Review


Literary criticism in recent times has tended to historicise the ‘author’ of literary works by expanding the ground of interpretation to include the work’s formative conditions of composition. No longer an isolated ‘self’, the autonomous writer is now widely understood to inscribe in the text traces and influences of society at large. Like Rimbaud,¹ the author is a situated self and the literary work rooted in the author’s historical situation. These coordinates of literary production, author, self, and the historical and social conditions of formation differentiate and illuminate the essays collected here by Aglae Pizzone, in her presentation of recent critical work on authorship in Middle Byzantine literature. Her aim is to focus on ‘the textual dimension and the transindividual subject’,² dispersing and relocating the authorial subject in a contextualised, historically grounded, and performative rôle.

All her contributors draw fruitfully on a contemporary paradox in Byzantine studies, in which the foregrounding of the reader has reinvigorated scholarly interest in ‘the individuals behind the discourses’, ‘reflexive relations between self-presentation and self-disclosure’, the ‘historian in the History’, and the epigrammatist and anthologist in the text. Such interpretative issues are both more complex and more elusive than those implied in the editor’s introductory references to *Ego-trouble* and biographism. These essays contribute to the establishment of new interpretative perspectives. They dwell less on ‘death of the author’ debates, but examine and illuminate a range of 9th-12th century Byzantine texts, their focus on each author’s intentions and relations ³ to contemporary life and times, understood as ‘an

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undetermined, productive instance that is simultaneously dependent on a social and cultural structure.\textsuperscript{4} The collection is organised in three sections:

(1) Modes - addressing how a literary product is shaped and presented, in time, space and productive context, through authorial choices and solutions in respect of genre, style, format and execution, oriented to an intended audience or reader;

(2) Functions - explaining how a literary object’s defining structure and active components construct a mask, or \textit{persona} for the author, in order to exert particular effects on audience and readers, i.e. how the literary product ‘worked’ in its originating time, place and context; this dimension is subtly and convincingly demonstrated, for example, in the editor’s discussion of the variability of authorial strategies identifiable in Basilakes’ \textit{Prolog};\textsuperscript{5}

(3) Identities - exemplifying how such a fleshed-out ‘personification’ or identity of the ‘author’, as agent or producer of the literary work, is identifiable through the traceable lineaments of style, genre, and their execution, in a particular historical and social context. A similar analytical framework is explained and illustrated by Floris Bernard in terms of style, register and discursive field.\textsuperscript{6} A number of contributors show in their chosen texts how, more noticeably in the 12th century, authorial identity seems more purposefully to intrude into and find expression in an author’s stylistic and performative use of language.

The range and wealth of literary ‘illuminations’ provided here are considerable. Papaioannou’s definition of authorship as ‘a complex field of lives and personal sensibilities, social networks and traditions, dominant ideologies, disorderly practices, and ultimately, cultural possibilities and material limitations’ \textsuperscript{7} establishes an invaluable point of reference. He goes on to identify traditions of Byzantine rhetoric

\textsuperscript{4}Tziovas, \textit{The Other Self}, 7.

\textsuperscript{5}Pizzone, “Anonymity, Dispossession and Reappropriation in the Prolog of Nikēphoros Basilakēs,” 225-244.


and manuscript practice, whereby Middle Byzantine authors drew both evocatively and submissively upon canonical authorities (such as Gregory Nazianzenos, ὁ θεολόγος) buttressing their own authorial image by placing their work behind manuscript collections of works by earlier prestigious authors. In this way, authorial identity was reinforced through what Papaioannou argues was ‘an authoritatively powerful mixture of rhetoric and anonymity’. A fascinating later example is the 12th century satire Timarion, placed at the end of an MS collection of much earlier Lucianic works. Location within an MS, as well as artistic imitation, could contribute to the creation and preservation of an authorial persona and image. Papaioannou reconstructs a cumulative historical process of individual literary interventions and writing strategies, adopted by authors for particular homiletic or rhetorical purposes, appropriating and adapting stylistic conventions and characteristics to form what subsequent readers might recognise centuries later as literary ‘tradition’ - not an ‘author-less’ tradition, but one in which authorship was cultivated, eponymously and anonymously, as a ‘protean but determined exchange of mask, signature and voice’.

