

# The Occasional Muse: Textual Genesis and Literary Innovation in Komnenian Byzantium

## Abstract

This paper explores the literary production of the twelfth century from the perspective of innovation. Focusing on occasion rather than occasionality, and understanding it as ‘event’ or *kairos*, it reminds us that the assumed constant of occasion and patronage sometimes needs to be teased apart. The Byzantine twelfth-century production is divided into four groups: 1) Commissioned occasional performative texts; 2) Commissioned non-occasional non-performative texts; 3) Not commissioned occasional (or non-occasional) performative (or non-performative), job-related texts; and 4) Not commissioned non-occasional highly experimental texts. Even if these categories admittedly remain somewhat crude and overlapping, the analysis shows, in particular, how the fourth group contains a large number of works that do not fit into a model of dominant patronage and pervasive occasionality. These are texts marked by hybridity and experimentation, perhaps aimed at achieving commissions through performance in the literary circles of Constantinople, the so-called *theatra*, but possibly written by authors for themselves or friends, relying on a ‘poetics of hybridity’.

## Keywords

Innovation, hybridity, occasional literature, poetics, performance.

1. Bourbouhakis, *Not Composed* 46\*–47\*: “the term ‘occasional’ risks becoming an abstract label, a mere classification rather than a designation signaling a concrete historical setting which enabled the performance of a text.”

2. [Web](#) [Accessed 2 November 2022].

Occasional literature is notoriously<sup>1</sup> difficult to define. It is also often considered more in terms of poetry than of prose works. The Poetry Foundation’s definition of “a poem written to describe or comment on a particular event and often written for a public reading” seems both too narrow (in that it does not allow for the participation of the text in the event) and too wide (in that it involves performance).<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Jeffreys’ starts similarly: “verse produced to commemorate an event, whether an imperial victory or an aristocratic wedding, a birth, a death” then veers away “or an impassioned petition to a potential patron” (E. Jeffreys, “Why produce verse?” 225). Wolfram Hörandner’s is tighter:

“an occasional poem is either itself part of a process or of an object, or it describes a process (or object) or refers to them in any way whatsoever” (Hörandner, “Custom and Beliefs” 235); though it complicates the definition with “an object” this is far from unusual. Marian Sugano begins with its position between history and poetry and ends with a “new poetics of the occasional” which foregrounds the presence of the object (Sugano 7). Occasional literature may be conflated with didactic, with Gebrauchstexte, or with public poetry.

It can encompass extreme ends of any spectrum of literature from the grand (Tennyson’s *Charge of the Light Brigade*) to the trivial (Mallarmé’s inscribed couplets on eggs, fans, visiting cards). It may be “partly literary and partly referential,” (de Man 3) between fact and fiction, the circumstantial and the essential (Sugano 1–2). Though much of the critical literature is restricted in scope to ‘occasional poetry’, in many literatures it includes both prose and verse in registers from the stately to the colloquial. And this can trouble those who choose to evaluate literature: a verdict on the British poet laureate’s poem on the death of Elizabeth II as “archaic at best, banal at worst”<sup>3</sup> is characteristic of some views of occasional literature;<sup>4</sup> Goethe’s as “die erste und echteste aller Dichtarten” (von Goethe, *Aus meinem Leben* 397) is characteristic of another time. There is a tendency for the term to become all-embracing: Goethe said that all his poems were occasional poems, suggested by real life (Goethe, *Conversations* 18), and Edward Said agreed in that “every literary text is burdened with its occasion,” (Said 35) Ingela Nilsson in her study of Constantine Manasses rejects a usage of Byzantine literature “often limited to cases of epideictic rhetoric or ceremonial poetry” and prefers “to argue that all preserved texts by Manasses were potentially occasional. So was most if not all Byzantine literature of the twelfth century as were numerous texts produced in Europe up till at least the end of the eighteenth century.” (Nilsson, *Writer and Occasion* 6).

Further, we are invited by the premiss of this collection of essays to consider the relation of occasion to patronage, to the pre-text, to an extra-literary end, to occasional literature as ‘public relations.’<sup>5</sup> If ‘writing on command for specific occasions’ is seen as the key activity then patronage is surely at the heart of occasion, and indeed of twelfth-century Byzantine literature as Robert Browning saw long ago: “The more one examines Byzantine literature, the more one becomes convinced that it never appears spontaneously: it needs a salon, patronage, institutionalised forms.” (Browning, “Unpublished Funeral Oration” 8).

Yet this is not necessarily so: “an aristocratic and courtly-sponsored society in which patronage played an important role” may cer-

3. Sarah C.E. Ross (Wellington, New Zealand) on Simon Armitage’s *Floral Tribute* acrostic, wondering why there has been so little poetic response to the death of the Queen, and whether public poetry is dead: [web](#) [Accessed 2 November 2022].

4. Hegel, vol. 2, 995–96 proposes inferior value because of “entanglement with life;” cf. Sugano 7: “a great deal” of Renaissance “verse was little more than servile flattery.” See also, tongue in cheek, Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 2, 107: “it is occasional poetry after all, ephemeral and of little consequence.”

