THE DISCOURSE OF ICONS, THEN AND NOW

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Art is made to be seen. Although few art historians, I trust, would quarrel with such a statement, most focus on the making rather than the seeing, or upon the intentions of the maker, not the reception, perception and interpretation of viewers, past or present. When deliberate attention is paid to the procedures by which images and viewers come together, many issues become problematic on both sides of what Roman Jakobson in his famous diagram represents as an addresser sending a message to an addressee.[1] They are joined by those factors that enable communication to take place: context, the referent of the message; contact, the physical and psychological channels through which or by which addresser and addressee interact; and code, the communicative system shared by the two parties. Such a model has a certain utility. By focusing on the entire communicative process, the system transcends the traditional art-historical preoccupation with the makers of images through the inclusion of the intended audiences and shifts the enquiry towards the facilitators of communication.

Works of art, however, usually outlast their primary producers or consumers, and necessarily do so in the case of medieval object that are extant today. Thus a private *objet d'art*, passed down through a family, survives only if later generations reaffirm its prior character or value at least to the extent of preserving it. The same is true of public art. For example, if a church fresco is no longer appreciated, a later congregation may replace it with something more appropriate for their needs. Thus for art after its inception, consumers become producers, always affirming or denying, perpetuating or transforming the object's significance for themselves and other audiences. As we approach our world, art historians play a major role in this process. In the nineteenth century, scholars literally appropriated medieval art from its inheritors, when monument commissions declared that a church or an altarpiece belonged not just to the local parish but also to the national patrimony, which was, in turn, largely defined by those same scholars.[2]

Today art historians and the repositories of art are the producers of medieval art for a modern public. In transforming the medieval object into art, as defined by modern values, we direct and control the context, contact and code, in Jakobson's terms. Occasionally we further attempt to give the object back to the Middle Ages.

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To do this, however, we must simultaneously affirm and deny the historian's role as the creator of art in order to create or hopefully re-create the medieval audience for the objects that we, not necessarily they, have declared art. If we are to be at all successful in this endeavour, we must always be aware of our responses, because they are so much louder than the faint sounds from the Middle Ages.

Accordingly, I will begin with the initial object of my enquiry, an illuminated Byzantine manuscript, in its present context at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington (plate 1). Displayed in the case in the right foreground of the photograph, the book rests on a lucite stand in a wood and lucite case and is held open by bands, the standard mode of display for valuable books. Beneath it is a label, which I cannot read, but an approximate substitute is provided by the museum's handbook: 'Illuminated Manuscript: Psalter and New Testament. Constantinople, ca.1084 A.D. . . . height 16.2 cm. Width 10.3–10.9 cm. 62.35.'[3] Such a label defines a minimal context for the object. Whereas the text type is a category that is both ours and theirs, the date and measurements are expressed in our terms; the last item, the inventory number, pertains, of course, to its current owner; and the language used, English, is that of its American curators, not its medieval readers. Because all of this seems so ordinary to us, it is easy to forget how far such data, even magnified a hundred fold, is from a medieval conception of the book and its decoration.

Let me suggest a few ways in which this book is an object of our world not theirs. First, it is displayed in the company of other objects that we regard as art, so that it too becomes art. The lucite, the special lighting, the museum guards standing by and even Dumbarton Oaks' highly polished floors further signify aesthetic importance, as well as high monetary value in our culture. Second, this is a book in name only, for it cannot be read. The viewer cannot take it in his or her hands and turn the pages, and moreover most of its viewers do not know Greek. Thus the meaning or significance of this object has shifted, a phenomenon analysed by Roland Barthes.[4] Originally its images and words were signifiers of religious messages, the signified. Now images and words, because they have become art, are the signified, and the new signifier is the milieu, the label, the case, the art museum, the fine house in Georgetown. The book has thus become an aesthetic object to be valued in and for itself, not as a means of transmitting divine messages.

In sum, the Byzantine manuscript has much in common with a butterfly on display in a natural history museum. Both have had their wings forced open and pinned down. Both have been labelled, which is to say classified, according to the intellectual structures of their keepers. And finally both are far from their original context. The butterfly is dead, of course, but so too is the manuscript, for reasons that I hope to make clear. In order to animate the book and gain some sense of its past significances, we must attempt to recover the context, contact and code that made its verbal and visual messages meaningful to its audiences. I will begin with methods commonly employed in art history before turning to others that are less traditional to the discipline. In so doing, I will consider different objects and media, because the communicative structures that I am pursuing transcend art-historical categories.

The Dumbarton Oaks manuscript contains the Psalms and the New Testament, a combination that became popular in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[5] Its

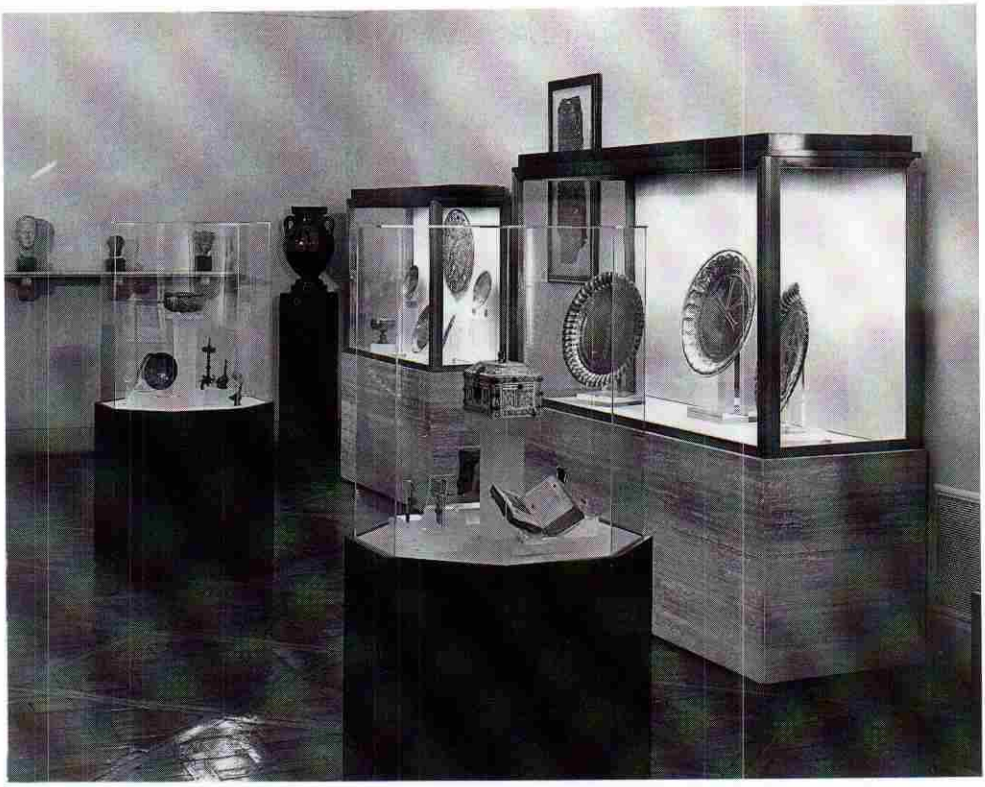
small size (given above) and extra-Biblical contents indicate a book intended for more private devotions.[6] Nothing further, however, is known about who made or commissioned the book in AD 1083/4, although a Constantinopolitan origin seems assured.[7] In the sixteenth century, a monk, depicted in the manuscript with his spiritual father, may have donated the book to the Pantocrator monastery on Mt Athos, where it remained until the mid-twentieth century.[8] The Psalter section contains some images that are properly classified as 'narrative' illustrations – such as the scenes of David and Goliath (plate 2).[9] These bear careful analysis, but rather than dwell on the comparatively traditional aspects of the illustration, I will focus on the book's more distinctive images and in particular on the iconic miniature of Christ before Psalm 77 (plate 3). Because the image is unprecedented here but not elsewhere, it provides a useful entrée into several contexts.

