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The Affective Byzantine Book: Reflections on Aesthetics of Gospel Lectionaries

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Abstract: The aesthetic qualities of Byzantine Gospel Lectionaries in Middle Byzantine times, afforded by their material construction, fostered an intermedial relationship with the architectural interiors of the churches and chapels where they were used in sacred liturgies. In particular, Byzantine book makers employed discreet reflective materials—particularly albumen and gold—that engendered an aesthetic of liquidity. If we center materiality and aesthetic considerations of the Byzantine Gospel Lectionary, building upon art history's so-called "material turn", we can come closer to understanding something of the poetry of the Byzantine manuscript as part of an affective experience—one that was shiny, shimmering, and fluid.

Keywords: Byzantine art; manuscript studies; materiality; intermediality; sacred space

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Citation: Kopta, Joseph R. 2024. The Affective Byzantine Book: Reflections on Aesthetics of Gospel Lectionaries. *Arts* 13: 92. https://doi.org/10.3390/arts13030092

Academic Editor: Andrew M. Nedd

Received: 15 January 2024
Revised: 18 May 2024
Accepted: 20 May 2024
Published: 22 May 2024

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1. Introduction

When, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Byzantium, a presbyter (or priest) celebrated the Divine Liturgy of Pascha (or Easter)—regardless of whether it be in a monastic, lay, or imperial church—the Gospel Lectionary (*Evangelion*) (Figure 1) took part in the rite from its very beginning.[1] At the start of mass, during the Little Entrance, this book[2] containing the lections (or readings) of the Gospels and instructions for the celebration of mass made its first appearance: carried by the deacon in procession from the outside world through the narthex, across the nave, and into the presbytery, it was placed upon the altar, preceding the chief celebrant. Mid-way through the mass, while the celebrating clerics would chant the *Prokeimenon*, or a psalm or canticle refrain that introduced the reading of the Gospel passage, the deacon, tasked with the important role of reading the word of God, would raise the Lectionary from the altar, where it would be bestowed with clouds of incense. The deacon, carrying the precious book from the altar, would cross the chancel threshold past the iconostasis and mount an ambo (if present), and after exclaiming "Wisdom!" (*Sophia*!), he would recite the lections prescribed for that particular mass.

On Easter Sunday, this reading consisted of the opening words of the Gospel of John: "In the Beginning was the Word".[3] The deacon would continue with the lection, as celebrants were dazzled by the multisensory experience surrounding them (Figure 2): the smell of incense wafting from the presbytery, carrying prayers upward to Heaven; sumptuous marbles of shifting light qualities surrounding them; glittering gold mosaics reflecting and refracting light in amorphous patterns; the otherworldly chanting of the *Prokeimenon*; and the voice of the deacon, who would eventually come to the verse in John 1:5: "And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it".[4]

This verse evoking the light and darkness expressed in the Gospel of John on Easter Sunday has particular relevance when examining the pages of a Lectionary itself, for when we view it, not only can the words rise up off of the page, shimmering in gold (Figure 3), but the paintings are animated by a dense abundance of luminous, layered pigments (Figure 4), mirroring the jewel-like surfaces of the interior of the structure itself.



Figure 1. The *Jaharis Gospel Lectionary*, ca. 1100 CE. Tempera, gold, and ink on parchment; leather binding. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2007.286, fol. 2v–3r).



Figure 2. Hosios Loukas, naos of the Katholikon, near Distomo, Greece. Photo: Brad Hostetler.

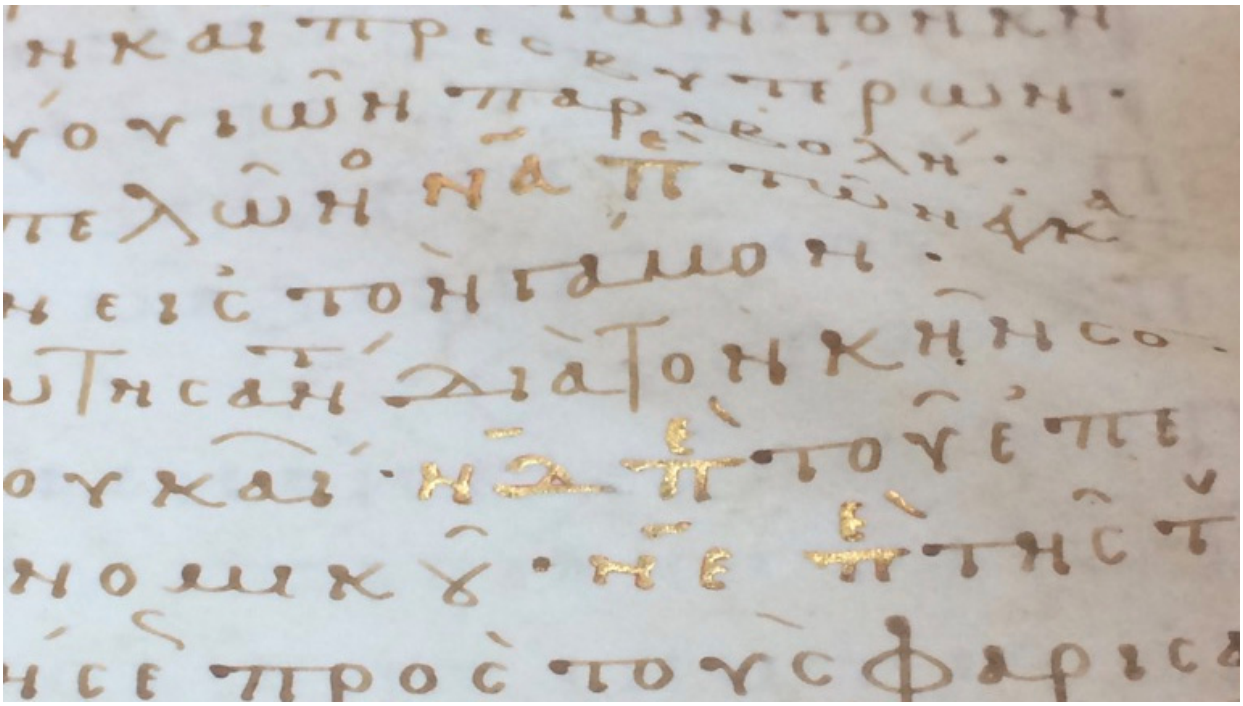

Figure 3. Detail of a Byzantine *Gospel Book*, late 13th century CE. Tempera, gold, and ink on parchment. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (Ms. 65/98.MB151).



Figure 4. Detail of a Canon Table, from a Byzantine *Gospel Book*, late 13th century CE. Tempera, gold, and ink on parchment. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (Ms. 65, fol. 7v/98.MB151).

When the Byzantine poet George of Pisidia described the peacock, he asserted: "How could anyone who sees the peacock not be amazed at the gold interwoven with sapphire, at the porphyry and emerald feathers, at the polymorphous synthesis of the colors, all mingled together but not confused with one another?"[5] This interplay of light and material qualities articulated in George of Pisidia's ekphrasis could very well describe the surfaces of Gospel Lectionaries and the interiors of sacred spaces in Byzantium. The aesthetic qualities of Lectionaries in Middle Byzantine times, afforded by their material construction, aided in fostering an intermedial relationship with the architectural interiors of the churches and chapels where they were used in sacred liturgies. Major trends of twentieth-century scholarship on Byzantine manuscripts, evaluating their iconographic programs and the tracing of a hypothetical prototype, have allowed for little in terms of understanding the affective nature of these books,[6] although this trend is beginning to change.[7] Roland Betancourt in particular has turned towards a contextualization of the Gospel Lectionary within a liturgical and ritualized space, considering especially the sonic qualities between the recitation of the text, a Lectionary's illuminations, and the interior of the church or chapel (Betancourt 2021). Rather than articulate the performative relationship between the Gospel Lectionary and its interior, this paper will instead center materiality and aesthetic considerations[8] of this Byzantine book type, building upon art history's so-called "material turn".[9] In this way, I intend to reflect upon something of the poetry of the Byzantine manuscript as part of an affective experience—one that was shiny, shimmering, reflective, and fluid.[10] In particular, Byzantine book makers employed discreet materials that emphasized shining or shimmering—especially albumen and gold—that engendered an aesthetic of liquidity, which in turn seem to share an intermedial relationship with ecclesiastical interiors.