5. Tompkins 208: “a resource of financial support, a form of social protection, a means of securing a comfortable job, an instrument of socialisation, a move in a complicated social game or even a direct vehicle of courtship.”

6. Nilsson and Zagklas, blurb for the colloquium.

7. See still Ihor Ševčenko, “Society and Intellectual Life.”

8. See the relevant chapters in Papaioannou, *Oxford Handbook*. On poetry Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 2, ranges later and more widely than the title suggests; Spingou, *Words and Artworks* unlocks the treasure house of Marc. gr. 524; for literature on art see Spingou’s two volumes, *Visual Culture of Later Byzantium*; together with these works Hörandner, Rhoby, and Zagklas, ed. *A Companion to Byzantine Poetry* and Rhoby and Zagklas, ed. *Middle and Late Byzantine Poetry* have put poetry at the centre of the twelfth-century achievement. See also the Austrian Academy’s four-volume project on metrical inscriptions, ed. Rhoby, and the [Gent book epigram project](#).

tainly have “allowed or even demanded occasional literature to thrive,” (Nilsson, *Writer and Occasion* 9) “textual genesis” may often have been “triggered by sponsorship of a patron”<sup>6</sup> yet that society may also have allowed or even demanded literature written for occasion which had other forms of genesis and development. Since Browning wrote, Byzantine literature of the twelfth century has come to be seen as a period of intense experiment and innovation and it is by no means certain that this innovation is patron-driven. In what follows I should like to take a step back from recent sophisticated studies of occasion (Nilsson) and patronage (Zagklas) and look at the relations between text, patronage and occasion in the Byzantine twelfth century with a view to clarifying ways of looking at textual genesis and innovation. And in this I should prefer to look at occasions rather than ‘occasional’, to see with Said that “poetry is an event” (Said 4) and with Bourbouhakis remember that “by ‘occasional literature’ we mean an actual physical and ceremonial context, an *event*.” (Bourbouhakis, *Not Composed* 46–47). If I use the term ‘occasional literature’ at all I should prefer the simple definitions of Adelung “ein Gedicht welches bey gewissen feyerlichen Gelegenheiten verfertiget” (Adelung, *Wörterbuch*, vol. 2, 529) or of Bourbouhakis “a text recited before a particular audience in a particular place.” (Bourbouhakis, *Not Composed* 59). Similarly, at this stage of analysis, I prefer occasion as *kairos* to occasion as *occasio* (Moog-Grünwald 15–18). There will be more questions than answers, hypotheses rather than solutions.

## Komnenian literature

From a perception fifty years ago that twelfth-century Byzantine literature operated in an “age of uncreative erudition, of sterile good taste” (Browning, “Enlightenment and Repression” 5) it has become apparent that it was highly creative and very innovative with revivals of ancient genres, translations from other languages and experiments in language, metre and genre. The sheer volume of surviving work is greater than in comparable periods, except perhaps in the early fourteenth century),<sup>7</sup> with a very large body of occasional rhetoric, and letters, new forms of narrative, and, we have increasingly seen, a mass of commissioned verse for objects and occasions.<sup>8</sup> Authors wrote for a small group of other authors and aristocratic patrons as well as for church and court. They were members of the imperial family, aristocrats, lawyers, soldiers, diplomats, bureaucrats, bishops, monks, career rhetors

9. Preeminently on Constantine Manasses by Nilsson, *Writer and Occasion* and on Theodore Prodromos by Zagklas, *Theodoros Prodromos*. On John Tzetzes see Pizzone, e.g. “A Byzantine Book of Memory?” and on Manganeios Prodromos the forthcoming edition by Elizabeth and Michael Jeffreys. The best overview of literary society in the period is still in Magdalino, *Manuel I Komnenos* 316–412.

10. As well as in *Distant Reading*, in *Graphs, Maps, Trees* Franco Moretti makes the case for a quantitative approach to literature, which may be digital but need not be. He argues that literary scholars should stop reading books and should start counting, graphing and mapping. Though Byzantine literature is less threatened than other literatures by the establishment of a canon representing less than 1% of works actually published, there is a tendency to look at parts rather than the whole. By considering as far as possible all works written in the long twelfth century we can arrive at a sense of relative numbers: between religious polemic at the most numerous to novels at the least.

11. Mullett addressed it in “Aristocracy and Patronage;” “The Disgrace;” “Patronage in Action” and in “Gynamics.” Floris Bernard 291–93 discusses the dangers of attempting to deduce patronage and considers, with respect to eleventh-century poetry, solicitation of patronage, commissions, dedications and gifts, the last proving the difficulty of establishing the level of reciprocity. See also Loukaki, “Τυμβωρύχοι και σκυλευτές νεκρών.”

and teachers. For the first time in Byzantium we see some who lived by writing on command backed up by teaching, and recent studies<sup>9</sup> have illuminated the careers of several. It would seem to be a perfect corpus of material with which to explore issues of occasion and patronage.

