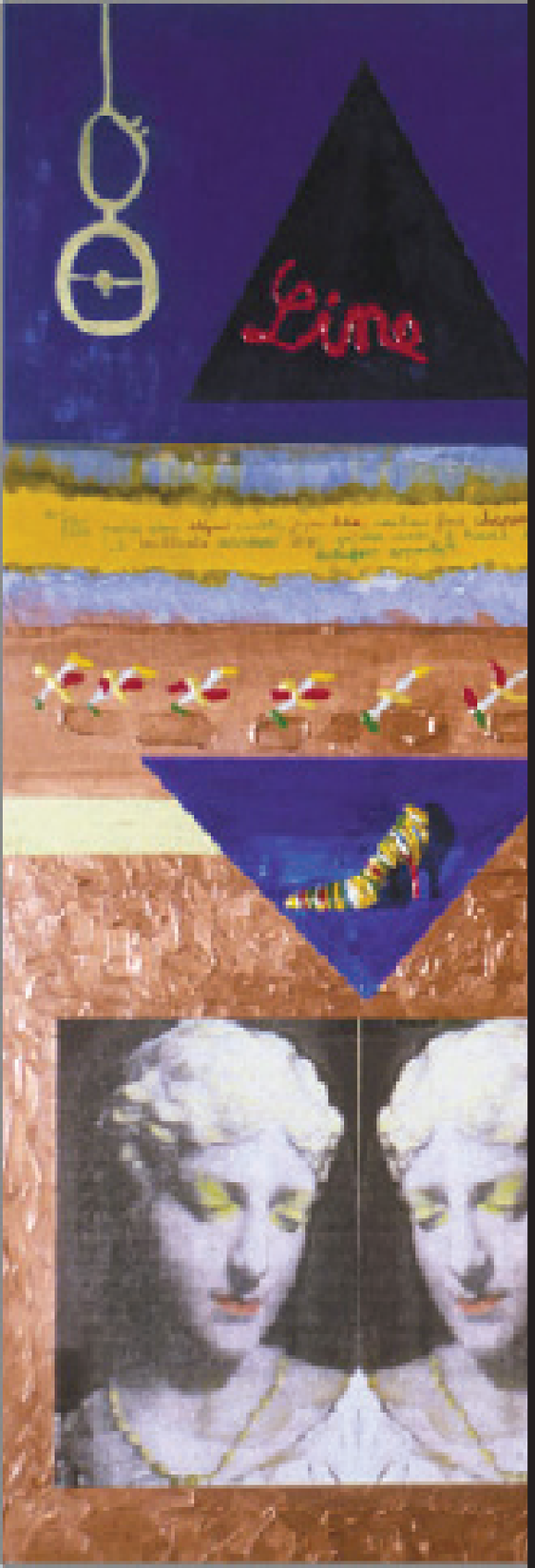

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Jefferson Journal of Science and Culture • Jefferson Scholars Foundation

May 2011

Jefferson Journal of Science and Culture

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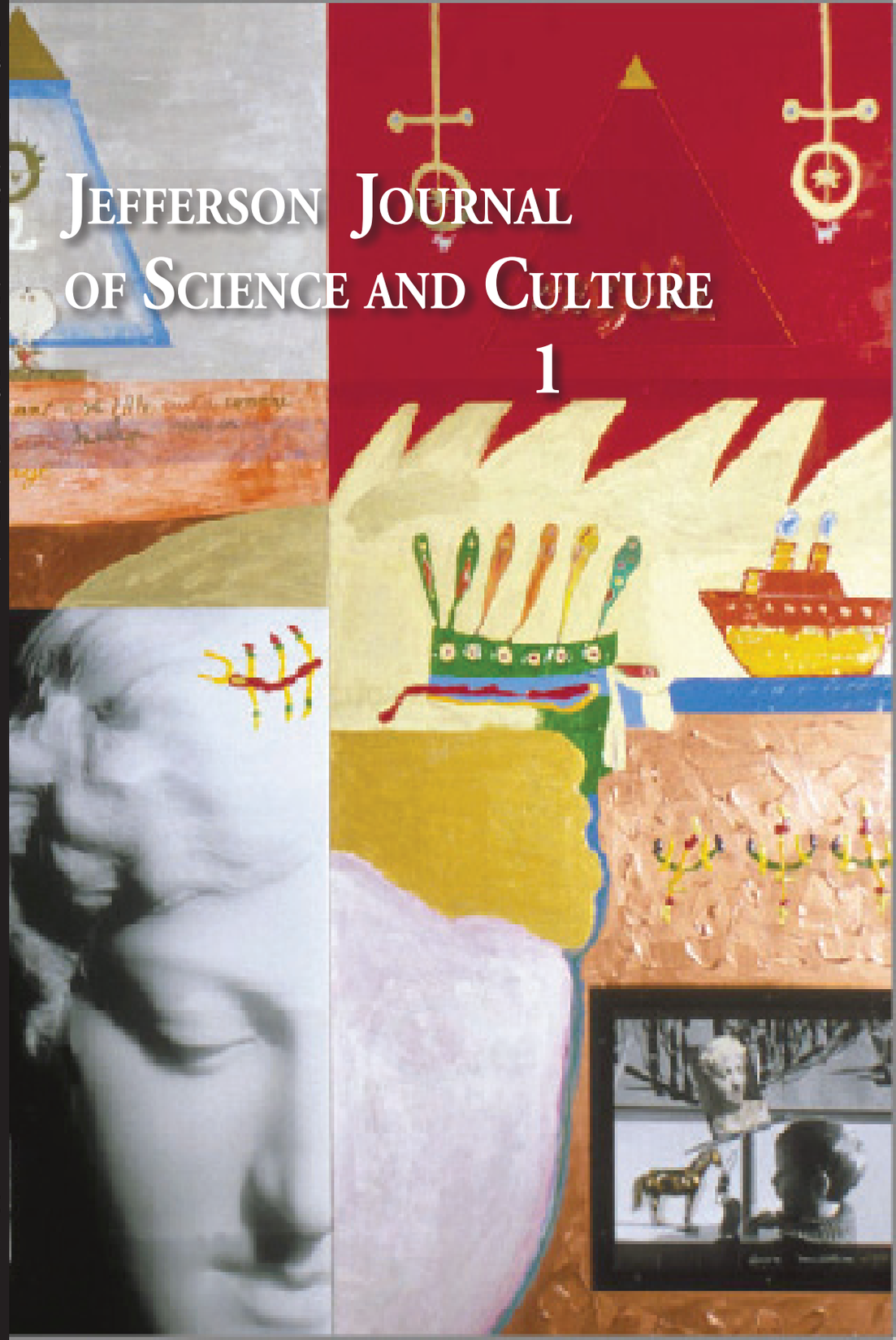