Support for readers in search of a code with which to unlock such protean indeterminacy of authorial intention may be found in Marc Lauxtermann’s contribution. There we are shown how “appropriation and internalization of pre-existing texts, can equal authorship”, in two penitential (catanyctic) prayers in the Harvard Psalter, thus illustrating how “genre is really the key to understanding” devotional poetry. The same work could be a devotional prayer in one collection and an object of study in another. From these two examples Lauxtermann demonstrates authoritatively how Gregory the Monk is both the author, and ‘not the author’ of the same work. Gregory’s authorship of similar poems led to patrons and scholars subsequently to anthologise works that ‘encapsulate’ his spiritual wisdom. Thus, the poems are both “Gregory’s, even if they are not Gregory’s”!

Floris Bernard reveals a distinctive approach when he asserts: “I will

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9 Anonymity was necessary also for the author of Timarion to protect the satirical writer in the Komnenian court climate, prone to monitoring the ever-widening repertoire of literary genres for their intellectual and religious orthodoxy.
11 Marc D. Lauxtermann, “His, and Not His: The Poems of the Late Gregory the Monk,” in The Author in Middle Byzantine Literature: Modes, Structures, and Identities, ed. Aglae Pizzone (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 77-86.
12 Lauxtermann, “His, and Not His,” 84.
investigate authorship as a social act, seeing how this act was ridden with moral tensions that authors attempted to resolve”. Authorship, including author style and register (in the case of Mauropous, for example), was negotiated in a discursive ‘field’, here defined as a group of people bound together by the same activity (writing). In his lucidly framed critical manifesto, Bernard reveals his intellectual roots in the work of the Frankfurt School, positing the study and analysis of language in use as ‘inherently part of and influenced by social structure, and produced in social interaction’. For Bernard, statements in writing are always made ‘in opposition to others’, a position from which their writing adopts an ethical ‘position’ supporting the ‘interests’ being advanced by the author, his captatio benevolentiae. The topos of modesty, if successfully treated, strengthens an author’s claim on the reader that he has succeeded in achieving the higher purpose of ὀφέλεια. Thematic development of how eloquence can be effective as an ethical device assumed different forms according to an author’s prevailing context of performance or publication. Personal self-representation by an author was contrary to the Christian ideal of humility, so that, for Gregory of Nazianzenos, silence was ‘enshrined as one of the essential Christian virtues’. But for Kekaumenos, providing a wide range of advice for would-be military leaders, at a time when the eastern borders of the empire were widely understood to be threatened, the author disclaims any pretensions to polished prose, and presents himself as ἀμοιρός... λόγου, to ensure that what he has to say will be understood as important practical advice for soldiers and their generals, not a testimony of personal eloquence and sophistication. Bernard presents two case studies of contrasts and uniformities in the styles in use by Psellos, whose forensic ‘interests’ were understandably plain to see, and Mauropous, whose clerical status compellingly required the support of an image of ethical and stylistic uniformity. Byzantine texts,

he concludes, “contain a kind of polyphony about authorship that precludes sweeping
generalisations and requires a careful analysis of the sociological context in which the
author was working, and the corresponding ‘ethos’ that he or she wished to transmit
through his or her texts”.21

Acknowledging at the outset that “dealing with questions of authorship in
Byzantine chronicles may seem a paradoxical thing to do”, Tocci takes on the
challenge in Psellus’ Historia Syntomos,22 a brief chronicle, or history, from the birth
of Romulus, founder of Rome, composed as a set of examples for the intellectual
guidance of Michael VII Doukas in his imperial role.23 Chronicles were different form
historiographical texts and were written more explicitly with an ideological purpose in
view. Initially, this derived from ‘the necessity for an accurate chronology of the
whole of human history’. Over time, this mission became modified to one of
representing the ‘Byzantine world-view’; for this more sophisticated objective,
Psellos used *apothegmata* to highlight and effect the didactic purpose of his text.
Tocci shows, through three examples, how this revised purpose fulfilled a function
similar to the traditional *prooimion*, providing the production context into which
Psellos intrudes at times, didactically and authorially, and at other times absents
himself, as required, from the chronicler’s generic condition of anonymity.