2. The Byzantine Gospel Lectionary

The medieval codex is a complex, expensive object, requiring careful planning by its makers and patrons before and during its design and execution.[11] Profoundly different in cost and means of production from a mass-produced paperback, the value of these medieval objects is difficult for modern users of books to grasp. Preserving and transmitting knowledge through texts and, sometimes, also images, a manuscript's materials and the great effort of its multi-step production demonstrate that it is both valuable and requiring of careful planning.[12] Although many other supports were used (including papyrus, wax, wood, ceramic, and paper), the great majority of medieval manuscripts were made from parchment, or animal skin. The number of animals required for a manuscript project, and the long process of cleaning, depilating, stretching, and drying the parchment is an indication that a manuscript's value was intimately tied to its materials.[13]

The Gospel Lectionary (*Evangelion*) (Figure 5) is the book used during an Orthodox liturgy to read scripture.[14]

Differently from a manuscript containing the complete Bible (which was much rarer in Byzantium), or one of the New Testament, the *Evangelion* contains lections (or *pericopes*, a "cutting-out"),[15] extracted readings of sacred scripture from the larger comprehensive set of the Four Gospels (the *Tetraevangelion*). As such, a Lectionary manuscript does not contain the entire text of the Four Gospels. Instead of following either the ordering of books in the New Testament, or the narrative arrangement of stories from the New Testament's Synoptic Gospels, the organizing logic of the Lectionary aligns with the two overlapping calendars that constitute the Orthodox liturgical year. These calendars are each made up of either fixed or moveable feast days over twelve months. Due to the multiple overlapping calendars represented in the Orthodox liturgical year, while there is some chronology, a Gospel Lectionary is not necessarily read in order from the first folio to the last. Instead, the lector would turn to the correct section required for a particular liturgy.

While the Gospel Lectionary has a central role in a liturgical rite, the majority of this type of extant Byzantine book contains text only without illumination. The text itself can be annotated with ekphonetic notation, usually written in a red kermes ink, to aid the lector in tonal shifts during the Gospel recitation and aid as a mnemonic device. Additionally,

indexical texts or abbreviations can frequently be found in the margins or before and after the main text.[16] The format of the manuscript page can vary, especially in terms of ruling patterns. A select few are presented in more elaborate cruciform text blocks.[17]



Figure 5. Detached leaf with St. Mark, from the *Lectionary of Katherine Komnena*, ca. 1063 CE. Tempera, gold, and ink on parchment. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington, D.C. (BZ.1979.31.1).

A much smaller number of deluxe, precious Lectionaries were illuminated with images. While the format of illustrated Lectionaries is individualized across manuscripts—no two Lectionaries are exactly alike—they can share similar iconographies and illumination schemes (See Nelson 1980). The most common elements are author portraits of the four Evangelists, which frequently take the form of full-page gold-ground illuminations with individual authors sitting composing their Gospel (Figure 6).

Such images usually precede the incipit of each of the four main sections of the *Synaxarion*. Occasionally a Gospel portrait is rendered as a smaller historiated initial or incorporated into a decorative text border (Figure 7), but the figure always appears at the beginning of one of the four sections of the moveable calendar. In some cases, the facing page of an *incipit* opening contains an elaborate border. This can frame an introductory title, a miniature portrait, or both. The format of such pages varies widely, although many of the Middle-Byzantine Gospel Lectionaries have a preference either for a Cruciform design or a quatrefoil framing device. Just as common are elaborate *kephalon* (chapter) headings, which nearly always take the form of the Greek letter *pi* (Π) and have an abstract resemblance to a gate (πυλή), which these decorative motifs are often called in modern literature (Figure 8). Additional painted and gilded bands separating subsections throughout the entire manuscript may be included (Figure 9). In addition, historiated initials, denoting the beginning of a new passage, may appear throughout the

text (Figure 10). Like the rest of a codex, they vary widely from manuscript to manuscript, and can take the shape of figures in the form of letters, painted floriated initials, or simple pen flourishes that help a reader find the beginning of a passage.



Figure 6. *Evangelist Portrait of Mark*, on a folio from a Gospel Lectionary (Athens, National Library of Greece, MS 2552), early 11th century CE. Ink, pigments, and gold on parchment. The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (W.530.A).



Figure 7. *Historiated Initial Epsilon with St. John*, detail in the *Jaharis Gospel Lectionary*, ca. 1100 CE. Tempera, gold, and ink on parchment; leather binding. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2007.286, fol. 3r).

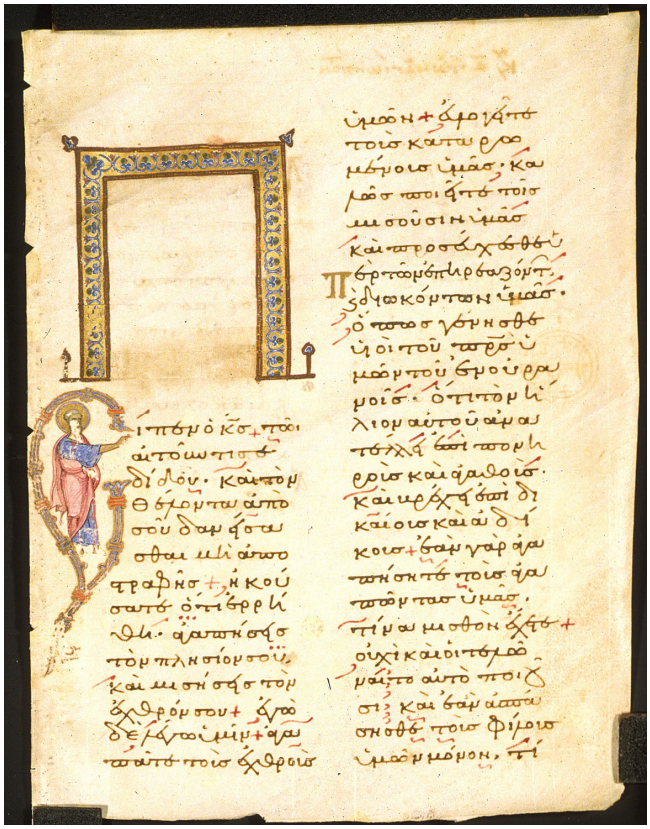

Figure 8. *Pi-Shaped Heading for the Opening of the Gospel of Matthew*, detail from the *Lectionary of Katherine Komnena*, ca. 1063 CE. Ink, tempera, and gold leaf on parchment. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection (BZ.1979.31.2).



Figure 9. Detail of the *Opening of the First Gospel of the Morning Resurrection Lections*, in the *Dumbarton Oaks Lectionary*, second half of 11th century CE. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington, D.C. (BZ.1939.12, MS 1, fol. 136v).



Figure 10. *Historiated Initial with Christ*, detail in the *Dumbarton Oaks Lectionary*, second half of 11th century CE. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington, D.C. (BZ.1939.12, MS 1, fol. 10v).

With its complex organizational system, the Gospel Lectionary is intricately tied to Christian systems of time and the performance of the liturgical rite. Although its *pericopes* derive from the New Testament, a Lectionary's organization of texts and images have little meaning outside of the liturgy.[18] While the history of the liturgy is not entirely clear before the Middle Byzantine period, the appearance of the *Evangelion* as a distinct manuscript type circa the eighth or ninth century CE suggests that the codification of readings throughout the liturgical year had more-or-less been established by that date. Historically, the selection and ordering of liturgical readings have not been consistent across different eras, adding to the complex challenge of understanding this type of book.

In many ways, the Byzantines cared intensely about their manuscripts, and placed a high value on the materials required for their construction. This appreciation is visible in the manuscripts themselves; even the unobservant user would have been aware of the codex as a rare and vulnerable object, materially embodying tremendous labor. Additionally, something of the great worth placed on a Byzantine manuscript, and its elevation in a Byzantine scriptorium as a prized object, is evident in tantalizing textual references. One such reference is the ninth-century *Epithimia* attributed to Theodore the Studite. In a list of penances for transgressions of monastic duties, Theodore writes on librarians, users of books, and manuscript scribes. For the librarians—caretakers of the Monastery of Stoudios' precious library—and borrowers, he indicates:

> *47. If anyone takes out a book and does not take good care of it; or if he touches the book of another without the permission of him who has taken it out; or if, grumbling, he seeks a book other than that which he has already taken, let him touch no book whatsoever the whole day.*
>
> *48. If the Librarian does not show proper solicitude (for the books), shaking and re-stacking and dusting each one, let him eat no cooked food.*
>
> *49. If anyone is found hiding a book in his cell which, without good excuse, he does not give back the moment the Librarian strikes (the gong), let him stand in the refectory.*

Likewise, the great cost of materials, the importance of staying true in the copying of a text, and the respect of other scribes is revealed in Theodore's rules for those working in the scriptorium:

> *53. If anyone makes more glue than is necessary, and wastes it by letting it sit too long, fifty genuflections.*[19]
>
> *54. If anyone does not take good care of the quire [in which he is writing], as well as the book out of which he is copying, putting both away at the proper time, and does not retain the spelling, accentuation and punctuation [of the original], one hundred and thirty genuflections.*
>
> *56. If anyone reads more than is written in the book out of which he is copying, let him eat no cooked food.*
>
> *57. If anyone breaks his pen out of anger, thirty genuflections.*
>
> *60. If the Chief Scribe distributes the work with partiality towards anyone; or if he does not carefully maintain the pieces of parchment and the tools for binding, lest any of the things used in this work be ruined, let him do one hundred and fifty genuflections and not attend Church.*[20]

Theodore's *Epithimia* begin to nuance for modern audiences how profoundly the Byzantines held their manuscripts dear. When it comes to the extraordinarily high cost of producing a Gospel Lectionary (Oikonomides 2002, vol. II, pp. 589–92),[21] the default assumption may be that the expensive materials and the great effort of its making are a display of conspicuous consumption on the part of patrons and book owners.[22] While this is certainly true—and explicit dedicatory inscriptions and colophons do survive which ensure that a patron, monastic institution, or collection was recognized or associated with a manuscript—nuancing this position are the aesthetic qualities of a Gospel Lectionary, which tied it to a broader affective experience within a sacred interior.