The Status of Holy Face Icons in Byzantium*

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Within medieval studies, Byzantine art history suffers from the on-going effects of a ghettoization from the mainstream. Scholars clamor about fascinating paradoxes inherent in, and particular to, Latin Christian art. Jeffrey Hamburger, for instance, has argued that Western medieval images "successfully escaped most attempts to control them."[1] Orthodox icons, by contrast, continue to be considered more straightforward, traditional, and, in a word, static.[2] As a result of its perceived conservatism, Byzantine art has been dismissed in every possible way; its hieratic formal qualities, perceived over-reliance on a seemingly limited set of stock religious themes, and penchant for shiny tesserae and gold plate have even been called "instrument[s] of ethnic cohesiveness."[3] Yet dismissal is often the result of misunderstanding. The Byzantine artist used a very "Occam-esque" approach: in depicting religious truths, iconography was not needlessly complicated. Simplicity was a strategy, employed to transcend the limits of materiality. Indeed, icons were sites of multivalent meaning; they both instituted and constituted a range of theoretical and theological complexities.

The subversion of artistic complexity, when coupled with external sensory effects, "activated" a sense of indeterminacy—of *charis*, or divine grace.[4] A seemingly unremarkable late-eleventh century Annunciation mosaic at Daphni's Church of the Dormition exemplifies this interaction between icon and environment [fig. 1]. Composed simply of the Angel and Virgin poised in a squinch against a gold mosaic background, this image, like so many others in the tradition of Byzantine art, seems to be a straightforward depiction of a biblical narrative scene. A closer look reveals important and perplexing pictorial problems that beg for further

analysis, though. The scene is easily identifiable by the presence and comportment of the two key players; but they are situated so that the space between them, a void, is the focus literally and figuratively. The astute observer might note that, while this is supposed to be the moment announcing Christ's physical incarnation, the Angel's mouth is closed. How does one annunciate, or "announce," via silence? Is this image of the Annunciation—in its focus on the void, in its attempt to depict annunciation through silence—really an Annunciation at all?

In fact, the image is a highly sophisticated visual idiom, a paradox of visual simplicity. The space between the figures filled with gold tesserae is not just the void filled by the angel's silence; instead, the "nothing" between signifies the unfigurable divine voice.[5] The simplest part of the image becomes the space where the most complex aspect of its meaning is demonstrated. Byzantine art is full of such seeming absences, such depictions of apparent lack. Abstraction allowed external aspects of an icon to determine its ultimate meaning. Glenn Peers has argued that in devotional contexts, orthodox viewers expected and received an "interactive sense of presence" from their art—that is, they believed, by and large, in the inhabitation, possession, and manipulation of art by the divine.[6] Glittering gold space separating actors becomes a site of metaphysical transformation. Surfaces undulate and oscillate under the effects of the very play of light. Combined with the viewer's awareness of the importance of the scene, religious media becomes active and reactive, metaphysical and material at once. Because it is situated in a squinch—a curved, concave space—the Daphni scene represents the most literal sort of void; in providing a space for various kinds of interaction, this void places a great responsibility on the viewer.[7] A seemingly straightforward Annunciation scene invites the viewer to become an ahistorical witness to, if not a participant in, a divine miracle.