Ida Toth,24 marks out grounds for appreciating the virtues of multiple
authorship. She looks for evidence of authorship ‘from within’, thus removing her
authors from inspection under ‘the prism of contemporary literary criticism’. The
Syntipas story, we are told, ‘defies precise contextualisation’, by which is meant
determination of author, origins, and the work’s subsequent transmission, but the
circumstances by which the story reached Byzantine audiences in the eleventh century
is reconstructed from evidence found in a book epigram in a 14\textsuperscript{th} century manuscript.
The work’s multiple authorial processes are shown to ‘involve different degrees of
authority, autonomy and creativity’. The plot reveals a ‘frame-story’, exemplifying

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22 Raimondo Tocci, “Questions of Authorship and Genre in Chronicles of the Middle Byzantine Period:
The Case of Michael Psellus’ Historia Syntomos,” in The Author in Middle Byzantine Literature:
Modes, Structures, and Identities, ed. Aglae Pizzone (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 65-75.
23 Ja. Ljubarskij, “Some Notes on Newly Discovered Historical Work by Psellus,” in ΤΟ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟΝ,
Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis, Jr. Vol. 1. Hellenic Antiquity and Byzantium, ed. (New Rochelle,
24 Ida Toth, “Authorship and Authority in the Book of the Philosopher Syntipas,” in The Author in
Middle Byzantine Literature: Modes, Structures, and Identities, ed. Aglae Pizzone (Berlin: De Gruyter,
2014), 87-102.
aspects of a transmission process through which this work emerged alongside other Eastern novels during the Middle Byzantine period. Toth explains the origins of this work in layers of varied ‘meta-authorial’ engagements with the ‘story’, a form of ‘distributive and disguised authorship’ in the course of which features of various genres emerge almost by accident as by-products of a cumulative, multi-authored process.

In Part II, where functional issues may be expected to be more prominent, Derek Krueger explains how the first person voice of the author is fashioned to facilitate the singer’s subjectivising enactment of the rôle of Lenten penitent. Differences in treatments of the same parable by different canonists evoke different ‘authorial’ purposes and dramatic emphases, seen to be shaping the two works. Where, for example, Romanos the Melodist, in the sixth century, focuses on the Father’s bountiful forgiveness in laying on a banquet for the prodigal, it is the liturgy’s homiletic function that is prominent, dramatising the moral value of forgiveness available to all who repent. In the version of the 8th-century hymnographer Andrew of Crete, the functional focus of the poem is more prominently the transformative power of penitence than the gracious bounty of God’s forgiveness. In Romanos’ morebiblically accurate version, the Son’s exclamation of repentance follows an effusion of forgiveness by the Father; in the later, fully Christianised orientation, the merciful bounty of the Father serves as a type for God’s mercy. The penitent in Andrew’s treatment relies on faith, ‘knowing [God’s] compassion’, enabling him to approach the Saviour and present his plea for forgiveness.

The 9th century was a time of restored ecclesiastical confidence after the iconodule triumph of orthodoxy in 843, and the 10th century saw increased influence exercised by socially conservative provincial, military families. Relations between poets and this new aristocracy, and their impact on literary production (since poets ‘on the whole preferred contemporary subjects’), are examined by Luisa Andriollo. The poems of John Geometres, in which ‘historical reality’ is established at the outset

as the object of a critical reader’s pursuit, remain the only source of reliable information about his life.\textsuperscript{28} Next in focus is his encomiastic portrayal of the virtues of the new class and the court \textit{milieu},\textsuperscript{29} in which possibilities of ‘self-assertiveness’ detectable in John’s poems afford sharp shafts of illumination upon the courtly world of Basil II, finely unpicked and lucidly presented. But instead of exposing the deeper, structural considerations of the poems’ social and personal conditions of production, focus is on their ‘historical content’, such as the ‘glossing over’ of John I Tzimiskes’ rôle in the murder of Nikephoros Phokas,\textsuperscript{30} where the poet, as aristocratic client, has suppressed the details for reasons of personal security.

Foteini Spingou writes of anonymous poets, writing between 1040 and 1200, whose works are included in the \textit{Anthologia Marciana}, an anthology of long and short poems from the 11\textsuperscript{th} and 12\textsuperscript{th} centuries that includes works by Theodore Prodromos and Michael Psellos. Here works are presented anonymously so as to forefront the donor’s and commissioner’s rôle at the expense of the author’s. In this society, the donor was the arbiter and shaper of the final product; the ‘author’ might have been a relatively impoverished but well educated ‘friend’; the scribe or anthologist may well have enjoyed an even less privileged position. For, as we are reminded in the subsequent discussion of collection and authorship: “The scribe/anthologist lived in a society with many intellectuals and few positions for them...... The anthologist was very aware of the importance of the donor...... The poet can simply remain anonymous”.\textsuperscript{31}