The now damaged miniature precedes the following verse: 'Give heed, O my people, to my law; incline your ear to the words of my mouth.' In medieval Byzantium, the mention of the word law often inspired the traditional scene of Moses receiving the law, as in a Vatican Psalter (gr. 342) written four years later (plate 4).[10] A second, much less common tradition incorporated some figure of Christ, as seen, for example, on the facing recto in the Vatican Psalter (plate 5).[11] In general terms, the representation of Christ was inspired, as Der Nersessian explained,[12] by Patristic commentaries, but in the Vatican manuscript its immediate context is the marginal commentary written around the headpiece. It states that the people mentioned in the psalm are the people of the church. Christ spoke first to the Jews, now to the faithful, who follow the will of the Lord and receive Christ. Referring to the words of the second line, 'incline your ears to the words of my mouth', the commentary adds: 'then to the words of the law; now to the Gospel of Christ'.

To illustrate text and commentary, the artist has juxtaposed Moses receiving the law on the verso with Christ giving it on the recto. This second transmission is shown in unprecedented detail. Christ offers a jewelled book, no doubt the richly bound Gospels that were used in the liturgy. This book is received by Peter, as Paul hands a scroll across to a youthful figure, who resembles the Moses of the facing miniature. Some members of the group of believers at the left also look up to Christ, thus inclining their ears to the words of Christ's mouth. This unique and little studied miniature displays an evident concern for how Christ's words reach the people of God and, by extension, the beholder.

I would submit that the contemporary Dumbarton Oaks miniature is also concerned with communication from God to Man, but that the means chosen are novel and difficult to explain with the traditional interpretative model of text and image. For example, Der Nersessian termed the miniature an illustration of 'Christ, the lawgiver, rather than Moses receiving the law',[13] which is an entirely correct, if limited, interpretation. The Christ here is not an illustration in the same way that David and Goliath illustrate the events of the supernumerary psalm, because the image of Christ served a radically different function for the medieval reader/viewer, whose role in activating the meaning of the object must be considered in any interpretation of this page.

Medieval reactions to such an image can be recovered in part as the image is an icon and the icon's affective value is well attested in pictorial and textual



1 The Byzantine Collection, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington

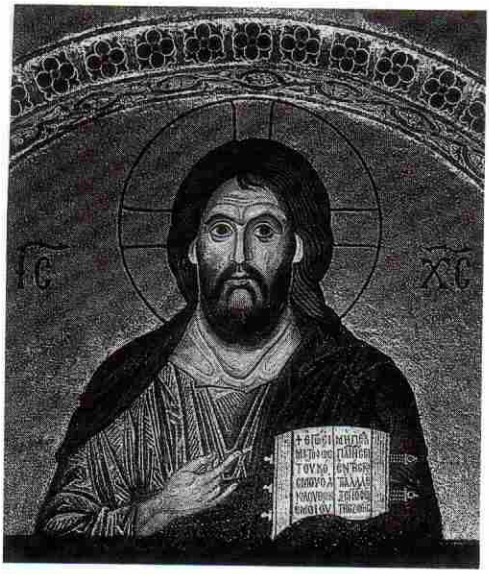
2 David and Goliath. Washington, Dumbarton Oaks, ms 3, fo. 71r

3 Christ. Washington, Dumbarton Oaks, ms 3, fo. 39r

4 Moses receiving the law. Rome, Vat. gr. 342, fo. 133v

5 Christ presenting the Gospels. Rome, Vat. gr. 342, fo. 134r

6 Icon of Christ. Florence, Uffizi



7 Christ. Hosios Loukas, narthex lunette

sources in Byzantium. This particular image of Christ, holding a book in his left hand and gesturing with his right, has a long history, and we find it in a sixth-century wood panel at Mt Sinai[14] and in an eleventh-century miniature mosaic in Berlin.[15] In both cases, Christ's book is closed, but in a twelfth-century mosaic icon in Florence (plate 6) it is open at the eighth chapter of John: 'I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'[16]

The text is traditional to the image and appears earlier in a monumental mosaic at the eleventh-century church of Hosios Loukas in Greece (plate 7).[17] The mosaic occupies the lunette directly above the main door leading from the narthex into the nave (plate 8). The faithful thus encounter the image as they proceed into the church proper. In this position, the sentence, 'I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life', pertains to the beholder's actual experience of processing into the nave. As the followers of Christ would pass from the narthex into the nave for the service, they would follow the text, walking from spiritual darkness into the light of life offered by the eucharist. A text about walking is co-joined with the processional action of the reader in order to structure and define the religious experience. Each activates the other, and all is carefully calculated for this temporal and spatial context. The open door at the left illumines the mosaic and spotlights the figure of Christ. Walking through the narthex permits the reading of the text at the moment that the believer is about to enter the naos, which outwardly is dark but spiritually is filled, as we read, with the light of life.

The mosaic's message, then, is directed to the experience of the viewer/reader, but there is more involved here than ritual procession. The text that Christ displays is written in the first person, 'I am the light of the world', etc. The pronoun 'I' is what Benveniste, Jakobson and others call a shifter, a word whose referent shifts depending upon who is speaking. Thus the word 'I' is not associated with a specific object or concept; rather the 'I' has an existential relation to the person speaking. It is only understandable in the instance of its use and constitutes an 'empty sign' that is always available to the speaker.[18] Thus in the semiotic categories of Peirce, such a word is an 'index', a sign that has a direct or existential relation to what it signifies, in contrast to the 'icon', which resembles its object, or the 'symbol', which has an arbitrary or conventional relation to its signified.[19] As Burks has noted, the 'I' is more precisely an 'indexical symbol', like the temporal adverbs 'now' or 'then', or the demonstrative pronoun 'this' or 'that', because each is a word and thus a linguistic convention or a symbol. The full meaning of the word includes the symbolic and the indexical and requires that the interpretant know the spatio-temporal context of its use.[20]

The 'I', the voice of the speaker, automatically posits a 'you', either stated or unstated, and hence an audience. At Hosios Loukas, the biblical passage had only 'I' and 'he', but the text that Christ presents in a similarly placed lunette mosaic at the church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople is slightly different (plate 9). It joins John 20:19, 26, 'Peace to you', to John 8:12, 'I am the light of the world'.[21] The additional salutation explicitly addresses audiences inside and outside the image.[22] The audiences defined by the texts of both mosaics are particular and personal, unlike the universalized audience created by other

grammatical structures. According to the linguistic code, the 'I/you' must be grounded in a specific situation in order to be comprehensible, and therefore these utterances are present-oriented and spatially and temporally 'coextensive and contemporary'[23] with the speaker and listener. Shifters create and are created by an event, and their referents are dependent upon that situation, so that the code – that is, knowing how shifters function – and the message overlap, as Jakobson explains.[24] Benveniste terms such communication a discourse,[25] hence the particular sense in which I use the word.

