the shirts of mail and armour. These in turn incurred more muscular adaptations, and so on. It is not easy to describe the medieval *chevalier* by isolating the human body from the horse and the technologies that helped construct and constitute it. As Cohen writes: 'No single object or body has meaning within this assemblage without reference to the other forces, intensities, affects, and directions to which it is conjoined and within which it is always in the process of becoming something other, something new.'[93]

The close relationship between medieval knight and horse was recognised by the Eastern Romans. In her discussion of war strategy, Anna Komnene states:

> for when on horseback any Kelt is irresistible in his charge and aspect, but whenever he dismounts his horse, partly because of the size of his shield, partly too because his boots are not fit for jumping and running, he immediately becomes easy to master and altogether different from before as his mental energy is also as it were brought to ground. It was because the emperor knew this, I reckon, that he ordered the killing of the horses rather than the knights.[94]

On foot the spurs, which were necessary for the assemblage to work, became a hindrance, restricting mobility. The change affected both the man's body and his spirit. He seems to have lost the willingness to act, revealing how the knight's agency was not simply located within the human body, but depended on horse and spurs to come together. The reason given for ordering the killing of horses rather than men is also worth noting. There is no mention of the greater importance of human life (although it was probably valued more highly). The target was corporeal vulnerability. Seen as a whole, the knight was most vulnerable when the horse was neutralised – indeed, he was now merely man, rather than knight.

Such a relationship does not seem to have been replicated in the case of Eastern Roman warriors and their horses, and scholars, as we have seen, repeatedly repudiated horses, showing a reluctant appreciation of the nameless mule. Their attitude was antithetical to that of the medieval knight, and Antiochos presents us with the clearest contrast. In his letter

[93] Chapter 2: 'Chevalerie', in J. J. Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (London, 2003), pp. 35–77, at p. 76.

[94] *Alexiad* 5.6.2: καὶ γὰρ ἀνὴρ Κελτὸς πᾶς ἐποχούμενος μὲν ἀνύποιστος τὴν ὁρμὴν καὶ τὴν θέαν ἐστίν, ἐπὰν δ' ἀποβαίη τοῦ ἵππου, τὸ μέν τι τῷ μεγέθει τῆς ἀσπίδος, τὸ δέ τι καὶ διὰ τὸ τῶν πεδίλων πρὸς ἅλματα καὶ δρόμον ἀνεπιτήδειον εὐχείρωτός τε τηνικαῦτα γίνεται καὶ ἀλλοῖος παντάπασιν ἢ πρότερον ὀκλαζούσης οἷον καὶ τῆς ψυχικῆς αὐτῷ προθυμίας. καὶ τοῦτ', οἶμαι, γινώσκων ὁ βασιλεὺς μὴ τοὺς ἱππότας, ἀλλὰ τοὺς ἵππους ἀναιρεῖν ἐπέταττε.

to Demetrios Tornikes (1175), complaining about the toils of his non-scholarly job, he writes:

> my body is troubled by my clothes, my feet are constrained by the soldier's boots and twisted by the spurs on my ankle and heel; and I am always ready to mount at short notice when my mule is present.[95]

Antiochos experiences a forceful and unwanted becoming which hurts his body. The accoutrements of riding fit him ill, and the horse is a mule. There has been no appropriate training for him; the necessary somatic knowledge is lacking. This passage is consistent with what we have seen so far: his clamouring for freedom and self-determination, and his repeated attempts to claim both masculinity and humanness. But if we look more closely, we can see that Antiochos is no neatly self-contained subject, resisting all non-human entanglements. In his case, it is not an equid, but his books and other study aids that appear as extensions of the flesh that allow him to become a scholar.

