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Images Borne on a Breeze: the Function of the Flabellum of Tournus as Meaning

One of the most elaborate and complicated objects surviving from the Carolingian period, the flabellum from the abbey of Tournus in Burgundy, now in the Museo nazionale del Bargello in Florence (Figs. 1, 2, 3)¹, is included in numerous reference works, has been the subject of two short monographs by Lorenz Eitner and Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, and is discussed in a recent book chapter and article by Isabelle Cartron². The writings attend to the rich carvings of the fan's

¹ This article derives from work I initiated for the colloquium, *Light, surface, spirit: phenomenology and aesthetics in Byzantine art*, organized at Dumbarton Oaks (Washington DC) by Ioli Kalevrezou and Bissera Pentcheva in November 2009; I presented the material a second time in the spring of 2010 when I was a *Gastwissenschaftler* at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence. I was able to refine my ideas through discussions with Beat Brenk, Philippe Cordez, Paul E. Dutton, Karin Leuenberger, Michael Sullivan, and Gerhard Wolf. P. Cordez examined the flabellum with me outside the display case at the Bargello and made many important observations; I am deeply indebted to Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi, the Director of the Bargello, for authorizing this exceptional opportunity.

² On this object and on flabella in general, C. de Linas, "Les Disques crucifères, le Flabellum et l'Umbrella", *Revue de l'art chrétien*, 1893, 379-94, 477-518; A. Goldschmidt, *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen aus der Zeit der karolingischen und sächsischen Kaiser, VIII.-XI. Jahrhundert*, 2 vol., Berlin 1914-1918, vol. 1, 74; H. Leclercq, "Flabellum", in F. Cabrol, H. Leclercq (eds.), *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, 15 vol., Paris 1913-1953, vol. 5/2, 1610-25; L. E. A. Eitner, *The Flabellum of Tournus*, New York 1944; D. Gaborit-Chopin, *Flabellum di Tournus*, Florence 1988; P. Lasko, *Ars sacra 800-1200*, Harmondsworth 1972, 2nd ed. New Haven 1994, 39-40; R. Kroos, K.-A. Wirth, "Flabellum (und Scheibenkreuz)", in *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, Stuttgart/Munich 1937-, vol. 9, 2003, 428-507; M.-P. Subes, "Art et Liturgie – Le Flabellum et l'ostension de la patène dans le cérémonial de la messe", *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 162 (2004), 97-118; B. Reudenbach (ed.), *Karolingische und Ottonische Kunst*, Munich 2009, 454-55; I. Cartron, *Les*

bone handle and ivory case and to the paintings and inscriptions on both sides of the parchment membrane itself, but largely to determine the flabellum's date and place of origin. The only references to the remarkable object's function (as the inscription states) *ad refrigerandum aerem* and *ad abigendas muscas* – “to refresh the air” and “to drive the flies away” – have been passing comments in such general studies as Jean-Pierre Caillet's *L'art carolingien*³ and Danielle Joiner's brief but provocative entry in *The Virgilian Tradition* edited by Jan Ziolkowski and Michael Putnam⁴. Indeed, except for Joiner, no one has taken note of the strangest feature, namely that the fourteen labeled figures painted on the two sides of the membrane, the six scenes from Virgil's *Eclogues* on the case, the myriad animals that inhabit the luxuriant vines on both the carved and painted surfaces, and all the lines of verse and other inscriptions would have been invisible at different stages of the fan's use and a mere blur when a deacon deployed the flabellum during Mass. Although it was fitted with a prong⁵, suggesting that it was on occasion set upright on an altar in the manner pictured in the late-twelfth-century *Life of St. Lambert* in the Bibliothèque nationale de Luxembourg (Ms. 100, fol. 39v; Fig. 4), indications of wear and the inscription itself strongly suggest that the flabellum of Tournus was employed actively in the liturgy⁶. Even in a

pérégrinations de Saint-Philibert. Genèse d'un réseau dans la société carolingienne, Rennes 2009, 81-89 and “Le flabellum liturgique carolingien de Saint-Philibert: du don d'un souffle à la geste des moines”, *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, forthcoming. After I submitted this essay for publication, I. Cartron generously sent me the proof of her article, which reassuringly is in many ways complementary to mine. Karin Leuenberger is currently completing a dissertation at the Université de Lausanne; I am particularly grateful to Ms. Leuenberger for her openness and suggestions.

³ Paris 2005, 143-44.

⁴ *The Virgilian Tradition. The First Fifteen Hundred Years*, New Haven 2008, 436-38. Now also Cartron, “Le Flabellum”.

⁵ Pierre Juenin, canon of the abbey of Tournus, mentioned a tang: “étant fermé, toute sa longueur [du flabellum] est de 29 pouces, dont 3 à 4 seulement par le bout d'en bas, ne sont pas couverts d'ivoire, mais aboutissent à une pointe, comme pour être emboîté dans un trou”, *Nouvelle histoire de l'abbaye royale et collégiale de Saint-Philibert et de la ville de Tournus*, Dijon 1733, 44-46.

⁶ The surfaces of the bone carvings are abraded in a manner that indicates repeated

stable upright position, however, the fan's principal imagery and texts would hardly have been legible; the scenes from the *Eclogues* were hidden from sight altogether and, because of the pleating, the words closer to the center of the open fan were virtually illegible.

In short, the probing investigations of the flabellum's style and iconography seem strangely at odds with the object's actual use to cool the air and banish flies, which required the fan to be brought from the place where it was stowed, opened, paraded to the altar, moved back and forth over the priest, (probably) mounted with the cross and other *vasa sacra* for the duration of the Mass, and eventually returned to its original place and condition. Scholarly interrogation of the traditional sort to which it has been subjected, in other words, fails to engage the phenomenology of the flabellum, an instrument that played a role, albeit only a secondary one, in the ritual transformation of bread and wine into Christ's body and blood. It is to the question of how the fan's performance constructed meaning from the decorations that this contribution turns, therefore, and, by implication, how such movements were engaged also in other such objects.

The flabellum's role in the liturgy is described in the inscriptions themselves, not once but twice, front and back on both sides, the two outer lines in golden capitals, the smaller inner one in silver letters:

“RECEIVE KINDLY, SUPREME HEAVENLY SOVEREIGN, THE GIFT
OF A BREEZE FROM A PURE HEART. / VIRGIN, MOTHER OF
CHRIST, BE CELEBRATED ALSO BY THIS SAME OFFERING, AND
YOU, PHILIBERT, PRIEST BE ALSO HONORED.

This small flabellum does two things in summer. It chases away the relentless flies and it ameliorates the heat; It allows for the appreciation of the Offering without disgust. For this reason, whoever wishes to pass a hot year and survive in a shelter from the black flies, take precaution to have a flabellum all summer.

THIS EXCEPTIONAL ORNAMENT IS GOOD, WORKED WITH
ELEGANCE; IT IS ALWAYS SAFEGUARDED IN A SACRED PLACE.

handling. The fan itself is feather light. When I asked the curator who manipulated it during the visit to the Bargello how much the flabellum weighs, he responded: “meno di un chilo”; balanced at the neck, moreover, it moves very easily.