The mosaic may not at first fulfill modern expectations for religious imagery. Nonetheless, through its relationship to the environment of

the church and the very subversion of obvious compositional schemes, it presents an implicitly theoretical image. The straightforward, technical qualities of a work, framed within a sacred environment, overcome problems with the undepictability of Christian religious ideology. There were other methods for depicting the undepictable, though—as when the very status of the icon itself carried meaning. A special class of devotional imagery appealed to widespread understanding of their own legend and circumstances of creation to overcome the undepictable nature of the doctrinal concepts they signified. Such icons purport to depict the Holy Face, Christ's true likeness. While Annunciation scenes like the one in the Dormition Church in Daphni were activated through a combination of external sensory data and the viewer's positioning as witness to the scene, Holy Face icons operated by appealing to the viewer's knowledge of their legendary status. The iconography's popularity was fueled, in particular, by the widespread belief in an original Holy Face icon; this original was believed to have been created by Christ and endowed with miraculous auto-reproducibility—a circumstance which gave the whole icon tradition meaning beyond that accorded to mere manmade devotional objects.

Holy Face icons were always at once static, two-dimensional, temporal, earthly, as well as alive, present, everlasting, divine. Unlike typical painted icons, they belonged to a larger class of images known in Byzantium as *acheiropoiētos*, images "not made by hand."[8] As Hans Belting explained, the term justified Christian cult images in the Byzantine world—images opposed, that is, to the human artifacts that served as idols in non-Christian cults.[9] From early times, there was a considerable body of disapproval in the Church for the cult of icons and the superstitious practices so often attached to them; it is clear from Eusebius' reply to Empress Constantia's request for a painted image of Christ that he did not approve of man-made icons.[10] Those of the early Fathers who had spoken in defense of artistic representations based their case primarily on the value of images in the education of the faithful.

For instance, St. Gregory of Nyssa, in his eulogy of St. Theodore Martyr, pointed out that it was not a question of presenting Divinity directly but of narrating events in order to edify the soul. However, popular opinion was less high-minded; the laity desired and required objects of devotion—not instruction.

Known as Mandylion icons in the Byzantine world—from the Arabic *mandyl*, for towel—they represented the imprint of Christ's face on a piece of cloth. Representations proliferated and, according to Robin Cormack and others, gained a place in regular church decoration, such that a painted copy came to be regarded as a standard image in any religious program.[11] The word "Mandylion" became widely applied to the artistic tradition, generally as a means of distinguishing the Byzantine treatment of the Holy Face from similar traditions.[12] Most famous among these was the Veil of Veronica. The Latin Church heavily promoted this separate tradition from ca. 1200.[13] According to legend, Saint Veronica from Jerusalem encountered Jesus along the Via Dolorosa on the way to Calvary. She wiped the sweat (Latin *suda*) off his face with her veil (*sudarium*), which became imprinted with his likeness [fig. 2]. The Veronica veil was, like the Mandylion, believed to possess miraculous properties—it could quench thirst, cure blindness, and even raise the dead. Its status as a true copy was fundamental to the iconography's import; the term "Veronica" may simply be a corruption of the Latin words *vera iconica*. The Latin tradition shared with the earlier Byzantine tradition an interest in commemorating the dual nature of Christ.

The original Mandylion icon, known as the Image of Edessa, was first attested in the early fourth century, at which time Eusebius claimed to have transcribed and translated the actual letter in the Syriac chancery documents of the king of Edessa.[14] References to Edessene pictures remain from the seventh and eighth centuries, the period when Edessa was the scene of religious controversy between Monophysites and Chalcedonians.[15] Although scholars are unsure exactly when the miraculous portrait entered the Christian tradition, they agree that it

happened a long time before the first iconoclastic period (ca. 730-87), during which epoch the idea was already so deeply rooted in the people's consciousness it was used as an argument against iconoclastic theology.[16] In fact, it was central to the iconoclast debates during the Second Council of Nicaea in AD 787, where the superiority of images over texts was affirmed. The Edessa icon was one of the *testimonia* cited in order to demonstrate the miraculous power of images.[17] According to Averil Cameron, "it exemplified the unwritten tradition over the written, and the visual over the textual; it justified image-veneration without danger of falling into idolatry; and it belonged to a special category of images not made by human intervention, and therefore supremely worthy of veneration."[18] Iconophiles argued that it demonstrated divine approval for religious portraiture.

From this point in history, numerous medieval textual sources treated the status of the Image as Edessa as a venerated historical object.[19] The tradition is best attested in the *Narratio de imagine Edessena*, a translation narrative attributed to Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus or someone of his court describing the reception of the image in Constantinople. The *Narratio* became a kind of official source of information concerning the Mandylion in Byzantium, on which all other texts are based.[20] The document survives in well over 30 codices.[21] Inherently political, it recalls the deposition of Emperor Romanos I Lekapenos four months to the day after the translation of the image to the imperial city; soon after, his sons were arrested and exiled and Constantine VII was sole emperor. The document relates that the Image of Edessa was received in Constantinople on August 15, 944 in exchange for Muslim captives, accompanied by the purported letter from Christ to King Abgar with all of the ceremony of an imperial triumph. Though the circumstances are not entirely clear, it appears that the relics were deposited together in a casket in the palace chapel of the Theotokos of Pharos, home to some of Christianity's holiest relics, including such items as the crown of thorns, nails from the Crucifixion, and the burial clothes of Christ.[22]

Afterwards, the event was celebrated by an annual feast on August 16, and the document itself was probably composed for the inauguration.[23]

