VISUAL REVIEW | Vol. 13, No. 1, 2023 | ISSN 2695-9631
International Visual Culture Review / Revista Internacional de Cultura Visual
https://doi.org/10.37467/revvisual.v10.3173

"HIS SOUL WITHIN HIM SHALL MOURN"
Job as a Bereaved Father in Venetian Renaissance Art

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KEYWORDS

Vittore Carpaccio
Pietro Lombardo
Giovanni Bellini
Job in Venetian Art
Iconography of Job
Job as a Bereaved Father
Iconography of St. Jerome

ABSTRACT

Studying the aspect of Job as a bereaved father by focusing on Vittore Carpaccio's Meditation on the Passion *and* Dead Christ with Job *and Pietro Lombardo's* Job and St. Francis*, this paper will contribute to the research of a surprisingly under studied aspect among the multiple meanings found in the iconographic research regarding Job in Renaissance Venice. Based on primary textual and visual sources, i.e., the iconography of Job and Medieval literature, the current paper will impart new meanings to elements such as postures, bones, and symbolic animals, supported by the fact that Job was one of the bubonic plague saints in Venice during the period these works of art were created.*

Received: 01/ 09 / 2022
Accepted: 30/ 11 / 2022

1. Introduction

The figure of Job featured prominently in the works of art created in Venice during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. These works of art include Pietro Lombardo's relief *Job and St. Francis* in St. Giobbe Church in Venice, Giovanni Bellini's *San Giobbe Altarpiece* and *Sacred Allegory*, Carpaccio's paintings *Meditation on the Passion* and *Dead Christ with Job*, and Marcello Fogolino's *Madonna and Child between Saints Job and Gothard* (figs. 1-6, numbered here chronologically).

The research of these works of art yielded rich and multiple interpretations. Reading the figure of Job in multiple ways comes from a time-honored Christian tradition founded on the Jewish hermeneutic method of attaching multiple meanings to each verse and figure (Smalley, 1964; Moscovich, 2015), deriving from the need to interpret the quintessential style of the Bible. According to this tradition, Job also received multiple interpretations, *inter-alia*, as patron of the poor, prophet, patron saint protecting from several diseases, and even as a patron of music, and the research also applied most of these readings to the works of art mentioned above.[1]

However, a certain lacuna is found in this literature. Apparently, Job, who lost his sons and daughters, should be the embodiment of grief and bereavement. This loss was the worst of the disasters inflicted upon him. His other plights, however, such as the loss of his fortune or his health, received scholarly attention, while this aspect of Job as a bereaved father is mentioned only briefly in the literature studying these works of art.

This absence of Job's bereavement in this literature is even more surprising considering the fact that the bubonic plague, also known as the Black Death, causing great rates of mortality and consequently terrible grief, raged in Europe during this period, especially in Venice, where Job was one of the prominent plague saints.

Without dismissing previous readings of these works of art, the current paper will attempt to contribute to existing research by filling this lacuna. Concentrating specifically on Vittore Carpaccio's *Meditation on the Passion* and *Dead Christ with Job* and Pietro Lombardo's *Job and St. Francis*, this paper will undertake an iconographic analysis from the point of view of Job's bereavement. Based on primary textual and visual sources, it will locate elements alluding to this reading of Job as a bereaved father in these works of art, among them the postures of Job, the bones, and some of the symbolic animals, which will be addressed in this light for the first time.

Figure 1. Pietro Lombardo (Italian, 1435-1515), *Job and St. Francis*, Marble relief, 1471

Source: Portal of San Giobbe Church, Venice, Free domain

[1] For the artists themselves applying this hermeneutic method in Renaissance art depicting Job see Lelli, 2008, p. 230. For Job as a protector of the poor see Moscovich, 2015. For Job as a prophet see Hornik, 2002; Lelli, 2008, pp. 216, 230, 235; Moscovich, 2019b. For Job as a plague saint see Hornik, 2002. For Job as a music patron see Meyer, 1954.

Figure 2. Giovanni Bellini, *San Giobbe Altarpiece (Pala San Giobbe): Madonna and Child with SS. Franciscus, John the Baptist, Job, Dominic, Sebastian, Louis, and Musician Angels,* c. 1475-1487, oil on wood, 471 x 292 cm.

Source: Venice, Galleria dell'Accademia ©G.A.VE Archivio fotografico – su concessione del Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo - Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia

Figure 3. Giovanni Bellini, *The Sacred Allegory*, ca. 1490–1510, oil and tempera on wood, 78 x119 cm.

Source: Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, Free domain

Figure 4. Marcello Fogolino (Italian, 1470/1488?–1548), *Madonna and Child between Saints Job and Gothard*, 203 x 160 cm., oil on wood, ca. 1508.

Source: Milan, Pinacoteca Brera, Free domain

Figure 5. Vittore Carpaccio (Italian, ca. 1464-1525/6), *Meditation on the Passion*, ca. 1490-1510, oil and tempera on wood, 70.5 x 86.7 cm.

Source: New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Free domain

Figure 6. Vittore Carpaccio, *Dead Christ with Job*, Ca. 1510-1520, 185 X 145 cm, tempera on wood.

Source: Berlin, Staatliche Museum, Gemäldegalerie © bpk/Gemäldegalerie/ Jörg P. Anders

2. Background – Plague and Mortality

The apparent absence of the aspect of bereavement in these artworks is quite surprising, especially due to the fact that a large portion of Europe's population was destroyed by the bubonic plague, also known as the 'Black Death', which struck the continent in multiple waves through the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. The discussion regarding the statistical estimations of the number or percentage of people who perished is beyond the scope of this paper, which will deal with the emotional

consequences of this tragedy. It should only be noted that the estimates vary between authors,[2] both because different authors studied different periods and places, and there was a lack of organized documentation, in addition to incorrect diagnoses of similar disease that led to erroneous reports regarding the causes of death (Boeckl, 2000, p. 9; Brody, 1974, pp. 56, 58; Cohn, 2003, p. 58; Karlen, 1995, pp. 124-125; Twigg, 1984, p. 200ff; Zimmerman, 2008, pp. 3, 38, 559-587).[3]

In any case, Venice was afflicted harshly by the plague. Approximately sixty percent of its population perished during the plague's first outbreak in 1347-8 (Slack, 1988, p. 343), and some of the contemporary estimates were as high as seventy percent (de' Mussis, ca. 1348, as cited in Horrox, 1995, p. 20). Moreover, the city was further inflicted by the plague multiple times, in 1361, 1381-1382, 1391, 1397, 1403, 1411, 1438, 1447, 1456, 1464, 1478, 1475, 1490, 1498, 1501, 1510, 1511, 1513, 1523, and 1528 (Pullan, 1971, p. 219).