## Four groups of texts

If we attempt a ‘distant reading’<sup>10</sup> of this rich literature and attempt to tease apart the assumed constants like occasion and patronage we might suggest a division (fig. 1) into four groups: 1. Commissioned occasional performative texts, 2. Commissioned non-occasional non-performative texts, 3. Not commissioned occasional (or non-occasional) performative (or non-performative), job-related texts and 4. Not commissioned non-occasional highly experimental texts.

	Court, school, church	Theatron, court
Other-generated	1. commissioned occasional performative	2. commissioned non-occasional non-performative
Self-generated	3. not commissioned occasional job-related	4. not commissioned non-occasional experimental
	Performative	Non-performative
	More factual	More fictional

Fig. 1 Four groups of twelfth-century texts

There are clearly difficulties in making distinctions of this kind. For one thing we frequently simply do not know whether a work was commissioned or not. The reciprocity spectrum from dedication to presentation to commission to piece-work patronage to personal patronage is a wide and difficult one,<sup>11</sup> and we may be misreading allusive references or simply be missing a piece of evidence which would push it in one direction or the other, towards self- or other-generated. For another the occasion is not always defined. Some rhetorical speeches give us a great deal of information, others do not. We may assume that monodies and consolations were delivered at the house, funeral orations later at the grave but we are seldom told. Sometimes we are told a great deal about occasion but nothing about textual genesis: for example the metrical prefaces to patristic sermons studied by Theodora Antonopoulou may tell us a great deal about place, liturgical feast, perfor-

12. Both are associated by Magdalino, “Liturgical Poetics” with the confraternity at *ta Kyrou*.

13. The *maistor ton rhetoron* was not the only speaker; he regularly handed over to his pupils and we also have some speeches with Jordan imagery not associated with a *maistor*, as well as some by a *maistor* without the Jordan. For Lazaros Saturday speeches see Loukaki, “Le samedi.”

14. Lauxtermann, “The Byzantine Epigram” 32; Maguire, *Image and Imagination* 7–9; Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry*, vol. 1, 42–43; on the epigrams Mercati 313–16. For other examples see Spingou, *Words and Art Works* 122, Bernard 307; Lauxtermann, “The Byzantine Epigram” 43–44, Drpić, the fullest discussion, 29, 31, 37, helpfully distinguishing ‘rough draft’ from ‘on spec’ and ‘workshop catalogue’.

15. Spingou, *Words and Art Works* 119–22 on inscriptional epigrams (which might never become verse inscriptions and might also be performed); 146–63 on performative epigrams, 163 “written with performance in mind.”

16. E.g. the two tent poems of Manganeios Prodromos for Eirene the Sebastokratorissa, edited by Michael Jeffreys in Anderson and Jeffreys 11–13.

17. Or rather perhaps not helped by the versatility of literature intended for these communicating vessels. Zagklas has shown convincingly that Theodore Prodromos recycled school compositions at court and court poems in teaching. Zagklas, *Theodoros Prodromos* 53–70.

18. Mullett, “Rhetoric, Theory and the Imperative of Performance;” Marciniak, “The Byzantine Performative Turn.”

19. On *theatra* Mullett, “Aristocracy and Patronage,” Magdalino, *Manuel I Komnenos*, ch. 5 on the Guardians of Orthodoxy, esp. 335–43; Grünbart, *Theatron*, esp. Marciniak, “Byzantine Theatron – a Place of Performance?” Andrew Stone has written a series of papers looking for Komnenian evidence, e.g. “Euthymios Malakes in Theatron;” “Eustathios of Thessalonike and Performance of Rhetoric” and Niels

mance by the author, sometimes the circumstances, but give us no idea of whether the poems were commissioned or author-generated (Antonopoulou). With Paul Magdalino’s work we can begin to see some as part of the devotion of a lay confraternity (Magdalino, “Liturgical Poetics”), but on the basis of their other works the likelihood of difference between poems written by John Geometres and Manganeios Prodromos<sup>12</sup> in terms of commission is great: the first we assume is author-generated, the second patron-generated. Another issue is whether a kind of text is job-related and so whether it should be seen as author- or patronage-generated: many school texts come into this category, but also the career-expected speeches of the *maistor ton rhetoron* to the emperor on 6 January or to the patriarch on Lazaros Saturday.<sup>13</sup> Sometimes the most obviously patron-generated texts can take on another light, as when it was posited that the range of eight texts for Constantine Dalassenos’s silver bowl in Laura Ω 126 represented ‘on spec’ epigrams to be presented to the patron: the pre-text is the job-search.<sup>14</sup> And the relationship between performance and occasion is not always clear. We have come to assume that we need to justify an argument that a text is not performed rather than that it is, but that does not in itself make it either performative or occasional. Here the work of Foteini Spingou on epigrams offers some assistance: she assumes that all epigrams may have been performed, if only as the process of reading aloud by the patron or recipient, but she distinguishes carefully between texts written for inscription (which may also be performed) and those written for performance.<sup>15</sup> Sometimes doubles are found, one for inscription, one for performance.<sup>16</sup> To prove occasion we would need evidence of a particular date in movable or immovable or life cycles. And finally we are often unsure about place, about the possible milieu for performance, a doubt not helped by Zagklas’s otherwise very helpful theory of communicating vessels.<sup>17</sup> The great performativity of Byzantine society<sup>18</sup> meant that a text might be performed in church, in a monastery, on the street, at court, in a law court, in a school or in a *theatron*,<sup>19</sup> and often we can only surmise which was its primary milieu and what others were possible.