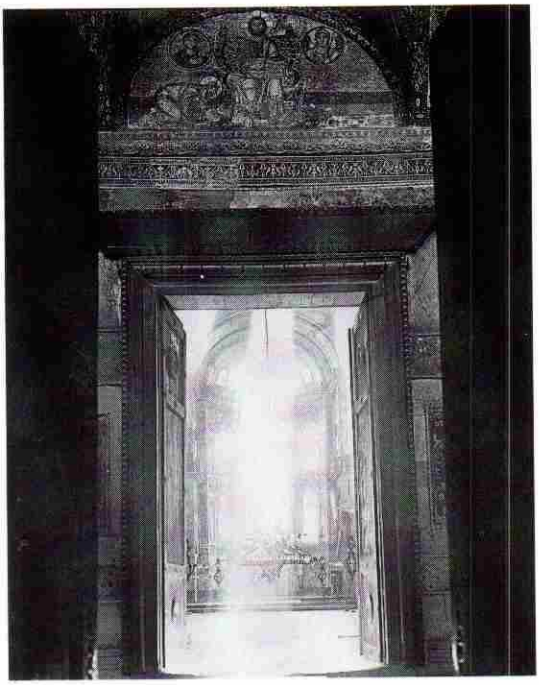
The foregoing analysis depends heavily upon twentieth-century linguistics, whose relevance for eleventh-century Byzantium ought to be scrutinized. My defence of this approach is simple: it seems to work, for it correlates with other inferences derived from quite dissimilar perspectives. According to Benveniste, 'discourse is language put into action, and necessarily between partners',[26] and we have observed how the texts held by Christ in these mosaics activate and are activated by the addressee's progression through this very space. Thus the meanings are generated from the message, contact, code and context of the communication. Moreover, the images accompanying these texts also construct discourse, as I will explain.

In both mosaics, the figure of Christ faces and thus looks at the beholder, forming a visual analogue to the 'I/you' of the texts and creating or directing a response from the beholder.[27] Moreover, Christ gestures with his right hand, a motif that since antiquity has signified speaking.[28] In the ninth-century Chludov Psalter (plate 10), for example, David is shown standing beside and pointing to the scene of Christ and the Samaritan Woman at the well. The adjacent caption reads, 'David says that the well of life is Christ'; hence the extended arm signifies speech, a notion found, as well, in medieval descriptions of images no longer extant. For example, the sixth-century poet Paul the Silentiary described an altar cloth decorated with a figure of Christ in the following manner: 'He seems to be stretching out the fingers of the right hand, as if preaching his immortal words, while in his left he holds the book of divine message . . .'[29]

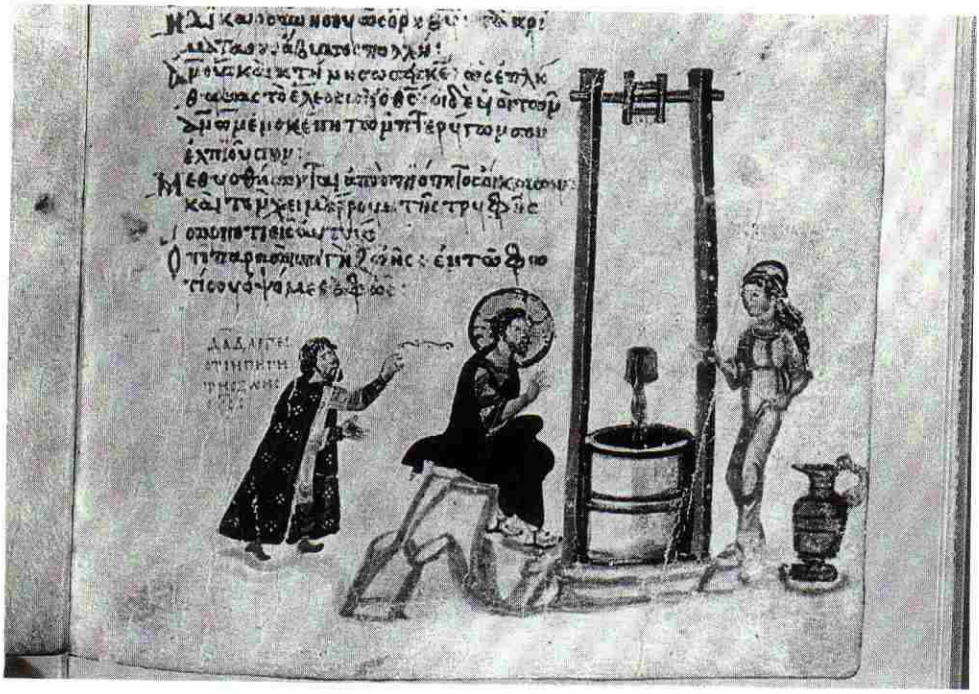
That preaching, like the frontal gaze of the mosaics, is directed towards the viewer/hearer and establishes a dialogue between image and beholder, who are further joined by a pervasive cultural code, the Orthodox theology of the icon. Viewing icons provides for the Byzantine believer a direct and tangible link with the person portrayed. John of Damascus writes that 'through the painting of images, we are able to contemplate the likeness of [Christ's] bodily form. . . . and by contemplating his bodily form, we form a notion, as far as is possible for us of the glory of his divinity. . . . [Hence] by using bodily sight we reach spiritual contemplation.'[30] According to John we should 'embrace [images] with the eyes, the lips, the heart; bow before them; love them . . .' Such 'images are a source of profit, help and salvation for all, since they make things so obviously manifest, enabling us to perceive hidden things.'[31]

How all this worked in practice is suggested by an episode in the life of John Chrysostomos, as recounted by John of Damascus. John Chrysostomos 'had an icon of the holy apostle [Paul], which he kept in a place where he would occasionally go to rest. . . . While he read St Paul's epistles he would gaze intently at the image, and would hold it as if it were alive, and bless it, and direct his thoughts to it,

8 Narthex, Hosios Loukas



9 Mosaic over the imperial door, Hagia Sophia, Istanbul



10 David, Christ and the Samaritan Woman. Moscow, Hist. Mus. ms. add. gr. 129, fo. 33r

11 Christ. Decani, narthex. Photo: D. Winfield

as though the apostle himself were present and could speak to him through the image. . . .'[32] In essence the image, the icon, is a mediator, a way for the believer to comprehend God and his teachings and a medium through which God and the believer interact.