Job was one of the main plague saints in Venice (Hornik, 2002, p. 547), as Garry Wills puts it, "the workhorses of plague protection in Venice were Sebastian, Roch, and Job" (Wills, 2001, p. 269). Thus, some of the scholarly literature referred to the artworks created in Venice during this period and featuring the figure of Job as "Plague Paintings,"[4] created in order to plead for mercy and health or gratitude for recovery, especially because they were created when repetitive waves of the plague struck the city. However, the literature generally ignored the facet of Job as a bereaved father, despite its obviousness. A fact all the more surprising considering that some of the plague's outbreaks were characterized by high proportions of deaths of young people, and thus referred to as "children's plagues".[5]

Below, I will discuss the emotional effect of this mortality as reflected in these artworks depicting the figure of Job, concentrating especially on Carpaccio's *Meditation on the Passion* and *Dead Christ with Job* and Lombardo's *Job and St. Francis*, which thus far, has not received any scholarly attention from this point of view.

3. Literature Review

In Giovanni Bellini's *Sacred Allegory*, there are three infants, in addition to Christ the Child. These were interpreted in the literature as the Innocents, the first martyrs, and since they are represented next to Job, they were also connected with his grieving over his children, on the one hand, and the families that grieved for their lost loved ones, on the other.[6]

In writing about Giovanni Bellini's *San Giobbe Altarpiece*, researchers referred to Job as the saint standing nearest to Christ the Child,[7] and the only one with direct contact with him (Goffen, 1986, p. 44). To this, one should add another point hitherto unnoticed by research, that the posture of Christ the Child in *San Giobbe Altarpiece* also reminds the posture of Christ showing his wound, which was a widespread subject in art during this period, and thus alludes to the Passion. Collectively, all these clues might also be interpreted as a kind of reference to affinity between Job, grieving for his children, and the bereaved Madonna.

In Carpaccio's *Dead Christ with Job*, one can see again the connection between Job and the grieving Virgin Mary, depicted on the right-hand side, in the group nearest to Job, again alluding to the sympathy Job feels towards Virgin Mary.

Claude Phillips did describe the figure of Job as "mournfully contemplating", both in Carpaccio's *Meditation* in the Metropolitan and *Dead Christ* in Berlin (Phillips, 1911, p. 145). Without identifying the figure as Job, however, which occurred much later, in Frederick Hartt's paper (1940, p. 27ff), the

[2] For example, according to Polzer (1982, pp. 107, 126), the plague took the lives of about one fourth to one third of west-European population, and according to Freedman (2000, p. 91), the numbers were as high as 40%. See discussion about the problematics of estimation in Siraisi, 1982, pp. 9-11.

[3] On the difficulties in diagnosing leprosy see Demaitre, 2007, pp. 169-239. On the difficulties in diagnosing the bubonic plague see Eckert, 1996, pp. 23, 45.

[4] For example, Bätschmann, 2008, p. 164; Finocchi Ghersi *et al.*, 2007, p. 14; Goffen, 1986, p. 65; Hornik, 2002, p. 547; Humfrey, 1993, p. 268.

[5] On babies' high mortality in Venice in this period, see Chambers *et al.*, 1992, p. 325.

[6] For the research support for the suggestion that Bellini's *Sacred Allegory* includes allusions to Job's daughters (although the new daughters, born after his recovery) see Meyer, 1954, esp. pp. 23-27, and that it includes allusions to both his dead sons and daughters, see Moscovich, 2015, pp. 142-144.

[7] This proximity was mentioned by Goffen, 1989, p. 147; Hornik, 2002, p. 545; Richardson, 1979, p. 23, yet they did not connect it to the bereavement of Job and the Madonna, rather as a place of honor.

mournful contemplation in Phillips' text referred to grief related to Christ's death and could not be connected with Job's grief as done in the current paper. Thus, in the literature referring to Carpaccio's *Dead Christ with Job* and *The Meditation on the Passion*, one can hardly find a reference to Job's grief, although he sits in a familiar grief posture, which will be discussed below.

4. Carpaccio's *Meditation on the Passion* and *Dead Christ with Job*

4.1. The Grief Posture

Our point of departure in discussing both of Carpaccio's paintings analyzed here, *Dead Christ with Job* and *The Meditation on the Passion*, is Job's posture. His head rests on his hand, while his elbow rests on his lap. This is a very ancient posture of grief. In studying the expressions of grief and sorrow in Byzantine art, Dorothy Shorr (1940) and Henry Maguire (1977) traced its origins back to the funerary Hellenistic and Roman art, while Raymond Klibansky *et al*. (1964, p. 268) found its origins much earlier, in Egyptian art. This posture was also used for depicting the Lamentation on Christ (*e.g.*, figs. 7-8), which is connected, of course, with Carpaccio's paintings discussed in the current paper.

Figure 7. *The three Marys at the tomb of Christ*, Ivory, Panel from an ivory casket: The empty Sepulcher, ca. 420-430 AD, Rome

Source: London, British Museum, Asset number 34961001 © The Trustees of the British Museum

Figure 8. Masters of Dirc van Delf (Dutch, active about 1400 - about 1410), *The Lamentation, Utrecht (probably),* Netherlands, Ms. 40 (90.ML.139), fol. 68v, about 1405-1410, Tempera colors, gold leaf, and ink on parchment, 16.5 × 11.7 cm

Source: New York, Getty Museum Collection, free domain

Furthermore, it became so closely identified with Job that it turned into one of his attributes, and can be found in many depictions of Job throughout the ages (*e.g.*, figs. 9-10; see also in Papadaki-Oekland, 2009, *passim*).

Therefore, I would suggest that Job's grief is present in Carpaccio's *Meditation* and *Dead Christ* and this hypothesis will be bolstered through other elements in the paintings.

Figure 9. A detail from an illustration to the Book of Job

Source: From the manuscript *Marcianus gr. 538*, fol. 27, Venice, Biblioteca Marciana.
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Figure 10. Francesco di Antonio del Chierico, *Job*

Source: From a Florentine manuscript, *Ms. 74.1, (2003.88)* Recto, ca. 450-1475, Tempera and gold on parchment, Folio size 20.6x18.75 centimeters, New York, Getty Museum Collection, free domain

4.2. "Made all my bones to shake"[8] – the multiple meanings of the bones in Carpaccio's Meditation on the Passion *and* Dead Christ

The bones in Carpaccio's *Meditation* and *Dead Christ* (figs. 11-12) have multiple meanings and link between Christ and Job, and in the case of the *Meditation* – St. Jerome as well.