Given these considerable provisos we may proceed to look at the literature of the long twelfth century, the Komnenian period (1081–1204), in terms of commission and occasion, generation and innovation.

20. See Table 1.

21. It is here that we regret the lack of a Komnenian *De cerimoniis*.

22. See Table 1. We still lack a good survey of the life-cycle rhetoric.

23. For example, members, in some cases three or four different individuals, of the Anemas, Apimphios, Arbanites, Aristenos, Axouch, Belissariotes, Dokeianos, Doukas, Drimys, Euphorbenos, Hagiotheodorites, Kamateros, Kontostephanos, Makrembolites, Meles, Mesapotamites, Palaiologos, Pantechnes, Prosouch, Roger, Stypeiotes, Stryphnos, Tornikes families received encomia, funeral orations, consolations, monodies, epigrams, poems, and were sometimes also correspondents of the literati. On the families see Grünbart, *Inszenierung und Repräsentation* and on the rhetorical works the dissertation of Ilias Nesseris.

24. Agapitos, “Mischung der Gattungen;” Zagklas, “Metrical Polyideia and Generic Innovation.”

25. See Table 2.

## 1. Commissioned occasional performative texts

This body of material<sup>20</sup> comprises the large body of annual speeches to the emperor and patriarch, with other occasional *prosphonemata*, and hymns for the demes on special but repeated occasions.<sup>21</sup> It also includes speeches and poems for major state occasions like John II’s victory at Kastamonu and the resulting triumph of 1133, the inauguration of the Pantokrator monastery and the rapprochement between the emperor and his brother Isaac of 1138. These represent the ‘Charge of the Light Brigade’ end of the public/private spectrum, but here are also to be found also life-cycle events: births, birthdays, and epithalamia, and the whole enormous Komnenian literature on death, comprising laments, consolations, and speeches of praise, in prose and verse, as well as epitaphial epigrams too long for inscription or explicitly performative in language.<sup>22</sup> Other political occasions of a less celebratory nature may also fit here: religious polemic and oral Kaiserkritik for example. More trivial and private occasions may also be included, like the account by Constantine Manasses of an expedition to the Sea of Marmara to hunt siskins, where it is clear that the text is the result of a request from his fellow-participant in the occasion recorded. Here there is always a sense that the occasion includes the text as well as inspiring it. The patrons, where not imperial or lesser members of the imperial house, belong to a restricted number of ‘literary’ families.<sup>23</sup> Texts are largely other-generated, placed in court, private houses of the aristocracy, churches, monasteries, or on the streets. They tend to be factual rather than fictional. Experiment and innovation may be found in *mixis* of genres, in playing with rhetorical conventions, and in the highly inventive polymetric cycles of verse for life-cycle occasions.<sup>24</sup> Texts of this kind account for 40% of secular output of the period and 35% of religious.

## 2. Commissioned non-occasional non-performative texts

These works represent a much smaller proportion of the output of the period, perhaps 17% of the whole, though we may be underestimating commissions where they are not explicit. The most certain have narrative support as well as dedication, or at least make the patronage history clear in the body of the text. They include<sup>25</sup> imperial commissions like an encyclopaedia of heresies and a parainetic set of animal fables translated from the Arabic for Alexios I Komnenos. Other imperial commissions include astrological poems and prov-

26. Theis et al., *Female Founders*.

27. Annibaldi, “Towards a Theory of Musical Patronage,” distinguishes humanistic patronage, in which the social standing of the patron is symbolised by his artistic sensibility, from conventional patronage, in which it is symbolised by an appropriate repertoire. Hence ‘passive literati’: either they were capable of work in their own right or were praised as if that were true.

28. Mullett, “Whose Muses?”

29. Early discussions of imperial women as patrons concentrated on the need to dumb down for those who were not native Greek-speakers, e.g. E. and M. Jeffreys, “Who was Eirene the Sevastokratorissa?” See also Magdalino, “Astrology at the Court.”

30. See for example Nilsson, “Discovering Literariness in the Past;” “The Past as Poetry;” “The Literary Voice of a Chronicler.”