The text records two different versions with regard to the "rediscovery" of the Mandylion from unknown contradictory sources. One tradition draws upon Luke 22: 43-44; it suggested that the Mandylion was formed during Christ's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.[24] This version anticipates the Veronica tradition, with its greater emphasis on Christ's agony and explicit references to his blood. The other, more popular tradition in Byzantium is part of the conversion narrative of Abgar V, King of Edessa (now Urfa in south-central Turkey), a contemporary of Christ often called the First Christian King.[25] This version suggests that Abgar was afflicted with an incurable sickness (perhaps leprosy); he sent his envoy Ananias to Jesus, the powerful healer, with a letter acknowledging his divinity and offering asylum in his own palatial residence and a chance to rule if he would leave the Jews and come and cure him. Christ declined to go; however, he washed his face in water and pressed it to a towel, leaving an impression of his likeness. He sent the towel and a letter to Abgar in response; in so doing, Christ himself "authorized" the representation of his face in human form.[26]

Notably, the author of the mid-tenth century *Narratio* found both versions equally plausible. In fact, the text recounts not only two stories, but two different relics. The second, the document tells us, resulted when Abgar's apostate grandson resolved to destroy the image, just as Abgar had destroyed pagan images. The bishop, learning of this plan, bricked over the niche containing the holy relic, yet not before covering the sacred cloth with a tile to prevent it from being subjected to damage from dampness or the passage of time. The Image of Edessa, as the legend progresses, was not discovered again until the sixth century, when stories of it began circulating throughout the empire, the timing of its recovery coinciding with the Persian threat to the region. Alerted by a dream to the location of the relic, the contemporary bishop reopened the niche to find the Edessene image

unharmed, still bearing the likeness of Christ's face. Moreover, the image had miraculously reproduced itself on the tile, thereafter known as the Keramion, which had been laid upon it for protection.[27] As the *Narratio* tells us, the original Holy Face of Edessa unexpectedly and incomprehensibly transferred "the divine image […] to the tile from the cloth, without having been drawn."[28] Once in Constantinople, the icon was received in churches of the Virgin and placed on the imperial throne in order to underline its acquired function as the protector of Constantinople and of the dynasty.[29]

This initial Holy Face is long-lost, likely having traveled West after the 1204 sack of Constantinople. Its fashion of representing Christ's likeness—as a dark, bearded, long-haired imprint on cloth—became one of the most revered image-types in Byzantium. Two churches, both in Italy, claimed (in fact, still claim) to possess true copies of the Image of Edessa.[30] While most copies of the Mandylion were painted, generally on wood panel, both of these copies appear on cloth pasted to a board, and seem to have been imprinted. Referred to as the Vatican and Genoa Mandylion icons, they preserve what must be considered the peculiar formal copies of the original. The Vatican example was kept in Rome's church of S. Silvestro until 1870 when it was moved to its present location in the Matilda Chapel.[31] The earliest evidence of its existence dates to 1517, when the nuns of S. Silvestro were forbidden to exhibit it in order to avoid competition with the Veronica. The Genoa example is kept in the modest Church of St Bartholomew of the Armenians where it was gifted to the city's fourteenth century Doge, Leonardo Montaldo by the Byzantine Emperor John V Palaeologus.[32] Like the Vatican example, the Genoa icon is considered to have been miraculously reproduced from the original.

Though the Image of Edessa's ability to reproduce was, in many ways, the crux of its reputation, Holy Face iconography proliferated in both miraculous and non-miraculous form. Indeed, the Mandylion tradition includes the original icon and its subsequent true copies, as

well as the non-miraculous painted icons that bore the same or similar dimensions and iconographic details. Later treatments of the theme in an orthodox context, such as the famous Slavic Mandylion icon that now resides at Laon Cathedral [fig. 3], preserved the heavily abstracted quality of the original.[33] As a portrait, the plainness of the Holy Face tradition, including its strangeness—composed simply of a sort of floating head with only its lank sections of hair to frame it—seems to defy expectations for what a religious image should attempt to accomplish. Even though the Edessene image and its copies were unable to account for the true nature of Christ—that which is not physical, representational, or even visible—images of the Holy Face came to stand in for all aspects of the divine physical presence. Holy Face images became a sign of something much greater, much more totalizing, in the Christian tradition. Mandylion imagery may have suggested a mere trace of Christ's human body, but this trace signified the miraculous aspects of divine presence. The face of the divine, which in the Old Testament had been conspicuously hidden, had been through Christ made present. With the Mandylion, Christ's temporal body was finally accessible again, an everlasting gift endowed with powers to heal. Holy Face icons expressed the fact that the miracle of the spirit is, unlike the body, immutable and eternal.