3. The Sensuous Byzantine Book

Investigations of materiality in art history have drawn attention to historical constructions of the senses and experiential sensual interactions with art; this is certainly the case with Byzantine visual experience.[23] As the hypothetical liturgical procession at the outset of this essay suggests, it is important to underscore that the Gospel Lectionary was not a passive object, or a simple receptacle for text and image, but rather was an active participant in the liturgy. This is emphasized through its use in the Byzantine rite, which has continued and evolved into modern Orthodox liturgical practice.

The Lectionary, in this ritual, related to the physical envelope around it: the architecture of the Byzantine church or chapel.[24] The moving, multi-sensory liturgy had, at its center, the priest or deacon and his codex. The architectural setting of the church or chapel, where the Gospel Lectionary was used, has long been understood to be a meeting place between Heaven and Earth, articulated as such in textual sources, art, architecture, and through the sensory experiences that the interior provides.[25] While the deacon was reciting the lection from the Gospel Lectionary, witnesses of the mass would not observe his words in a vacuum, but rather would be awed by the multisensory experience surrounding them.

In the elite space of the Byzantine church or chapel, mosaics with tesserae intentionally set at varying angles caught flickering light in destabilizing ways. Likewise, textiles were present that transformed hard architecture into soft, swaying surfaces. Light and shadow moved hypnotically thanks to the presence of oil lamps, and the strong scent of incense, swung from censers, enriched the interior while creating a cloudy atmosphere conducive to this heavenly setting on earth. The voice of the deacon reciting the lections, as well as any chanting in the Byzantine tonal mode, would reverberate around the architectural interior, creating a sense of sonic destabilization.[26]

It is within this metamorphic space that the Byzantine lectionary existed. The colors of the miniatures, showing elaborate jeweled borders framing Gospel authors, both create and simultaneously reference the shimmering and gleaming of a great variety of sumptuous materials in its environment (Figure 11). The material colors in the pages—themselves painted skins—extend and engage with the skin of the architecture itself, when opened in the heightened moment of the reading of the Gospel during the liturgy. While the phrase

"Jeweled Style" refers to a polychromatic, multi-media aesthetic of the Early Byzantine period,[27] this visual system did not disappear during the Middle Byzantine Period. Instead, it transformed into a mode that continued to energize surfaces, but did so in a different way, through denser, tighter patterns with more precise lines and edges.[28]

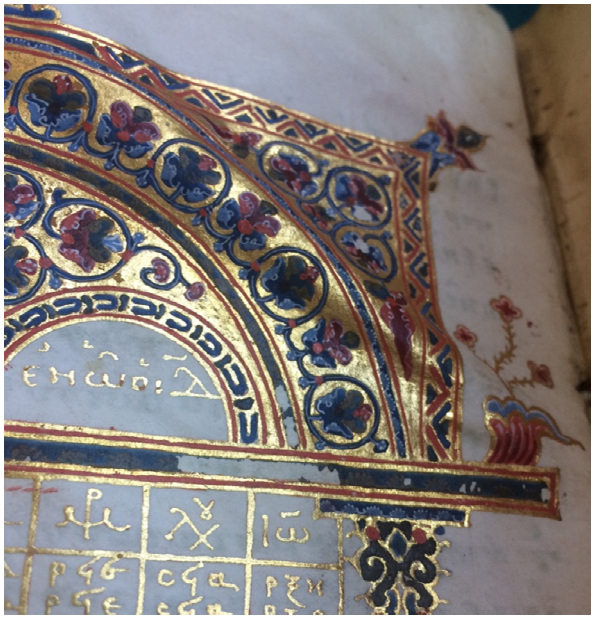

Figure 11. *Canon Table* (detail), from a Byzantine *Gospel Book*, 13th century CE. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (MS 65, fol. 7v).

Evidence that the Byzantines thought of their Gospel Lectionaries and church interiors in similar aesthetic and sensory ways is found in historic texts that describe manuscripts and architecture analogously. In the colophon of a twelfth-century manuscript containing the *Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus* at the Monastery of St. Katherine at Sinai, for instance, the abbot and scribe Joseph Hagioglykerites wrote

> The monk Joseph, leader of the Monastery of the Pantocrator-Logos, who made the book glittering with silver-white, dappled with wrought gold, which Gregory, the highest of the chief shepherds, being the mouthpiece of God, composed, gives [it] to the Monastery of the Pantanassa as a gift for the redemption and cleansing of [his] sins".[29]

In this epigram at the end of the codex, the author has drawn attention to the aesthetic and material qualities of his donation: descriptions of glittering silver-white (possibly referring to the parchment) and dappled with wrought gold (doubtless a reference to gilded text or image). This brief yet powerful description of this manuscript recalls ones that articulate architectural interiors, such as the well-known sixth-century ekphrasis by Paul the Silentiary describing the interior of the newly-constructed Justinianic church of Hagia Sophia:

> *Yet who, even in the thundering strains of Homer, shall sing the marble meadows gathered upon the mighty walls and spreading pavement of the lofty church? Mining [tools of] toothed steel have cut these from the green flanks of Carystus and have cleft the speckled Phrygian stone, sometimes rosy mixed with white, sometimes gleaming with purple and silver flowers. There is a wealth of porphyry stone, too, besprinkled with little bright stars that had laden the river boat on the broad Nile. You may see the bright green stone of Laconia and the glittering marble with wavy veins found in the deep gullies of the Iasian peaks, exhibiting slanting streaks of blood-red and livid white; the pale yellow with swirling red from the Lydian headland; the glittering crocus-like golden stone which the Libyan sun, warming it with its golden light, has produced on the steep flanks of the*

> *Moorish hills; that of glittering black upon which the Celtic crags, deep in ice, have poured here and there an abundance of milk; the pale onyx with glint of precious metal; and that which the land of Atrax yields, not from some upland glen, but from the level plain: in parts vivid green not unlike emerald, in others of a darker green, almost blue. It has spots resembling snow next to flashes of black so that in one stone various beauties mingle.*[30]

While several centuries separate these two texts, they contain similar rhetorical strategies of material description. The well-studied ekphrastic dedication of Paul the Silentiary comprises descriptions of variegated colored marbles with adjectives such as "rosy mixed with white", "glittering crocus-like golden", and "glittering black . . . [with] an abundance of milk" that emphasize the surface quality and texture of the individual types of stones installed as interior revetments and their engagement with light.[31] Similar descriptive strategies characterize Hagioglykerites' colophon, in which he terms his codex as "glittering with silver-white" and "dappled with wrought gold". What both these descriptions evoke in the mind of the reader are the suggestive descriptions of luminous color. We may quite literally as well as figuratively think of them, and the codex and monument they describe, as shifting, glittering, and glowing skins.[32] Additional Byzantine authors—including Chorikios and Photios, to name some—also continuously and consistently highlighted the importance of variety in describing color.[33]

Liz James has brilliantly demonstrated that the Byzantines conceptualized color in ways completely foreign to post-Newtonian viewers, one primarily experienced through an appreciation of value. Through a careful study of the terminology used for color by the Byzantines, James has effectively demonstrated that color words do not align precisely with modern terms of hues, instead corresponding to value (light and dark); in other words, there is an imprecision in respect to hue as to what color the Byzantines themselves were describing (James 1996).[34] As a result, it is essential to recognize that asking questions about color systems based on hue presuppose an awareness of it as a category. Modern viewers know color in a post-Newtonian way; the systematization of our color system is based on a three-pronged model, according, first and foremost, to hue and then to value (light and dark) and intensity (or saturation), which we consider to be the constituent elements of any color. Differently from the modern system of color, James along with John Gage (James 1996; 2003, pp. 223–33; Gage 1999a, 1999b)[35] have established that value (or amounts of light and dark)[36] is the principal organizing element of color systems for the Byzantines. Such an assertion might be inferred by the words of the Patriarch Photios, in a well-known ninth-century Homily delivered on the Feast of the Annunciation in the Great Church:

> But wherefore, O God's people and most Christ-loving of emperors, have you assembled thus eagerly and splendidly, and have adorned this holy and august temple, which one might well call, without missing the mark, the eye of the universe, and especially so today when, mixing the white with the black, out of which colors the natural constitution of the eye is wrought, you have filled with your bodies the voids of this wondrous place, forming as it were the socket of the eye?[37]

Definitions of color words are historically no more stable than other ideas about color. Terms such as "purple", which a twenty-first-century reader of English understands in relation to a specific hue range, in other contexts might have entailed reference to additional hues and to other qualities, such as brightness, or morality. For the Byzantines, the word πορφυροῦς referred to hues which we identify as red and blue in addition to purple, and also connoted saturation and lustrousness.[38] The issue, then, is one of translation. This lack of fixity with respect to hue boundaries in Greek might be unsettling to an audience primarily accustomed to modern color systems and words that correspond to hue, and should be kept in mind as one of the basic differences between Byzantine and modern ideas about color.

4. Material Aesthetics of Byzantine Lectionaries: Albumen and Gold

In attaching material specificity to the aesthetic qualities of Byzantine books, several discreet materials contribute to their appearance—in particular, the reflective qualities of albumen (or egg white) and gold.[39] The majority of Greek-language manuscripts before the Late Byzantine period surviving to modern times were made from parchment, or the depilated skin of an animal, which was transformed into a suitable receptor for writing and illuminating via a complex, multi-stage process.[40] These skins were treated and prepared for the reception of inks and pigments; they would be specially measured for the assembly into quires and eventual binding with a cover as a codex.[41] Although many other supports were used (including papyrus, wax, wood, ceramic, and paper), the great majority of deluxe, illuminated medieval manuscripts were made from parchment.[42] The number of animals required for a manuscript project, and the long process of cleaning, depilating, stretching, and drying the parchment, discussed below, is an indication that a manuscript's expense and materiality were intimately tied to the intangible value of the project.

An additional step in the preparation of a codex that is particular to some—but not all—Byzantine manuscripts is the application of albumen (egg white) and/or linseed oil on both sides, which creates a shiny, luminous surface.[43] In a letter by Maximos Planoudes from 1295 CE ordering parchment for the School of the Chora Monastery,[44] this author importantly mentions that the batch should *not* be coated with egg albumen:

> Now you should never encrust these [leaves] with egg [albumen], because when they have suffered this treatment they receive the letters onto the egg, and not onto [the leaves] themselves. For if they should somehow see water, the writing is washed away and shaken away along with the egg, and the work of the scribe turns out into thin air, clean gone. For the egg lies in the middle space between the writing and the parchment leaf, and when it is wet, it washes away the writing with it.[45]

The fact that Planoudes makes this request suggests that coating parchment with albumen was a regular and perhaps even widespread practice in earlier Byzantine parchment manufacture. Planoudes is quite clear why this should not happen: the albumen, a thin layer between the surface of the parchment and any applied text, often leads to the corruption of the text; any moisture or exposure to water will cause the writing to disappear. By the time of Planoudes, the Byzantine habit of preparing a shiny parchment surface was recognized as seriously problematic due to the loss of text and image, and seems to disappear as standard practice.

The sheen of the surface of many Byzantine folios is largely due to the presence of albumen in an egg binder, and these substances account for the great conservation problems in earlier and also modern times of flaking pigments.[46] Although the conservation issues associated with albumen may not have been immediately apparent upon the creation of these deluxe manuscripts, the question remains why it would be used at all. Nearly all modern commentators note that the surface of Byzantine manuscripts treated with egg-white albumen has a lustrous, even sheen. This quality is clearly seen when examining an open quire in raking light (Figure 12).

As such, it seems reasonable to assume that the aesthetic qualities of shimmering pages were desirable, especially for liturgical texts intended for use in the interior of a sacred space. The even luster provided by the albumen coating contrasts with the reflective qualities provided by the sharp points of light in gold-ground illuminations, the mosaic-like glittering of powdered gold adhering to text written with kermes ink, and the relatively matte appearance of painted pigments contained in Middle Byzantine Gospel Lectionaries. These various qualities of light are suggestive of an aesthetic dialogue with the architectural interior of the monastic church or chapel.[47] The aesthetics of luster afforded by albumen, with an even sheen covering the entire parchment surface, seem especially to relate to interior marble floors and revetments.[48] Similar aesthetic qualities might also be appropriate to describe the albumen-prepared parchment surface, especially with the understanding that the manuscript pages would be illuminated by soft light from flickering oil lamps.



Figure 12. *Leaf with St. Matthew*, from the *Lectionary of Katherine Komnena*, ca. 1063 CE. Tempera and gold on parchment. Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland (1942.1512).

The experience of light in Byzantine Gospel Lectionaries is likewise aided, as it is in other media in Byzantine visual culture, by gold.[49] When gold appears in manuscripts, either flat or three dimensionally, its surface generates reflectivity, especially apparent when seen in raking light (Figure 13).



Figure 13. *Leaf with St. Luke*, from the *Lectionary of Katherine Komnena*, ca. 1063 CE. Ink, tempera, and gold on parchment. Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland (1942.1511).

These reflective aesthetics, however, are not the same as those of glass, as in mosaics, with sharp starbursts of light, but rather gold that creates a matte, consistent light that bounces off the surface of the metal in hypnotic but steady ways. Gold also captures light (for example in a church at dawn) more quickly than a painted surface does, thus making the gold radiate around still darkly silhouetted figures.[50]

The primary aesthetic property of gold in manuscripts—whether it is gilding for the background of a miniature scene or a halo, burnished to create sensuous patterns, or

powdered and applied together with gum arabic over letters constituting text—is one of shimmering and gleaming. Likewise, gold in Byzantium is associated with liquid or fluid properties—not only in its melted state for the minting of coins, but also seen through the regular ways in which it shines and shimmers in its applied state on the manuscript, as if in movement. It is, therefore, the medium of gold on the surface of a manuscript page that helps to engender an aesthetic experience of liquidity or movement. Since the manuscript is a three-dimensional object designed to be manipulated through the turning of its pages, and one that was regularly processed throughout monastic chapels, we should imagine them in motion, with the gold present in these codices when the manuscripts were open flickering with different qualities of light as they moved through space.

Thus, in many ways, it its gold that makes Byzantine Gospel Lectionaries luminous objects. And yet it is used in manuscripts sparingly; it appears typically only on a few leaves of a deluxe codex, as background for author portraits, in select spots for initials, or denoting text considered worth highlighting. Furthermore, close observation has shown that gold itself is not always used, but sometimes also *aurum musicum* ("mosaic gold"), a synthesized tin with gold-like aesthetic properties, or *Zwishgold*, a combination of gold and silver.[51]

The preciousness and value of gold in Byzantine times must be characterized and qualified, both aesthetically and financially. Pliny defined the value of gold in ancient Rome, writing that its "highest rank" was not achieved due to its color, but rather to its steadfastness when heated with fire, and its purity in relation to other metals. Pliny continued on this theme, stating that, unlike other metals, it does not need to be purified from ore, but rather is found already perfect; and, when used in art and textiles, it does not change character, since gold does not oxidize, nor react to salt or vinegar, and therefore no rust, tarnishing, or corrosion appears.[52]

Despite its role as an economic standard, the *aesthetic* qualities of gold were described as merely one texture among many in Byzantium, as demonstrated in literature, including ekphrases, beginning in Late Antiquity. While manuscripts themselves tend not to be the subject of ekphrastic works in Byzantium, other media, including icons and especially architecture, are described using the aesthetics of gold. When used as a color, gold was often described as pallid and glowing, and seems to denote preciousness when used adjectivally. Such is the case in a dedicatory poem in Greek by Eugenios of Palermo to an icon of St. John Chrysostom:

> All blessed one, both your color and your voice are golden.
> For the one [your voice], pouring out to us golden words,
> took its name from your deeds,
> while pallor delineates the holiness of your color.
> For consuming your flesh by the fire of fasting,
> you have tinged it with the pallor of gold.[53]

John Chrysostom's honorific name itself, "golden-mouthed", is likewise referenced here—for Eugenios, Chrysostom's flesh, pallid from asceticism, is associated with gold. At the same time, in describing the "pouring out" of "golden words", Eugenios' dedication demonstrates another defining aesthetic quality of gold recognized by the Byzantines: one of fluidity, perhaps reflected also in gold's physical property of having a comparatively low melting point. Such liquidity as an aesthetic quality is widely discussed in ekphrases, especially those of architectural interiors. This is the case in Michael Psellos' dedication of the Church of St. George in Mangana:

> Everything was made more artful, the ceiling was covered with gold [...] And gold flowed in a torrential stream from the public treasury as from an inexhaustible source. [...] Indeed, the church was like the sky adorned on all sides with golden stars; to be more exact, the heavens are gilded only at intervals, while here the gold, flowing as it were, from the center in a copious stream, has covered the entire surface without interruption.[54]

Psellos' reference here at St. George in Mangana to gold flowing "in a torrential stream" and "in a copious stream" is found also in another of his writings about the reign of Alexios I Doukas, in which "fountains and streams of gold gushed forth" at the beginning of the new emperor's reign (Kaldellis 2017). Thus, the liquidity of gold takes on not only an aesthetic value, but a panegyric one. Likewise, the twelfth-century Michael, *protekdikos* of the church in Thessaloniki and later deacon of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, wrote an ekphrasis for the annual celebration of the Church of Holy Wisdom's inauguration, similarly using liquid qualities for describing the gilded interior:

> [. . .] and the brightness of the gold almost makes the gold appear to drip down; for by its refulgence making waves to arise, as it were, in eyes that are moist, it causes their moisture to appear in the gold which is seen, and it seems to be flowing in a molten stream. But what manner of stonework is this that fastened around the building, striving with its variegated coloring and smoothness against gold, shining because of its smoothness and, because of its diversified bloom having something that surpasses even the gold, which is of one color?[55]

The ekphrases of Psellos and Michael Protecdicus that call upon golden qualities (just two examples of a much greater number) reveal another tendency of Byzantine authors when describing this material. In many Byzantine ekphrases addressing architecture, gold itself is not modified by adjectives such as "gleaming" or "shining", but other materials—including marbles and silver—are. Likewise, as Magdalena Garnczarska has recently noted, gold is merely one constituent part of a multi-media whole, in which fine marbles, colored glass mosaics, and other materials create the overwhelming aesthetic experience.[56] In this way, me might understand that gold in Byzantium—whether adorning a manuscript folio or an architectural interior—was prized for its steadfastness as a material and its consistent qualities of a matte-like shining and fluidity.

5. Gospel Lectionaries and Visual Experience

In its emphasis on reflectivity and texture, facilitated by materials such as albumen and gold, the aesthetics of the Gospel Lectionary seem to mirror that of architectural interiors of Byzantine sacred space: an intentionally shiny parchment surface prepared with albumen, illuminated with gilded imagery, that privileges a variety of texture rather than flat hue. In trying to explore this aesthetic, it is important to underscore the notion that Byzantine visual experience was different from that of modern viewers.

As an example of this difference in pre-modern visuality, let us evaluate the lighting conditions of a professionally photographed manuscript at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the *Jaharis Gospel Lectionary* (Figure 14). Here, we lose something of the complex chromatic and three-dimensional nature of this object. The image, when professionally photographed with studio lighting—-oftentimes to make the work useful and usable to scholars studying the text—-flattens the manuscript object into single leaves, reducing any notion of flexibility in the inherently three-dimensional parchment, and flattening any color. As described above, Gospel Lectionaries were objects that bent and swayed as the deacon turned the parchment pages, and the codex itself was carried through space with shifting light qualities (Figure 15). This is all to say that the image seen of many digitized manuscripts is a far cry from the Byzantine visual experience of a Gospel Lectionary in its spatial context.

A further illumination of this problem is found when comparing photographs of a Byzantine manuscript leaf with *St. John and Prochoros* in the collection of Dumbarton Oaks in Washington (Figures 16 and 17). John the Evangelist, dictating to scribe Prochoros, is wearing what we might describe as a vibrantly-hued purple tunic. Yet, the experience of color is quite different when the manuscript leaf is seen under lighting conditions similar to those in a monastic chapel, where the moment of viewership of the original manuscript would have taken place. Looking at this image, without artificial lighting, raises questions about what colors are indeed present. The entire folio in this case becomes a silhouette in

which the gold-ground background distinguishes everything, de-saturating the color of the modern photograph.



Figure 14. Opening of the *Gospel of Luke*, in *The Jaharis Gospel Lectionary*, ca. 1100 CE. Tempera, gold, and ink on parchment; leather binding. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2007.286, fol. 109r).



Figure 15. Opening of the *Gospel of Luke*, seen at an angle from above, in *The Jaharis Gospel Lectionary*, ca. 1100 CE. Tempera, gold, and ink on parchment; leather binding. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2007.286, fol. 109r).



Figure 16. *Manuscript leaf with St. John and Prochoros*, 13th century CE. Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C. (BZ.1958.105).



Figure 17. *Manuscript leaf with St. John and Prochoros*, seen in low-level lighting conditions, 13th century CE. Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C. (BZ.1958.105).

One further example of this difference with pre-modern visuality merits consideration: the full-page framing device of the beginning of the lection from the Gospel of John in the so-called *Dumbarton Oaks Lectionary* (DO MS 1).[57] Although somewhat damaged, likely due to the constant rubbing with the facing cover board, folio 1r still presents a brilliant illumination that elevates the lection recited on the Sunday of *Pascha* (Figure 18). A large rectangular frame, mirroring the shape of the parchment, encloses a vertically elongated quatrefoil design. The quatrefoil contains a heading announcing the reading for *Pascha*

from the Gospel of John, continuing with the text of John 1:1–4. An inscription identifies the figure in a historiated initial of a seated St. John, forming the Epsilon of Ἐν (Figure 19). John, seated on a red cushion, with gilded robes, book, and halo, reaches out to the beginning of his text, his right arm forming the horizontal stipes of the epsilon. A small, grayish epsilon between the historiated initial and the beginning of the text has been left by the scribe; this visual cue was certainly intended as instruction to the illuminator of the miniature (whether they be the same as the scribe or a different artist) as to which letter should be represented by the saint's body. This visual clue underscores the fact that the writing of the text happened first, before any illumination was made.

Much of the visual excitement of this folio, however, derives from the elaborate border framing the quatrefoil text (Figures 20–23). Richly saturated, the complex interplay of painted and gilded textures interacts with each other in the geometric and vegetal designs. A thick gilded frame surrounds the entire shape of the central quatrefoil, marked by a painted blue border, into which alternating circles, diamonds, and cross shapes define spaces. In the interstices, the illuminator has painted vegetal and floral motifs using bright blue, green, dark red, and bright red highlights to describe leaves and petals. The space between this quatrefoil border and the outer edge of the framing rectangle are gilded, with accompanying vine scrolls ornamented by continuing vegetal and floral motifs in the same color palette. At the base of the rectangle, two lions prowl behind Cypress trees, while two additional lions, surrounding another tree, face off at the top of the frame, gazing towards the acroteria at the corners. Internal evidence within the manuscript itself—including drips of wax from candles (Figure 24) and stains of spilled wine (Figure 25)—demonstrate it was a Lectionary actively used in a liturgy before entering its current museum collection.



Figure 18. The *Dumbarton Oaks Lectionary*, second half of 11th century CE. Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C. (BZ.1939.12, MS 1, fol. 1r).



Figure 19. *Miniature Historiated Initial Epsilon with St. John*, in the *Dumbarton Oaks Lectionary*, second half of 11th century CE. Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C. (BZ.1939.12, MS 1, fol. 1r).



Figure 20. Detail of Figure 17.



Figure 21. Detail of Figure 17.



Figure 22. Detail of Figure 17.



Figure 23. Detail of Figure 17.

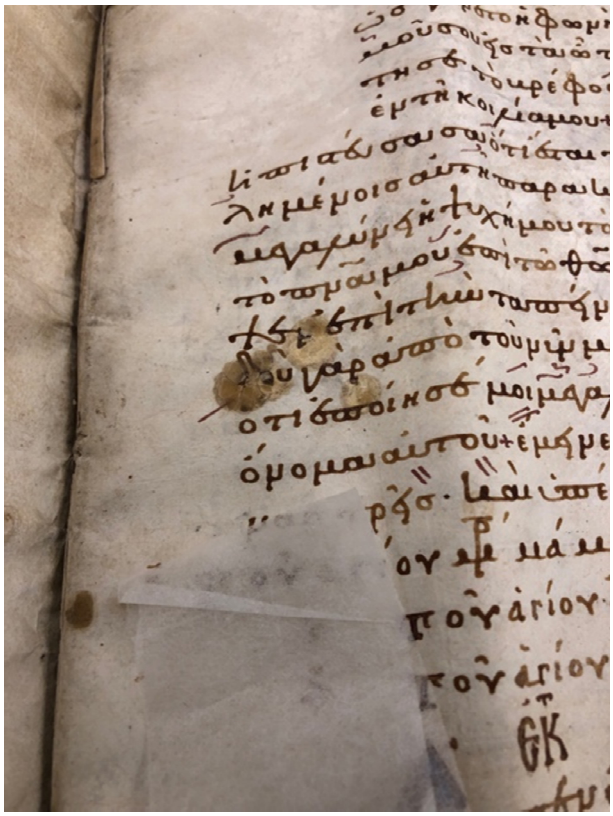

Figure 24. Dripped candle wax in the *Dumbarton Oaks Lectionary*.