31. See Table 3.

32. E.g. at Isaac Komnenos’s *Kosmosotera* once a month, *Typikon*, 59, ed. Petit, 48; tr. Nancy Ševčenko, vol. 2, 825.

33. Though it is often believed that hymnography was on the decline except in Byzantine Italy, that hagiography in the twelfth century was very sparse, and that new homilies were not needed when patristic sermons could be read aloud, there are more of all three than might be expected.

erbs for Manuel I Komnenos, and one of the earliest revived novels for the Caesar Nikephoros Bryennios. The commissions of imperial women are even more impressive:<sup>26</sup> theological and meteorological works for the ex-basilissa Maria, philosophical commentaries for Anna Komnene; various epigrams and poems and a history for her mother Eirene Doukaina. Educational works – grammatical, astrological, historical and classical – were written for the sebastokratorissa Eirene, as well as poems, homilies and letters. Manuel’s first wife Bertha-Eirene is associated with at least one classical paraphrase. Aristocratic patrons include Constantine Kotertzes, George Palaiologos and the many patrons of the Marc.gr. 524 epigram collections. The small prayers of Byzantine lead seals, often metrical in this period, introduce us to a wider group of patrons, though sadly not to their authors. These patrons, or passive literati, fit Annibaldi’s category of ‘humanistic patronage’<sup>27</sup> in that they are praised for their good taste and knowledge, equated with Muses when female and expected to return the favour of elegant writing.<sup>28</sup> By definition these works are other-generated, though they may take a form originated by the author, they are non-performative, though they may have been read in whole or in part at court or in a *theatron*. They may be fictional or non-fictional, didactic or paraenetic and in a register appropriate to the recipient.<sup>29</sup> Experiment and innovation may be found in the verse form, in register, in the kind of history written.<sup>30</sup>

### 3. Not commissioned occasional (or non-occasional) performative (or non-performative) job-related texts

This group of texts may come under the heading of ‘job-related,’ where an individual writes as part of his calling.<sup>31</sup> Teachers of the Great Church gave inaugurals for their ceremonial installation and further lectures relating to psalms, epistles or gospels without clear occasional identity. Monastic leaders wrote *katecheseis*, answers to spiritual questions, collected spiritual anthologies, and drew up *typika*, foundation documents for their monasteries. These might be performed on a particular day in the year or, like many *typika*, read in the refectory on designated occasions.<sup>32</sup> Bishops and other clergy wrote sermons for particular feast-days, hymns for designated days in the year and daily office, saints’ lives for a feast-day *panegyris* or in the liturgy to celebrate the anniversary of the saint, forming an occasional cycle accessible to a wide public.<sup>33</sup> Members of confraternities, at Chalkoprateia, Hodegon or *ta Kyrou*, may

34. On the competitions Bernard 253–90, on *schede*, Vassis, “Graeca sunt;” Agapitos, “Grammar, Genre and Politics” and “Learning to Read and Write a *schedos*;” on schedography, see also the book by Fevronia Nousia, esp. 49–75. Some *schede* were dedicated in their second (verse) half.

35. For the eight Prodroomic dialogues see esp. Marciniak, “Reinventing Lucian in Byzantium;” two other dialogues, *Dialogue of the Dead* (CE 1185) and *Anarcharsis* are attributed elsewhere; three others, *Philopatris*, *Charidemos* and *Timarion*, are anonymous and much disputed as to authorship and (at least in the case of *Philopatris*) date.

36. van den Berg, et al. *Byzantine Commentaries*, esp. papers by Trizio and Pizzone.

37. E.g. *Timarion*, in Romano, *La satira bizantina* 107–75, and see Marciniak, “Heaven for Climate, Hell for Company,” with bibliography on readings by Alexiou, Macrides, Kaldellis, Krallis, MacDougall and Nilsson; *Bion praxis*, in La Porte–du Theil, “Vente à l’encan de différentes professions,” and see Marciniak, “Theodore Prodromos’ *Bion praxis*” as well as Chryssogelos, “Theodore Prodromos’ Βίων πρᾶσις;” Theodore Prodromos, *En apodemia te philia*, PG 133: 1321–32 and see now Zagklas, *Theodoros Prodromos* 270–89; *Anacharsis* or *Ananias*, in Christidis and see Cullhed, “The Consolation of Philology.”

38. We do not have Komnenian equivalents for the tenth-century harangues, McGeer, “Two Military Orations,” though some are indicated in historiography; for the other genres and the relationship of emperor to general see Schmidt, “Performing Military Leadership.”

39. On the revival of Lucianic satire see Marciniak, “Reinventing Lucian in Byzantium;” Messis, “The Fortunes of Lucian in Byzantium;” Zagklas, “Astrology, Piety and Poverty.”

40. See Table 4.

41. Why this should be so is of some interest. Partly it is because the texts were regarded as more ‘literary’, partly because they relate easily to contemporary writings in the west: the *Chanson de Roland*, Chrétien de Troyes, the Archpoet. Many are narrative, and what rhetoric is well known often depends – as well as on its narrative significance – on what is described, for example

have written verse prologues for delivery before famous patristic sermons. Schoolmasters wrote commentaries, treatises in prose and verse on everything from metre to morality and *schede*, the grammatical exercises which were used in school competitions in eleventh- and twelfth-century Constantinople and also for grand-er occasional purposes.<sup>34</sup> It may be that the revival of satire in mid-twelfth-century Constantinople also had a didactic purpose; many of the small dialogues are associated with Theodore Prodromos who was a teacher as well as court poet, and they may have originated in his classroom as a means of teaching grammar or rhetoric.<sup>35</sup> Though it has come to be thought that commentaries were performed in the sense of read in class,<sup>36</sup> and the dialogues could certainly have been,<sup>37</sup> they had no occasional identity. Generals delivered harangues to troops before battle, received instructions from the emperor and encomia from literati as well as sending reports from the front.<sup>38</sup> So this group of texts represents both occasional and non-occasional literature in our strict sense, performative and non-performative, fictional but mostly non-fictional, and appears to be author-generated, within the patronal framework of the institutions of schools, the patriarchate, monasteries and city churches where the texts were used or performed. Innovation could be metrical or in terms of register or generic expectations, or in the major task of reviving an ancient genre.<sup>39</sup> These texts account for perhaps 37% of the whole literature of the period.