The status of the Mandylion was rare, even unique, as an object connected with Christ himself. To a modern viewer of such icons, it may seem that an image "not made by hand" is the very contradiction of an image, but Holy Face icons were revered in Byzantium specifically because of their subversion of everyday artistic practice. Belting insisted, "To speak of images not made by human hands…is a mere excuse for saying: this is not an image, but instead is a body and behaves like a body even to the extent of performing miracles, as living thaumaturges did, and imprinting itself on images, as bodies did."[34] That is, such icons purport to be dynamic, thaumaturgical indices, and were accepted as such. They represented Christ's real presence and gave a likeness of that presence while at the same time bringing the viewer the benefit of the

miracle of divine healing power. To guarantee healing power, however, an "exact" match between likeness and original had to be observed in synthesizing copies, since anything less than a match would have allowed the unwanted presence of a human intervener to be gleaned. The nature these icons purport to depict is, of course, that which is undepictable, purely doctrinal. Alexei Lidov stresses, "In the multi-layered, poly-semantic structure of Byzantine iconography various meanings could exist simultaneously and were emphasized more or less clearly, depending on the specific symbolic context." [35]

When considered critically as a theoretical instrument in the Byzantine world, the Mandylion functioned by bringing the viewer more fully into communion with dichotomous ideas about the true nature of the divine. The Image of Edessa and the icons it was believed to have created co-presented Christ's divinity (signified by the miraculous qualities of the imprint) and humanity (signified by the appearance of the physical body) in a non-oppositional fashion. The true importance of the image was not in the way it recalled an absence of the divine, but in the way it represented the previous occasion of an overflow of presence. The theological nature of the image is attested in the possibility it suggested—the possibility for auto-reproduction. Holy Face iconography depended upon the viewer's belief in the original's miraculous manufacture, its communion with Christ, even though new icons were eventually created self-consciously through human manufacture. The viewer was, then as now, expected to bring knowledge of the true icon's reproductive capacity—of the image's dual properties, material and divine. Accompanied by a history of oral and written traditions, the Mandylion provided a way of suggesting the body of Christ while simultaneously exposing that his true, full presence was uncapturable—"distilled," as Peers claims, "into a limited body, which shared characteristics of that body but was not wholly he."[36] Even in the West as the Veronica, images of the Holy Face came to express a human desire for communion with the divine by calling attention to both the occasion of Christ's physical presence and

his divine status.

Before 944, the Image of Edessa was known largely as a distant relic housed in Mesopotamia, known only through hearsay, tradition, and legend. After 944, Mandylion icons tapped into what can only be explained as a real devotional need; they were thereafter foremost in a category of images considered religious in a broadly cultural sense—images which engaged the fundamental contradictions in Christian figural art. Recalling the iconoclast debates, James Trilling suggested that Holy Face icons brought Christian art back from the brink of unjustifiability, trapped, as it was, between pagan precedent and the Biblical commandment against idolatry.[37] The Mandylion assumed its unique status by suggesting itself as proof that God not only approved of Christian art, but that Christ himself had inaugurated Christian visual culture. It justified the visual while occupying a site of both marginality and centrality, at once near and far, making up for the physical loss of Christ's body through spiritual proximity to his nature.

To see the Holy Face was to see something eternal. In essence, the viewer had to pre-decide to see something eternal, though. The image's cultural status was dependent upon viewers' doctrinal knowledge. Thus, viewer reception and experience was of primary importance; the Holy Face tradition bridged the history of Christ the living with the eternal reality of Christ the divine. The status of later Edessene copies depended on the force of the religious and political discourses surrounding the original.[38] The formal features of the icon were ultimately drained of their significance, since these came to be tied to human production. The very absence of any significant technical features unloaded all of the paradox on the legendary power of the image to reproduce itself.

The icon was seen as both image and body, likeness and physical presence, capable of setting the terms of its own visibility through the process of miraculous reproduction.[39] Yet proliferation of non-miraculous reproduction did not diminish the sense of the original Mandylion's uniqueness. The legends surrounding the Image of Edessa stress that it

was not just easily reproducible, it was incidentally reproducible—i.e., the Keramion was created when a tile was placed on top of the cloth in order to protect it. This may have certain implications for theories of image democratization and proliferation, such as that proposed by German cultural critic Walter Benjamin. In his 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," he explored the interrelation of art and technological development, and the effects of copying on the status of an artwork.[40] Specifically, Benjamin contemplated what happens to the viewer's experience of unique works of art when they become ubiquitous through ease of reproducibility. He argued that the cultural value of an artwork, and thus of its aura— that sense of awe and reverence one experiences in the artwork's presence—is determined by issues access and availability. Experience of a work, as far as it can be theorized, is a function of use. According to Benjamin, reproduction inevitably leads to the devaluation of the sense of traditional, ritualistic importance surrounding a unique work. The "withering" of the aura initiated by copying, he argued, might finally free art "from its parasitical dependence on ritual."[41] Reproduction might then negate the status of an original completely.

Yet the Mandylion tradition seems to offer an escape from or exception to Benjamin's predictions about image-proliferation and a resulting, inevitable decline in the ritual importance of an original. Ubiquity did not diminish the cult value of Holy Face icons or destroy their status; instead, reproducibility determined the status of the cult itself, and copying only aggrandized the ritual importance of a true or original icon. The Mandylion's popularity reflected the widespread concern over the uniqueness of representations of Christ's likeness. Hans Belting believed the icon of Christ represented a chain of values and associations; not just an image, or even a body, it was also representative of "the paradoxical search for a body where a body had been but had disappeared ever since."[42] Its extraordinary popularity in Byzantium as an iconographic theme suggests the stable status of its cult value over time and in the face

of growing ubiquity due to reproduction. As images, Holy Face icons were everywhere; they were seen by Byzantine viewers all of the time. Often placed above the sanctuary, where one would take part in the ritual of Communion, this imagery was intimately involved in framing that most sacred and ritualistic of all aspects of the Christian tradition. Holy Face icons retained their unique status as sites of contemplation and metaphysical interaction. If anything, reproduction enhanced the aura of the original, as it heightened awareness of the miraculous qualities it marked or symbolized.