Ulrike Kenens examines the less glamorous literary production of scholiasts, inviting readers to consider whether we should view the scholiast as drudge,\textsuperscript{32} transmitter or exegete. In her reassessment of possible relations between scholiast and inherited text, she examines the work of three authors from the 5\textsuperscript{th} to 12\textsuperscript{th} centuries: the anonymous author of the 2\textsuperscript{nd}-century Platonic \textit{scholia vetera}, the anonymous interpolator and editor of a 2\textsuperscript{nd}-century collection of Greek proverbs by Zenobius, and Tzetzes’ commentary on Lykophron’s Alexandra, an abstruse poetic

\textsuperscript{28} Andriollo, “Aristocracy and Literary Production in the 10\textsuperscript{th} Century,” 120.
\textsuperscript{29} Andriollo, “Aristocracy and Literary Production in the 10\textsuperscript{th} Century,” 126.
\textsuperscript{30} Andriollo, “Aristocracy and Literary Production in the 10\textsuperscript{th} Century,” 123.
\textsuperscript{32} Samuel Johnson, \textit{A Dictionary of the English Language} (London: printed by W. Strahan, for J. and P. Knapton; T. and T. Longman; C. Hitch and L. Hawes; A. Millar; and R. and J. Dodsley, 1755).
version of Cassandra’s Trojan prophecy in 1,474-iambic trimeters. In her ‘close reading’ of these ‘sub-literary’ writings, Kenens examines the content and interpretations offered in the texts, comparing their methods of choosing excerpts and introducing new interpretations with those of their predecessors in that rôle. These critical comparisons are used to provide us with a glimpse of each author’s chosen ‘authorial’ purposes, undertaken for educational or instructional purposes, and of their creativity as reader and commentator, compared with predecessors working in functionally different, intellectual, social and ideological settings. The interpretive task undertaken here by Kenens relies on critical appraisal of the content of the chosen texts and comparison of their scholiastic performances. She shows how each author reveals unique attitudes towards their authorial task, related to widely different contextual factors, that contributed silently to their writing and unconsciously influenced each author’s choice of scholarly focus and editorial selections and emphases.

In the longest essay of the collection, Margaret Mullett proclaims a rebirth of the author in contemporary literary studies, stating emphatically that the author is ‘again at center stage’, Barthes and Foucault having failed in their attempts at inhumation. In support, she mentions the recently established journal, Authorship, though without reference to its wide-ranging mission to explore “current developments in authorship studies and…… theoretical and historical understandings of the complex ideological, technological and social processes that transform ‘writers’ into ‘authors’”. By contrast, Mullett sees authorship as concerned with the product of an ‘author in the text’, autonomous creator of work that, as in her examples, may

34 Mullett, “In Search of the Monastic Author,” 171.
36 In the journal’s opening issue in 2011, the editors staked out their discursive territory as follows: “The Romantic concept of the solitary genius (if indeed such an entity ever existed) has for decades now been the subject of intense critical scrutiny and revision; as a result, what the general public might once have thought of as authorial agency is now submerged in an elaborate tissue of critical feedback, textual instability, editorial intervention, and accidents of publishing, branding, and spin. And yet the Author persists, as a nomenclature, as a catalogue entry, as a biographical entity, as a popular icon, and as an assumed agent of creativity and innovation. In analyzing cultural formations of ‘authoriality’ as they developed historically, over a long period of time and in a variety of geographical locations, in relation to cultural networks and social change, to transformations of the media, as well as to changing perceptions of gender and personhood, Authorship hopes to foster a more refined and precise theoretical and historical understanding of the complex ideological, technological and social processes that transform a writer into an author”. Gert Buelens, et al., “Introduction: Authorship,” Authorship 1, no. 1 (2011): 1.
contribute to our understanding of the literary culture of the ‘long 12th century’. She examines three monastic texts: a biography (‘The Life of Cyril Phileotes’), a complex set of nested narratives and letters, and a typikon, combination of will, biography and monastic injunctions to be observed by successors. Claims regarding the authors’ rôle and literary purposes are derived from historical realia - textual content and references taking precedence over considerations of style, register, language and authorial purpose. The concluding paragraph summarises claims demonstrating a new authorial self-awareness and self-confidence evidenced by an increased number of attributed rather than anonymous monastic works. The mode of writing in the chosen examples, we are told, shows ‘innovation’, and readiness to claim ‘authorship’ by name, though it is masked and at the same time reinforced by anonymity and self-effacement, as new ‘voices’ are heard and innovative rôles adopted in monastic communities that have discovered new motives and impetus to reinvent their function.