/ IN FACT, WITH ITS BREEZE, IT CHASES AWAY THE
RELENTLESS FLYING CREATURES AND ITS MOVEMENT,
LIGHTLY, MOVES THEM AWAY.

The flabellum also removes the stagnant air and, even though the burning heat dominates, it creates wind and calm and sends the dirty and pesky flying things to flee”⁷.

Wherever it was made ca. 875 – at Tours, St. Denis, Reims, or Metz – the accumulation of saints on the flabellum of saint Philibert seems to allude to the monks’ movements as they fled their mother abbey of Noirmoutier on the Atlantic coast in 834 and until they settled in Tournus in 875, when Charles the Bald gave them the necessary properties, after a first donation by the monk Geilo in 867 or 868⁸. A line in the inscription confirms the assumption that, as any precious object would have been, the fan was kept with the monastery’s most valued possessions during these travels; but the specific reference to a *sacer locus* suggests that it may have been made to be enshrined with the saint’s remains, as indeed it was later⁹. Honoring St. Philibert with a

⁷ FLAMINIS HOC DONUM REGNATOR SUMME POLORUM / OBLATUM PURO PECTORE SUME LIBENS. / VIRGO PARENS XPI VOTO CELEBRARIS EODEM / HIC COLERIS PARITER TU, FILIBERTE SACER. / Sunt duo quae modicu[m] confert estate flabellu[m] / Infestas abicit muscas et mitigat estu[m] / Et sine dat tedio gustare munus ciboru[m] / Propterea calidum qui uult transire per annu[m] / Et tutus cupit ab atris existere muscis / Omni se studeat aestate muniri flabello. / HOC DECUS EXIMIUM PULCHRO MODERAMINE GESTUM / CONCEDET IN SACRO SEMPER ADESSE LOCO. / NAMQUE SUO VOLUCRES INFESTAS FLAMINE PELLIT / ET STRICTIM MOTUS LONGIUS IRE FACIT. / Hoc quoque flabellum tranquillās excitat auras / Aestus dum feruet ventum facit atque serenū / Fugāt et obscenas importunasque volucres. MGH, PLAC, vol. 4/3, 1054-55. The poetry incorporates phrases found in Sedulius Scottus (known 848-858) and Hrabanus Maurus (780-856).

⁸ After the French Revolution, the flabellum of Tournus passed into private hands and made its way into the Carrand Collection and then to the Bargello.

⁹ Moved from place to place in a marble sarcophagus, St. Philibert’s relics were said to cure pilgrims who touched the reliquary and prayed before it; see Ermentaire (ninth century), *De translationibus et miraculis Sancti Filiberti*, ed. in R. Poupardin, *Monuments de l’histoire des Abbayes de Saint-Philibert (Noirmoutier, Grandlieu, Tournus)*, Paris 1905, xxx and 19-106. The earliest reference to the fan’s being among Philibert’s secondary relics is in J. Mabillon, *Annales ordinis S. Benedicti*, 6 vol., Paris 1703-39, vol. 4, 1707, 356; see Eitner, *Flabellum*, 1. Three flabella have been attributed during the Middle Ages to local historical figures. A flabellum came to be treated

fan was particularly appropriate; deployed during the summer when air needed moving and flies abounded, it would presumably have been displayed especially on the saint's August 20 feast day¹⁰. The flabellum's bone handle assimilated the object to Philibert's own physical remains, while its elegant carvings of birds and pastoral animals among vines joined by green bosses symbolized renewed life, as they do also on the fifth-century sarcophagus of Archbishop Theodore in Ravenna, for instance¹¹. Philibert himself is pictured on the handle's neck, together with *S. Maria* (almost certainly the Magdalene), Peter, and Agnes (replaced at a later date by Paul)¹². Michael, the archangel venerated in northwest France who is to weigh souls on Judgment Day, is present too, albeit only in the name inscribed on the handle's third boss.

Two sides of the fan's case extend the handle's basic ornament of inhabited vines while translating it into ivory; one of them features an ox head, the symbol of ancient blood sacrifices, its horns wrapped in grape-laden tendrils and a serpent; alive with birds eating the fruit, the vines fill the field in which a lioness and prominent goat

as one of the relics of St. Columba (521-597) at Kells; see R. Ó Floinn, "Insignia Columbae I", in *Studies in the Cult of Saint Columba*, Dublin 1997, 136-59 (at 155-58). This *cuilebad Coluim Cille*, now lost, is first mentioned only in the eleventh century; but evidence of liturgical fans in Ireland goes back to the ninth century if not earlier. At Monza in Lombardy, a secular flabellum came to be regarded as a relic of Queen Theodolinda (c. 570-628); see S. Coppa et al., "Contributi alla storia del tesoro del duomo di Monza. Il flabellum 'di Teodelinda' e le ante degli organi", *Studi Monzesi*, 2 (1987), 5-43; and at Canosa in Puglia, a twelfth-century fan was ascribed to the sixth-century saint, Sabinus. Two other medieval fans survive, both from the twelfth century, one in Boston, Museum of Fine Arts (inv. 56.882) and the other in the British Library (Add. MS 42497); see for the first H. Swarzenski, "A Medieval Treasury", *Apollo*, 90 (1969), 484-93; about the other, R. B. Green, "The Flabellum of Hohenbourg", *Art Bulletin*, 33 (1951), 153-55; *Krone und Schleier. Kunst aus Mittelalterlichen Frauenklöstern*, cat. exhib. Bonn, Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland / Essen, Ruhrlandmuseum, Essen/Munich 2005, 316.

¹⁰ In the *Martyrologium* he finished ca. 848, Wandelbert of Prüm (ca. 813-ca. 870) gives the date as July 20 (MGH, PLAC, vol. 2, 590).

¹¹ In Sant'Apollinare in Classe. See F. Deichmann, *Ravenna. Geschichte und Monumente*, Wiesbaden 1969, figs. 155-57.

¹² Cartron's attribution of the replacement figure to the seventeenth century is not at all certain.

are also depicted¹³. That this imagery was meant to convey the idea of pagan rites yielding to Christ's eternal offering in the Eucharist is confirmed by its recurrence on liturgical ivory combs, which served the same basic purpose of keeping priests clean of flies that might fall from hair or beard and pollute the Sacramental species¹⁴. An example made at Metz during the third quarter of the ninth century features Samson destroying the lion, presenting the spiritual battle between God's elect and savage carnality, set within a twisting vine bearing bunches of fruit being eaten by birds quite like those on the Florence flabellum, sharing with it the same intellectual and artistic context¹⁵. The difference, of course, is that combs were used during private preparation, accompanied by a prayer evoking spiritual cleansing: "Oh Lord, your nourishing spirit purifies and cleans our head, our entire body, and our mind"¹⁶. Fans, by contrast, were used in public, not only to purify the celebrant but also to refresh him and, most important, to keep *Christ's* body and blood uncorrupted by heat, flies, and/or maggots generated by flies¹⁷. The Carolingians, it should be remembered,

¹³ Simpler vegetal ornament also adorns the cases of the Monza and Canosa fans.