For Antiochos, objects associated with scholarship have an intensely vivid life. Notably, he believed that grace could pass from human into book and then back into another human. Writing to Eustathios (end of 1173) to apologise for the late return of one of his books, he states:

> From your book I expected simultaneously to get some part of you. For one should grant not only to the sun, snow and perfume to transmit heat, cold, or fragrance to the bodies with which they come into contact, but now also to you, the sole or rather (of this I am convinced) the outstanding attendant of rhetoric – because you too have left valuable traces of your grace upon everything on which you lay your hands or eyes, be they books, volumes, or any passages of text.[96]

For Antiochos, objects came to life when touched or looked upon, two senses that he associated with each other. He understood vision as a combination of intromissions and extramissions: 'there are emanations from both existing

[95] E12, ll. 250–3 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 1054: τὸ μὲν σῶμα τοῖς ἐσθήμασιν ἐνοχλούμενον, τοὺς δὲ πόδας ταῖς κρηπῖσι σφιγγόμενον καὶ τοῖς περὶ τὸ σφυρὸν καὶ τὴν πτέρναν ἱπποκέντροις στρεβλούμενον· καὶ οὕτως ἀεὶ παρεσκευάσθαι, ὡς ἐκ τοῦ σχεδόν, τῆς ἡμιόνου παρούσης, ἐποχησόμενον.

[96] E6, ll. 25–31 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, pp. 976–8: ὁμοῦ δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς βίβλου μεταληψόμενός τι καὶ σοῦ· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡλίῳ μόνον δοτέον καὶ χιόνι καὶ μύρῳ τὸ τοῖς προσομιλοῦσι τῶν σωμάτων θάλψιν ἢ περίψυξιν ἢ εὔπνοιαν ἐμποιεῖν, ἀλλ' ἤδη καὶ σοί, τῷ μόνῳ ἢ ὑπὲρ ἅπαντας, ὡς ἐμαυτὸν πείθω, τοῦ λόγου θεραπευτῇ. οἷς γὰρ ἂν χεῖρας ἢ ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐπιβαλεῖς καὶ αὐτός, εἴτε βίβλοι ταῦτ' εἴεν εἴτε τόμοι ἢ ὁποῖα ἄττα τῶν γραμμάτων ἐδάφια, τῶν παρὰ σοὶ χαρίτων ἴχνη τούτοις ἐφῆκας οὐ φαῦλα.

objects and the seeing eyes'.[97] According to this theory, which he attributed to Plato, both the eye and the object streamed off rays which 'touched' each other to create the seen image.[98] In this process, the object itself is neither passive nor isolated, but fully connected with the body that sees it. And this connection is evident for Antiochos even without reference to ancient theories: the very fixed way in which a scholar looks at a book, trying to squeeze out its content, was enough for a mutual exchange to be established. On the one hand, the scholar learns from the book's subject matter; on the other, he imparts to the book 'something of his own nature'.[99] Touch could similarly transmit essence, a process which Antiochos explains within a religious framework: 'I am convinced that, as in the case of the Saviour, power emanates from you and flows into all that your holy hands touch.'[100] In Christ's case such power would often be used for healing, and could involve not only direct touch but even the simple touch of his hem, as in the case of the bleeding woman (Mark 5:25–34). Through touch, objects became implicated in processes of sacral transmission which enlivened them and made them indispensable carriers of grace.[101]

Books also merged with the human body in Antiochos' writing. The biblical image of the consumption of the scroll (Ezekiel 3:3) comes up in the letter to Eustathios directly after the discussion of seeing and touching:

> I intended to slide it whole down my throat and devour it, just like the excellent prophet Ezekiel did that other scroll; not for anyone else's sake, and not only because it is, in any case, a beloved book for me, but simply because it is your fingers in particular, the talented servants of reason and wisdom, that have found it worthy to touch.[102]

[97] E6, ll. 38–9 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 978: ἀπορροίας τινὰς ἐκ τῶν ὑποκειμένων σωμάτων καὶ τῶν ὁρώντων ὀμμάτων ἐκφέρεσθαι. This earliest intromission theory is that of Empedocles (c. 495–435 BCE), found also in Plato's *Meno* (76c–d). See K. Rudolph, 'Sight and the Presocratics: Approaches to Visual Perception in Early Greek Philosophy', in *Sight and the Ancient Senses*, ed. M. Squire (Abingdon, 2016), pp. 36–53, at pp. 44–5.

[98] Rudolph, 'Sight and the Presocratics', p. 45.

[99] E6, ll. 41–6 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 978: τι τῆς ἑαυτῆς φύσεως.

[100] E6, ll. 62–3 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 980: κατὰ δ' οὖν τὸν Σωτῆρα δύναμιν ἀπὸ σοῦ ἐξιέναι πεπιστευκὼς καὶ πᾶσιν, οἷς ἂν αἱ ἱεραί σοι ψηλαφήσωσι χεῖρες, εἰσκρίνεσθαι.