Such icons were not constituted to the sole end of facilitating a coherent, cogent history or knowledge. Instead, they suggested multiple histories, multiple possibilities, multiple aspects of the divine—in short, each icon suggested multiple extensions of God's personality. True copies of the Image of Edessa—such as the Keramion, or the Genoa and Vatican icons—were miraculously produced; their status excluded man. The painted reproductions that ensued in Byzantium and which later proliferated in the West as the Veronica were always conscious of their inheritance of a tradition of miraculous reproduction. The very act of static, slavish copying, of reproduction in this pre-mechanical but nonetheless simulated fashion, was a symptom of constant striving for the preservation and enhancement of the aura of the absent original. Human reproduction did not degrade the divine import of the original. That quality of the face of Christ which was undepictable is precisely that which the Holy Face, as an image-type, was meant to recall.

The very ubiquity of Holy Face icons attests to the panoply of belief that body and spirit could be simultaneously alluded to, depicted, and through an intellectual process encountered. Scholars such as Otto Demus and James Trilling have suggested that the Byzantine viewer was "expected to fill in the blanks mentally, using his or her imagination to make the image 'real.'"[43] Byzantine icons were socially recuperative—that is, the complex systems of meaning so simply presented depended upon the viewer's understanding of aspects of religious doctrine in order for

the image to fully function in its cultural context. The various meanings behind Holy Face icons were likewise dependent upon the reception of culturally disseminated ideas about what the image could do. The Image of Edessa's long-standing and indisputable power testifies to its cultural status and ritualistic value in the Orthodox Church. Its popularity was largely tied its legend, but its success was the result of its commemoration of the divine presence.

Figure 1

Annunciation mosaic. Ca. 1100. Monastery Church of the Dormition, Daphni, Greece:

(photo: Vanni / Art Resource, NY)

Figure 2

Saint Veronica with the Sudarium. Ca. 1420. National Gallery, London, Great Britain.

(photo: © National Gallery, London / Art Resource, NY)

Figure 3

Fig. 3: Holy Face icon; Slavic. Late 12th-early 13th century. Laon Cathedral, France.

(photo: © DeA Picture Library / Art Resource, NY)

Endnotes

* I would like to thank Rossitza Schroeder for her comments and suggestions on the drafts of this paper. I would also like to thank Anna Kim for offering her unique and helpful insights, and the anonymous reviewers of the *Jefferson Journal*. Portions of this paper were presented at the Sacred Leaves Symposium at the University of South Florida in February 2009 and at the Jefferson Forum for Interdisciplinary Dialogue at the University of Virginia in September 2010; on both occasions, I benefited from comments and questions offered by members of the audience. In thanking these many parties for their feedback, I do not mean to imply their total agreement with the conclusions I draw. I merely point out my own awareness of how I have benefitted from such engagement with a range of intelligent critics.

1 Jeffrey Hamburger. Hamburger, "The Place of Theology in Medieval Art History: Problems, Positions, Possibilities," in Jeffrey Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché, eds., *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages* (Princeton University, Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 17.

2 See Herbert Kessler, "On the State of Medieval Art History," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (June, 1988), p. 166, in which he asserts: "In the Christian East, art remained emphatically traditional into the eighteenth century and beyond, despite the influence of Renaissance imports and the Turkish conquest on Constantinople."

3 Kessler (1988), ibid.

4 See Bissera Pencheva, "The Performative Icon," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 88, No. 4 (2006), p. 631; see also her essay "Visual Textuality: The Logos as Pregnant Body and Building," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No. 45 (Spring, 2004), pp. 225-38.

5 Compare to Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant l'Image: Question posée aux fins de l'histoire de l'art* (Paris, 1990) trans. John Goodman as *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), p. 15.

6 Glenn Peers, *Sacred Shock: Framing Visual Experience in Byzantium*

(University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).

7 See Otto Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium* (London: Routledge & Keagan Paul, 1948).

8 Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. E. Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 49. Compare to the tradition surrounding the Shroud of Turin, which is kept in the royal chapel of the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist in Turin, Italy. It bears a purportedly miraculous imprint on a linen cloth bearing the image of a man who appears to have suffered physical trauma in a manner consistent with crucifixion. Some contend that the shroud is the actual cloth placed on the body of Jesus Christ at the time of his burial, and that the face image is the Holy Face of Jesus. See Ian Wilson, *The Turin Shroud: The Burial Cloth of Jesus Christ?* (London, 1978).

9 Belting (1994), ibid.

10 Eusebius *History of the Church,* VII, 18, 4, trans. By G. A. Williamson (Harmondsworth, 1981), p. 302.

11 Averil Cameron, "The Mandylion and Byzantine Iconoclasm," *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation: Papers from a Colloquium at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome and the Villa Spelman, Florence, 1996*, eds. H. L. Kessler and G. Wolf (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1998), p. 36; and Robin Cormack, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and its Icons* (London: George Philip, 1985).