¹⁴ See Goldschmidt, *Elfenbeinskulpturen*, vol. 1; V. H. Elbern, "Ein ottonischer Elfenbeinkamm aus Pavia", *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft*, 23 (1969), 1-7; C. Little, "The Road to Glory: New Early Images of Thomas Becket's Life", in E. Sears, T. Thomas (eds.), *Reading Medieval Images: The Art Historian and the Object*, Ann Arbor 2002, 201-11; A. Peroni, "Un pettine per il vescovo di Pavia", *Bollettino della Società Pavese di Storia Patria*, 107 (2007), 15-40. Julia Ann Schmidt is working on a study of liturgical and secular combs.

¹⁵ Now in the Louvre; See D. Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux. Ve-XVe siècle*, Paris 2003, 148-49.

¹⁶ *Intus exteriusque caput nostrum, totum corpus et mentem meam tuus, Domine, purget et mundet Spiritus almus*: Roman pontifical. See M. Bretagne, "Recherches sur les peignes liturgiques", *Bulletin monumental*, 27 (1861), 273-283, esp. 275.

¹⁷ The best early description of the use of such fans occurs in the customary of Cluny abbey in Burgundy, the *Antiquiores consuetudines cluniacensis monasterii*, written by the monk Ulrich around 1086: [...] *et in qualibet missa privata deberent agi, sicut alias dictum est. Unus autem ministrorum, qui semper duo debent esse, stans cum flabello prope sacerdotem, ex quo muscarum infestatio exurgere incipit, donec finiatur, eas arcere a sacrificio, et ab altari, seu ab ipso sacerdote non negligit. Diaconus vero, subdiaconus, et unus ministrorum, si dies festus est, acclines postea manent orationi intenti*: PL 149, 719. On maggots and flies, see Pliny, *Historia naturalis*,

were obsessed with sacramental cleanliness, as Bishop Theodulf of Orléans's (750/60-821) *Precepts for the Priests of his Diocese*¹⁸ and Bishop Halitgar of Cambrai's *Penitential* (830) attest¹⁹.

Ever since Alexandre Du Sommerard identified the principal source of the scenes as Virgil's *Eclogues*²⁰, the case's other two sides have attracted particular attention. Following the work of Goldschmidt and Eitner, a consensus now exists that five of the six panels represent: on one side, from the top, Meliboeus bidding Tityrus Farewell (Ec. 1), the Meeting of Gallus and Pan (Ec. 10), Corydon Lamenting Alexis, on the other side, in the middle, Menalcas and Mopsus (Ec. 5) or Damon and Alphesiboeus (Ec. 8), and at the bottom, the contest of Menalcas and Damoetas (Ec. 3). Only the precise identification of the uppermost scene on this side remains disputed; the sole non-bucolic image, this depiction of a speaker before an enthroned figure recalls certain consular diptychs and may well depict Virgil before his patron Alfenus Varus (Ec. 6)²¹. If so, then, though reference to Virgil's opening lines, the purpose of the first scene might have been to underscore the pictorial sequence's sylvan aspect.²² In any case, as Cartron has

Book X, 87: [...] *ut vermiculos muscae [gignuntur]*; ed. and trans. H. Rackham, Cambridge, MA, 10 vol., 1938-1963, vol. 3, 1940, 412-13.

¹⁸ "Let it be carefully observed that the bread and the wine and the water, without which Masses cannot be celebrated, be kept very clean and handled with care and nothing be found in them of poor quality": transl. G.E. McCracken, A. Cabaniss, *Early Medieval Theology*, Philadelphia 1957, 382-99.

¹⁹ The desecrations include allowing a mouse to eat the host, spilling wine, permitting "little animals" to live in the flour, dropping the wafer, and allowing it to be consumed by worms; PL 105, 693-710; transl. J. T. McNeil, H. Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, New York 1938, 297-314 (reprinted in P. E. Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization. A Reader*, Peterborough 1993, 2nd ed. 2004, 246-47. See R. Kottje, *Die Bussbücher Halitgars von Cambrai und des Hrabanus Maurus. Ihre Überlieferung und ihre Quellen*, Berlin/New York 1980.

²⁰ *Les arts au Moyen Âge* [...], 5 vol., Paris 1838-1846, vol. IV, IX^e série, pl. XVII, 233.

²¹ It also conjures up scenes of Christ and his followers; see, for instance, the sixth-century ivory in Dijon (Musée des Beaux-Arts); W. F. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters*, Mainz 1916, 3rd ed. 1976, number 148.

²² *Prima Syracosio dignata est ludere versu / nostra nec erubuit silvas habitare Thalea / cum canerem reges et proelia [...]* *agrestem tenui meditabor harundine*

noted, the scene of address is a kind of author portrait, reinforcing the fan's general allusion to contemporary manuscripts, bound in ivory covers carved with appropriate narratives, and evoking the contemporary interest to Virgil's poetry.

The Carolingians had access to the two most famous Late Antique illustrated manuscripts of Virgil's writings known today, the so-called Vatican Virgil²³ and the so-called Roman Virgil²⁴, the one at St. Martin of Tours and the other at St. Denis when the flabellum was being made – possibly at one of these very abbeys²⁵. In addition to the *Georgics* and *Aeneid*, the latter manuscript also includes the *Eclogues*, illustrated with four (extant) miniatures in addition to three author portraits. Goldschmidt had already connected the ivories on the flabellum to the Roman Virgil and he was followed in this by Eitner and Gaborit-Chopin; and, despite variations in details that have led some scholars to question the connection, there can be little doubt of it. The depiction of Meliboeus bidding Tityrus Farewell (fol. 1v), for instance, shares with the ivories the figure of the piper leaning against a tree as he tends his cattle and the shepherd grasping the horn of one of his goats; and although certain features differ, as Kurt Weitzmann has argued, the fact that – contrary to the text – both illustrations do not literally picture Tityrus *recumbans* and each extends the words *hanc etiam vix duco* in much the same manner suggests a relationship²⁶. Though reversed, the illustrations of Eclogue 5 (possibly Ec. 8) present a similar situation: they both portray the shepherd Menalcas with

Musam. Ed. and transl. H. Rushton Fairclough, *Virgil, Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid 1-6*, Cambridge, MA 1916, 60-61, rev. ed. 1999.

²³ Vatican, BAV, Cod. lat. 3225; Eitner, *Flabellum*, 17-23; D. H. Wright, "Commentarium", in *Vergilius Vaticanus. Vollständige Faksimile-Ausgabe im Originalformat des Codex Vaticanus Latinus 3225 der Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*, Graz 1984, and *The Vatican Virgil. A Masterpiece of Late Antique Art*, Berkeley/Los Angeles 1993.

²⁴ Vatican, BAV, Cod. lat. 3867; D. H. Wright, *Codicological Notes on the Vergilius Romanus (Vat. Lat. 3867)*, Vatican 1991. See G. Lobrichon, "Saint Virgile Auxerrois et les avatars de la IV^e Éclogue", in École Française de Rome (ed.), *Lectures médiévales de Virgile*, Rome 1985, 375-93.

²⁵ Both Martin and Denis are pictured on the membrane.