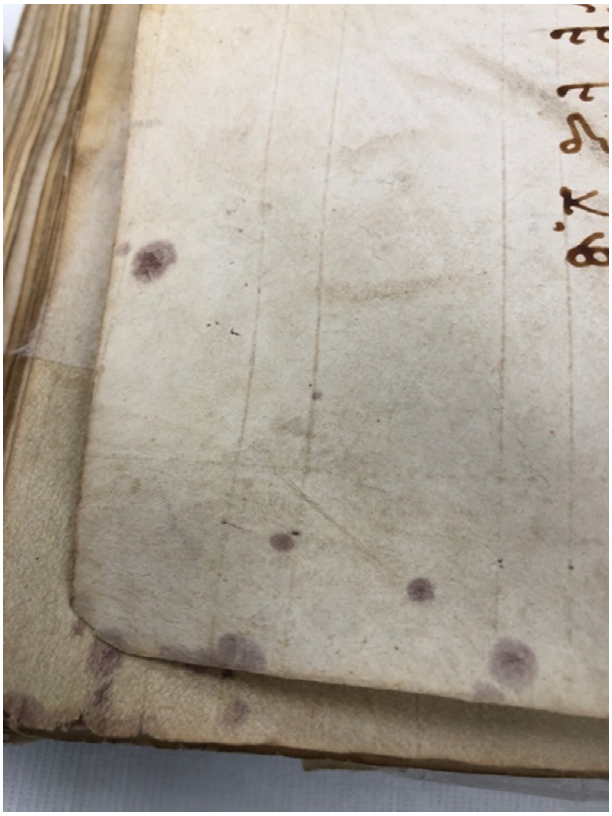

Figure 25. Spilled wine stains in the *Dumbarton Oaks Lectionary*.

In a visual experiment conducted in 2021 at Dumbarton Oaks with Elizabeth Dospěl Williams, we attempted to recreate something of the pre-modern visual experience of this Byzantine Gospel Lectionary by turning off overhead fluorescent lights and using a flashlight to illuminate the surface (Figure 26). In this viewing circumstance, it really is quite difficult, if not impossible, to pinpoint precise hues of any color. What this experiment seems to suggest is that the Lectionary surface in a metamorphic interior, lit by oil lamp, would not be recognized in the same chromatic terms that modern viewers enjoy; instead, textures would be foregrounded.

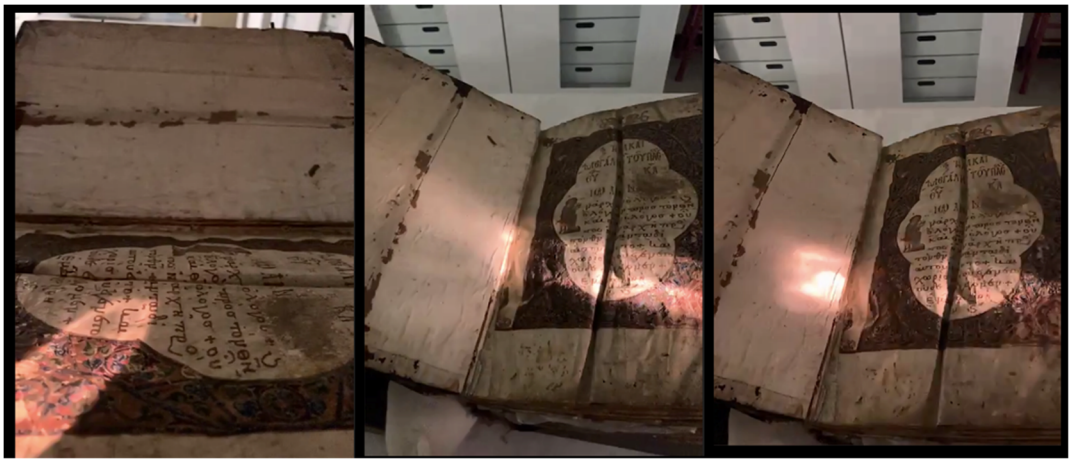

Figure 26. Visual experiment using a flashlight to mimic pre-modern viewing conditions using the *Dumbarton Oaks Lectionary* (BZ.1939.12, MS 1, fol. 1r), May 2021.

In this vein, the aesthetic qualities of Byzantine Gospel Lectionaries, afforded by their material construction through albumen and gold, among other materials, aided in fostering

an aesthetic relationship with their architectural interiors. These heavy volumes of astonishing cost and spiritual value, made from a flock of animals and requiring inconceivable labor and material resources, may well have been understood almost as if it were a miniature version of the church held in the deacon's hands, mirroring the larger space where the holy liturgy transpired. When we foreground the material and aesthetic qualities of the Byzantine manuscript—those that were shiny, shimmering, reflective, and liquid—we understand that they participated in an affective intermedial experience.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Notes

[1] Ideas in this essay have been excerpted and adapted from my PhD dissertation, "Materiality and Materialism of Middle Byzantine Gospel Lectionaries (Eleventh–Twelfth Centuries CE)" (Temple University, 2022). I presented select material from this essay at the 52nd Annual Sessions of the Middle Atlantic Symposium in the History of Art in March 2022; I am grateful to the audience members for their questions and feedback. My gratitude is also due to special issue editor Marcia B. Hall for the invitation to contribute this material, and to Elizabeth S. Bolman for assistance in developing and refining the ideas contained herein.

[2] For the purposes of this essay, I have included Byzantine Gospel Lectionaries (*Evangelia*) with which I am personally familiar, and which serve to describe material-aesthetic constructs of affect. Any number of Middle Byzantine Gospel Lectionaries could potentially have been chosen.

[3] Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος . . .

[4] καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν.

[5] Ὅπως ἰδών τις τὸν ταὼν μὴ θαυμάσοι
τὸν χρυσὸν ὡς σάπφειρον ἐμπεπλευμένον,
καὶ τὴν πτερωτὴν ἐν σμαράγδῳ πορφύραν,
τὰς πολυμόρφους συνθέσις τῶν χρωμάτων,
ὅλας ἀσυγχύτους τε καὶ μεμιγμένας;
George of Pisidia, *Hexaemeron*, 1245–49. Transcribed and translated in (Maguire 1987, p. 39).

[6] Especially Kurt Weitzmann, much of whose scholarship has been reprinted in (Weitzmann 1971). For a succinct historiography of Byzantine manuscript studies, see (Kalavrezou and Tomaselli 2017, pp. 23–34).

[7] One particularly important work is (Dolezal 1991), which comprehensively studies the history, development, and structure of this manuscript type, and interprets illustrations of several deluxe codices in Venice, New York, Mt. Athos, and the Vatican. This material is summarized and expanded upon in (Dolezal 1996, pp. 128–41).

[8] Particularly important in foregrounding issues of materials and the materiality of color in the field of art history at large was (Gage 1999a); for materiality in early modern Western European art, see (Hall 1994), with an expanded overview and updated discussion in (Hall 2019).

[9] Many of the ideas of materiality in art history of recent decades were expressed in the earlier twentieth century by philosopher Gaston Bachelard, such as (Bachelard 1962b) and (Bachelard 1962a). An early response to Bachelard is found in (Christofides 1963, pp. 477–91). Materiality as a methodological approach is addressed in the essays of (Lange-Berndt 2015) and (Miller 2005), with additional references following.

[10] For issues of aesthetics in Byzantine art, Liz James's work has led the conversation, especially (James 1996). Issues of Byzantine materiality are better articulated in media other than manuscripts; see (James 2013, pp. 17–34; 2017a, pp. 145–57; 2017b; Kalavrezou 2012, pp. 354–69; Barry 2020; and Peers 2021, pp. 31–42), among many others.

[11] For the standard monograph on western medieval manuscript production, see (Alexander 1992). A careful discussion of the production and execution of medieval manuscripts is also found in the introductory text by (Clemens and Graham 2007), with additional references following. Byzantine manuscripts are considered by (Bianconi 2018) and (Bianconi 2009, pp. 15–35).

[12] Significant contributions to the understanding of bookmaking and book culture in Byzantium were undertaken in the collections of essays by (Mango and Ševčenko 1975) and (Hunger 1989).