[101] This kind of thinking is not surprising in a society in which icons and holy images more broadly played such an important role. Of interest is also the argument of Basil the Great, who sought to protect manuscripts of the New and Old Testaments, because he believed that the material of these books, the vellum and ink that formed them, had been changed by the sacred words written upon them. See C. Barber and D. Jenkins, 'I.1.1 Art and Worship in Komnenian Thought', in *Sources for Byzantine Art History: Volume 3, The Visual Culture of Later Byzantium (c.1081–c.1350)*, ed. F. Spingou (Cambridge, 2022), pp. 6–23, at p. 10.

[102] E6, ll. 66–71 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 980: ᾤμην δὲ ἄρα καὶ πᾶσαν ταύτην καθιμήσασθαι τοῦ λαιμοῦ καὶ καταφαγεῖν, καθὰ δὴ καὶ βιβλίου κεφαλίδα ἐκείνην ὁ διορατικώτατος Ἰεζεκιήλ· οὐκ

Antiochos imagines incorporating the scroll that has been touched and enlivened by Eustathios, consuming it using his eyes, hands and mouth, as well as his mind.[103] The human body appears open and connectible through all its senses. Antiochos' metaphorical consumption of the scroll highlights the importance of books for the construction of the scholar's subjectivity, but also manifests the complexity of the limits of the scholar's imagined body, a body that transforms itself though the incorporation of the human, plant and inorganic matter of the scroll – the human words, the stems of papyrus reeds, the nut-gall, Arabic gum and vitriol that make the ink.[104] Indeed, this is a transformation that we have already seen Antiochos embrace in his description of the scholar's body becoming reed: 'he is made into a reed, his substance is altered to the nature of a thin sheet'.[105]

Another object that stands out in Antiochos' writings is the *skimpodion* (σκιμπόδιον), also referred to as *skimpous* (σκίμπους). This piece of furniture had many uses and meanings: it could be a bed for the ill, dying, or dead; it could be 'a cheap and low bed, not much above the ground', as defined by Eustathios, used to signify a lack of resources or a purposeful asceticism; or, more paradoxically, it could be made of gold and refer to an imperial seat.[106] Of particular interest is the word's literary history: it is on a cheap and flimsy type of *skimpous* that we find Socrates sleeping in Plato's *Protagoras* (310c).[107] The choice was so emblematic of the philosopher's character that this same piece of furniture, infested with bugs, was used in Aristophanes' *Clouds* (254) for the initiation rites of Socrates' school.[108] Antiochos reclaims the *skimpous* from Aristophanes' mockery and highlights its importance for the scholar's body. We have already seen a passage where he notes his attachment to the *skimpodion*: in his description of the

ἄλλου του χάριν, οὐδὲ ταύτῃ μόνον, ὅτι βιβλίον ἐστὶν ἐμοὶ καὶ ἄλλως ἐράσμιον, ἀλλ' ὅτι δὴ σοὶ μάλιστα οἱ λόγου καὶ σοφίας εὐφυεῖς διάκονοι δάκτυλοι θιγεῖν τούτου μόνον ἠξίωσαν.

[103] There is a second reference to the consumption of the scroll in Antiochos' letter to Hagiotheodorites. There he refers explicitly to taste. See E10, ll. 10–14 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 1014.

[104] On ink, see F. Spingou, 'I.4.4. Author Unknown (? Twelfth Century), Making Colors: Seven Ink Recipes', in her *Sources for Byzantine Art History: Volume 3, The Visual Culture of Later Byzantium (c. 1081–c.1350)*, pp. 416–31. Antiochos is referring here to a scroll which would have most likely been made of papyrus. See S. Kotzabassi, 'Codicology and Palaeography', in *A Companion to Byzantine Illustrated Manuscripts*, ed. V. Tsamakda (Leiden, 2017), pp. 35–53, at pp. 35–9.

[105] E5, ll. 245–6 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi Opera*, p. 958.