²⁶ K. Weitzmann, *Ancient Book Illumination*, Cambridge, MA 1959, 89-92.

legs crossed leaning on a staff while addressing Mopsus who expresses his grief by raising his arm to his head²⁷. In this way, too, the flabellum approximates manuscript illumination.

Attempts to explain the choice of scenes have not been particularly persuasive. A fragmentary commentary attests to interest in the *Eclogues* during the ninth century, but what is known of it concerns only questions of Virgilian syntax and diction²⁸. As many scholars have noted, moreover, even though the subjects are drawn from throughout Virgil's text, the reliefs do not explicitly refer to the fourth eclogue's famous prediction of a child "under whom the iron brood shall at least cease and a golden race spring up throughout the world", well-established in Early Christian literature as a prophecy of Christ and reiterated, probably just some years before the flabellum was made, by Christian "of Stavelot" in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, sent ca. 864-865 to the abbey of Stavelot-Malmedy, near Liège, where he had been teaching²⁹. Gaborit-Chopin's intriguing idea that the exiled Meliboeus in one of the uppermost panels stands in for the fleeing monks and the seated Tityrus for their saving host is attractive³⁰: "We are leaving our country's bounds and sweet fields. We our outcasts from our country"³¹. The theme of longing does seem to have dictated the choice of the two central vignettes, Gallus' for Lycoris and, if the identification is correct, Mopsus' for Daphne. Joiner's pro-

²⁷ Wright, *Codicological Notes*, 131-32. Here, it should be remembered that only eighteen of the original twenty-eight folios containing the *Eclogues* survive in the Roman Virgil.

²⁸ See P. Legendre, *Études Tironiennes: Commentaire sur la sixième Éclogue de Virgile*, Paris 1907; M. Stansbury, "Carolingian Commentary on *Eclogues* 6", in Ziolkowski, Putnam (eds.), *Virgilian Tradition*, 700-4.

²⁹ "Audierunt quia Iesus transiret." Iudaei audierunt per prophetas, gentes quoque non per omnia ignorauerunt, sed sophistae eorum hoc similiter denuntiauerunt. Unde est illud Maronis: iam noua progenies caelo demittitur alto, et Sibilla inquit e caelo rex adueniet per saecula futurus, scilicet in carne presens ut iudicet orbem, unde deum cernent incredulus atque fidelis.; Christianus dictus Stabulensis, *Expositio super librum generationis*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens, Turnhout 2008, 337.

³⁰ See Gaborit-Chopin, *Flabellum*, 55.

³¹ *Nos patriae finis et dulcia linquimus arva / Nos patriam fugimus*: ed. Rushton Fairclough, 24-25.

positional that the unifying motif is poetic inspiration, here transferred from Apollo and his muses which Virgil invokes in his *Eclogues* to the incarnated Holy Spirit, is even more suggestive because it links the ivory case to the fan proper, the spirit being the breeze over the altar during the Mass when the Word again appears in the flesh. A different reference to inspiration may explain the particular emphasis on leafy trees in the reliefs, a visualization of the breezes in nature that also animate Virgil's poetry, for instance, *sub incertas Zephyris motantibus* (Ec. 5), and perhaps even of the rustling sound these, like a fan, make³². But no specific program accounts for the selection of subjects, which – especially if the identification of the “author portrait” is correct – rather seem to have been chosen to assert a fundamental bucolic aura.

Whatever motivation determined the choice of the Virgilian episodes, when the fan was deployed, the plaques were swung around and clapped against one another causing the *bucolica* to vanish from view. The rustic pagan world cedes to that of the true Pastor, Christ and, in turn, his shepherds, the priests, in a move inspired perhaps by biblical passages that invest sacrificial animals and their protectors with references to winds, notably Hosea 4.19: “The wind shall sweep them away, wrapped in its wings, and they will find their sacrifices a delusion”; and Jeremiah 22.22, “The wind shall carry away all your shepherds”, as in Hrabanus Maurus's encyclopaedia *De Universo* from the 840s³³. The Irish teacher Sedulius Scottus, like Hrabanus an author of phrases incorporated in the flabellum's inscription, engaged the same idea in his contemporary poem “Our Glory Returns”, written between 848 and 855, figuring his protector Bishop Hartgar of Liège as the *pastor bonus atque beatus* whose sheep come at the sound of pipes³⁴.

³² Ed. Rushton Fairclough, 85. I thank Eunice Dauterman Maguire for this suggestion.

³³ See Hrabanus Maurus, *De ventis*, in *De universo*, Book 9, chapter XXV; PL 111, 282.

³⁴ II, 10, 5; MGH, PLAC, vol. 3, 178. Bells may once attached to the flabellum, beckoning the faithful when the fan was opened; however, my examination did not uncover any evidence for them.

An even more dramatic spiritual translation was effected when the deacon, lifting the membrane from the coffin-like box and opening the pleated parchment, visually transformed bone into flesh³⁵. Again, most of the same elements reappear, some of them for the third time, but now not carved in bone or ivory but painted on parchment highlighted in gold and (badly tarnished) silver³⁶. The imagery was also augmented. Eagles are pictured twice, for instance, perhaps because their majestic soaring on the winds evokes the rising up from the mundane world to celestial realms. The menagerie is enlarged to include a griffin and a unicorn – hybrid animals with theological connotations. Paired creatures such as the fox and crane conjure up Aesopian fables, perhaps – in so doing – even the wine-drinking associated with the fables’ original ancient Greek symposium context and evoking, in yet another way, the difference between pagan custom and Christian practice.

The successive accumulation of imagery only reinforces the ornamental abundance. Peter and Paul, Philibert and Agnes appear once more; and their cohort, too, is expanded to include Andrew and also the Roman female saints Lucy and Cecilia, and, on the other side, the local saints Hilary, Martin, Denis, and Maurice and a *levita* and a *iudex*³⁷. Replacing the *S. Maria* of the handle, the Virgin Mary is

³⁵ Two holes on the bottom of the side that was swung around probably accommodated an attachment that secured the open membrane to the (extant) ring on the handle.

³⁶ Some spots suggest that the ivory may have been colored; the bone or ivory bosses on the handle and the neck are stained green, as are parts of the frames of the Virgil plaques. Such polychromy would have reduced the contrast between relief and painting. Myriad holes remain on the ivories; some are filled with ivory plugs; others may have had gems or glass, increasing the coloristic effect further.

³⁷ Taking up Eitner’s (*Flabellum*, 12) and Gaborit-Chopin’s (*Flabellum*, 55) proposal, Cartron (*Peregrinations*, 80 and 87) has argued persuasively that the *iudex* (“judge” or “count”) and the *levita* (“deacon”) represent the donors of the object and of the properties that had enabled the new settlement, the connection being made through the inscription on the second boss of the handle: “Joel made me in honor of Mary” (*Ihoel me scae fecit in honore[m] mariae*). *Ihoel*, anagram of “Geilo”, would refer to the monk Geilo who in 867 or 868 bequeathed the inheritance from his father of the same name, a count of the entourage of Charles the Bald, before he became an abbot in 870 and, as such, received King Charles’s donation in 875. A fan could have symbolized

given pride of place at the center between Peter and Paul, distinguished from the other figures by being portrayed half-length; indeed, holding the Christ Child, she is pictured as the *Hodegetria*, that is, as an icon-type invested with image theory based on Christ's dual nature³⁸. Thus, the flabellum's very unfolding enacted Virgil's otherwise unrepresented "messianic prophecy", inserting the Virgin at the middle just as the predictive fourth eclogue occupies the center of Virgil's book of ten³⁹.