Figure 11. The bones and the skull

Source: Vittore Carpaccio, *Meditation on the Passion* (fig. 5). Detail

Figure 12. The bones and the skulls

Source: Vittore Carpaccio, *Dead Christ and Job* (fig. 6). Detail

4.2.1 The Bones, the Crucifixion, and St. Jerome

Firstly, the skull and bones in both paintings might suggest that Job, predicting the Passion, also foresees the Resurrection of the Dead during the Crucifixion of Christ (Matt. 27:52; mentioned by Phillips, 1911, p. 145). The notion that this allusion to the Resurrection of the Dead circulated in Venice during this period is further supported by a Crucifixion by Giovanni Bellini, where multiple skulls can be seen at the feet of the cross.[9]

Bellini's *Crucifixion* adds yet another possible reading of the skulls in Carpaccio's *Meditation* and *Dead Christ*. In addition to the interpretations connecting the skulls and the bones with St. Jerome

[8] *King James Bible*, 1769/1998, Job 4:14.

[9] Giovanni Bellini, *Crucifixion*, wood panel, 81X49 cm., early 1500s, Prato, Galleria di Palazzo degli Alberti della Cari Prato.

discussed below, Keith Christiansen connects the skulls in Bellini's Crucifixion with St. Jerome. According to St. Jerome's exegesis to Matthew, convicted criminals were decapitated in Golgotha, and their skulls remained scattered around (Christiansen, 2004, p. 50). Therefore, it might be that the skulls in Carpaccio's *Dead Christ* also refer to Christ's humiliation by crucifying him in this penalization site, including the fact he was crucified next to two thieves (Matt. 27:38; Mark 15:27ff; Luke 23:32-34), also suggested in Carpaccio's *Dead Christ* by the three crosses in the background. Thus, Christiansen's reading of Bellini's *Crucifixion* adds another connection of the skulls in Carpaccio's *Meditation* with St. Jerome, which will be discussed below.

An additional interpretation to the presence of the bones and the skulls would link them to the Last Judgment and the Return of Christ, through the interpretations of St. Jerome and of St. Gregory the Great to the verse "and that he shall stand at the latter day, vpon the earth" (Job 19:25),[10] to which the inscription on the chiseled stone where Job sits alludes.[11]

However, when considering Carpaccio's *Meditation*, one can also find several other links between the skull and St. Jerome and thus connect St. Jerome with Christ. St. Jerome visited the site of the Crucifixion, and in one of his letters, wrote:

> Tradition has it that in this city, nay, more, on this very spot, Adam lived and died. The place where our Lord was crucified is called Calvary, because the skull of the primitive man was buried there. So it came to pass that the second Adam, that is the blood of Christ, as it dropped from the cross, washed away the sins of the buried protoplast, the first Adam. (St. Jerome, ca. 347-420/1893b, Letter No. 46; Rice, 1985, p. 112)[12]

Thus, at a certain point, the skull became an essential attribute of the iconography of St. Jerome in his study. Eugene F. Rice traces the beginning of this tradition to a print by Albrecht Dürer (German, 1471-1528) from 1514, depicting St Jerome in his study (Rice, 1985, pp. 111-112, 165). Nevertheless, during the research upon which the current paper is based, I found that the skull emerged earlier, in the mid-fifteen century, in Italy, in paintings and reliefs describing St. Jerome in the desert, or St. Jerome in the wilderness. In these instances, St. Jerome is depicted praying to a small sculpture of a Crucifixion, with a skull at its feet, alluding to his contemplation about Adam's burial in the site of the Crucifixion. This motif, among other examples, is depicted in a relief by Desiderio da Settignano, in a painting by Bartolomeo di Giovanni, in a relief attributed to Antonio Rosellino, and in a painting attributed to Vincenzo Civerchio, all of them describing St. Jerome in the desert.[13] Therefore, although the skull occurs mainly in the iconography of St. Jerome in his study, it does not occur exclusively in this context, rather also in the iconography of St. Jerome in the desert, and, as mentioned above, occurred in art earlier than described in previous literature (see also Rice, 1985, pp. 111-112, 160-161).

St. Jerome used to reflect often about death, the ephemerality of life, and the Last Judgment (Rice, 1985, p. 160). Moreover, the fact that the skull (along with other symbols of ephemerality such as the candle and the hourglass) later became one of his permanent attributes, is associated with these reflections, too (Rice, 1985, pp. 111-112). One of the better-known examples of St. Jerome's reflections concerning death is found in his exegesis to *Ezekiel* 40:5, where he recounts his visits to the Christian catacombs in Rome:

> When I was studying the liberal arts in Rome as a youth, in the Lord's days I used to go around with others of the same age, and intention to tombs of the apostles and martyrs. And frequently I

[10] St. Jerome, ca. 347-420/1893a, *Contra Joannem Hierosolytitanum*; St. Gregory the Great, ca. 540-604/1844, *Moralia in Iob*, Vol. II, Book XIV, Line vi, 72, referring to the resurrection of the flesh according to Luke 24:39 in his exegesis to Job 19:25

[11] The text on the chisled rock was deciphered by Hartt, 1940, p. 27.

[12] In St. Jerome's *Letters*, sent to Marcella in the name of Paula and Eustochium. St. Gregory the Great also refers to the concept of Christ as Second Adam, whose mission was to redeem the sin of the First Adam through the Passion: "And unless the first man had transgressed, the second would never have come to the ignominies of the Passion" (ca. 540-604/1844, Vol. III, Line xvi, 26) in his commentary to Job 2:3, "Though thou movedst Me against him, to destroy him without cause".

[13] Desiderio da Settignano (Italian, ca. 1430-1464), *St. Jerome in the Desert*, marble, ca. 1460-1464, Washington, National Gallery; Bartolomeo di Giovanni (Italian, 1483-1511), *St. Jerome in the Desert*, oil on canvas, fifteen century, Florence, Galleria dell'Accademia; Antonio Rosellino (Italian, 1427-1479) (attributed), *St. Jerome in the Desert*, marble 16 5/8 x 15 1/4 x 2 7/8 in. (42 x 38.7 x 7.3 cm.), ca. 1470, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art; Vincenzo Civerchio (1470-1544) (attributed), *St. Jerome in the Desert*, whereabouts unknown (until 1932 – in Tross collection in Los Angeles).