In these mosaics, therefore, we have multiple indexical signs: the personal pronouns, the pose and gesture of Christ and, most importantly, the entire image, because of the Orthodox doctrine of the icon.[33] The words are indexical symbols and the images are indexical icons, according to Peirce's categories,[34] but each functions similarly and collaboratively. Text and image establish a discourse, animating or voicing a dead text and addressing it to the reader/viewer, whose religious belief permits the decoding of these powerful messages. This contextualization of the verbal and visual has the properties of linguistic discourse, a communication that creates and is created by a common spatial and temporal setting. Images promote the spatial; words the temporal. Inscriptions define a presentness for the text, and images position the messages in carefully controlled spatial contexts.

What we today label and objectify as John 8:12 becomes in the mosaics a present-oriented, subjectively construed discourse, which, not by accident, was the situation when Jesus originally spoke these words in the temple court during the feast of the Tabernacles. For the nocturnal celebration, the temple was lit by great golden lamps filled with large quantities of oil. Hence Jesus' metaphor builds upon the specific temporal and spatial context of the original discursive event and then transcends it, for he is the light, not of the temple courtyard, but of the world.[35] The initial allusion to the light of the temple lamps can only be perceived through scholarly analysis, because the former speech act is as lost for us as it was for medieval Byzantium. Yet the Byzantine mosaics in the nartheces of Hosios Loukas or Hagia Sophia (plates 8–9) attempt to re-establish it. They re-present Jesus' words as another discourse. This new discourse depends for its meaning also upon particular spatial and temporal contexts in which the word 'light' now refers as well to the locally specific illumination falling on the figure of Christ (plate 8) and flooding the nave day (plate 9) and night.[36]

Inevitably the reconstituted discourse is recast by the new associations of words and images, a process exemplified by a fresco at the fourteenth-century church at Decani (plate 11).[37] Here, above the door leading from the narthex into the nave, Christ once more holds an open book, but this time he presents John 10:9, 'I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.' The passage is taken from Jesus' discussion of sheep, the sheepfold, and the good shepherd caring for his flock. At Decani, Jesus' reference to the door has been grounded in the context of its presentation, that is, the door below and the going in and out of the church. In this position, Jesus' discursive language and his gesture are directed to the viewer/believer, but also to the church's Serbian patrons, who are depicted praying to Christ, just as a Byzantine emperor bowed to him at the entrance to the nave of Hagia Sophia.

Perhaps not coincidentally, an abbreviated version of the same text is incorporated in an image of the hetoimasia at Hagia Sophia.[38] Set at the centre of the lintel of the imperial door, this sixth-century bronze relief is directly beneath the lunette mosaic (plate 9). Thus the principal entry at Hagia Sophia reconstructs two discourses from the Gospel of John and thereby directs, defines and ultimately

controls the viewer's experience in ways that serve religious and political purposes. The discourse of the relief is primarily verbal, while that of the mosaic is as much verbal as pictorial. Thus it is not necessary to specify the speaker of the text in the mosaic, but the text inscribed on the book of the hetoimasia begins, 'The Lord said . . .', because no speaker is depicted.

At this juncture I would like to turn back to the Dumbarton Oaks miniature with which I began and review what we have learned about it. It is unique, but it belongs to a period concerned with the transmission of Christ's words to the people. The artist employed a standard icon type, which in other cases depicted an open book inscribed with the words of Christ in the first person, signifying that Christ was speaking these words. By analogy the Christ of the Dumbarton Oaks miniature ought to be speaking as well, but the artist has written nothing on the book. So what can this Christ be saying? The answer is close at hand, namely the first words of the psalm below: 'Give heed, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.' Such a verse, we now recognize, belongs to and creates a discourse. The words 'I/you' are obvious signs of discourse, but so too is the vocative 'O my people', and the imperative 'give heed' and 'incline your ears'. According to Jakobson, communication oriented toward the addressee 'finds its purest grammatical expression in the vocative and imperative'.[39]

Text and miniature are thus directed to the actual experience of the person holding and reading the manuscript. Their function is analogous to the Hosios Loukas mosaic and the processional entry of the worshipper. Our miniature does more than merely visualize the text. True, it does satisfy, as Der Nersessian noted, the commentaries' identification of Christ as the law-giver, but this Christ's act of giving the law is hardly the equivalent of the Vatican Psalter's scene of Christ handing a book to the disciples (plate 5). Such a narrative *translatio* does appear here in the initial pi, where Christ hands a jewelled book to David. The Christ of the miniature above, however, is of an entirely different character. It directly confronts the beholder, the listener, ordering him or her to pay attention to the words of his mouth, the words that the image speaks. The miniature does not illustrate a text, either biblical or commentary, in the ways art historians normally understand the word 'illustrate'. Nor has this miniature 'migrated' from its place of origin. Nor, finally, is this a narrative. It is the narrator himself, conveying the text to the beholder, like the icon that John Chrysostomos held in his hands while he read the Epistle. By not representing the audience for Christ's words, as was attempted in later manuscripts,[40] the intended audience for the Dumbarton Oaks miniature can only be the beholder, to whom this seemingly simple composition is directed.

Because of the indexical nature of the Byzantine icon, direct physical involvement was encouraged and rewarded, and, as noted, John of Damascus recommended embracing the icon not only with the eyes, but also the lips. In this regard, it may be useful to examine more closely the present condition of the Dumbarton Oaks miniatures. As in many Byzantine illustrated manuscripts, pigments have cracked and flaked, revealing the parchment below. The precise mechanisms of deterioration are still poorly understood, but important factors include the preparation of the parchment, the binding medium and the pigments themselves. Once the painted surface begins to crack, it is vulnerable to further damage from rapid changes

in humidity and temperature and from improper handling. In many of the manuscript's miniatures (cf. plate 2), the flaking appears to be randomly distributed, but elsewhere the damage is concentrated in certain areas. For example, in the miniature of Christ (plate 3), his face, neck and hand are particularly flaked in contrast to the open book and frame, which are virtually intact. Similarly varying patterns of deterioration are found on the first decorated folio of the manuscript, the missing fo. 4.[41] Here the initial cross on the recto is better preserved than the badly abraded faces and garments of holy figures on the verso. In these cases, iconic images suffered the most, suggesting that they may have been touched or kissed over the centuries. If so, the Christ miniature constitutes an index in yet another sense, for it would be a witness to physical contact between beholder and icon.[42]

These and other medieval systems of communication are performative and thus are also redundant; that is, they duplicate each other.[43] It is as if to ensure that at least one message was received, many were sent on different channels. A prime example of the phenomenon are the foregoing texts and images, but both are further subsumed in the larger communicative structures of orality, deriving from the fundamentally oral nature of reading in the Middle Ages.[44] At that time, texts, especially devotional ones like the psalms of the liturgical offices, were primarily read out loud, not silently. Thus the notion of discourse, which I have so laboured to evoke visually and linguistically, would have been obvious to anyone able to observe the eleventh-century use of the Dumbarton Oaks manuscript. One would have held the book in one's hands, a specific spatial context, and recited the verses that it contains in a specific temporal context. The reader/viewer/speaker would have thus re-enacted discourse, thereby animating and personalizing the messages therein.