The richly adorned parchment within the carved ivory case assimilated the fan to contemporary manuscripts in yet another way⁴⁰; and it is certainly no mere coincidence that the membrane was prepared in the manner books were, with blind rulings used to organize the rows of inscriptions, ornament, and pictures or that, in the search for provenance and dating, the fan has consistently been compared to contemporary manuscripts from Tours⁴¹. Nevertheless, an essential distinction must be made: the fan's membrane cannot be read as a page is, even the excessively ornamented leaves in contemporary books made for Charles the Bald. The pleated parchment requires a

the *levita* (the deacon who used the fan), as well as the *iudex*. Drawing on the figure of the winnowing fork in Matthew 3.12, the author of the *Allegoriae in Sacram Scripturam* (a tract previously attributed to Hrabanus Maurus [780-856]), for instance, made the connection through the action of separating the wheat from the chaff: *ventilabrum est discrimen iudicii, ut in Evangelio: "Cujus ventilabrum est in manu ejus" id est, discrimen iudicii in potestate ejus*, PL 112, 1074. The two possibilities are not, of course, mutually exclusive.

³⁸ The *Hodegetria* is also featured at the center of the bronze flabellum dated 1202-1203 from Deir al-Surian (the "monastery of the Syrians") in Egypt, in the Musée Royal de Mariemont in Morlanwelz (Belgium), there inscribed in Syriac: "To the glory and the honor of the holy and consubstantial Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, these flabella were made for the Monastery of the House of the Mother of God, Maryam, in the desert of Scetis, the year 1514 of the Greeks". See J. Leroy, "Un flabellum syriaque daté du Deir Souriani (Egypte)", *Les Cahiers de Mariemont*, 1974, 30-39; B. Snelders, M. Immerzeel, "The Thirteenth Century Flabellum from Deir al-Surian in the Musée Royal de Mariemont", *Eastern Christian Art*, 1 (2004), 113-39.

³⁹ See O. Skutsch, "Symmetry and Sense in the Eclogues", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 73 (1969), 153-69.

⁴⁰ I owe this and many other observations to Philippe Cordez.

⁴¹ See both Eitner, *Flabellum*, 13-17 and Gaborit-Chopin, *Flabellum*, 37-45.

particularly aggressive eye to scale the peaks and search the valleys in any attempt to piece together the fragmented images and lines of verse and to comprehend their meaning.

Opening the membrane also evoked a peacock displaying its tail and, in so doing, activated a rich set of allusions to fans and fanning, especially in Byzantium, peacocks being more common in the Mediterranean realm, but also in the West. Peacock tail-feathers were themselves often used to make flabella, as in the illustration, appropriately of the month of August, in the *Calendar of 354*, a late antique chronographic compilation known in Carolingian Gaul⁴². The association is maintained in the very earliest reference to liturgical fans in the late fourth-century *Apostolic Constitutions*, a collection of treatises attributed to the apostles, compiled as manual on Christian discipline, worship, and doctrine: “Let two deacons on either side of the altar hold a fan of parchment, or of peacock feathers, and let them gently ward off the small flying creatures, so that they may not approach the chalice”⁴³. The peacock was figured in the gilt feathers adorning the rim on ceremonial fans such as the sixth-century silver *rhipidia* from the Kaper Koraon treasure found in Syria⁴⁴. Some time before Philibert’s flabellum was made, the byzantine Emperor Michael III sent Pope Nicholas I (858-867) two flabella “of a peacock type, with a case [decorated] with various precious stones”⁴⁵. As on the Tournus

⁴² The Calendar survives in early modern copies such as one in the Vatican (BAV, Cod. Barb. lat. 2154, fol. 19r). See H. Stern, *Le calendrier de 354. Étude sur son texte et ses illustrations*, Paris 1953, 258-63 et passim.

⁴³ δύο δὲ διάκονοι ἐξ ἑκατέρων τῶν μερῶν τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου κατεχέτωσαν ἐξ ὑμένων λεπτῶν ριπίδιον ἢ πτερὸν ταῦνος ἢ οδόνης, καὶ ἡρέμα ἀποσοβείτωσαν τὰ μικρὰ τῶν ἵπταμένων ζώων, ὅπως ἂν μὴ ἐγχερίμπτωνται εἰς τὰ κύπελλα: *Constitutiones apostolorum*, VIII, 12, 3; ed. P. de Lagarde, Leipzig 1862, 248.

⁴⁴ M. Mundell Mango, *Silver from Early Byzantium. The Kaper Koraon and Related Treasures*, Baltimore 1986, 147-54; R. S. Nelson, K. M. Collins (eds.), *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai*, Los Angeles 2006, 218-19.

⁴⁵ *Repidis duae in typum pavonum cum scutum et diversis lapidibus pretiosi*: ed. L. Duchesne, *Le liber pontificalis*, 2 vol., Paris 1886-92, vol. 2, 154; trans. R. Davis, *The Lives of the Ninth-Century Popes (Liber Pontificalis)*, Liverpool 1995, 211-12 and 316. The Latin hapax, *repidis*, puzzled Davis who translated it as “some kind of handle or (perhaps more likely) precious stones”; but obviously it is derived from *ῥιπίδια*, as the mentioning of the object between a paten and chalice and an embroidered altar cloth

fan, the allusion did not need to be explicit to be recognized⁴⁶: a peacock is already depicted with a fan of the pleated type at the corner of the eighth-century marble ciborium in San Prospero in Perugia, for instance⁴⁷.

In her study of the Kaper Koraon fan, Marlia Mango linked the creature at the center to the “flaming sword” at the gates of Eden and also to the seraphim and cherubim that encircle the enthroned Lord in Isaiah’s and Ezekiel’s prophecies (Is. 6.2-5 and Ez. 1.5-21), “their whole bodies [...] full of eyes“, an association realized by representing the cherubim with peacock-feather wings⁴⁸. Building on this argument, Stephen Zwirn underscored the connection to the prophetic visions by noting the Scriptures’ evocation of lustrous metal and inspiring wheels⁴⁹. The juxtaposition of gold and silver on the flabellum of Tournus would have caused a similar kind of flashing. In turn, the reference to peacocks would have evoked the cherubim made to adorn the desert tabernacle and Jerusalem temple. Pictured, for instance, in the apse mosaic of Theodulf’s oratory at Germigny-des-Prés (806)⁵⁰ and on the Leviticus frontispiece of the Bible in the Monastero di San Paolo fuori le mura in Rome (Fig. 5), a manuscript that is more or less contemporary with the flabellum of Tournus, the two cherubim (their wings adorned with peacock-feather eyes) hovering over the

also suggests. Worth noting is the use of *scutum* (shield) for the case, which engages the notion of protection of the physical object but perhaps also the fan’s function in securing the purity of the Eucharist.