12 One such tradition surrounded another orthodox Holy Face icon not made by human hands, the lost Kamouliana. It held that a pagan woman in Cappadocia in Asia Minor refused to convert to Christianity; while gardening, she noticed a piece of linen in a garden well, upon which was an image of Christ. Lifting it from the water, she found it dry; clutching it to her dress, she found it automatically replicated. The cloth and the dress were processed through surrounding towns; both worked miracles. By 574, the Kamouliana was venerated in Constantinople, where it was established as a palladium to the city under Justin II; tradition holds that it was destroyed during the Iconoclast Controversy. It is referred to in *The Syriac Chronicle known as that of Zachariah*

of Mitylene, trans. F. J. Hamilton and E. W. Brooks (London: Methuen & Co, 1899), pp. 320 ff.

13 For the relationship between the traditions of the Byzantine Holy Face and the Veronica, see Gerhard Wolf, "From Mandylion to Veronica: Picturing the 'Disembodied' Face and Disseminating the True Image of Christ in the Latin West," *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation* (1998), op. cit., pp. 153-180. A long tradition of miraculous portraiture exists in the West as well. In the Chapel of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, there is a portrait said to have been painted by St. Luke. Known as the *Salus Populi Romani*, the Salvation of the Roman People, it is a stunning portrait of Mary holding the infant Christ. The painting was met in an August procession each year by another" image not made by hand," held today in the Sancta Sanctorum, a onetime private papal chapel in the Lateran palace. Legend has it that St. Luke painted this portrait of the adult Christ as well, but it was only completed with the assistance of angels—who, thanks to their continued beholding of the face of Christ in heaven, ensured its accuracy.

14 Eusebius *History of the Church,* VII, op. cit.; note that the author mentions only the correspondence between the king and Jesus; he quotes both Abgar's letter to Jesus and that of Jesus to Abgar, referring to the documents kept in the archives of Edessa, which were his sources of information. He does not tell whether Jesus answered personally or an envoy of the king wrote down his message. The historian noted the circumstances which led to Abgar's and Edessa's conversion to Christianity but does not mention the portrait of Jesus. See also *Das Das Decretum Gelasianum de Libris recipiendis et non recipiendis*, ed. Ernst von Dobschütz (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1912); and Steven Runciman, "Some Remarks on the Image of Edessa," *Cambridge Historical Journal*, Vol. 3, (1931), pp. 238-252, especially p. 240.

15 The latter apparently owned an icon which they kept in their church and promoted as a miraculous portrait of Christ's likeness. For more detailed treatment, see Ewa Balicka-Witakowska (2005), pp. 104-5, and her note 21.

16 On translations of Greek sources about the Mandylion, see Mark Guscin, *The Image of Edessa* (Leiden: Brill, 2009). See also Hans J.W. Drijvers,

"The Image of Edessa in the Syriac Tradition," and Zaza Skhirtladze, "Canonizing the Apocrypha: The Abgar Cycle in the Alaverdi and Gelati Gospels," both in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation* (1998), op. cit., pp. 13-32 and 69-94, respectively.

17 Cameron, (1998), op. cit., p. 42; Ewa Balicka-Witakowska (2005), op. cit., pp. 109-13.

18 Cameron (1998), ibid., p. 43-4.

19 Mark Guscin's work updated the important previous primary source compilation by Ernst von Dobschütz in *Christusbilder: Untersuchungen Zur Christlichen Legende* (Leipzig, 1899); von Dobschütz presented an assemblage of the key documents on the cloths reputed to bear miraculous imprints of Christ—including the Image of Edessa, the Veronica of Rome, and certain others. Guscin has revealed texts on the Image of Edessa about which von Dobschütz seems not to have been aware. See Guscin (2009), op. cit., Part One: "The Texts and Their Translations," pp. 5-140, for a fuller treatment of the documentary evidence.

20 Alexei Lidov, "The Miracle of Reproduction: The Mandylion and Keramion as a Paradigm of the Sacred Space," *L'immagine di Cristo dall'Acheropita alla mano d'artista: dal tardo medioevo all'eta barocca*, eds. C. L. Frommel and G. Wolf (Città del Vaticano: Studi e testi / Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2006), p. 18.

21 See Guscin (2009), op. cit., pp. 7-8, for a complete table of surviving codices.

22 Cameron (1998), op cit., pp. 33-4; see also her footnote 2 for treatment of sources on the Chapel and its relics. Note that they were not joined by Keramion until 968. See also Ewa Balicka-Witakowska (2005), op. cit., pp. 105-108 and her footnote 27. She mentions as well the possibility that the relics were enshrined above the Chalke Gate in a chapel dedicated to Christ the Savior erected by Romanos.

23 See Kurt Weitzmann, "The Mandylion and Constantine Porphyroge nnetos," in *Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination*, ed. Herbert Kessler (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 224-46, in which he

discusses resemblance between King Abgar and Constantine VII; see also Sharon Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries: Programs of the Byzantine Sanctuary*, College Art Association Monograph on the Fine Arts 56 (Seattle and London: College Art Association, in association with the University of Washington Press, 1999), in which she discusses this moment of the relic's translation and posits Eucharistic associations for the painted relic in sanctuary programs.