#### 4. Not commissioned non-occasional highly experimental texts

This final group of texts<sup>40</sup> includes those for which the Byzantine twelfth century is best known:<sup>41</sup> the texts popularised by Margaret Alexiou in the 1970s and 80s:<sup>42</sup> the novels (one in prose, two in twelve-syllable verse, fragments of another in *politikos stichos*),<sup>43</sup> the vernacular experiments including the four (or five) ‘begging’<sup>44</sup> poems of poor Prodromos, the Grottaferrata version of the heroic poem *Digenes Akrites* if it is to be placed in the twelfth century,<sup>45</sup> the more ambitious of the satirical dialogues. It includes histories not explicitly commissioned or dedicated,<sup>46</sup> as well as saints’ lives written by lay literati rather than churchmen. And as well as narrative it includes rhetorical pieces, both *progymnasmata* and free-standing *ekphraseis*. These texts give no clue of commission or oc-

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works of art. Clearly there is no emic justification for isolating these works, but there is some logic in terms of the history of Byzantinist scholarship.

‘Hysmine and Hysminias’;” “Literary Subversion and the Aristocracy” and “The Poverty of Écriture.”

42. See her “Eustathios Makrembolites’

43. For the best evaluation of the impact of the novels on literature in

general and for a summary of arguments on the order of the texts see Nilsson, *Raconter Byzance*. For the impact of rhetoric on the novels see Roilos.

44. Though these are addressed to an imperial figure the scenario suggests self-generation.

45. The (cautious) tendency is now to work from the date of the manuscript, so the fourteenth century. Goldwyn and Nilsson, *Reading the Late Byzantine Romance* xix n. 20, and Goldwyn and Nilsson, "Troy in Byzantine Romances" 191–92; Messis, "The Palaiologan Hagiographies" 230 and n. 1.

46. Only the histories of Michael Attaleiates (dedicated to Nikephoros Botaneiates), Nikephoros Bryennios and Constantine Manasses appear to be other-generated. The elaborate histories of Anna Komnene and Niketas Choniates appear to be self-generated; both writers were surprisingly under-studied in terms of monographs until very recently.

47. These vary, ranging from the long paraphrases and narratives including the two novels at 4,614 and 3,638 lines respectively to the Cannibal at 165 lines and Ptochoprodromos II at 117 and Majuri at 66 lines.

48. It should be noted that we do have the (positive) reception of Kerkyras' poem when delivered at the synod of Blachernai in 1094, and Mouzalon's may also have been written for delivery, offering occasions of some kind. Indeed, if this were so the poems could have been performative in the sense of Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*.

49. *The Alexian Komnenian Muses*, ed. Maas. Again this purports to be delivered on Alexios's deathbed, suggesting a fictive delivery at a real occasion.

50. *Mousai* conforms only in that it claims authorship for Alexios. In fact the author must be close to John II. See Mullett, "Alexios I Komnenos and Imperial Renewal;" Mullett, "Whose Muses?"; Stanković 20.

51. See Constantinou on Bakhtin's theory of hybridity; see also the panel at the BSANA Byzantine Studies Conference at Holy Cross, Brookline in 2012 with papers by Beatrice Daskas on Mesarites, Alexander Riehle on Sergia's

casation but are secure in authorship, form a tiny proportion of the literature as a whole (little more than 5%), and tend to the fictional rather than factual. They are innovative in language, metre, mode, and especially in revival.

This group also includes the long<sup>47</sup> poems of the twelfth century: two poems of resignation from episcopal office (there is no indication that this was a regular kind of writing to match inaugural lectures),<sup>48</sup> the fragmentary *Muses* purporting to be written by Alexios I Komnenos for his son John,<sup>49</sup> a poem on the fires of 27 July 1197 and a poem in the Marc.gr. 524 on toothache. It may include Glykas's poem from prison, but not the prison/exile poem of Anonymous Malta since his literary milieu appears to be the court of the Norman kings of Sicily rather than the court of the Komnenian emperors at Constantinople. It includes one of a few travel accounts of the twelfth century but focusing largely on the ambassador's distress at having to leave Constantinople. These are original in terms of subject-matter, and sometimes in structure, ranging over description, narrative, parainesis, complaint, sometimes ending with a prayer, sometimes not, and apparently entirely author-generated and autographic<sup>50</sup> if not totally authorially secure.

