

READING IN THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE AND BEYOND

Offering a comprehensive introduction to the history of books, readers and reading in the Byzantine Empire and its sphere of influence, this volume addresses a paradox. Advanced literacy was rare among imperial citizens, being restricted by gender and class. Yet the state's economic, religious and political institutions insisted on the fundamental importance of the written record. Starting from the materiality of codices, documents and inscriptions, the volume's contributors draw attention to the evidence for a range of interactions with texts. They examine the role of authors, compilers and scribes. They look at practices such as the close perusal of texts in order to produce excerpts, notes, commentaries and editions. But they also analyse the social implications of the constant intersection of writing with both image and speech. Showcasing current methodological approaches, this collection of essays aims to place a discussion of Byzantium within the mainstream of medieval textual studies.

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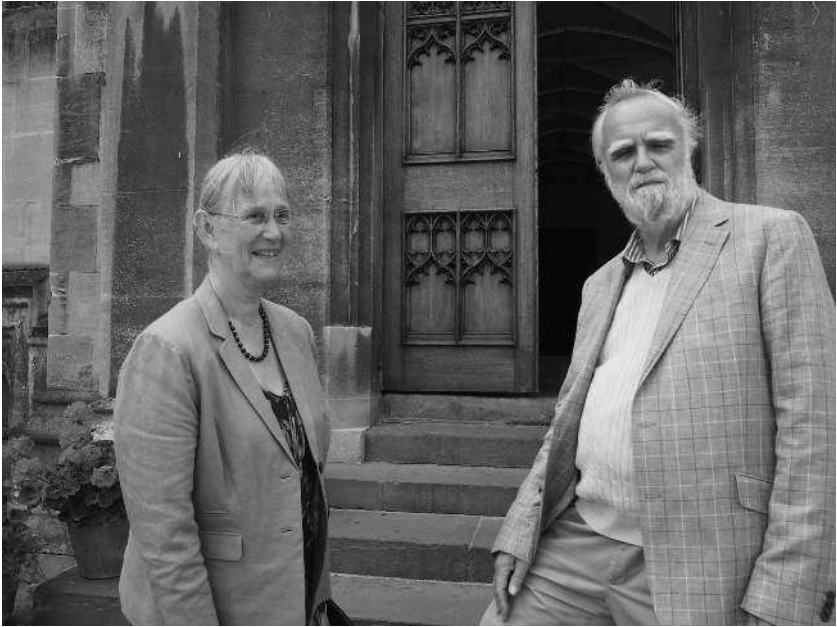


Fig. 0.1 Elizabeth and Michael Jeffreys about to join family and friends to celebrate their Golden Wedding in the hall of Exeter College, July 2015 (photograph by © Katharine Jeffreys)

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To Elizabeth and Michael Jeffreys

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Preface

If you desire to hear of the deeds of good soldiers,
 to learn and be instructed, perhaps you will make progress.
 If you know letters, start reading;
 if, on the other hand, you are illiterate, sit down by me and listen.
 And I hope, if you are sensible, that you will profit,
 since many of those who have come after them have made great progress
 because of the stories of those great men of old.¹

With these lines at the end of his preface, a fourteenth-century chronicler imagines the fate of his work. There will be those who will pick up the book for themselves and peruse it. But also those who will gather together to listen to its contents, which will be read either by the author himself or by another reader who assumes the authorial voice. At the heart of this dual reception lies a paradox. As was true throughout the pre-modern world, possession of an advanced level of literacy was extremely rare in the Byzantine Empire. Only a handful of people were expected to attain higher education. Books, due to the materials and labour involved, were prohibitively expensive. Moreover, deciphering texts from handwritten manuscripts, despite the aid provided by the transition to the codex and presence of rubrics and marginal symbols, remained a demanding business. Even so, this was a society that laid great store by the written word.

It might be objected that ours is a distorted image of the past. After all, our sources reflect the truth of the aphorism *scripta manent*. Yet it is clear that medieval religion, government, and the economy all demanded of imperial citizens that they participate to the best of their ability – and according to the expectations of their class and gender – in a literate culture. Their Christian faith was based on the authority of revealed

¹ Translated in E. Jeffreys and M. Jeffreys, 'The Oral Background of Byzantine Popular Poetry', *Oral Tradition*, 1 (1986), 504–47, at 507; for the original, see J. J. Schmitt, ed., *The Chronicle of Morea, A History in Political Verse* (London, 1904), 93–4 (vv.1349–55).