> entered the crypts that had been hollowed out of the deep places of the earth and that, along with the walls on either side of those who enter, hold the bodies of the people buried there. Everything is dark, almost to the point of fulfilling the words of the prophet: "Let them go down to hell alive" [Ps 55:15]. (St. Jerome, c.419-420/2017, p. 451)

4.2.2. The Bones, Job's Sons and Daughters, and the Plague

In addition to all the above-mentioned, the current paper will suggest yet other unique contributions to these interpretations of the bones in both Carpaccio's *Meditation* and *Dead Christ*, based on the *Testament of Job.* The *Testament* is an apocryphal book, probably from Jewish origin. There is controversy as to its specific origin date, location, and language: some authors argue it was written by a member of the Essenes, in the first century BC or AD, and some pinpoint it in the Jewish community in Alexandria, in the middle of the second century AD. Some suggest it was written in Aramaic, while others maintain it was written in Greek (Meyer, 1954, p. 21; Gruen, 2009). In the *Testament of Job,* Job says that his wife asked his friends the kings to order their soldiers to

> dig among the ruins of our house, which fell upon my children, so that their bones could be brought in a perfect state to the tombs. Fir as we have, owing to our misfortune, no power at all, and so we may at least see their bones. (ca. 1st Century B.C.-2nd Century AD/1897, Chapter 9, verses 4-8)

Therefore, it might be that the bones on the ground in Carpaccio's *Meditation* and *Dead Christ*, as well as in some illuminated manuscripts depicting the story of Job, allude in a way to this story – and to Job's bereavement.[14]

Furthermore, in both of Carpaccio's paintings discussed here, these bones may also be an allusion to the intensity of the plague. One of the issues that preoccupied the witnesses of the first outburst of the Black Death during the mid-fourteenth century was the inability to pay the victims their last respects with an appropriate funeral due to the need for hurried burials. As many authors observed, this concern is expressed, for example, in texts composed by Agnolo di Tura del Grasso (Italian, fourteenth century), who wrote the chronicle of the plague in Siena in 1348, by the author Giovanni Boccaccio (Italian, 1313-1375), describing the plague in Florence in *Decameron* (1353/2007), by the Florentine chronicler Marchionne di Coppo di Stefano Buonaiuti (*Cronica*, 1327-1385/1995), by the Sicilian Franciscan Michele da Piazza (*Cronaca*, 14th century as cited in Horrox, 1995, pp. 35-41), and by the Piacenza lawyer Gabriele de' Mussis (Italian, d. 1356) (Bowsky, 1971, pp. 10-11, 13-14; Cohn, 2003, pp. 123-124, 195; Gottfried, 1983, p. 47; Herlihy, 1997, pp. 61-62; Watts, 1997, p. 18).[15]

Boccaccio wrote in *Decameron*:

> Few, again, were they whose bodies were accompanied to the church by more than half a score or a dozen of their neighbours, and of these no worshipful and illustrious citizens, but a sort of blood-suckers, sprung from the dregs of the people, who styled themselves pickmen and did such offices for hire, shouldered the bier and bore it with hurried steps, not to that church which the dead man had chosen before his death, but most times to the nearest, behind five or six priests, with little light and whiles none at all, which latter, with the aid of the said pickmen, thrust him into what grave soever they first found unoccupied, without troubling themselves with too long or too formal a service. (1353/2007, Day the First)

Agnolo di Tura wrote in *Crhonaca senese* (1349):

> In these ways, they die and no one can be found who would want to bury them, not even for money or in the name of friendship. Those who get infected in their own houses, they remove

[14] For the illuminated manuscripts depicting Job with bones on the ground see, for example, Jean Bourdichon (French, 1456/9-1520/1), *Job and His Friends*, an illustration for a *Book of Hours*, *MS. 6*, fol. 96, painted in Tour, France, tempera and gold on parchment, 6 5/8 x 4 1/2 in. (16.09 x 11.4 cm.), ca. 1480-1485, Los Angeles, Getty Museum Collection; and illustrations to a French Book of Hours, *MS. M. 62*, fol. 119r, 128v, and 131r, New York, Morgan Library

[15] De' Mussis wrote (ca. 1348) a book named *Historia de Morbo* (*The History of the Plague*), in the form of a dialogue between God and the Earth (as cited in Horrox, 1995, pp. 16-29).

> the best way they can and they bury them *without a supervision of a priest. No one controls anything and they do not even ring the church bells anymore*. Throughout Siena, giant pits are being excavated for the multitudes of the dead and the hundreds that die every night. The bodies are thrown into these mass graves and are covered bit by bit. When those ditches are full, new ditches are dug. So many have died that new pits have to be made every day.
>
> And I, Agnolo di Tura, called the Fat, have buried five of my sons with my own hands. Yet still I do not steal from those who were *poorly buried* like the *dogs* that *eat them and litter them about the city*. *There is no one to weep for any of the dead*, for instead everyone awaits their own impending deaths. (as cited in Aberth, 2005, p. 81. emphasis added)

Marchionne di Coppo di Stefano Buonaiuti wrote, "the city was reduced to bearing the dead to burial; many died who *at their passing had neither confession nor last sacraments*" (1327-1385/1995, Rubric 634a. emphasis added). Michele da Piazza wrote in *Cronaca* (14th century): "*Corpses lay unattended* in their own homes. *No priests*, sons, fathers or kinsmen dared to enter; instead, they paid porters large sums to carry the bodies to burial" (as cited in Horrox, 1995, p. 36. emphasis added), and de' Mussis wrote, in *Historia de Morbo*:

> And when the victim had breathed his last, it was often the mother who shrouded her son and placed him in the coffin, or the husband who did the same for his wife, for everybody else refused to touch the dead body. *No prayer, trumpet or bells summoned friends and neighbours to the funeral, nor mass was performed*. [...] Men were borne to burial by fay and night, since needs must, and *with only a short service* (ca. 1348, as cited in Horrox, 1995, p. 22-23. emphasis added).

Indeed, by the end of the fifteenth century, the authorities, at least in Venice, were better prepared to handle the issue of burials.[16] Nevertheless, it is quite possible that this painful problem remained a collective traumatic memory – whether commemorated by the written texts cited above or handed down orally from generation to generation, which was probably the most common means.[17]

Thus, it is possible that the depiction of the bones in Carpaccio's *Meditation* and *Dead Christ* forms a link between Job's and his wife's mourning for their sons and daughters, as expressed in *The Testament of Job*, and the grief of Carpaccio's contemporaries, mourning family members who died during the plague.

4.3. The Symbolic Animals

Finally, I would like to refer to the animals appearing in the *Meditation*, which is abound with animals. One can notice a goldfinch (fig. 13); a parrot (fig. 14); a bird taking to the sky (fig. 15); a fox (fig. 16); a lion (fig. 17); and a weasel (fig. 19). One can also find a pair of hares, a stag, a leopard devouring another stag another leopard, or a panther, following yet another stag.[18]

These animals have multiple symbolic, mostly religious or therapeutic meanings, and the current section will deal with a few of them, connecting some with predicting death, and others specifically with the loss of offspring.