Bourbouhakis, in Part III, starts by asking simply: “What can we learn about an author by reading his or her texts?” But the apparent straightforwardness of this approach is immediately belied in his next question: “How revealing of any author’s state of mind is any text, even when intended as such, given the deflecting screen of language?” Here the question of what can be meant by authorship in Byzantine texts is radically problematised, and in different ways. The authorial rôle, it is argued, is decentred by some recursive implications of Byzantine rhetorical practice, with its requirement for all accomplished writing to serve a higher end than can be encompassed by human motives and knowledge, and by the challenges inherent in being ‘intellectuals in a tough world’. The title of Michael Choniates’ discourse Πρὸς τοὺς ἀπτιμένους τὸ ἀφιλένδεικτον directs us explicitly to consider the inter-relatedness of authorial function and rôle in Middle Byzantine elite society. Bourbouhakis parses the relation between ‘Identity and Intention’ as the proverbial distinction without sufficient difference. He claims that searching for ‘the author in

37 Mullett, “In Search of the Monastic Author,” 197-98.
39 ‘Translated by Bourbouhakis as ‘a reply to those who accuse him of spurning exhibition (ἀφιλένδεικτον)’.
the text’ in the world of letters is not much different from searching for the proverbial ‘needle in a haystack’. We know there is one, but their identity is no more significant for our understanding of the text than the discovery of the needle contributes to our understanding of the purposes of the haystack. He then shows how the author’s mask (prosopon/persona), assumed for literary purposes, is more important than individual identity, implying that for every writer the text is always to some degree ‘means to a social end’ - there need be no question of literature ‘for its own sake’. Only the continued influence of the Romantic movement’s preoccupation with ‘originality’, in all its Neo-Platonic essentialism, could induce us now to equate authorial identity with ‘authentic’ creativity. And is simulation not an equally worthwhile, creative goal? To try to locate an essence of authorial agency in the text involves what Bourbouhakis describes as a ‘house of mirrors’; better to accept the protean changeability of ‘performance’, the central goal and focus of much Byzantine composition, for which the ‘plasticity’ inherent in ἐπίδειξις is perfectly suited. And the 12th century affords plentiful indication of audiences and readers accustomed to hearing authorial voices embody their subtle intentions, if not necessarily individual identities.

Self-presentation is prominent also in Aglae Pizzone’s essay, showing how the theological controversy that ultimately ruined the author is both present and absent in the work of Nikephoros Basliakes: absent in that explicit reference to doctrinal synods and their damning outcome is entirely missing, yet at the same time also present, implicitly, in the author’s adoption of anonymity, buttressed by extended use of hallowed biblical (Solomon in the Book of Ecclesiastes) and Hellenic (the philosophical dialogue) precedents, which reveal the author’s personal sense of vulnerability to reprisal for any perceived acts of literary or theological hubris. Prominent among such attainable infamies was any claim to be an auctor, a term whose implications of ‘authority’ were disclaimed by a writer no less prolific and highly placed than Anna Komnēnē. As Pizzone makes clear in her introduction, the ‘discourse of modesty’ and ‘poetics of anonymity’ functioned directly in support of such authorial strategies - to achieve honour humbly, for the sake of personal survival.

‘Authorial voice’ is also the subject of Leonora Neville’s paper on Anna

Komnēnē, the only female historian to write within the Greek historical tradition, before the modern era. Anna adopts in her writing a female version of the ‘Stranger’s Strategem’, presenting herself as ‘deeply humble’, and her story as one of tragic woe, if not actually a ‘lament’. Alexiad, Thebaid, and Iliad - all connoted tragic, antecedent royal sagas, worthy subjects for lament. Audiences of 12th-century romance will have been familiar with such figurative equations of the hubristic ‘step too far’, in romantic, as in courtly, political settings. That “Εγώ ταῦτα ἄν εἰδεῖν,” ἐφη, “τοσαύτας ὄβρεις ἡς ἔρωτος παθὼν” (“So many, he said, have been the outrages I have suffered from love”), in the words used by Kleitophon, opens the framed account of a long romantic quest, in Achilles Tatius’ sophistic novel. Yet Anna’s position as Byzantine author was quite unique in her time, surely, and one that Neville acknowledges to have been ‘particularly complex and difficult’. The mask, or mode of lamentation, her form of self-presentation as a female mourner, leading her to ‘create a complex authorial persona and frame her history with a tale of woe’, though successful in her case, was extremely unusual then, and not readily accommodated in contemporary culture. Later readers should make allowances for her adoption of authorial constructions that were to a degree imposed by the social, religious and political circumstances of her time.

