Performing the Gospels in Byzantium

Tracing the Gospel text from script to illustration to recitation, this study looks at how illuminated manuscripts operated within ritual and architecture. Focusing on a group of richly illuminated lectionaries from the late eleventh century, the book articulates how the process of textual recitation produced marginalia and miniatures that reflected and subverted the manner in which the Gospel was read and simultaneously imagined by readers and listeners alike. This unique approach to manuscript illumination points to images that slowly unfolded in the minds of its listeners as they imagined the text being recited, as meaning carefully changed and built as the text proceeded. By examining this process within specific acoustic architectural spaces and the sonic conditions of medieval chant, the volume brings together the concerns of sound studies, liturgical studies, and art history to demonstrate how images, texts, and recitations played with the environment of the middle Byzantine church.

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Performing the Gospels in Byzantium
Sight, Sound, and Space in the Divine Liturgy

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Acknowledgments

I have been writing this book on and off for over ten years now. In this time, far too many debts have been incurred, personal, professional, and financial. Taking this moment to acknowledge these dues at the completion of a manuscript is an honor that I am greatly privileged to enjoy at this time.

This volume began as my first paper in graduate school, written for Robert S. Nelson’s seminar on word and image in the Middle Ages in the fall of 2009. I recall those days fondly, particularly getting to enjoy a class that was so driven by what drew me to Rob as an adviser and a class that was so clearly marked by Rob’s enduring friendship with the late Michael Camille. Bisserra Pentcheva and Ioli Kalavrezou’s stimulating colloquium at Dumbarton Oaks on phenomenology and aesthetics galvanized my interests, as just weeks before I had discovered the exciting work by Christoffer Weitze et al. on the acoustics of Hagia Sophia, which Bisserra herself has fruitfully furthered.

Over time, marked by semesters and chapters written, the paper grew and eventually became the overextended core of my dissertation. In the time that has followed, the project has dilated. My desire has been to not simply produce a study on a manuscript type (i.e., the Byzantine Gospel lectionary), but rather to follow the Gospel from text to image, to recitation and ritual, to sound and architecture – and consider how all these parts come together and play off one another.

While this is the closest book to my dissertation, it was not my first, because I felt that I first had to lay the groundwork on Byzantine perception for this book to make sense. My emphasis on the workings of the imagination as a cognitive faculty in my first book is a key factor in comprehending how the visual analyses and iconographic plays that I outline in this volume are cultivated and sustained by Byzantine viewers, whom I often prefer to call “users” so as to be less optic and more inclusive of the broader sensorium and its perceptual and cognitive dimensions. Therefore, this is volume two of a broader study, which I have long referred to as The Proleptic Image. The third book in the trilogy, if I ever finish it, will be the eponymous volume on the ebbs and flow of time.
This is a book marked by access. Access to archives, access to images, and access to resources. Resources used to travel to access archives, to buy photographic equipment to produce photographs, and then more resources to license and publish those images in print. An exorbitant amount in image fees has been paid to the libraries that hold the manuscripts found in this text. And, much time has been consumed with working to gain access to the manuscripts themselves or to images of said manuscripts from institutions across the Mediterranean and the United States.

Much of this access has been based on economic and gender privilege. Therefore, I wish to give special thanks to all those institutions whose collections are open access and charge no fees for images or reproduction. To those who follow ethical models of access with clear and accessible procedures, rather than being restricted by gatekeepers that require tapping into intricate social networks for permitting access. And, to those where all genders are welcomed and able to work with safety, dignity, and respect.

Over the years, I found myself in various libraries, museums, and archives for this project, far more than have even made it into the book itself. But the generosity and care of some do continue to stand out. At the Vatican Library, Paolo Vian granted me access to consult the manuscripts found there and over the years approved many of my requests for images and their reproduction rights. At Dumbarton Oaks, Stephen Zwirn patiently sat in the room with me and read about Byzantine silver while I carefully made my way through their manuscript holdings. And, over the years, various at the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, including Deb Brown Stewart, Alyson Williams, and Samuel Shapiro, have helped immensely with resources and images rights. At the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Helen Evans gave me all the images I could possibly need of the Jaharis Lectionary, and Christine Brennan helped with details. Special thanks must also be offered to Melanie Holcomb who went out of her way to track down the names and numbers of people who might be able to help me with difficult-to-find images, outside the Met’s holdings. At the State Historical Museum in Moscow, Svetlana Bedrak was crucial for gaining image rights and exceptional. At the National Library of Greece, many assisted me with access and rights, including Daniel B. Wallace, Robert Marcello, and Leigh Ann Thompson at the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts in Plano, Texas. At Art Resource, Robbi Siegel has been a true lifesaver over the years, always remembering me and turning around image files and rights in a matter of hours for me. At Monza, several managed to point me in the direction of the recent photography of the ampullae, including their photographer Piero Pozzi and the
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