[13] For a basic introduction to the laborious process of making the medieval manuscript, see (Clemens and Graham 2007, esp. 18–34 and 49–64).

[14] For an overview of the Gospel Lectionary as manuscript type, see (Yota 2017, pp. 287–99), with additional references following.

[15] For a basic definition, see (Taft 1991, vol. II, pp. 1201–2).

16 These might indicate the liturgical date, words such as ἀρχή (beginning) and τέλος (ending) to indicate the beginning and end of a reading, or abbreviations of phrases such as Ἐν ταύταις ἡμέραις ("In those days"). These marginal texts, however, never take the form of catena, or extensive commentaries that engulf the main text, such as those found in illuminated Byzantine Prophet Books or Octateuchs.

17 One such example is the so-called *New York Cruciform Lectionary*, MS M.692, Morgan Library and Museum, New York, discussed by (Anderson 1992).

18 An idea explored by (Nelson 2016, pp. 87–115).

19 (Featherstone and Holland 1982) question whether this rule applies to a bookbinder requiring glue, or to the shoemakers of the preceding section. For a brief but useful overview of Byzantine bookmaking, see (Van Regemorter 1954, pp. 3–23).

20 Translation excerpted from (Featherstone and Holland 1982, pp. 258–60). Also referenced in (Ševčenko 1998, pp. 186–228), at 190. For a view on the authenticity of this text, see (Beck 1959) at 494.

21 (Oikonomides 2002, vol. II, pp. 589–92) at p. 591, while not indicating the source of these numbers, claims that the price of a manuscript in the tenth century on average cost 21–26 gold *nomismata*, against the cost of a cow (3), a warhorse (12), and a mule (15), or the annual salary of an official *protospatharios* (72).

22 This is a point raised also with regards to marble by (Barry 2020).

23 On the senses in Byzantium and Byzantine art, see (James 2004); (Pentcheva 2006, pp. 631–55); (Pentcheva 2010); and (Ashbrook Harvey and Mullett 2017). The study of senses and sensuality is by no means limited to the Byzantine world, and has been approached by a wide variety of scholars in art history; see, e.g., (Jhanji 1989); (Houston and Taube 2000, pp. 261–94); (Hall and Cooper 2013); and (Neumann and Thomason 2021), to name but a few.

24 On the aesthetic qualities of sunlight in medieval churches, see the collection of essays in (Ivanovici and Sullivan 2023), esp. the essay by (Potamianos 2023, pp. 151–72). See also (Nesbitt 2012, pp. 139–60).

25 Considerable discussion of the various interconnected realms of art and religious experience in Byzantium exist in the essays of (Safran 1997), and more recently, (Betancourt 2021).

26 Scholarship emphasizing the polyvalent and sonic qualities of Byzantine ecclesiastic interiors include (Pentcheva 2017); (Pentcheva and Abel 2017, pp. 336–60); and (Antonopoulos et al. 2017, pp. 321–35), all with additional references following.

27 Such as the fifth- and sixth-century monumental interiors including the "Mausoleum" of Galla Placidia in Ravenna, Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, and the Red Monastery near Sohag, or one of the many Codex Purpureus manuscripts, such as the Rossano Gospels or Vienna Genesis.

28 For instance, the monasteries of Hosios Loukas near Distomo, Nea Moni on Chios, or the *Paris Gregory* (Paris. gr. 510).

29 τ(ὴν) χρυσοτευκτόστικτον ἀργυφῆ βίβλον, ἣν ἐκρότησε τοῦ Θ(εο)ῦ τελ(ῶν) στόμα τ(ῶν) ποιμεναρχ(ῶν) Γρη(γόριος) ἀκρότ(ης), τεύξ(ας) μοναστ(ὴς) Ἰωσὴφ ἀρχηγέτ(ης) μο(νῆς) μοναστ(ῶν) Παντοκράτ(ο)ρ(ος) Λόγ(ου), τ(ῆς) Παντανάσσ(ης) τῇ μο(νῇ) δῶρ(ον) νέμει εἰς λύτρ(ον) εἰς κάθαρσι(ν) ἀγνοημ(ά)τ(ων). Epigram from the *Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus*, Mt. Sinai, Cod. gr. 339, fol. 437v, presented by Abbot Joseph Hagioglykerites to the Monastery of the Theotokos Pantanassa on the island of Hagia Glykeria, 1136 CE. Greek from the *Database of Byzantine Book Epigrams*, Type 3794, https://www.dbbe.ugent.be/types/3794, accessed on 1 December 2021. English translation from (Weitzmann and Galavaris 1990, p. 140), with slight emendation by Joseph Kopta. See also (Anderson 1979, pp. 167–85), at 167–68, for a slightly different translation.

30 Καὶ τίς ἐριγδούποισι χανὼν στομάτεσσιν Ὁμήρου μαρμαρέους λειμῶνας ἀολλισθέντας ἀείσει ἠλιβάτου νηοῖο κραταιπαγέας περὶ τοίχους καὶ πέδον εὐρυθέμειλον; ἐπεὶ καὶ χλωρὰ Καρύστου νῶτα μεταλλευτῆρι χάλυψ ἐχάραξεν ὀδόντι καὶ Φρύγα δαιδαλέοιο διέθρισεν αὐχένα πέτρου, τὸν μὲν ἰδεῖν ῥοδόεντα, μεμιγμένον ἠέρι λευκῶι, τὸν δ' ἅμα πορφυρέοισι καὶ ἀργυφέοισιν ἀώτοις ἁβρὸν ἀπαστράπτοντα. πολὺς δ' εὐπήχεϊ Νείλωι φορτίδα πιλήσας ποταμίτιδα λᾶας ἀνίσχων πορφύρεος λεπτοῖσι πεπασμένος ἀστράσι λάμπει. καὶ χλοερὸν λάϊγγος ἴδοις ἀμάρυγμα Λακαίνης μάρμαρά τε στράπτοντα πολυπλάγκτοισιν ἐλιγμοῖς, ὅσσα φάραγξ βαθύκολπος Ἰασσίδος εὗρε κολώνης, αἱμαλέωι λευκῶι τε πελιδνωθέντι κελεύθους λοξοτενεῖς φαίνουσα, καὶ ὁππόσα Λύδιος ἀγκὼν ὠχρὸν ἐρευθήεντι μεμιγμένον ἄνθος ἐλίσσων· ὅσσα Λίβυς φαέθων, χρυσέωι σελαγίσματι θάλπων, χρυσοφανῆ κροκόεντα λίθων ἀμαρύγματα τεύχει ἀμφὶ βαθυπρήωνα ῥάχιν Μαυρουσίδος ἄκρης· ὅσσα τε Κελτὶς ἀνεῖχε βαθυκρύσταλλος ἐρίπνη χρωτὶ μέλαν στίλβοντι πολὺ γλάγος ἀμφιβαλοῦσα ἔκχυτον, ἤι κε τύχησιν, ἀλώμενον ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα· ὅσσα τ' Ὄνυξ ἀνέηκε διαυγάζοντι μετάλλωι ὠχριόων ἐρίτιμα, καὶ Ἀτρακὶς ὁππόσα λευροῖς χθὼν πεδίοις ἐλόχευσε καὶ οὐχ ὑψαύχενι βήσσηι, πῆι μὲν ἅλις χλοάοντα καὶ οὐ μάλα τῆλε μαράγδου, πῆι δὲ βαθυνομένου χλοεροῦ κυανώπιδι μορφῆι· ἦν δέ τι καὶ χιόνεσσιν ἀλίγκιον ἄγχι μελαίνης μαρμαρυγῆς, μικτὴ δὲ χάρις συνεγείρετο πέτρου. Paul the Silentiary, *Descriptio S. Sophiae*, 617–646. Greek from (Veh 1977, pp. 306–58), retrieved from the *TLG*, http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu.libproxy.temple.edu/Iris/Cite?4039:001:33034, accessed on 13 December 2021. English translation by (Mango 1972, pp. 85–86). A new critical edition of the Greek text has appeared: (De Stefani 2009).

31 The evocative aesthetic qualities of Procopius's ekphrasis are explored by (Pentcheva 2011, pp. 93–111), at pp. 95–98; and, more recently within a discussion of sixth-century ekphrases, (Barry 2020) at pp. 164–90.

32 Elizabeth S. Bolman describes the architecture of early Byzantine churches in Egypt as having a "painted skin", in (Bolman 2010, pp. 119–40).

33 Passages from these authors are contained in (Mango 1972). For a summary of related Latin literature, see (Roberts 1989).

34 More recent complementary scholarship on color perception in the pre-modern world has emphasized the connection between color and source material. See, for instance, (Stager 2016, pp. 97–120).