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[16] The first burst of the plague in Venice occurred in late 1347 (Gottfried, 1983, p. 48) or early 1348 (Gasquet, 1908, p. 18). The Venetian authorities took steps such as appointing a health commission and ordering rules for burials as early as March 1348 (see Gasquet, 1908, p. 36; Gottfried, 1983, p. 48); the *Lazzaretto Vechio,* was established by a senate decree in 1423, and the *Lazaretto Nuovo* in 1464. See Chambers *et al.*, 1992, pp. 114-115 and p. 114, note 16 for the decrees of Venetian Senate referring to building the special plague hospitals; p. 302 for a French testimony on the removal of the dead bodies from the *Lazaretto Vechio*. In 1460, three health officers were elected, see Haag, 2021, p. 26. See also Carmichael, 1986, p. 110; Cippola, 1992, p. 2; Cohn, 2002, p. 371; Morse, 2006, p. 193; Palazzotto, 1973, p. 25. See also a short testimony in Contarini, 1543/1599, pp. 117-119.

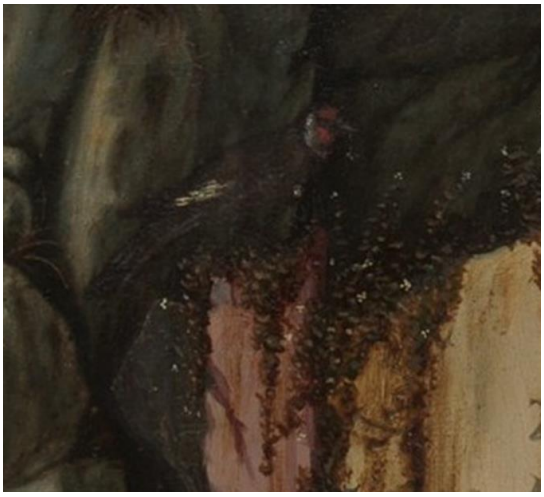
[17] Fenlon (2007, p. 218) maintains that the effects of the Black Death from 1348 were already lost from the collective memory, though they were still mentioned in written materials. Nevertheless, it is difficult to believe that such a traumatic event was simply forgotten and disappeared. For the role of collective memory see Carmichael, 1998.

[18] For the stags and the *Felidae* family predators, see Moscovich, 2019a

4.3.1. Ominous Symbolic Animals Predicting Death

The concept of predicting death is connected here with the traditional function of Job as a prophet, prophesizing the Passion.[19] Yet, it also can be connected to the fact that he, somehow, prophesized his own disaster, as testified by the words "For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me" (Job 3:25).

Figure 13. The goldfinch



Source: Vittore Carpaccio, *Meditation on the Passion* (fig. 5), detail

One of the animals predicting death is the goldfinch (fig. 13), seen perching on the throne next to Christ's shoulder, which is closely connected with death in several ways. Among other things, the goldfinch symbolizes sacrifice and resurrection, and foretells the Passion (Friedmann, 1946, pp. 83-84; Levi D'Ancona, 2001, p. 79). The goldfinch is featured in numerous paintings describing Virgin Mary and Christ the Child. Herbert Friedmann was probably the only author to identify this bird in Carpaccio's *Meditation* as a goldfinch, and the only one noting that it might be the single painting featuring a goldfinch representing Christ as an adult rather than as an infant. Yet, in spite of the fact that he dedicated an entire book to the goldfinch and its meanings in Christian art, Friedmann doubted whether in Venetian art, and particularly in this painting, the goldfinch has any symbolic meaning (Friedmann, 1946, p. 83). In a later book, however, Friedmann changed his mind and noted that the goldfinch symbolizes the Passion due to the red feathers on its head, which led to its identification as one of the little birds that tried to pull the thorns from the crown of thorns on Christ's forehead, and thus tainted by his blood (Friedmann, 1980, p. 220; Skinner, 1925, p. 16).[20]

The *Golden Legend* connects St. Jerome, too, with bloodspots of the passion, explaining St. Jerome's sanctity in the following manner, "He was dyed in blood by thinking of the passion of our Lord Jesu Christ" (de Voragine, 1275/1900, Vol. 5, p. 94ff). Friedmann remarks, "This suggests a deep symbolic affinity between St. Jerome and the Goldfinch". Nevertheless, he adds, "In Carpaccio's *Meditation on the Passion* the goldfinch is not associated with St. Jerome, but rather to the subject of the composition" (Friedmann, 1980, p. 220), by which he probably means Christ and the Passion.

Despite Friedmann's interpretation, maintaining that the goldfinch should not be connected to St. Jerome, I believe that the goldfinch in Carpaccio's *Meditation* emphasizes the association between St. Jerome and the Passion, and serves as a symbol of the Passion. First, it seems impossible to separate here between the meanings of the Passion and St. Jerome, which are so interconnected in this painting. Secondly, considering all of the rich and versified symbolic interpretations of animals in literature, the multiple symbolic meanings of the animals in Carpaccio's *oeuvre* (Cohen, 2008, pp. 55-134), and specifically in the *Meditation* (Moscovich, 2019a, 2019b), and Friedmann's own reservation regarding

[19] For Job as a prophet in the context of Carpaccio's *Meditation* see Hornik, 2002; Moscovich, 2019b.

[20] It was also connected with the Passion and the crown of thorns simply because it feeds on thistles, see Levi D'Ancona (2001, p. 79) citing Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* (7th century/2006, Book XII, Chapter vii, Lines 74, p. 269). Yet Albertus Magnus, in his book *On animals: A Medieval summa zoologica*, maintains it does not eat thorns, rather dwells on them (ca. 13th century/1999, Vol. 1, p. 601; Vol. 2, p. 703).

his earlier opinion in his later book, there can be no doubt the goldfinch in Carpaccio's *Meditation* has a symbolic function. Thus, the goldfinch should be interpreted here according to its symbolic meanings, which are shared both by the description of St. Jerome mediating the Passion in the *Golden Legend* and by the paintings where it is depicted with Christ the Child, where it is foretelling the Passion, which enhances the prophetic aspect of the painting –depicting Job as prophesizing the Passion.

Friedmann also noted that the goldfinch (scientific name *Carduelis carduelis*) inherited the traditional meanings of the legendary *Caladrius* bird (also *Charadrius*, *Caradrius*, Caladres, Caladrio, Calandre, Calandrius, Calatrius, Caradrius, Charadrius, Kaladrius, or Kalandria) (Badke, 2002-2022). The goldfinch was assigned the traditional meanings attributed to this legendary bird, despite the tremendous disparity between the look of the goldfinch, which is colorful and small, and the alleged appearance of the Caladrius, which is white and large. Friedman analyses this contradiction, looking for the source of the identification between such different birds, examining a plethora of evidence, yet he does not reach any unequivocal conclusion relating to it, rather only suggestions, or postulations (Friedmann, 1946, pp. 10-28).