[106] C1, ll. 286–7 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 532; M. van der Valk (ed.), *Eustathii archiepiscopi Thessalonicensis commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem pertinentes*, Vol. 4 (Leiden, 1987), p. 167; M. van der Valk (ed.), *Eustathii archiepiscopi Thessalonicensis commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem pertinentes*, vol. 3 (Leiden, 1979), p. 904: εὐτελῆ κλίνην καὶ χθαμαλήν, πελάζουσαν τῇ γῇ; L2, ll. 124–5 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 150.

[107] N. Denyer (ed.), *Plato: Protagoras* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 69.

[108] It is interesting that *Clouds* also includes the figure of the anti-scholar in the form of Strepsiades' horse-obsessed son.

construction of the scholarly body, Antiochos states that it is forged by 'being fastened to the lectern and sewn to the *skimpous*' (ἐμπεπῆχθαι δὲ τῷ ἀναγνωστηρίῳ καὶ συνερράφθαι τῷ σκίμποδι).[109] This same image of two bodies being sewn together also comes up in Antiochos' letter to Euthymios Malakes (after 1173), where he apologises for no longer being able to act as a proper scholar:

> For where can we, miserable people, find time either to frequent our friends every day through brief letters or to greet them after a long time with long ones? We, people who have now risen from the chair [σκίμποδος] and left the lectern, to which we were formerly sewn, bending over [προσκεκυφότες] the reading matter and the unclasped books.[110]

The intense attachment to the *skimpodion* that Antiochos has in mind creates somatic knowledge in a similar way to riding a horse. In this case, it does not build strong muscles, but the body does mould itself according to the shape of its seat, acquiring Antiochos' prized curved back. We can similarly visualise the impact of the sitting posture on the scholar's body in Antiochos' letter to Demetrios Tornikes (1175):

> But where can I find the blissful leisure for these things and the happy respite to be still, away from the crowd, uninterrupted and undisturbed? Where is the low *skimpous* on which I was established [ἱδρύμην], sometimes all day and all night, and the dear books with which I consorted [ὡμίλουν] while they were unfurled on both knees, a light and not at all onerous burden?[111]

We can almost see Antiochos' curved back as he sits on his low seat, bending over the books spread across his knees. The word ἱδρύμην, which describes Antiochos' sitting, can be used for the setting up of a statue, and creates the impression of the same immobility in the body of man, book and seat that we have previously seen in the scholar's eyes. The liveliest part of this assemblage are the books which ὡμίλουν (consorted or conversed) with Antiochos.

[109] I previously translated σκίμποδι more simply as 'chair'. See E5, ll. 216–7 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, pp. 954–6.

[110] E7, ll. 30–35 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 992: Ποῦ γὰρ ἡμῖν σχολὴ τοῖς ἀθλίοις, ὡς ἂν ἢ βραχείαις ἐπιστολαῖς ἑκάστης ἡμέρας παρὰ τοὺς φίλους θαμίζοιμεν ἢ πεπλατυσμέναις χρόνιοι γοῦν τούτους προσαγορεύοιμεν· ἄνθρωποι, τοῦ σκίμποδος ἀναστάντες ἤδη καὶ τοῦ ἀναγνωστῆρος ἀφέμενοι, οἷς ἄρα καὶ συνερράμεθα τὰ προτοῦ, τῇ ἀναγνώσει προσκεκυφότες καὶ ταῖς ἀνεζυγωμέναις βίβλοις.

[111] E12, ll. 105–10 in Sideras, *Gregorii Antiochi*, p. 1044: Πλὴν ἀλλὰ ποῦ μοι ἡ μάκαρ τούτοις σχολὴ καὶ τὸ εὔδαιμον ἄπραγμον, τὸ ἀτρέμας ἔχειν καὶ ἄτερ ὄχλου, τὸ ἀπερίσπαστον, τὸ ἀθόρυβον; ποῦ δὲ ὁ χαμαίζηλος σκίμπους καὶ αἱ φίλταται βίβλοι, ἐν ᾧ τε ἱδρύμην, ἔσθ' ὅτε καὶ πανήμερος καὶ πανύχιος, καὶ αἷς ὡμίλουν, ἐπ' ἀμφοῖν ἀναπεπταμέναις τοῖς γόνασιν, ἐλαφρῷ τούτῳ φορτίῳ καὶ ἥκιστα ἐπαχθεῖ.