35 All with additional references following.

36 To this assertion, I would add the experience of texture.

37 Ἀλλὰ τί μοι, λαὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ βασιλέων φιλοχριστότατε, προθύμως οὕτω καὶ λαμπρῶς συνηθροίσθητε καὶ τὸ ἱερὸν τοῦτο καὶ σεπτὸν ἐξωραΐσατε τέμενος, ὃν ὀφθαλμόν τις εἰπὼν τοῦ παντὸς οὐκ ἂν ἀποσφαλείη τοῦ πρέποντος καὶ μάλιστά γε νῦν, ὅτε τὸ λευκὸν τῶν χρωμάτων οἱονεὶ τῷ μέλανι κερασάμενοι, ἐξ ὧν ἡ τῶν ὀμμάτων φύσις διαποικίλλεται, τοῖς ὑμετέροις σώμασι τὰ κενὰ τοῦδε τοῦ θεσπεσίου χώρου, καθάπερ ὀμμάτων κοῖλα μορφοῦντες, ἀνεπληρώσατε; Photios, *Homily* 7, 15–21. Greek text from (Laourdas 1966), retrieved from the *TLG*, <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu.libproxy.temple.edu/Iris/Cite?4040:006:179685>, accessed on 28 December 2021. English translation by (Mango 2020, pp. 139–40).

38 For a recent study of this color and its associations in Byzantium, see (Ranoutsaki 2022).

39 There are far more materials that contribute to the aesthetic properties of Byzantine manuscripts, but I investigate here only albumen and gold for the purposes of this essay.

40 The general scientific properties of parchment as material are discussed in (Reed 1972); see also the series of essays, including on history and conservation, contained in (Rück 1991; Müller 1997; Fuchs 2001). Older references on the scientific properties of parchment include (Johnson 1968; Lüthi 1938).

41 A careful discussion of the production and execution of medieval manuscripts is found in (Clemens and Graham 2007), with additional references following; the examples in this volume, however, are all from Western Medieval Europe. An additional classic study on Western medieval manuscript production, with reference given to parchment, is (Alexander 1992). For an overview of the history and use of parchment regarding manuscript production, see (Agati 2017), at pp. 59–76.

42 A recent introductory essay that addresses parchment making in Byzantium is (Dobrynina 2020, pp. 95–125, esp. 96–99).

43 A brief introduction to albumen on Byzantine parchment is presented by (Dobrynina 2020, p. 96). A more thorough investigation (which includes many Late-Byzantine codices), summarizing several decades of investigative material research at the State Research Institute for Restoration in Moscow, is found in the descriptive catalogue by (Mokretsova et al. 2003), especially pp. 203–7. The coating of parchment with egg-white albumen is particularly apparent in liturgical manuscripts, where the use of illumination makes evident the issues of flaking that the glair provides.

44 A critical edition of the letter is contained in (Leone 1991, pp. 161–62). Planoudes was a monk, *hegoumenos* of the monastery at Mt. Auxentios, and teacher at the school of the Chora Monastery in Constantinople. See (Fisher 1991, vol. III, pp. 1681–82).

45 ἔτι μηδ’ ᾧ ταύτας περικεχρίσθαι, ὅπερ αἱ
παθοῦσαι δέχονται μὲν ἐπὶ τοῦ ᾠοῦ τὰ γράμματα, οὐκ ἐφ’
ἑαυτῶν· εἰ δέ που ὕδωρ θεάσονται, αὐτίκα σὺν τῷ ᾠῷ καὶ
τὰ γεγραμμένα ἀπέπτυσαν καὶ ἀπετινάξαντο, καὶ ὁ τοῦ γρά-
φοντος πόνος εἰς ἀέρα φροῦδος ἐχώρησε. τὸ γὰρ ᾠὸν ἐν μεταιχ-
μίῳ τῶν τε γραμμάτων καὶ τῆς μεμβράνης κείμενον, ἐπειδὰν
ἐκκλυσθῇ, συνεκκλύζει ἑαυτῷ καὶ τὰ γεγραμμένα.
Planoudes, *Epistle 100* (1295 CE), Greek text from (Leone 1991, pp. 161–62). English translation by (Abt and Fusco 1989, pp. 61–66).

46 Such is the case, for example, with the ninth-century Paris Gregory (Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Grec 510). See (Brubaker 1999), at p. xix.

47 The performative aspects of the Gospel Lectionary within its architectural space are explored by (Betancourt 2021), with additional references following.

48 A discussion of the aesthetic qualities of marble in Hagia Sophia as they relate to Paul the Silentiary’s ekphrasis is found in (Pentcheva 2011), at pp. 95–98.

49 For studies on the phenomenological aspects of gold in Byzantine visual culture, see (Garnczarska 2020, pp. 83–121), which includes a robust survey of Byzantine literary mentions of gold; (James 1996; 2017b, especially pp. 119–44; and Frances 2003, pp. 13–24), all with additional references following.

50 Gold in medieval art is represented by a robust amount of scholarship. See (Wenderholm 2005, pp. 100–13; Rudolph 2011, pp. 283–96; Beer 1983, pp. 271–86; and Claussen 2007, pp. 64–67); and the essays in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 79, no. 4 (December 2016), all dedicated to gold in medieval visual culture.

51 An excellent survey of gold and gilding in medieval manuscripts is (Turner 2022, pp. 51–110).

52 Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, 33.20.

53 Καὶ χρῶμα χρυσοῦν, πάμμακαρ, σοὶ καὶ στόμα
τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἡμῖν ἐκχέον χρυσοῦς λόγους
τὴν κλῆσιν ἀπήνεγκεν ἐκ τῶν πραγμάτων,
τουδὶ τὸ σεμνὸν ὠχρότης διαγράφει
σὴν σάρκα καὶ γὰρ πυρπολῶν ἀσιτίαις
ἔχρωσας αὐτὴν χλωρότητι χρυσίου. Eugenios of Palermo, *Versus iambici*, Poem 11, “In imaginem Chrysostomi”. Greek from

(Gigante 1964), retrieved via the *TLG*, http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu.libproxy.temple.edu/Iris/Cite?3033:001:33535, accessed on 3 January 2022. English translation by (Maguire 2012, p. 130).

54 καὶ τεχνικώτερα πάντα· καὶ χρυσὸς ὑπαλείφων τὸν ὄροφον. τῶν δὲ λίθων ὁπόσαι χλοάζουσιν, αἱ μὲν κατεστρώννυντο· αἱ δὲ τοῖς τοίχοις ἡρμόζοντο· καὶ ἄλλη τίς ἐφ' ἑτέρᾳ ἐπήνθει, ἢ ἐφ' ὁμοίῳ τῷ χρώματι· ἐναλλὰξ παραλλάττουσαι. ὁ δὲ χρυσὸς, ἀπὸ τῶν δημοσίων ταμιείων ὥσπερ ἐξ ἀφθόνων πηγῶν καχλάζοντι ἐπέρρει τῷ ῥεύματι. [...] Ὁ μὲν γὰρ ναὸς, ὥσπέρ τις οὐρανὸς χρυσοῖς ἀστράσι πάντοθεν ἐπεποίκιλτο. μᾶλλον δὲ τὸ μὲν αἰθέριον σῶμα ἐκ διαστημάτων κατακεχρύσωται· ἐκείνῳ δὲ ὁ χρυσὸς, ὥσπερ ἐκ κέντρου ῥυεὶς, ἀφθόνῳ τῷ ῥεύματι πᾶσαν ἀδιαστάτως ἐπέδραμεν ἐπιφάνειαν. Michael Psellos, *Chronographia* 6, 185, lines 15–21; 186, lines 10–14. Greek text from (Renauld 1967, 2 vols., 1926–1928, reprinted 1967), retrieved from the *TLG*, http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu.libproxy.temple.edu/Iris/Cite?2702:001:391529, accessed on 20 February 2022. English translation by Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 219.

55 Text in the *Escorial Codex*, MS Y–II–10, fols. 123r–124v, Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial. English translation from (Mango and Parker 1960, pp. 233–35), at 237, with discussion. This text is also discussed by (Garnczarska 2020, p. 91).

56 Garnczarska, ibid., esp. beginning at 88.

57 *Gospel Lectionary with Marginal Illuminations*, Middle Byzantine, second half of 11th century CE. 12 3/16 × 9 ¾ × 2 7/8 inches (32.6 × 24.8 × 7.3 cm). Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, MS 1, BZ.1939.12. I am grateful to Elizabeth Dospěl Williams and Carla Galfano at Dumbarton Oaks for facilitating my research visit and permitting me to examine this manuscript, which took place on October 26–27, 2021. This manuscript is described by (Kavrus-Hoffmann 1996, pp. 289–31).

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