One of the important characteristics of the goldfinch, pertaining to our context, which it inherited from the legendary Caladrius, is its ability to predict life and death. The *Physiologus* (ca. 4th century/1942) says,[21]

> If someone is ill, whether he live or die can be known from the charadrius. The bird turns his face away from the man whose illness will bring death and thus everyone knows that he is going to die. (Ch. 7, pp. 7-8)

Alexander Neckam (1157- 1217) in *De laudibus divinae Sapientiae* says, "As often as it perceives the day of death approaching" (ca. 13th century/2012, p. 377-378, line 200ff.) and the *Rochester Bestiary* (1230) says,

> If anyone is ill, by means of this caladrius it can be found out if he will live or die. For if the man is destined to die, it turns its face away from him, and by this sign people know that he is going to die. (as cited in Druce, 1912, p. 13)

Another source, *History of Alexander the Great* (1333-c.1340), tells,

> From there they went to the palace of king Xerxes. And Alexander found in this palace many marvels, and among other things he found birds of the size of doves which are called "salandres," which prophesy about a sick person, if he is going to die or not, or to live. For if it so happens that it looks at the sick man in the face, he must live, and if it turns the other way he will surely die. (British Library, *Royal MS 19 D. i*, fol. 39v, as cited in Druce, 1912, p. 17, note 23)

This predictive power also found its expression in art. For example, in British Library, *Harley MS 4751* (fol. 40r) and in the *Talbot Shrewsbury Book* (1444-1445) (British Library, Royal 15 E VI, fol. 21v) illustrating the above-mentioned story of Alexander the Great with ill people and Caladrius birds, predicting that one of them will die and the other – restore to his good health.

Friedmann found that this legend was also known to St. Jerome (Friedmann, 1946, p. 11, note 12; Friedmann 1980, p. 220, note 92), thus it is possible that Carpaccio was familiar with it, through some *Bestiaries*, or through the writings of St. Jerome, which also strengthens the connection between St. Jerome and the goldfinch in Carpaccio's *Meditation*, and supports this reading of the goldfinch as predicting death. Of course, the other side of the coin in this case is the ability of the caladrius to predict recovery to good health – and to cure, which is beyond the scope of the current paper.[22]

[21] The *Physiologus* is an ancient prototype for a large number of Medieval *Bestiaries*. See references to reviews in Moscovich, 2019b, p. 6, note 39.

[22] For the positive symbolic meanings of the goldfinch, see Friedmann, 1946, pp. 7, 10-35.

Figure 14. The parrot

Source: Vittore Carpaccio, *Meditation on the Passion* (fig. 5), detail

I would like to suggest here that the meaning of a bird tainted with blood, and thus sharing with the goldfinch this implicit prediction of the Passion – can also apply to the completely red parrot (fig. 14), seen on the ground in Carpaccio's *Meditation*, between Christ's throne and Job's right hand. Hartt interprets it as a possible symbol of sacrifice (Hartt, 1940, p. 30), which connects the parrot closely to both the Passion of Christ and St. Jerome's devotion to the Passion.

The rarity of fully red-feathered parrots supports this symbolic reading of the parrot in Carpaccio's *Meditation*. Friedmann argued that a red-feathered parrot does not exist in nature, and that it is a "pure invention" (Friedmann, 1980, pp. 281-282). Many years later, Masseti suggested that Carpaccio painted in the *Meditation* a red lory, *Chalcopsitta cardinalis*, also known as cardinal lory, which is "the only parrot characterized by a completely red colouration and a long tail" (Masseti, 2016, pp. 261-262). Yet looking at photographs of the red lory raises doubts as to the assumption that the cardinal lory served as a model in Carpaccio's *Meditation*, since the wings of the cardinal lory have a much darker shade, of purple or brown,[23] while the color of the parrot painted by Carpaccio is homogenous. This enhances the possibility that it is an imaginary bird, and thus supports the symbolic meaning of this parrot.

Furthermore, as Masseti noted, the red parrot features in Carpaccio's paintings depicting St. Jerome in other several occasions, for example, in *The Funeral of St. Jerome* and in *St. Jerome and the Lion* (Masseti, 2016, p. 260).[24] This fact supports the above-mentioned connection between the parrot and St. Jerome.

We can conclude yet another connection between the parrot and St. Jerome in Carpaccio's work, including the *Meditation*. The translator of the Old and New Testaments from Hebrew and Greek into Latin, St. Jerome is also related to the parrot in another way, since the parrot symbolizes the fluency of speech.

In addition, St. Jerome's preoccupation with defending the Immaculate Conception doctrine can lead us to yet another connection with the parrot (St. Jerome, 347-420/1893c, pp. 335-346). Since the Immaculate Conception occurred by means of word, and not in a physical manner, the parrot, as a verbal creature, is the symbol thereof (Friedmann, 1980, p. 281).

In this connection, the parrot is also ascribed the quality of prophecy – it prophesized the future arrival of Virgin Mary and the Immaculate Conception (Cohen, 2008, p.113; Eisler, 1991, pp. 39, 52; Friedmann, 1980, pp. 281-282). According to legend, a parrot congratulated Julius Caesar in the forest with the words *Ave Ceasar*, which was interpreted as a proof that miracles are possible, as well as an allusion to the blessing of the Archangel Gabriel to Virgin Mary in the Annunciation, *Ave Maria*. The word *Ave* is also the reversal of the name *Eva*, and Virgin Mary is the antithesis of Eve and considered

[23] See Google. (n.d.). [Google photos of "Chalcopsitta cardinalis" "cardinal lory"]. Retrieved January 4, 2023, from https://bit.ly/40oIJUG

[24] Vittore Carpaccio, *The Funeral of St. Jerome*, 1502, oil on canvas, 141x211 cm., Venice, Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni; Vittore Carpaccio, *St. Jerome and the Lion*, 1502, tempera on canvas, 141x211 cm., Venice, Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni.

the "New Eve" (Cohen, 2008, pp. 112-113; Eisler ,1991, p. 268; Friedmann, 1980, pp. 281-282). The parrot pronouncing the word '*Ave*' also appears in the book *Defensorium inviolatae virginitatis Mariae* (1490), by Franciscus de Retza (German, ca. 1343-1427), published in multiple editions in Europe during the fifteenth century.[25] The text accompanying the painting reads, "If a parrot can say 'Ave', why can't Virgin Mary get pregnant through the word 'Ave'?" Retza's book uses legends from *Bestiaries* and other common Medieval sources referring to real and mythological animals to defend the Immaculate Conception, texts that one may assume Carpaccio's familiarity with and, accordingly, his familiarity with this legend as well. Further research is required to affirm whether there were copies of Retza's book available in Venice at the time.[26]

Figure 15. A bird taking to the sky

Source: *Vittore Carpaccio, Meditation on the Passion* (fig. 5), detail

Another bird, identified by Friedmann as titmouse or bunting (fig. 15), can be seen flying in the background of Carpaccio's *Meditation*, above the throne. This bird was interpreted by Hartt as a symbol of Christ's Resurrection, relying upon St. Gregory the Great's exegesis of the verse "There is a path which no foule knoweth, and which the vulturs eye hath not seene" (Job 28:7; Hartt, 1940, p. 30). Looking at the *Bestiaries'* tradition about the vulture, we find that like the other birds in Carpaccio's *Meditation*, the vulture is connected both to predicting death and to the Immaculate Conception.