And the group includes a number of extraordinary texts unlike anything else, all hybrids. I do not mean this in de Man's sense of the nature of occasional literature as between literarity and referentiality (De Man 3) but that like the centaur they combine more than one body.<sup>51</sup> There are prose and verse examples, all highly experimental, all problem pieces or puzzles. We have a saint's life entwined with an ascetic anthology, a trilogy of passion plays in the form of Euripidean tragedy welded to Virgin's lament, a mock epic-cum-animal fable in dramatic form, a poetic version of a legal document recording a day in court, suffused with tragic lament, and an epistolary narrative including monastic embassy accounts and vivid vignettes of court life in Constantinople. They tend to the fictional, claim no occasion<sup>52</sup> or setting, are not apparently commissioned and several have authorship issues.<sup>53</sup> The performability of the *Christos Paschon* has been questioned (and defended)<sup>54</sup> and the dramatic form of the *Katomyomachia* recently challenged.<sup>55</sup> That they were performed seems highly likely, though not all at a single sitting.

These texts undermine binary distinctions in Byzantium: past and present in that patristic authors speak through a twelfth-century saint, Euripides' tragic heroines speak through the Virgin

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narration about St Olympias, and Raimondo Tocci on chronicle, organised by Aglae Pizzone and Alexander Riehle. Constantinou's strict adherence to Bakhtin might not include any of our examples: she

distinguishes between texts where the two elements are easily separable and those with more intricate connections. For different views on generic hybridity see Kubina, esp. 150–56; Cupane, "Intercultural encounters."

52. The exception is the Cannibal poem, which claims to be the *semeioma* delivered in court by the judge Andronikos after interviewing the penitent Maria. Ruth Macrides considered that it was fact rather than fiction and probably delivered as claimed; it is at least as likely that it was written after the event and performed at a *theatron*. The improvisation in the course of a day in court is not impossible, given other improvisation challenges of the period, but time pressure must have been extreme. Of course both, as communicating vessels, are possible.

53. Authorship issues: only one, the *Katomyomachia*, can be ascribed to a major literary figure of the period and that in only one of the 24 manuscripts; the *Paschon* is ascribed in all 25 manuscripts to Gregory of Nazianzos, but is clearly a twelfth-century text; the *protekdikos* Andronikos is not otherwise known and Nicholas Kataskepenos hardly more so; the authorship of the *Partial Account* is multiple.

54. Puchner, “Theaterwissenschaftliche Anmerkungen;” Mullett, “Performance issues.”

55. Marciniak and Warcaba 99: “we would like to argue that the *Katomyomachia*, even if it contains some dramatic elements (e.g. chorus, *rhesis angelike*) and recycles lines from ancient drama, is not an endeavour to revive the ancient form of drama, but is rather a Byzantine version of mock-epic and an attempt to write an updated, Byzantine version of the *Batrachomyomachia*.”

56. Macrides, “Poetic Justice,” 138: Ἄκουσμα καινὸν καὶ πέρα τραγωδίας / οἶονπερ οὐκ ἦνεγκε πῶποτε χρόνος.

57. Ampelarga, and see Constantinou, “Generic hybrids.”

58. Cameron and Gaul, *Dialogues and Debates*; for the chorus by Michael Haploucheir, see Cavallero and Marciniak, “The Dramatization by Michael Haploucheir;” Alexiou, “Lament of the Virgin.” For a (very) small Euripidean cento (4 lines) see Duluz, “Ekphrasis and Emotional Intensity” 258–59.

59. See now Cupane, “Letters in Narrative Literature.”

60. Beaton 47 acknowledged the genre problem and resolved it with the proposal of ‘proto-romance’, characterising G as a transitional piece; Magdalino, “Digenes Akrites and Byzantine

Mary, a story in Josephos is reflected by the tragic cannibal Maria, and that the cat and mice play out *Iliad* and *Persai*, Aesopic fable and the stylistically (but not chronologically) Homeric *War of Frogs and Mice*. Education and entertainment coexist in story-worlds of monastic jokes, recipes, the engagement of the emotions and palace gossip to convey eternal truths about redemption, and more contemporary concerns of judicial compassion, Athonite superiority and monastic reform. Literary and subliterate also coexist in the inelegant frame story of the *Partial Account* and the high-style epistolary formulas, and in the tragic interpolations into the legal frame of the Cannibal poem. Fact and fiction emerge explicitly in the Cannibal poem, and the Athonite narrative, but the saint of the *Life* is nowhere else attested and his cult sank without trace in Thrace – if it ever really started. Secular and sacred clash above all in the *Paschon*, yet those contrasting worlds are apparent also in the Cannibal, the *Partial Account* and the *Life* with their stories of court life.