Alexander Riehle, acknowledging his debt to Angeliki Laiou, goes a little further in his exploration of relations between female identity and authorship in women’s writing, replacing Laiou’s ‘problematic’ and somewhat essentialist use of the word ‘mentality’ by the more functionally oriented ‘identity’. Women became prolific composers of liturgical poetry in the early 9th to late 12th centuries, and Riehle reveals aspects of discursive relations in their work, showing how they used both the socially textured substance of their language and the narrative tenor and tone.

50 Riehle, “Authorship and Gender (and) Identity,” 246.
in which their stories are enunciated, to create complex levels of identification and narration.\textsuperscript{51} Use of a third person, or heterodiegetic narrator, removes many of the explicitly gendered markings that would otherwise be found, and enables the female narrator to appear unheralded, yet vividly ‘present’, in the plain, participial λέγουσα (‘saying’). This is just one example of what Riehle achieves in this essay, illustrating how, despite the ‘sinfulness’ and low status of womanhood in Byzantium, the gendered presentation of womanhood in women’s writing was ‘perennially negotiated’ through opportunities inherent in authorial conventions and practices of the time. His conclusion is widely pertinent to the topic and title of the collection as a whole: “Womanhood (like authorship)…… is not a stable category…… but is continuously constituted through discursive acts”.\textsuperscript{52}

Finally, in ‘A Perspective from the Far (Medieval) West on Byzantine Theories of Authorship’,\textsuperscript{53} Ian Johnson reviews the volume as a whole and looks beyond Byzantium to explore notable features of authorship at this time in both East and West. Scope for comparison is limited by the fact that much vernacular literature in the West, after 1200, consisted of translation. Yet the example of John Gower’s \textit{Confessio Amantis} is ‘intriguing’, since Gower assumes in this vernacular work, by inclusion of marginal glosses, the auctoritas normally accorded to works in Latin.\textsuperscript{54} Different versions of not dissimilar cultural and religious challenges confronted authors in both East and West. In both, ‘ostentatious deference to authority’ was a hallmark. Endorsing Papaioannou’s view that Byzantium had ‘no unified understanding of the word authorship’, or related terms such as ‘literature’ and ‘subjectivity’, Johnson draws some limited ‘comparisons and contrasts’ with aspects of agency raised in the body of the collection in relation to Byzantine authors. For one thing, we must be careful not to identify auctor with the modern ‘author’, as implying autonomous literary agency.\textsuperscript{55} Examples of Byzantine ‘self-assertive self-authorising’ identified by Papaioannou (and Krueger) arose from unease around a suspicion of heresy inseparable from authorless hagiographical stories, which came to be rewritten

\textsuperscript{51} Riehle, “Authorship and Gender (and) Identity,” 249.
\textsuperscript{52} Riehle, “Authorship and Gender (and) Identity,” 262.
\textsuperscript{54} Johnson, “A Perspective from the Far (Medieval) West on Byzantine Theories of Authorship,” 278.
\textsuperscript{55} In Johnson’s formulation: “social circumstances play a major rôle in shaping all instances of textual meaning and modes of authorship”. Johnson, “A Perspective from the Far (Medieval) West on Byzantine Theories of Authorship,” 277.
‘in the media of hymnography’. This feature of post-iconoclastic rhetoricising of an earlier hagiographical tradition should be read as conferring authority upon the text itself, rather than evoking a personal claim to ‘authorial’ identity. In a familiar Christian rendition, the Byzantine sacred author was expected to render unto God the things that are God’s (“Ἀπόδοτε οὖν τὰ Καίσαρος Καίσαρι καὶ τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῷ Θεῷ”); in secular writing, a work’s auctoritas often depended, as we have seen, on cultivated redeployment of classical, biblical and traditional motifs and exempla and, above all, on demonstration of modesty and capacity to win approval from political and clerical elites. Middle Byzantine writers became auctores by their admission to the educational syllabus and support of powerful groups in whom authority resided.

Michael Strain

MA in Byzantine Studies

Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies
University of Birmingham