Some images in Byzantine religious manuscripts, especially historiated initials, provide models of and for such discourse.[45] The treatment of the canticles in the Dumbarton Oaks manuscript is particularly informative in this regard. The miniature before the canticle of Hannah (plate 12), for example, represents her twice, seated with Samuel on her lap and giving thanks to God for her son. That such prayers were normally oral is proved by an event described in the preceding chapter of the First Book of Kings. Because Hannah had not been able to conceive, she was so distraught that one day she was observed praying, but 'only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard; therefore Eli [the priest] took her to be a drunken woman'. The reason, of course, was that she was praying silently, a practice so exceptional as to seem irrational.

In the manuscript, her prayer to the Lord after the birth is constructed as visual discourse. Hannah herself occupies the initial epsilon, and her extended arms signify speech. She speaks the words of the First Book of Kings, chapter 2: 'My heart exults in the Lord; my strength is exalted in the Lord. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in thy salvation . . .' Here the reference to her mouth, the depicted speech gesture, and the figure of Hannah enmeshed in the actual text all signal orality. This Hannah turns to the right and prays to a small enthroned figure of Christ in the right margin. The images thus provide a Christological interpretation in which the Lord of the Old Testament is visualized as the Christ of the New Testament. The seated Christ gestures and engages in dialogue not Hannah, but the beholder. In this position, Christ also serves as the focal point

of the reader/viewer, who recites this prayer to this Christ. The reader/speaker/viewer is thus meant to take Hannah's place and to pray her words to this Christ. The evident damage to Christ's face again testifies to past contact with the frontal, iconic image.

This and other discursive initials in the Dumbarton Oaks manuscript[46] find analogies in other manuscripts of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. For example, in the contemporary Dionysiou lectionary,[47] a text that by definition was made to be read aloud, the miniature of the Prayer in Gethsemane (plate 13) is a beautifully composed tableau of rhythmic speech gestures: Christ praying, the angel gesturing, Christ praying in proskenysis and finally addressing the apostles. Below, in the initial epsilon, Christ gestures to his disciples, two of whom stand with him in the epsilon, while the others huddle together in the margins and indicate their dialogue with Christ by their outstretched hands. Like the figure of Hannah, such an initial fuses text and image. The particular lection here opens with the traditional formula, 'The Lord said to his disciples.' The Christ of the initial is the Christ who pronounces the words that follow. This Christ is a mirror image of the Christ in the miniature above, so that the sequential narrative of the miniature is continued by the groups below, forming an S-shaped composition that unites all aspects of the page for the benefit of the beholder.

In this case, the beholder was the anagnostes, the lector, who held the book and read from it during the liturgy. Like the Dumbarton Oaks page with Hannah's prayer, the imagery acts to join the speaker/viewer with the text. The lector standing before a congregation and reciting these words replicates the action of the speaking Christ of the initial or the miniature, and vice-versa. The lector speaks these words before an audience, who hopefully listened as attentively as Christ's disciples. The lector sees on this page an analogous audience to the congregation before which he stands. That congregation, like the disciples depicted, would also have stood during the service.

To some degree, the contextualization of the visual is familiar to Byzantinists. About forty years ago, in his influential book *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration*, Otto Demus applied the term 'icon in space' to certain mosaics in which figures gesture to each other across the space of a Byzantine church. For Demus, the space of the image extends not behind the picture plane, but in front of it, so as to encompass the beholder.[48] Iconic imagery in manuscripts functions similarly. In the preceding examples, spatially unifying gestures operated at the level of a line or page, but more elaborate configurations are also encountered in an eleventh-century Gospel book in the Vatican.[49]

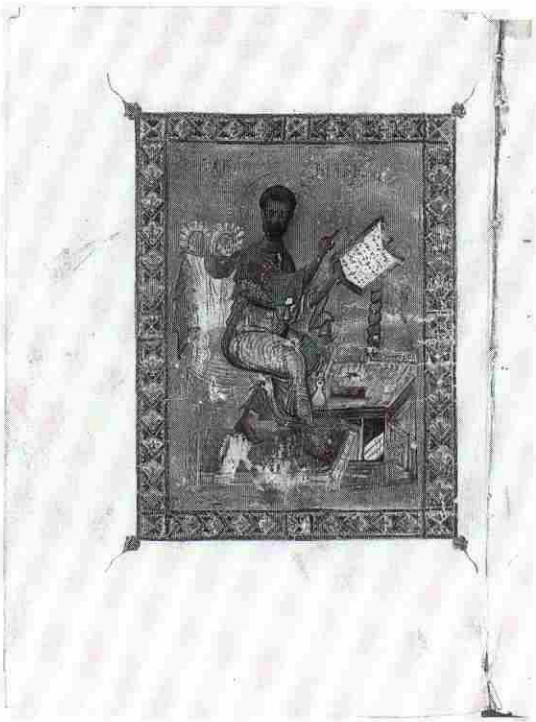
Here evangelist portraits occupy the verso folios (plates 14–15), while the Gospel begins on the rectos, a convention that was centuries old by this date. Above the text of John (plate 14), the headpiece enframes medallions of Christ and the archangels Michael and Gabriel. In the lower right margin, a small figure of John the Baptist stands beside John 1:6: 'There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light.' Accordingly, John the Baptist raises his arm to point to and thus bear witness to the light, or the Logos, as manifested in the central figure of Christ. A similar configuration introduces the Gospel of Mark.[50]

Such compositions recall the Dumbarton Oaks initial of Hannah, but spatial

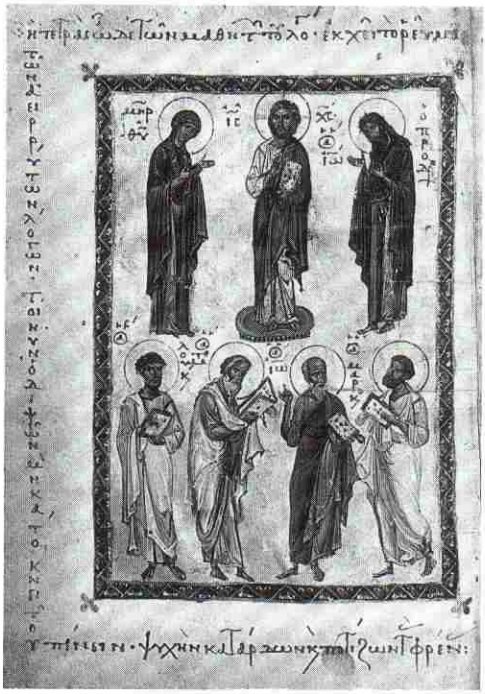
12 Canticle of Hannah. Washington, Dumbarton Oaks, ms 3, fo. 75r