Scripture. The grant of land, assessment of taxes, and deliberation of court cases all involved the issuing of documents. The value of coins was meant to be guaranteed by their inscriptions. In these and other contexts, the written word was always a living thing: generative and transactional, it shaped individuals and bound them together in communities. Texts were authored, of course. But they were also copied and modified, as well as translated and transposed across languages and into other media. And above all they were read – frequently although by no means exclusively aloud, whether in a private or public setting. Imperial orations, where a complex relationship exists between what was delivered at court and what has been transmitted in manuscript form, are a case in point; so too are vernacular epic and romance. If we are to understand how Byzantines interacted with writing, we need to address questions of materiality and look for traces of transmission and circulation with the performative aspect of textuality kept firmly in mind.

The present volume showcases a range of critical approaches to the study of books, readers and reading. A work of this size and scope represents a protracted endeavour that accumulates many debts. The editors are deeply beholden to the contributors for their commitment to the project, and their willingness to bring to bear their collective expertise on the topic it treats. We are also grateful to Joshua Birk, Emmanuel Bourbouhakis, Lorenzo Calvelli, Averil Cameron, Surekha Davies, Charalambos Dendrinou, Lawrence Douglas, Joe Ellis and Ellen Wilkins-Ellis, Stella Frigerio-Zeniou, Sharon Gerstel, Dimitris Gondicas, Tony Grafton, Geoffrey Greatrex, Molly Greene, David Gwynn, John Haldon, Judith Herrin, David Holton, Ruth Macrides, Fred McGinness, Leonora Neville, Paolo Odorico, Georgios Ploumidis, Charlotte Roueché, Carole Straw, and Christopher van den Berg for their help and encouragement, as well as to the anonymous readers and peer reviewers of both the individual chapters and the complete manuscript for their careful feedback. Sheila Marie Flaherty-Jones, Jonathan Martin, Hollis Shaul, Douglas Whalin, and most especially Randall Pippenger gave vital technical assistance. Amherst College, Mount Holyoke College, Oxford University, and Princeton University provided us with institutional homes and financial support. Our particular thanks go to Michael Sharp and Cambridge University Press for making publication possible. And, as always, to our families – for being there.

Finally, we should like to dedicate this book to two scholars who have made an unparalleled contribution to our knowledge of Byzantium's literary culture: Elizabeth and Michael Jeffreys. Drawing our attention to the interplay between the written and the oral, the Jeffreys have shone a

Preface

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spotlight on previously ignored figures: the folk singer, the preacher, the begging poet, the foreigner and the female patron. They have been staunch advocates for the adoption of editorial practices and the creation of databases that harness the potential of evolving technological platforms and allow us better to visualise the multiple layers of our evidence. In retirement, they continue to be trailblazers, with recent publications including: E. M. Jeffreys, trans., *Four Byzantine Novels, Translated with Notes* (2012) and M. J. Jeffreys and M. D. Lauxtermann, *The Letters of Michael Psellos: Cultural Networks and Historical Realities* (2017).

A *Festschrift* has already been published in the Southern Hemisphere: *Basileia: Essays on Imperium and Culture in Honour of E. M. and M. J. Jeffreys*, ed. G. Nathan and L. Garland (2011). Our new volume brings together a number of colleagues and students of the Jeffreys' from the Northern Hemisphere, notably from Great Britain. With it, the editors and contributors together offer a token of their deep gratitude for the intellectual guidance and personal friendship they have been so unstintingly given.

*Finished on 27th December: Feast day of the patron saint
of authors, publishers, and parchment makers.*

Abbreviations

<i>AHR</i>	<i>American Historical Review</i>
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>AnzWien</i>	<i>Anzeiger der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien</i>
<i>ArtBull</i>	<i>Art Bulletin</i>
<i>BacBelg</i>	<i>Bulletin de la Classe des lettres et des sciences morales et politiques</i>
<i>BalkSt</i>	<i>Balkan Studies</i>
<i>BCH</i>	<i>Bulletin de correspondance hellénique</i>
<i>BMGS</i>	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
<i>BSI</i>	<i>Byzantinoslavica</i>
<i>BullBudé</i>	<i>Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé</i>
<i>BullJRylandsLib</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
<i>ByzSym</i>	Βυζαντινά Σύμμεικτα
<i>ByzF</i>	<i>Byzantinische Forschungen</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CahCM</i>	<i>Cahiers de civilisation médiévale (xe–xii^e siècles)</i>
<i>ClMed</i>	<i>Classica et Mediaevalia</i>
<i>ClRev</i>	<i>Classical Review</i>
<i>CSCO</i>	<i>Corpus scriptorum Christianorum orientaliū</i>
<i>DChAE</i>	Δελτίον τῆς Χριστιανικῆς Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>DTC</i>	<i>Dictionnaire de théologie catholique</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>EEBS</i>	Ἐπετηρὶς Ἑταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν
<i>EKEE</i>	Ἐπετηρίδα Κέντρου Επιστημονικῶν Ἐρευνῶν
<i>EO</i>	<i>Échos d'Orient</i>
<i>FHG</i>	<i>Fragmenta historicorum graecorum</i> , ed. K. Müller
<i>FM</i>	<i>Fontes minores</i>
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>