Isidore of Seville (7th century/2006) says in *Etymologies*, "They say that some vultures do not unite in coition, but conceive and reproduce without copulation" (Book XII, Chapter vii, line 12, p. 264), and according to *The Aberdeen Bestiary* (ca.1200/1996),

> What can they say, those people who are by nature accustomed to mock the mysteries of the Christian faith, when they hear that the virgin gave birth, yet maintain that child birth is impossible for an unmarried woman, whose virginity is undefiled by intercourse with a man? What they do not deny is possible in vulture, they think is impossible in the mother of God. (fol. 44V)

The Aberdeen Bestiary adds, "Vultures know when death is near", and "Vultures regularly foretell from certain signs that men will die" (fol. 44V).

Therefore, the goldfinch, the parrot, and the bird taking to the sky in Carpaccio's *Meditation* can be connected with dead Christ, since they can be read as an allusion to the Immaculate Conception, and as predicting death.

Now, I would like to turn to the animals whose symbolic meanings refers to Resurrection, *i.e.*, the fox, the lion, and the weasel.

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[25] The book is mentioned in Levi D'Ancona, 2001, p. 170, and in Eisler, 1991, p. 33.

[26] According to *WorldCat Identities*, http://worldcat.org/identities/lccn-n2007072724/, no Venetian edition was published. Yet this does not exclude the possibility that the book circulated in Venice.

4.3.2. Animals Symbolizing Resurrection

In the upper left corner, standing at the entrance to a cave, one can see a predator from the *Canidae* family, probably a fox (fig. 16). The fox can also be associated with the Passion of Christ, and in this particular context, I would like to connect between the fox in Carpaccio's *Meditation* and description of the Passion in the scriptures, using the metaphor of Herod as a fox:

> The same day there came certaine of the Pharises, saying vnto him, Get thee out, and depart hence; for Herode will kill thee. And he said vnto them, Go ye and tell that Foxe, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected (*Luke* 13:31-32; also mentioned in *Physiologus*, ca. 4th century/1942, Chapter XVIII, pp. 27-28).

These verses include a prophecy of the Passion and the Resurrection, hinted by the phrase "the third day", thus, the fox in Carpaccio's *Meditation* might allude to the Resurrection.

Figure 16. The fox

Source: Vittore Carpaccio, *Meditation on the Passion* (fig. 5), detail

Figure 17. The Lion

Source: Vittore Carpaccio, *Meditation on the Passion* (fig. 5), detail

Figure 18. Giotto di Bondone, *The Lion Resurrecting its Cubs*, 1302-1305, fresco

Source: Padova, Capella Scrovegni ©Museo Civico Eremitani di Padova, Beni Culturali

Other animals in Carpaccio's *Meditation*, such as the lion (fig. 17) and the weasel (fig. 19) have other meanings, connecting them to the story of Job through the loss of offspring, and to the Resurrection, by the legends referring to their ability to revive their dead offspring.

According to ancient sources, such as Medieval *Bestiaries*, the lion's cubs "sleep for three days and nights" when they are born, until their father wakes them with his roar.[27] *The Aberdeen Bestiary* (ca.1200/1996) tells another version:

> When a lioness gives birth to her cubs, she produces them dead and watches over them for three days, until their father comes on the third day and breathes into their faces and restores them to life. (fol. 7V)

This legend was probably known in North Italy, as testified by Giotto's fresco in Cappella Scrovegni in Padua (fig. 18).

Figure 19. The weasel

Source: Vittore Carpaccio, *Meditation on the Passion* (fig. 5), detail

[27] For a wider context of this legend and its other meanings in primary sources see Moscovich, 2019b, pp. 12-13.

Figure 20. *The Weasel Resurrecting its Offspring*

Source: *MS. Douce 308*, Folio 96v, Oxford, Bodleian Library, free domain

Similarly, Medieval *Bestiaries* describe the weasel, also seen in Carpaccio's *Meditation* (fig. 19), as capable of resurrecting its dead offspring.[28] *The Aberdeen Bestiary* (ca. 1200/1996) says, "if, by chance, their young are killed, and their parents succeed in finding them, they can bring the offspring back to life" (fol. 24R).[29] And *MS. Douce 308* (fig. 20) says, "The weasel, skilled in medicine, can bring her dead cubs back to life".

Of course, both these legends are connected closely in Christian tradition to the Resurrection of Christ. Thus, for example, Giotto's depiction of the legend is adjunct to the *Noli mi Tangere*, *i.e.*, the Resurrection scene;[30] yet, the allusion to the dead offspring can also be related, in the current context, to the figure of Job as a bereaved father. When connecting them with the allusions to the end of times and the Resurrection of the Dead discussed above – the bones and the verse "and that he shall stand at the latter day, vpon the earth" (Job 19:25) – one can connect them to bereavement, and to praying for the soul and the hope for the Resurrection of the deceased. As seen below, prayer is one of the prominent features discussed in the following section.

5. *Pietro Lombardo's* Job and St. Francis *and the Expression of Grief*

In analyzing Pietro Lombardo's relief *Job and St. Francis* (fig. 1), in the portal of San Giobbe Church in Venice, the posture of Job will be, again, our departure point. Surprisingly, Lombardo did not choose to depict Job in his traditional grief posture describe above. It might seem even more surprising, given the fact that the portal's round arch, which frames the relief, could also comfortably contain a depiction of Job in the traditional grief posture, with his back bowed. However, I would like to maintain that his grief is present in this relief, too, despite the surprising choice of posture.

In Lombardo's artwork, Job is depicted kneeling and praying. His prayer is directed towards God, represented as a kind of sun – a circle from which beams of light radiate. Apparently, as in Carpaccio's *Meditation* and *Dead Christ*, at first sight, one might assume that this relief does not include any allusion to Job's bereavement. However, looking at Byzantine illustrations in manuscripts of the Book of Job (*e.g.*, figs. 21-22; see also in Papadaki-Oekland, 2009, pp. 115-119) will reveal a surprising precedent to the prayer posture of Job in Lombardo's relief, a precedent connecting it to grief.