13 Prayer at Gethsemane. Mt Athos, Dionysiou cod. 587, fo. 66r

14 Portrait of John and beginning of his Gospel. Rome, Vat. Ross. 138, fos. 3v–4r



15 Portrait of Mark. Rome, Vat. Ross. 136, fo. 4v



16 Mary, Christ, John the Baptist and the four Evangelists. Istanbul, Ecumenical Patriarchate cod. 3, fo. 2v

unity does not end here; it extends to the evangelists on the facing page. In such portraits, John often interacts with the divine, visualized by a hand of God extending from a segment of heaven. Yet in this case (plate 14), the hand is missing from the heavenly quadrant in the upper right corner, and instead, John's gesture is carefully directed towards the Christ on the opposite page, thus obviating the need for an inspiring hand from heaven and thereby spatially unifying both pages. John gestures across space, just as the angel Gabriel at the Annunciation calls to the Virgin across the triumphal arch of a Byzantine church. Mark's gesture (plate 15) serves the same function, but unlike John, he looks out to the beholder, whose attention is thereby drawn to the medallion of Christ on the facing page. Thus beholder, evangelist and headpiece are discrete, but interrelated points in the three-dimensional space of the holy images.

More complex still is the illustrative programme in a twelfth-century Gospel book in Istanbul.[51] It opens with the miniature (plate 16), depicting Mary, Jesus and John the Baptist in the upper register and the four evangelists below. Around the miniature is inscribed the following poem:

> The quaternity of the disciples of the Word [Logos] pours forth a stream of ever-flowing words. Therefore he, who thirsts, does not shrink from drinking, refreshing his soul and quenching his sense.

This poem is traditional and appears in many Greek Gospel books, so that text preceded image. Thus we might conclude that image 'illustrates' text, but the matter is not so simple. In the lower row, the evangelist John raises his hand and points to Christ, a gesture that recalls prophets in a Byzantine church pointing up to Christ in the summit of the dome,[52] or the John the Baptist of the preceding manuscript (plate 14). Like the latter figure, John gives witness to the Logos, for the phrase 'of the Word [Logos]' has been abbreviated so as to be directly above the head of Christ in the upper row. Thus the four evangelists here pour forth the words of this Word, this Logos. He who thirsts should refresh his soul with this life-giving water. The poem voices the visual, and the visual contextualizes the verbal.

Later in the Istanbul Gospels, a calligraphic poem is inscribed in gold ink over two pages:

> I was impatient. I had an old irrepressible desire to write down in a fine little book your words. These, O Creator of all things, the mind of mortal men can scarcely encompass, for they possess light, breath and the glory of life. I, your servant Michael, am the least of those who live the solitary life. I have now satisfied the desire in a worthy manner by embellishing the inside, outside and every part (of the book). O You who gush forth the unfathomable from the four-mouthed fountain of the disciples to water all minds and my dry soul in the time of judgement, may you grant a new immortal drink, that which you once told the disciples to drink.

The poem describes the long-standing desire of the monk Michael to write down the words of the Creator in a book. Having accomplished his task, he prays for salvation to the one who gushes forth 'the unfathomable from the four-mouthed fountain of the disciples'. Michael, however, did not compose the poem himself but adapted it from a version that appears in an earlier manuscript in Paris. His

emendations personalized the poem for him, recorded his role in the production of the manuscript, and addressed his prayer to the Christ of the first miniature and poem. In both the original and the adaptation, the language is discursive, employing the standard forms of discourse – personal pronouns, vocatives and imperatives. But Michael the monk has changed the context and thus the meaning of the poem. He has borrowed a colophon that was not illustrated, fused it with the introductory miniature and verses, and thereby created or re-created discourse. Even though the calligraphic poem and the initial miniature are separated by 130 folios, the discursive structures create a unity of time and space on behalf of and in the presence of the beholder, the person holding the book.

Much iconic imagery in Byzantium probably functioned similarly, but rather than extend the argument to other miniatures and mosaics, I shall return to the Dumbarton Oaks manuscript and its modern context. My purpose is to contrast modern scholarship with medieval worship in terms of word and image. The Christ image and the David and Goliath scenes, with which I began (plates 3–4), appear side by side in Der Nersessian's fundamental article in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*.[53] On that journal page or on this one, miniatures have been re-presented in categories that are of our making: plate number, folio number, identification of the image and inventory number. Even the single Greek word used in Der Nersessian's caption, the title Pantocrator, is misapplied to this image, for the epithet is used only in later Byzantine art. Subsequently it came to be codified by art historians, so that the term is as much modern as medieval.[54]

The most significant transformation, however, is also the most subtle. Following academic custom or tradition, Der Nersessian describes the manuscript in words that imply the third person and thereby objectify the book, silencing its living voices and denying its discursive audiences. But even our grammatical categories achieve the same result, for the terms, first, second and third persons do not adequately describe the radical distinctions involved. Given what we have learned about medieval communication, it is not surprising that the terminology of Arab grammarians is more appropriate for that past perspective. For them, according to Benveniste, the first person is 'the one who speaks', and the second 'the one who is addressed', but the third is 'the one who is absent'.[55] In this sense, the Christ in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* XIX has become 'the one who is absent', not 'the one who speaks'.

The voices of Christ, Hannah and the other discursive figures in the Psalter–New Testament are also silenced by the present exhibit case (plate 1). This lucite polygon and the disparate objects inside it are artifacts of modernism, and as such are predicated on modernist notions of the autonomy and self-referentiality of the art object. In contrast, recent art has sought to alter those by now traditional relationships of art object and viewer. Contemporary sculpture that attempts to incorporate the act of viewing and the viewer in the art work has joined art with theatre in ways that better resemble the former performative nature of Byzantine liturgical imagery than the present modernist visions of Byzantine art.[56] Working in two dimensions, the post-modern artist Barbara Kruger combines the indexical photograph[57] with indexical language placed on the image itself, not below it like a caption, and thereby creates discourse. Like Byzantine icons, her work addresses audiences, but the context, contact, code and message, of course, differ.[58] Her

fusion of picture and text, deriving from the photomontage practices of modern advertising, departs from the traditions of 'art photography'[59] and high art and simultaneously constructs and deconstructs discourse, thereby critiquing social mores.