⁴⁶ The association with the peacock persisted throughout the Middle Ages; fans made of its feathers regularly appear in inventories and images from the thirteenth century on, as the *musculatorium de pennis pavonum* in the 1295 inventory of St. Paul’s in London, or the *muscifugium de peacock* in Bury St. Edmunds in the fifteenth century: Kroos, Wirth, “Flabellum“, in *Reallexikon*.

⁴⁷ See Cabrol, Leclercq, *Dictionnaire*, vol. 5, 1617; the ciborium has been moved from place to place but is now again in San Prospero.

⁴⁸ Mango, *Silver from Early Byzantium*, 151.

⁴⁹ In G. Bühl (ed.), *Dumbarton Oaks. The Collections*, Washington, D.C. 2008, 82-83.

⁵⁰ A. Freeman, P. Meyvaert, “The Meaning of Theodulf’s Apse Mosaic at Germigny-des-Prés”, *Gesta*, 40 (2001), 125-39.

Ark of the Covenant atop an altar adorned with crosses establish the Christian typology⁵¹.

The specific source of the Byzantine and Carolingian symbolism seems to have been the fifth-century *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia* by Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite. Hilduin, abbot of St. Denis from 818 to 840, who had undertaken a Latin translation of the writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius in 838, was deeply involved with the monks of St. Philibert; indeed, Ermentaire's *Life of St. Philibert* and the first book of his *Miracles* are dedicated to him⁵². The text refers to the fans of feathers held by deacons beside the altar when the priest consecrates ointment: their twelve *οπίσιν αγγέλων ως πτέρυξι* are presumably a reference to paired symbols of the six-winged cherubim⁵³. Already before the translations of the Pseudo-Dionysius texts were available, on the frontispiece to Mark's Gospel in the *Book of Kells* in Ireland (ca. 800)⁵⁴, fans actually substitute for angels (Fig. 6); flabella replace Matthew's winged man throughout, each one displaying cow-bells or sleigh-bells. Cherubim (one with wings adorned with peacock-feather eyes) were also pictured holding fans while guarding Eden in the *Paradise* miniature in the *Codex Vigilanus* illuminated in the monastery of San Martín de Albelda, in the Spanish Kingdom of

⁵¹ Fol. 32v. See J. Gaedhe, "L'ornamentazione", in *Commentario storico, paleografico, artistico, critico della Bibbia di San Paolo fuori le Mura*, Rome 1993, 239-40. The same association accounts for the depictions of peacocks on the San Prospero, as also the ninth-century ciborium from the destroyed church Sant'Eulacadio at Classe (Ravenna), now in Sant'Apollinare in Classe.

⁵² Ed. in Poupardin, *Monuments de l'histoire des Abbayes de Saint-Philibert*.

⁵³ J. Braun understood the reference (*Der christliche Altar in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, Munich 1924, 489), which seems to have perplexed C. Luiheid and P. Rorem who translated the phrase "covered by a dozen sacred folds": *Pseudo-Dionysius. The Complete Works*, New York 1987, 224-25. A miniature in the Syriac Gospel of Deir Es-Za'Faran (ca. 1250) captures the idea beautifully: one page shows Christ administering the Communion to the Apostles, the altar – displaying the chalice and two patens – being sanctified as he does so by angels waving large disk-flabella, each, as on the sixth-century Kaper Koraon Treasure fans, embossed with cherubim: J. Leroy, *Les manuscrits syriaques à peintures conservés dans les bibliothèques d'Europe et d'Orient*, Paris 1964, pl. 131/1.

⁵⁴ Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS A 1 (58), fol. 192v.

Pamplona⁵⁵ An angel bearing a flabellum of the circular pleated type is depicted on the twelfth-century capital in the cloister at Moissac in southern France picturing the martyrdom of St. Lawrence, paired with an angel swinging a censer over the dying saint, a another device that uses the movement of air, in this case, to stoke embers that produce light and a sweet odor⁵⁶. At Moissac, the breeze consecrating the saint's soul is set in opposition to the air pumped by the bellows used to stoke the fire that causes his physical death. The flabellum of Tournus may be understood productively in relationship with a censer, therefore, its flashing vision, sound, and tangible breeze complimenting the smell of incense.

The relationship to the scriptural cherubim explains also why fans are so often paired, in the fourth-century *Apostolic Constitutions*, for instance, in the sixth-century Kaper Koraon treasure, in Michael III's letter (between 858 and 867), in the *Codex Vigilanus* (976), in the twelfth-century *Life of St. Lambert* miniature, and probably in the use of the plural in the inscription on the Deir al-Surian bronze flabellum

⁵⁵ Escorial, Real Biblioteca, Cod. d.I.2, fol. 17v. J. Domínguez Bordona, *Spanish Illumination*, 2 vol., New York 1930, vol. 1, 18-19; A. Iacobini, "L'albero della vita nell'immaginario medievale: Bisanzio e l'Occidente", in A. M. Romanini, A. Cadei (eds.), *L'architettura medievale in Sicilia: la cattedrale di Palermo*, Rome 1994, 241-90.

⁵⁶ East Gallery, south side, n. 24; A. Hirmer, M. Hirmer, *Romanische Skulptur in Frankreich*, Munich 1984, 88. The idea that flabella symbolize the protection and preservation of a body has ancient roots. A giant fan appears on the "marigold stele" at Carndonagh in Ireland (7th century), for instance; see R. B. K. Stevenson, "Notes on the Sculptures at Fahan Mura and Carndonagh, County Donegal", *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 115 (1985), 92-95. The association with death and regeneration underlies the flabella on the stone relief carved around 739-742 by *Ursus magester* in the monastery of San Piero a Valle, near Ferentillo in Umbria, there flanked by birds; A. M. Orazi, *L'abbazia di Ferentillo*, Rome 1979. The same kind of association is implied by the depiction of John the Baptist's death (perhaps culminating in his burial) on the fragmentary late twelfth-century flabellum from Hohenbourg in the British Library. The thirteenth-century painting of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary in the northern half-dome in the Church of al-Adra at the monastery of Deir al-Surian in Egypt includes two angels fanning Mary's body with jeweled flabella: Snelders, Immerzeel, "Thirteenth-Century Flabellum", 117 and Pl. 2.

(1202-1203)⁵⁷. There is no indication that the flabellum of Tournus ever had a “Gabriel”, but the angel typology accounts for the fact that St. Michael, whose name is inscribed on the handle’s lowest bead, is not actually portrayed on the Philibert’s fan; when it was activated in the liturgy, the flabellum *became* Michael, whose (unseen) presence was felt in the generated breeze.

Thus, various associations inhered in the fan’s movement after it was opened in the peacock-tail flourish; and, as the deacon paraded the flabellum behind the priest, the specifics of figures and inscriptions yielded completely to a continuously changing effect of light reflected from its variegated surface of the celestial blue-green, silver, and gold, an effect like iridescent peacock feathers that was enhanced when, on arrival at the altar, the deacon stood waving the fan from side to side, mimicking the cherubic fanning in heaven. Themselves deemed angelic, deacons thus effected a phenomenological relationship between the body and blood on the altar and the enthroned Lord being honored by the angelic creatures in heaven above⁵⁸.