[28] Debra Hassig (1995, p. xvii) studied twenty-eight English manuscripts from the 12-14 centuries, and the legend concerning the female weasel occurs in all of them.

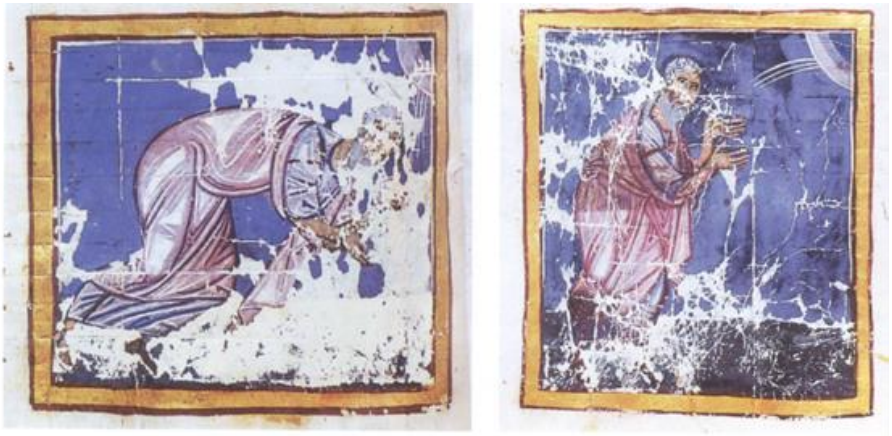
[29] See also Charbonneau-Lassay, 1940/1991, p. 149; Hassig, 1995, p. 29.

[30] See Giotto di Bondone - Scenes with decorative bands - WGA09284.jpg. (2011, June 9). In *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Giotto_di_Bondone_-_Scenes_with_decorative_bands_-_WGA09284.jpg

Figure 21: Illuminations of *Job,* 1:20

Source: *Giobbe e catena*, Library Cod.3, fol. 21r, Egypt, Sinai, St. Catherine Monastery. By permission of Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt

Figure 22: Illuminations of *Job*, 1:20



Source: *Marciana gr. 538*, (fol. 18v on the right, fol. 19 on the left), Venice, Biblioteca Marciana. With the authorization of the Ministry of Cultural Assets and Activities – Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana. Reproduction prohibited

The verses describing Job's reaction to the terrible news of his children's death read:

> While he was yet speaking, there came also another and said, "Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house, and behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only have escaped alone to tell thee!"
>
> Then Job arose, and rent his mantle and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground and worshiped (Job 1:18-20)

Various illustrations of verse Job 1:20 in Byzantine manuscripts (*e.g.*, figs. 21-22)[31] refer to the phases of grief described in this verse —renting his mantle, shaving his head, and falling upon the ground and worshipping, whether in a continuous form or separate scenes, when the third phase describes Job as addressing in prayer to God – exactly as in Lombardo's relief. Sometimes God is described, as in Lombardo's work, as a Sun (Vatican Library, *Vaticanus* gr. 1231; Biblioteca Marciana, *Marciana* gr. 538). Alternatively, these illustrations describe God as Christ the Pantocrator (*Codex Gr.5*)[32] or as a palm of a divine hand (*Vaticanus gr. 749*).

[31] Other examples: Vatican Library, *Vaticanus gr. 749*, fol. 21, painted probably in Rome, second half of the 9th century; Venice, Biblioteca Marciana ,*Marc gr. 538*, fols. 18v-19, probably painted in Asia Minor, early 10th century; Vatican Library, *Vaticanus gr. 1231*, painted probably in Cyprus, early 12th century; Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, *Codex Gr.5 (T*), around 1300; Egypt, Sinai, St. Catherine Monastery, Library *Cod.3*, fol. 21r .

[32] One can also find Job praying on his knees facing God the Father, in the illustration by Jean Bourdichon to the above-mentioned *Book of Hours*, MS. 6, fol. 131r, painted in Tour, France, tempera and gold on parchment, 6 5/8 x 4 1/2 in. (16.09 x 11.4 cm.), ca. 1480-1485, Los Angeles, Getty Museum Collection.

This posture in the Byzantine manuscripts is unique to describing the moment when Job receives the terrible news. In illustrations referring to other verses, the description is quite different. Thus, for example, in illustrating the next verse, Job 1:21, the manuscript illustrators chose to depict Job standing (*Vaticanus 1321*, fol. 53; *Cod. 171*, p. 44).

This uniqueness supports the assumption that Lombardo's relief in the Church of San Giobbe also alludes to the aspect of Job as a bereaved father. This assumption can be further enhanced by the fact that three of the five manuscripts describing bereaved and grieving Job in this particular posture are found in Italy. One of them is found in the *Biblioteca Marciana*, Venice, and the other two in Rome, in the Vatican Library. Thus, it might be that Lombardo knew of this iconographic tradition, and it may be assumed that he knew similar manuscripts, or even these manuscripts themselves. Indeed, the specific manuscript found in the Biblioteca Marciana, *Marcianus gr. 538*, was donated to this library by Jacomo Gallicio only in 1624 (Zorzi, 1988, p. 58), and further research is required to find out whether it was in Venice much earlier, and therefore available to Lombardo.

Yet, as mentioned above while discussing the multiple – and even contradictory – levels of interpretations, this reading does not exclude the hope that can be seen in the figure of praying Job in Lombardo's relief *Job and St. Francis*.

6. Conclusions

Although Job's sons or daughters do not appear in Carpaccio's *Meditation on the Passion* or in his *Dead Christ with Job*, and neither in Lombardo's work *Job and St. Francis*, they are present in these artworks in several ways.

Among these ways, one can find the postures of Job, the allusion to the *Testament of Job* and the death of Job's sons and daughters without granted the right for a proper burial, and the symbolic meanings of the animals predicting death or suffering from losing their offspring, as well as the description of Job in illustrations to specific verses in Byzantine manuscripts.

These various ways add another important level of meaning to these works of art and can also be related to the plight of the Venetian society during the plague – the loss of family members and the great pain that accompanied it. Such a dimension offers comfort to those who suffer, alluded by the various references to Resurrection, and also enhances the identification with them and the compassion towards them.

* A shorter version of this paper was delivered online on October 2, 2020, at the 2ND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ARTS AND CULTURES (II CONGRESO INTERNACIONAL DE ARTES Y CULTURAS), October 2, 2020, organized by *Global Knowledge Academics* (*GKA*).

7. Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Professor Simona Cohen from Tel Aviv University for supervising the MA thesis upon which this paper is based.

The present text arises within the framework of a CONCILIUM project (931.791) of the Complutense University of Madrid, "Validation of models of communication, business, social networks, and gender".

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