List of Abbreviations

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HA	Ἑκτάκτῃ Ἀμσώρια (Handēs Amsōrya)
ICS	<i>Illinois Classical Studies</i>
IRAIK	<i>Известия Русского археологического института в Константинополе (Izvestiia Russkogo arkhelogicheskogo instituta v Konstantinopole)</i>
IstMitt	<i>Istanbuler Mitteilungen</i>
JDAI	<i>Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JMedHist	<i>Journal of Medieval History</i>
JÖB	<i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
JThSt	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
JWalt	<i>Journal of the Walters Art Gallery</i>
JWarb	<i>Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes</i>
Letopis'	<i>Летопись историко-филологического общества при Императорском Новороссийском Университете (Letopis' Istoriko-filologicheskogo obshchestva pri Imperatorskom Novorossiiskom Universitete: Vizantiiskoe otdelenie)</i>
LSJ	H. G. Liddell, R. Scott and H. S. Jones, <i>A Greek–English Lexicon</i>
MEFRA	<i>Mélanges de l'École française de Rome: Antiquité</i>
MEFRM	<i>Mélanges de l'École française de Rome: Moyen âge–Temps modernes</i>
MGH AA	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Auctores antiquissimi</i>
MusHelv	<i>Museum helveticum</i>
NAMSL	<i>Nouvelles archives des missions scientifiques et littéraires</i>
NE	<i>Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων</i>
ODB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</i>
OrChr	<i>Oriens christianus</i>
OrChrP	<i>Orientalia christiana periodica</i>
PBE	<i>Prosopography of the Byzantine Empire</i>
PBW	<i>Prosopography of the Byzantine World</i>
PG	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne
PL	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus, Series latina</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne
PLP	<i>Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit</i> , ed. E. Trapp et al.
PO	<i>Patrologia orientalis</i>

<i>RA</i>	<i>Revue archéologique</i>
<i>RAC</i>	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i>
<i>RBK</i>	<i>Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst</i>
<i>RE</i>	<i>Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> , new rev. ed. by G. Wissowa and W. Kroll
<i>REArm</i>	<i>Revue des études arméniennes</i>
<i>REB</i>	<i>Revue des études byzantines</i>
<i>REGr</i>	<i>Revue des études grecques</i>
<i>RESEE</i>	<i>Revue des études sud-est européennes</i>
<i>RhM</i>	<i>Rheinisches Museum für Philologie</i>
<i>RHE</i>	<i>Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique</i>
<i>RömHistMitt</i>	<i>Römische historische Mitteilungen</i>
<i>RSBN</i>	<i>Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici</i>
<i>SBN</i>	<i>Studi bizantini e neoellenici</i>
<i>SC</i>	<i>Sources chrétiennes</i>
<i>SicGym</i>	<i>Siculorum gymnasium</i>
<i>SIFC</i>	<i>Studi italiani di filologia classica</i>
<i>SOsl</i>	<i>Symbolae Osloenses</i>
<i>StP</i>	<i>Studia patristica</i>
<i>SVThQ</i>	<i>St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>TAPhS</i>	<i>Transactions of the American Philosophical Society</i>
<i>TLG</i>	<i>Thesaurus linguae graecae</i>
<i>TLS</i>	<i>Times Literary Supplement</i>
<i>TM</i>	<i>Travaux et mémoires</i>
<i>VigChr</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
<i>VizVrem</i>	<i>Византийский Временник (Vizantijskij Vremennik)</i>
<i>YCS</i>	<i>Yale Classical Studies</i>
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>
<i>ZRVI</i>	<i>Зборник радова Византолошког института (Zbornik radova Vizantološkog Instituta)</i>