24 Lidov (2006), op. cit., p. 18.

25 For a fuller treatment of this story, see Guscin (2009), op. cit.

26 Sources do not clarify whether Christ wrote the letter himself or dictated it. In any case, the letter became revered as a holy icon of similar status to the Mandylion. The letter purportedly blessed the city and promised that no enemy would prevail over it. The image played an active role in political and military events; it was believed to have saved the city during the Persian siege in 554. Procopius relates that the Persian kings attempted to capture the city in order to disprove the validity of the icon's reputed protective powers; see *History of the Wars*, II, 12, 26, ed. and trans. By H. B. Dewing (London: Heinemann, 1914), pp. 369-371. Note that the vignette of Abgar receiving the Image of Edessa became a powerful icon in its own right; for instance, a tenth-century icon from the monastery of St. Catherine of Sinai depicts Abgar with the image of Edessa. See Kurt Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Icons I: From the Sixth to the Tenth Century*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 94-98. Also, a miniature from a fourteenth-century amulet role, now in New York, commemorates the legendary circumstances under which it is believed Christ created the first Holy Face icon. The amulet role is split and resides in both New York and Chicago. See Glenn Peers, "Magic, the Mandylion and the Letter of Abgar: A Fourteenth-Century Amulet Roll in Chicago and New York," in *Intorno al Sacro Volto: Genova, Bisanzio e il Mediterraneo* (XI-XIV secolo), ed. Anna Rosa Calderoni Masetti, Colette Dufour Bozzo and Gerhard Wolf (Venice: Marsilio, 2007), pp. 163-74.

27 Lidov (2006), ibid.; see also James Trilling, "The Image Not Made by Hands and the Byzantine Way of Seeing," *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation* (1998), op. cit., p. 117, for fuller treatment of the primary

source details; see also Drijvers (1998), op. cit., in the same volume for a greater discussion of source materials, including a comparison of Syriac and Greek versions of the legends.

28 Lidov (2006), op. cit., p. 19, from *Narratio* as sited in his footnote three.

29 For a fuller treatment of references to Edessene pictures, see Ewa Balicka-Witakowska (2005), op. cit., pp. 100-32, especially pp. 104-7.

30 The Image of Edessa was described as *sanctam Toellam tabulae insertamon* on the list of relics ceded by Baldwin II to Saint Louis of France written in 1247; see *Le trésor de la Sainte Chapelle* [Catalogue de l'exposition, Mu*sée* du Louvre, Paris, 31 mai – 27 *août* 2001], ed. Jannic Durand (Paris: Reunion des musees nationaux, 2001), pp. 70-71.

31 See Isa Ragusa, "Mandylion-Sudarium: The *'T*ranslation*'* of a Byzantine relic to Rome," *Arte Medievale* 5:2 (1991), pp. 97-106

32 It was the subject of a detailed study by Colette Dufour Bozzo; see *Il sacro volto di Genova* (Rome: Ist. Nazionale di Archaeologia, 1974). See also *Mandylion: Intorno al Sacro Volto, da Bisanzio a Genova*, eds. Gerhard Wolf, Colette Dufour Bozzo, Anna Rosa Calderoni Masetti (Milano: Skira, 2004). For a fuller treatment on this particular icon, its frame, and its sources, see Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, "The Holy Face of Edessa on the Frame of the *Volto Santo* of Genoa: the Literary and Pictorial Sources," *Interaction and Isolation in Late Byzantine Culture*, ed. Jan Olof Rosenqvist (Transactions of the Swedish Institute Istanbul 13, 2005), pp. 100-32. Bissera Pentcheva, in *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2010), also discusses the issue of how the frame's story, which focuses on Abgar's suffering and Jesus' gift, should be read. Note that, because competing traditions of the legendary origin of the icon were circulating, framing itself often argued for the legitimization of a particular history.

33 Generally referred to as the Holy Face of Laon, this thirteenth century Slavic icon consists of tempera on a primed cedar panel. Note that despite its iconographic relationship to the Mandylion tradition, the icon was offered as a Veronica in the presumed letter of Jacques de Troyes to his sister, abbess

of Montreuil-en-Thiérache, the Cistercian nunnery in the diocese of Laon, in 1249. See André Grabar, *La Sainte Face de Laon: Le Mandylion dans l'art orthodoxe* (Prague: Seminarium Kondakovianum, 1931.), p. 8 and *Byzantium Faith and Power, 1261-1557* [Exposition catalogue, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, March 23 to July 4, 2004], ed. Helen C. Evans (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 174-75.

34 Hans Belting, "In Search of Christ's Body: Image or Imprint," *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation* (1998), op. cit., p. 5.

35 Lidov (2996), op. cit., p. 22.

36 Peers (2004), op. cit., p. 122.

37 Trilling (1998), op. cit., p. 109.

38 Cameron (1998), op. cit., p. 36.

39 See Gary Vikan, "Ruminations on Edible Icons: Originals and Copies in the Art of Byzantium," in *Retaining the Original: Multiple Originals, Copies, and Reproductions*, Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts. Symposium Papers VII (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1989), pp. 47-59.

40 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," reproduced in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt; trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 217-252.

41 Benjamin (1969), ibid. p. 224.

42 Belting (1998), op. cit., p. 1.

43 Trilling (1998), op. cit., p. 122.