For the modernist viewer of the Dumbarton Oaks manuscript, its display case is transparent and invisible and thus not a legitimate subject of scholarly inquiry. Yet for the post-modernist, the case is necessarily a site for mental as well as optical reflections. While modernism has contributed to the incorporation of Byzantine art in the art-historical canon, led to its concomitant acquisition and preservation in private and public collections, and created paradigms that still dominate art-historical scholarship,[60] those legacies are now waning. Viewing the same imagery from contemporary perspectives affirms the power and significance of the icon and suggests how visual and verbal discourses around it have been constructed recently and in the past.

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NOTES

My paper derives from lectures presented in 1988 at the annual meeting of the Medieval Academy of America and at a conference at the University of Wisconsin organized by Anthony Cutler. Over the last several years, earlier versions were delivered at Princeton University, Southern Methodist University, Dumbarton Oaks, University of North Carolina, the National Humanities Center and the University of Birmingham, Alabama. For publication, I have deliberately retained some of the oral character of those lectures, because form relates to content. My work was supported in part by the National Humanities Center and the National Endowment for the Humanites. Having developed slowly, this paper has benefited from the comments of many colleagues, in particular B. Buchloh, M. Camille, W. J. T. Mitchell, M. R. Olin, L. Seidel and J. Snyder. Finally, Thomas Mathews has kindly sent me his 'The Sequel to Nicaea II in Byzantine Church Decoration', *Perkins Journal*, no. 41, 1988, pp. 11–21, which treats similar issues in the realm of liturgy and monumental painting.

1 ADDRESSER — CONTEXT / MESSAGE / CONTACT / CODE — ADDRESSEE

R. Jakobson, 'Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics', *Style in Language*, T. A. Sebeok (ed.), Cambridge, Mass., 1960, p. 353. Donald Preziosi extends Jakobson's notions to art history in chapters 2 and 5 of *The Coy Science, Rethinking Art History* (forthcoming). Critiques of Jakobson's notion of communication are discussed in A. Easthope, *Poetry as Discourse*, London, 1983, pp. 10–18.

2 See, for example, M. Olin, 'The Cult of Monuments as a State Religion in Late 19th Century Austria', *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 38, 1985, pp. 177–98.

3 Dumbarton Oaks, *Handbook of the Byzantine Collection*, Washington, DC, 1967, p. 106.

4 R. Barthes, 'Myth Today', *Mythologies*, A. Lavers (trans.), New York, 1972, pp. 109–59.

5 The fundamental article on the manuscript is S. Der Nersessian, 'A Psalter and New Testament Manuscript at Dumbarton Oaks', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 19, 1965, pp. 153–84. More recently there is A. Cutler, *The Aristocratic Psalters in Byzantium*, Paris, 1984, pp. 91–8; A. Cutler, 'The Dumbarton Oaks Psalter and New Testament: the Iconography of the Moscow Leaf', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 37, 1983, pp. 35–45.

6 The contents are described in Der Nersessian, pp. 156–64. On the combination of the Psalter with the New Testament and its association with private devotions, see A. Weyl Carr, 'Diminutive Byzantine Manuscripts', *Codices Manuscripti*, vol. 6, 1980, pp. 133–6; and now also J. Lowden, 'Observations on Illustrated Byzantine Psalters', *Art Bulletin*, no. 70, 1988, pp. 248–50.

7 Der Nersessian, pp. 164–6.

8 The manuscript was removed from the monastery some time after 1941 and was acquired by Dumbarton Oaks in 1962. Both actions are the consequences of the book's

transformation into an art object. Information about the history of ownership may be found in Der Nersessian, pp. 155, 160, 182–3.

9 A useful discussion of the character of visual narrative is found in L. Marin, 'Towards a Theory of Reading in the Visual Arts: Poussin's "The Arcadian Shepherds" ', *Calligram*, N. Bryson (ed.), Cambridge, 1988, pp. 65–6.

10 Cutler, *Aristocratic Psalters*, pp. 78–9. On Moses and Psalm 77, see H. Belting, 'Zum Palatina-Psalter des 13. Jahrhunderts. Aus der Werkstattpraxis eines byzantinischen Malers', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, vol. 21, 1972, pp. 24–8.

11 Both traditions came together in later illumination as Belting has discussed: ibid., pp. 28–32.

12 Der Nersessian, p. 173.

13 ibid.

14 K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai, The Icons*, vol. 1, Princeton, 1976, pp. 13–15, pl. I.

15 I. Furlan, *Le icone bizantine a mosaico*, Milan, 1979, pp. 41–2, fig. 4, where the icon is attributed to the last third of the eleventh century; A.-A. Krickelberg-Pütz, 'Die Mosaikikone des Hl. Nikolaus in Aachen-Burtscheid', *Aachener Kunstblätter*, vol. 50, 1982, p. 77.

16 Furlan, pp. 53–5, fig. 11; Krickelberg-Pütz, pp. 77–8.

17 For a recent discussion of the church and its date, see D. Mouriki, *The Mosaics of Nea Moni on Chios*, vol. 1, Athens, 1985, pp. 254–9.

18 E. Benveniste, 'The Nature of Pronouns', *Problems in General Linguistics*, 1971, pp. 217–20; R. Jakobson, 'Shifters, Verbal Categories, and the Russian Verb', *Roman Jakobson, Selected Writings*, vol. 2, The Hague, 1971, pp. 130–3.

19 *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vol. 2, C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss (eds.), Cambridge, Mass., 1960, pp. 143–4 (2.247–2.249).

20 A. Burks, 'Icon, Index, and Symbol', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 9, no. 4, 1949, pp. 673–89.

21 On the inscription, see A. Grabar, *L'Empereur dans l'art byzantin*, London, 1971, pp. 103–6. These passages warrant further study in the larger context of Byzantine culture.

22 N. Oikonomides, 'Leo VI and the Narthex Mosaic of Saint Sophia', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 30, 1976, pp. 171–2. The mosaic is further reviewed in R. Cormack, 'Interpreting the Mosaics of S. Sophia at Istanbul', *Art History*, vol. 4, 1981, pp. 138–41.

23 Benveniste, 'Pronouns', p. 219.

24 As in n. 18.

25 E. Benveniste, 'The Correlations of Tense in the French Verb', *Problems in General Linguistics*, 1971, pp. 208–9. This notion of discourse is reviewed and applied in P. Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, Fort Worth, 1976. One recent survey of this linguistic field is D. Schiffrin, *Discourse Markers*, Cambridge, 1987.

26 E. Benveniste, 'Subjectivity in Language', *Problems in General Linguistics*, 1971, p. 223.

27 See, for example, the discussion of Marin, 'Towards a Theory of Reading', p. 74. Michael Fried has been much concerned with what he comes to call the contrast between 'absorption' and 'theatricality' (what is at stake in the mosaics). See his 'Art and Objecthood', *Minimal Art, A Critical Anthology*, G. Battcock (ed.), New York, 1968, pp. 116–47; and *Absorption and Theatricality, Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, Berkeley, 1980. The theoretical issues involved will be discussed more broadly by M. Olin in a forthcoming study.

