

EPILOGUE

Taken, given; offered, received: my tattoo, my body, my desire. And now, my memory.
Mine: because the gift of another. Mine: because read by you.

—Virginia Burrus, “Macrina’s Tattoo”

I have tried in the course of this book to describe not only how *Byzantine Things in the World* happened and meant in 2013, but also the ways (for me, at least) *Byzantine Things* (with and without italics) have kept inserting itself/themselves *into* the world, that is, their ongoing work on me, their incessant, gentle teaching and formation. I was guilty of a certain pride at the opening of the show in May 2013; maybe I can be forgiven: it was a wonderful team project. But I was patiently corrected in my overweeningly human-centred stance by the things, Byzantine and other, who showed me a silent, surplussing richness. I was fortunate to have the time and resources to watch, consider, and accept some (never all) of what they could reveal to me. I felt I had become related—in the sense of entering into a relational communion that now only exists in my memory, but that is, in/after the event, no less vivid in its effects.

My memory is deeply imprinted by the now-gone Byzantine Fresco Chapel Museum. Even the body memory of hot, bright humidity changed to cool, luminous intensity is constantly with me. Leading students into that revelation of peerless Cypriot beauty was a deeply satisfying experience every time. But now it is gone, as I’ve described in the chapters above, and I have only that body memory—that skin-depth of knowing, a depth so much more profound than the sense we habitually use our “skin deep” to mean.

Byzantine skin, like every past skin, is not recoverable in any true way. But we know their skin was also permeable, as was the skin of every other thing in that world. This book has tried to include a wide range of things, to be as inclusive as possible, but it has neglected manuscripts, those gatherings of skin, ink, pigments, and other materials. But these things, too, were living, bleeding bodies; they spoke and felt and acted and bodied themselves in all the real ways.³⁹ And the skin shared and spread across all things felt across all senses.

So why not mine, as an offering and remembering and inclusion? In July 2017, I spent two afternoons in the studio of Joshua Lord having those hopes addressed. I was gifted the Archangel Michael to my inner left arm: red-purple robed, leaning away from sight in his perpetual prayer, and glancing back over his right shoulder at me. Drawn from the lower rim of the dome of the Lysi chapel, the gathering waves of prayer of angels, Mary and John the Baptist, always about to crest in Christ’s taking of that ready seat. That angel on my skin keeps me in that pavilion in Houston, in that country chapel outside Lysi, even in the icon hall in Nicosia, and it gathers them into me. I hope to have added a second angel by the time you read this, a second to make the circuit on my arm complete, a readied hope coiled like the fresco. So many skins folded into mine, and more, if I am still this fortunate, to come.

39 See Peers 2004, 35–58, and Coogan 2018, 377: “As an object, the Christian book was active, present, animate.” See also Kristensen 2012, 125–28, on tattooing.