How, precisely, was the fan actually deployed? The miniature of the Virgin and Child in the Book of Kells (ca. 800) picturing three angels fanning the Virgin and Child with flabella of the pleated type and a fourth holding what might be the leaf-fan associated with the relics of St. Columba, the founder of the abbey, suggests two possibilities⁵⁹: the angels over the Virgin would have to be waving their flabella up and down, the angel at the lower left seems to be moving the object back and forth. Later representations consistently show the fan being held in a position perpendicular to the priest’s head, as the depiction of the plagues of Egypt in the thirteenth-century frescoes at the abbey of Grottaferrata in Lazio, which includes a representation of Pharaoh raising his cape to shield himself from the pests while a

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, appendix by L. Van Rompay, 135-36.

⁵⁸ See Ulrich’s Customary of Cluny in n. 17.

⁵⁹ Fol. 7v. The flower-like design of the disk held by the figure at the lower right might represent pleating; see M. Werner, “The *Madonna and Child* Miniature in the Book of Kells, Pt. II”, *Art Bulletin*, 54 (1972), 129-139; H. Pulliam, *Word and Image in the Book of Kells*, Dublin 2006, 29.

member of his court tries to protect him by waving a pleated flabellum back and forth⁶⁰, or the scene of the Mass of St. Regulus in the fourteenth-century *Life of St. Denis* in Paris, which includes a fan made of peacock feathers⁶¹.

Mimicking the cherubim's veneration of God enthroned in heaven and establishing a connection with it, such fanning was also a form of worship. As movers of air, fans were identified with the spirit, in Isidore of Seville's (560/570-636) *Etymologiae*, for instance, which defines the [lung] as a flabellum "for the heart, in which the *pneuma*, that is the breath, resides"⁶². According to the eighth-century Gelasian Sacramentary, containing the priest's texts for celebrating the Eucharist throughout the year, a priest can approach God only when his heart is clean⁶³, a theme incorporated in the fan's inscription: "Oh supreme Lord of the heavens, graciously receive this gift of a breeze offered by a pure heart". Activating a visual litany of saints venerated by the monks of St. Philibert, the images bore the spiritual gift to God in heaven, while transmitting the plea inscribed on the membrane: "Be celebrated, Virgin Mother of Christ, with this same offering and you, Philibert, priest, be so honored as well".

While the larger inscriptions engage this spiritual function, the smaller ones underscore the flabellum's practical purpose, namely "with its breeze [to] chase away the relentless flying creatures and its movement, lightly, [to] move them away" so that the faithful could receive the Sacraments "without disgust". The latter phrase seems to allude to the desecration by maggots in the Eucharist, a concern recorded in Halitgar of Cambrai's *Penitential* (830) which condemns

⁶⁰ See H. L. Kessler, "Caput et speculum omnium ecclesiarum": Old St. Peter's and Church Decoration in Medieval Latium", in *Old St. Peter's and Church Decoration in Medieval Italy*, Spoleto, 2002, 45-73, Fig. 3.20.

⁶¹ BnF, MS lat. 5286, fol. 103; see Subes, "Art et Liturgie – Le Flabellum".

⁶² [...] eo quod cordis flabellum sit, in quo πνεῦμα, id est spiritus inest [...]; Isidorus Episcopus Hispalensis, *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, XI, i, 124; ed. W. M. Lindsay, 2 vol., Oxford 1911, vol. 2, n.p.

⁶³ Ut accepta tibi sint, Domine, nostra jejunia, praesta nobis, quaesumus, hujus munere sacramenti purificatum tibi pectus offerre; PL 78, 119. See also the commentary on the Scriptures *Glossa ordinaria* on Psalm 69; PL 113, 951.

priests for allowing *larvae* to generate in the Eucharistic species: “He who treats the host with carelessness so that it is consumed by worms and comes to nothing shall do penance for three forty-day periods. If it was found entire with a worm in it, it shall be burnt”⁶⁴. The Bible also notes that “dead flies make the perfumer’s sweet ointment turn rancid and ferment” (Ecclesiastes 10.1). As the *titulus* for a fan in a twelfth century manuscript put it: “The devil strives mightily to tempt, just as dying flies are ruined by the delight of ointment”⁶⁵.

In fact, however, when the flabellum was in use, the practical effect took on a spiritual meaning. The flies the fan whisked away were thought to be the devil, as Isidore argued in the passage illustrated in the *Codex Vigilanus*, which is why the guardians of Paradise hold flabella: “The Cherubim, that is, a garrison of angels, have been drawn up above the flaming sword to prevent evil spirits from approaching so that the flames drive off human beings, and angels drive off the wicked angels, in order that access to Paradise may not lie open either to flesh or to spirits that have transgressed”⁶⁶. Indeed, in the intellectual context where the flabellum of Tournus was being made, both Sedulius Scottus (known 848-858)⁶⁷ and Christian “of

⁶⁴ *Qui negligentiam erga sacrificium fecerit, ut sit a vermibus consumptum, et ad nihilum deveniat, III quadragesimas poeniteat. Si integrum invenerit, et in eo fuerit vermis, comburatur, et sic cinis ejus sub altari abscondatur; et negligens XL dies poeniteat*: PL 105, 702; transl. in McNeil, Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks*, 310 and Dutton, *Reader*, 246.

⁶⁵ [...] *maxime tentare nititur diabolus, ut muscae morientes perdant suavitatem unguenti*: R. Pörtlner, *Eine Sammlung lateinischer Gedichte in der Handschrift ÖNB 806 aus dem 12. Jahrhundert*, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Tübingen, 1989, p. 419-20.

⁶⁶ *Cherubim quoque, id est angelorum praesidium, arcendis spiritibus malis super rompheae flagrantiam ordinatum est, ut homines flammae, angelos vero malos angeli submoveant, ne cui carni vel spiritui transgressionis aditus Paradisi pateat*; *Etymologies*, XIV,iii,4; *Isidori Hispalensis epsicopi sive originum*, ed. W. M. Lindsay, Oxford 1957, n.p.

⁶⁷ Sedulius drew on 2 Kings 1.2 and Ecclesiastes to describe Belzebub as “*idolum muscae*”: *principem demoniorum ex spurcissimi idoli appellantur uocabulo, qui “musca” dicitur propter immunditiam, quae exterminate suavitatem olei*; ed. B. Löfstedt, *Sedulius Scottus. Kommentar zum Evangelium nach Matthäus 1,1-II,1*, Freiburg 1989, 296.

Stavelot” (ca. 864-865) reiterated the claim, the latter: “He avoids flies, that is the devil”⁶⁸. The fan’s gentle back and forth motion is to be understood, then, as a counter to the helter-skelter attacks of the demon-flies, attracted by the Eucharist’s perfume and sweet taste, and unable to control their carnal frenzy. Cadenced movement controls the darting attacks of evil.