28 R. Brilliant, *Gesture and Rank in Roman Art, Memoirs of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences*, vol. 14, 1963, pp. 148–9, 165–70, 207.

29 C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1972, p. 89.

30 St John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images*, D. Anderson (trans.), Crestwood, NY, 1980, p. 72.

31 ibid., pp. 58, 74.

32 ibid., p. 46.

33 St Theodore the Studite even employs a standard example of an index, the shadow, in his discussion of the icon: 'If the shadow cannot be separated from the body, but always subsists along with it, even if it does not appear, in the same way Christ's own image cannot be separated from Him. As the shadow becomes clearer with the radiation of the sun, so also Christ's image becomes more conspicuous to all when it appears by imprinting itself in materials.' St Theodore the Studite, *On the Holy Icons*, C. P. Roth (trans.), Crestwood, NY, 1981, p. 113.

34 Both concepts are used in S. J. Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets*, Cambridge, 1984, pp. 4–5.

35 R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St John*, vol. 2, New York, 1980, pp. 189–90.

36 On the lighting of the Hagia Sophia mosaic, see E. J. W. Hawkins, 'Further Observations on the Narthex Mosaic in St. Sophia at Istanbul', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 22, 1968, pp. 164–6. Paul the Silentiary describes in some detail the nocturnal lighting at Hagia Sophia: Mango, *Art*, pp. 89–91.

37 J. T. Matthews, 'The Byzantine Use of the Title Pantocrator', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, vol. 44, 1978, p. 447.

38 H. Kähler, *Die Hagia Sophia*, Berlin, 1967, p. 32, figs. 22–3, 62. I thank Dr Eunice Maguire for bringing this example to my attention.

39 Jakobson, 'Closing Statement', p. 355.

40 Cutler, *Aristocratic Psalters*, figs. 40, 269. In London, Brit. Lib. Add. 11836 (fig. 159), the

significance of the image is clear. Christ leans down from a quadrant of heaven in the upper left corner and gestures to a group standing at the right. The text written beside Christ records what he is saying, namely Psalm 77:1, which begins on the opposite page.

41 Der Nersessian, figs. 1–2.

42 This line of thought was first suggested to me in a conversation with Ms Rebecca Leuchak of Columbia University. The importance of physical contact with icons is emphasized by Mathews, 'The Sequel to Nicaea II'.

43 On this nature of performative communications see the overview of L. E. Sullivan, 'Sound and Senses: Toward a Hermeneutics of Performance', *History of Religions*, vol. 26, 1986, pp. 7–8. D. Preziosi develops these notions in regard to architecture in 'The Multimodality of Communicative Events', *The Semiotics of the Built Environment*, Bloomington, 1979, pp. 96–102.

44 Orality has been principally studied for medieval Europe. See, for example, M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record, England, 1066–1307*, Cambridge, Mass., 1979, esp. pp. 202–30; and P. Saenger, 'Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society', *Viator*, vol. 13, 1982, pp. 367–414; and idem, 'Books of Hours and the Reading Habits of the Later Middle Ages', *Scrittura e civiltà*, vol. 9, 1985, pp. 239–69. Of fundamental importance for words and images in an oral context is the article of M. Camille, 'Seeing and Reading: Some Visual Implications of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy', *Art History*, vol. 8, 1985, pp. 26–49. Although the matter requires systematic attention in Byzantium, it has been briefly noted in A. Kazhdan and G. Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium, An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies*, Washington, DC, 1982, pp. 102–4; and with more detail in M. Mullett, 'Aristocracy and Patronage in the Literary Circles of Comnenian Constantinople', *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries*, M. Angold (ed.), Oxford, 1984, pp. 173–201. The relations of Byzantine art and rhetoric are explored in the important book of H. Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium*, Princeton, 1981.

45 The notion of 'model of' and 'model for' are taken from C. Geertz, 'Religion as a Cultural System', *Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, 1973, pp. 93–4. See also the comments of C. Bell, 'Ritualization of Texts and Textualization of Ritual in the Codification of Taoist Liturgy', *History of Religions*, vol. 27, 1988, p. 369.

46 Der Nersessian, figs. 6, 13, 15, 17, 19–21, 23–5, 30, 33, 35, 41–55, 61–2.

47 S. M. Pelekanidis et al., *The Treasures of Mount Athos*, vol. 1, Athens, 1973, pp. 434–46.

48 *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration, Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium*, New Rochelle, NY, 1976, pp. 13–14, 23–5. This notion has been taken up in the work of B. Uspensky, *The Semiotics of the Russian Icon*, Lisse, 1976, and *A Poetics of Composition*, Berkeley, 1973.

49 The manuscript is mentioned most recently in G. Galavaris, *The Illustrations of the Prefaces in Byzantine Gospels*, Vienna, 1979, pp. 120–1.

50 ibid., fig. 94.

51 What follows on the Patriarchate Gospels is adapted from my dissertation, 'Text and Image in a Byzantine Gospel Book in Istanbul (Ecumenical Patriarchate, cod. 3)', New York University, 1978, pp. 187–97, 217–28; and my article, 'Michael the Monk and his Gospel Book', *Actes du XV^e Congrès international d'études byzantines*, vol. 2, Athens, 1981, pp 575–82.

52 cf. a mosaic at Daphni: E. Diez and O. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaics in Greece, Hosios Lucas and Daphni*, Cambridge, Mass., 1931, fig. 62.

53 Der Nersessian, figs. 7–8.

54 Matthews, 'The Title Pantocrator', pp. 442–62.

55 E. Benveniste, 'Relationships of Person in the Verb', *Problems in General Linguistics*, 1971, p. 197; W. Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*, vol. 1, London, 1874, p. 55. I thank my colleague Fred Donner for advice on this matter.

56 e.g. R. E. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, New York, 1977, pp. 201–42.

57 The notion of the index has been introduced into contemporary criticism by R. Krauss, 'Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America, Part 1', *October*, no. 3, 1977, pp. 75, 78–81; 'Part 2', *October*, no. 4, 1977, pp. 59–67; and developed by R. Shiff, 'Performing an Appearance: On the Surface of Abstract Expressionism', *Abstract Expressionism, The Critical Developments*, New York, 1987, pp. 94–123.

58 *Barbara Kruger*, New York, 1987, with introductory essay by J. Baudrillard. Her earlier work is presented in *We Won't Play Nature, Barbara Kruger*, London, 1983; see especially the essay by C. Owens, pp. 5–11. She responds to issues raised in her 1987 exhibition in A. Stephanson, 'Barbara Kruger', *Flash Art*, no. 136, October 1987, pp. 55–9. Finally, there is the important article by H. Foster, 'Subversive Signs', in *Theories of Contemporary Art*, R. Hertz (ed.), Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1985, pp. 179–88.

59 A. Solomon-Godeau, 'Photography after Art Photography', *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, B. Wallis (ed.), New York, 1984, pp. 75–85.

60 In a forthcoming study, Michael Camille, Linda Seidel and I intend to explore the reception of medieval art in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.