A very similar image comes from a letter of Georgios Tornikes (fl. 1146–56), brother of Demetrios Tornikes, written to notify Ioannes Kamateros (c. 1155) of his election as metropolitan of Ephesos. He describes himself as 'a man who is nailed fast to the *skimpodion*, who wears out his knee with a little book, and is bent over his parchments'.[112] Darrouzès, the editor of this letter, pointed out that the description of the scholar, attached to his low seat and using his knees to read, bent over his books, is reminiscent of the images of the Evangelists

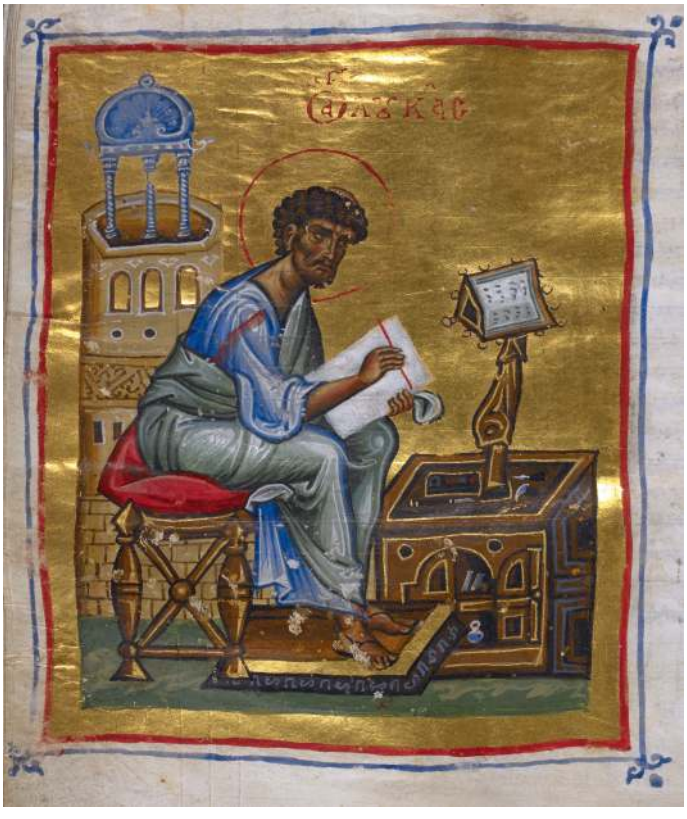

Figure 3.1 Luke the Evangelist painted by the Kokkinobaphos Master in the twelfth century (Burney MS 19 fol. 101v British Library)

[112] J. Darrouzès (ed.), *Georges et Dèmètrios Tornikès, Lettres et Discours* (Paris, 1970), pp. 15–16, 137–9: ὁ τῷ σκιμποδίῳ προσπεπατταλευμένος καὶ βιβλιδίῳ τὸ γόνυ τριβόμενος καὶ τοῖς δέρρεσι προσκεκυφώς.

found in many illuminated manuscripts (Figure 3.1).[113] This provides a further, religious framework for understanding the body of the scholar as a hybrid of man, seat and manuscript, as well as lectern and reed, and further fixes its desired and necessary immobility on the page.[114]

Not unlike the knight, then, the scholar is defined by the objects he uses for his study. The books and furniture help create scholarly identity through both their real presence and the effects they have on the body, and through their literary and visual traditions, the many ways both religious and secular of understanding them. This means that despite Antiochos' emphasis on freedom and self-determination, his seeming 'coherence of form ultimately rests on a blending of species, on a body that in its movements is in fact no longer human'.[115] An emphasis on such entanglements of man and matter allows us both to relate the Eastern Roman scholar to the Western knight, and to move the man slightly off centre. Even in a book about masculinity – or, perhaps, particularly in such a book – it is important to remain open to readings that challenge man's exceptionalism and remind us of the many forms of interdependence necessary for the construction of the masculine subject.[116]

[113] Darrouzès, *Georges et Dèmètrios Tornikès*, p. 138 n. 2.
[114] This is particularly apt in the case of Demetrios Tornikes, who was bishop, and as such both his scholarly and his clerical status would need to be taken into account in any analysis of the construction of his masculine subjectivity.
[115] Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, p. 55.
[116] This chapter was supported by the Wellcome Trust 223561/Z/21/Z.