Just as flies threatened the Sacramental wine and bread, devils put the celebrant’s own soul at risk; and so, like the combs that purified the mind by ridding his head of these pests, fans were intended also to protect priests against temptation. On the flabellum’s membrane, the serpent entwined on the tree conjures up such seductiveness; and the fable of the crane and the fox evokes the moral lesson that one should never expect a reward from serving a rascal. As Hildebert of Lavardin, Bishop of Le Mans, later explained in a personal letter written around 1100 to accompany his gift of a flabellum to Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury, the fan that chases flies from the holy sacrifice is a *catholicae fidei ventilabrum* that drives temptation away from the priest celebrating the Mass⁶⁹. The Parisian theolo-

⁶⁸ *Appetitur ab omnibus animalibus, quia et doctrina apostolorum suscipitur ab omnibus gentibus, restringit corpora, sicut fit per doctrinam, ut luxuriosi casti fiant, fugat muscas, id est diabolos, et ideo iure dixit illis dominus uos estis sal terrae id est habitantibus in terra; Christianus dictus Stabulensis, Expositio super librum generationis, Chap. 10; ed. R. B. C. Huygens, Turnhout 2008, 144.*

⁶⁹ *Flabellum tibi misi, congruum scilicet propulsandis muscis instrumentum. Est etiam quod in munusculo nostro interpretari te oporteat. Attende ergo quibus muscis immolantes Domino sacerdotes gravius infestentur. Mille sunt occursantium phantasmata cogitationum, mille diaboli suggestiones, mille mortalium tentationes animorum; quae dum se sacrificantium mentibus inopino ingerunt illapsu, dum eas ad alia atque aliena cogitanda distrahunt, dum haereticam moliuntur inducere pravitatem, quid aliud faciunt quam, velut quaedam muscae, sacrificantes altaris ministros infestant et impediunt? [...] Dum igitur destinato tibi flabello descendentes super sacrificia muscas abegeris, a sacrificantis mente supervenientium incursus tentationum, catholicae fidei ventilabro exturbari oportebit. Ita fiet ut quod susceptum est ad usum, tibi mysticum praebeat intellectum. Et quoniam praefatae volucres super sacrificia tantum descendisse leguntur, non etiam ipsum interrupisse officium, sacerdotes Christi tentationes, quas perferunt, ita docentur abigere, ut a sacramentis altaris, talis eos lapsus non cogat abstinere. Hic enim defectus infirmitas est quae virtutem perficiat, non*

gian Peter the Chanter (?–1197) repeated the claim: “This virtue is most needed by priests. Priests with a fan of faith and clean heart, greatly assist at the altar of the sacrifice; when unfit things rise up and infest, then with this fan, they chase them away”⁷⁰. Understood to be St. Michael, the great winged battler against the Evil Doer and judge of human virtue, the fan activated a moral lesson in its very motion and, carried triumphantly to the altar, embodied victory over devilish seduction⁷¹.

Among the potential temptations was the fan’s own “beautiful ornament worked with elegance”, as the inscription declaims. Like all art, the ivory and bone carved with myriad creatures and the painted pleated parchment replete with pictures of saints and fascinating creatures itself threatened to distract viewers from higher things, including priests. The successive unfoldings and movements and, especially, the gentle alternation of wind and calm ameliorated not only the summer’s heat, but also that carnal hazard, transforming the figures and inscriptions into flashing gold and silver on heavenly blue ground. About the time the fan was made, following up on a passage in Cassiodorus’ *De Institutione Divinarum Scripturarum* from the sixth-century, the Irish theologian Johannes Scotus Eriugena, who was working at the court of Charles the Bald (840-877) and translated the

quae virtutis opera in irritum deducat. Hildebert of Lavardin, *Epistolae*, lib. I, ep. 2, ed. PL 171, 143.

⁷⁰ *Sicut enim Abrahe sacrificanti tunc immundis uolucris descendibus super sacrificia necessarium fuit flagellum quo eas abegit, sic et sacerdoti uentilabrum fidei et mundicie cordis. Vnde quidam: “Misi tibi flabellum muscis abigendis congruum.” Sepe enim musce morientes, id est fantastice cogitationes, perdunt et destruunt atque exterminant suauitatem unguenti, deuote scilicet orationis; unde abigende sunt hoc flabello, id est cordis mundicia, tunc maxime cum tot infesteris fantasiis in canone misse; Peter the Chanter, *Verbum abbreviatum*, II, 20; *Petri Cantoris Parisiensis. Verbum abbreviatum. Textus conflates*, ed. M. Boutry. Turnhout 2004, 673.*

⁷¹ In a sermon, Bishop Ivo of Chartres (c. 1040-1115) compared the fan to the Ascension (*Sermo* 11; PL 162, 575). An interesting late witness to the moral interpretation appears in the thirteenth-century Lambeth Apocalypse (London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 209); fol. 53r pictures an angel chasing away flies with a flabellum as a devil attacks Faith. See F. Šmahel, “Das *Scutum Fidei christianae magistri Hieronymi Pragensis* in der mittelalterlichen trinitarischen Diagramme”, in A. Patschovsky (ed.), *Die Bilderwelt der Diagramme Joachims von Fiore*, Ostfildern 2003, 185-210.

writings of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, likened the “marvelously beautiful variety of innumerable colors in one and the same peacock feather or even a single small portion of the feather” to the “infinite number of ways to interpret” Scripture⁷². The flabellum functioned in a similar way; and, in so doing, enacted a central principle of Carolingian art theory according to which physical images are understood to be but the provocation for raising the mind beyond inherently distracting objects⁷³.

Like other late Carolingian objects, the fan in Florence collected myriad and diverse elements and organized them into a mix of politics, liturgy, and ideas about art. It assembled references to saints venerated at the various sites the monks of St. Philibert stayed at before they settled at Tournus becoming, like the flabella at Kells, Monza, and Canosa, a founding document associated with the patron saint and, in this case, the surrogate of a permanent home – a movable ornament for monks on the move. Moreover, drawing on texts and art from antiquity, Byzantium, and diverse Carolingian centers, it tied the age of Charles the Bald to Rome and to the reborn Rome of ninth-century Gaul. And, like Eriugena’s peacock feather, the Flabellum of Tournus presented the collected material in a way that provoked continuously shifting interpretations that, even until now, have escaped any single reading.

To be sure, the fan itself always remained; the colorful and richly adorned bone, ivory, and parchment never disappeared completely from sight. But like notes of chant issued on the breath of monks organized around a continuous “recitation tone”, the fragmentary, fleeting, and repetitious images and verses acquired a new form and meaning when they coalesced through the liturgical movements and, possibly following a Pythagorean structure, by music itself. Then, having elevated the community’s history and present, they vanished – borne heavenward on the gentle, steady breeze of pure faith.

⁷² See E. Jeuneau, *Quatre thèmes Érigéniens*, Paris 1978, 68-69.

⁷³ See H. L. Kessler, “Image and Object: Christ’s Dual Nature and the Crisis of Early Medieval Art”, in M. McCormick, J. Davies (eds.) *The Long Morning of Medieval Europe*, London 2008, 291-319.