Each of these texts is a unicum, as Andronikos *protekdikos* argues (lines 1–2)<sup>56</sup> for his story, the Cannibal, and is unrepeated. But each text has forebears. The combination of *Life* and ascetic anthology had been tried once before in the late antique *Life of Synkletike*,<sup>57</sup> and the *Katomyomachia* reflects the fragmentary papyrus *War of Weasels and Mice* (Schibli) and complements the Homeric *War of Frogs and Mice*. The *Christos Paschon* is clearly unique as a Byzantine tragedy though it is bookended by a second-century CE Jewish tragedy and a mysterious early fourteenth-century Cypriot Passion cycle in scenario form (Lanfranchi, “The Exagoge;” Puchner, *Crusader Kingdom*). There are other twelfth-century dialogues, other uses of a chorus, other Virgin’s laments, other centos.<sup>58</sup> But the combination is entirely unique. There are included letters and included documents in narrative works<sup>59</sup> and a great deal of Byzantine history-writing involves the combination of vivid episodes (Scott, “Byzantine Stories”) – but not in the specific mixture of the *Partial Account*.

The hybrids are not a closed group, simply the most extreme version of a common phenomenon, even within the well-known works of this fourth group: *Digenes Akrites* is a combination of frontier epic and romance;<sup>60</sup> Markéta Kulhánková has recently characterised the *Ptochoprodromika* as a fusion of encomium, supplication, satire and parody (Kulhánková, “Game of Discourses;” Mar-

Literature” 3 sees “thematic affinities with twelfth-century romances” and the “common ground of epic”; and resolves the preface’s listing of “the Byzantine epic,” “the epic of Modern Greece,” an “epic-romance” and

“romance” again with a transitional model. Goldwyn and Nilsson’s *Reading the Late Byzantine Romance* 191–96 “makes an implicit case for the inclusion of Digenes Akritis among the Palaiologan romances” 11, and

reveals its Homeric motifs and techniques while remaining skeptical about hybridity. Kulhánková “Narrative Coherence,” esp. 198, explicitly chooses to look to heroic poems in other literatures rather than to the twelfth-century Byzantine novels.

61. Nilsson, *Writer and Occasion* 46–54.

ciniak has characterised the *Timarion* as a blend of Höllenfahrt and satire (Marciniak, “Heaven for Climate, Hell for Company”). We could go on: the *Hodoiporikon* is a mixture of travel account and encomium of Constantinople (Nilsson, *Writer and Occasion* 46–54).<sup>61</sup> They are all very different from each other, pairing narrative with an interactive genre/form or playing with tragedy and lament with different architexts. What they all have in common is their hybridity. What they share with the narratives and the long poems is their level of inventiveness, their heightened experiment.

## Analysis and problems

So we have isolated, quite crudely, four groups of Komnenian text, to show the relationship between occasion and patronage: the rhetoric and ceremony which depends on both, the educational and entertaining works which are explicitly commissioned but have no obvious occasion, the religious and educational writings which ‘come with the job’ (some with occasion, some not), and the fourth group, apparently independent of occasion or patron. The crudeness of the isolation is immediately apparent: there is no emic justification – to a Byzantine all would be *logoi*, prose or verse, rhetoric or ‘literature’. And it is frequently difficult to assign texts to one group rather than another. We have seen that in terms of occasion it is absurd to place one group of 6 January speeches in the ‘commissioned occasional’ group and another in the ‘comes with the job’ group. One of the (usually occasion-free) hybrids claims to have a real-life occasion though we may suspect it is a *theatron* piece.<sup>62</sup> One of the non-occasional commissioned pieces (with a narrative of commission) has survived in an elaborate illustrated copy<sup>63</sup> surrounded by paratexts which scream performance in a ceremony of presentation. One of the revived novels,<sup>64</sup> normally placed in the fourth group, moves to the second, non-occasional commissioned, simply because the patron can be deduced. If we can include metrical prologues to homilies in the ‘comes with the job’ group, on the basis of Magdalino’s confraternity theory, the performance of the poem by its author surely represents an occasion in Said’s sense of the poem as an event.

More serious issues arise when we interrogate further the nature of occasion or patronage. Nilsson’s inclusive definition was not totally sweeping: “all preserved texts [...] were *potentially* occasional” (Nilsson, *Writer and Occasion* 6). Though performance does not

62. The Cannibal poem, see above 26 and n. 52.

63. Vat. Gr. 666 of Euthymios Zigabenos’s *Panoplia dogmatike*.

64. Theodore Prodromos, *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*: see discussion by Jeffreys, “A Date for *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*?” Agapitos, “Poets and Painters.”

65. Cf. Bernard 291: “patronage tends to conceal itself.”

66. See for example the efforts of John Tzetzes and Manganeios Prodromos to obtain institutional support.

67. For these works, both funerary, see Lampsidis, “Die Monodie von Leon Megistos.”

68. See Zagklas, “Experimenting” and “Metrical Polyeideia” and for specific pairings of ‘historische Gedichte’ with ptochoprodromic, Agapitos, “Schedourgia’.

69. As well as the Leo *ho tou Megistou* story see Demetrios Tornikes challenging Niketas Choniates to argue that winter is better than summer, see van Dieten, *Erläuterungen zu den Reden und Briefen* 138–39.

70. Gédéon 70–72.

make occasion it can, and we need to look for these possibilities. And Zagklas talks about “*well camouflaged occasions*” (Zagklas, *Theodoros Prodromos* 17), to which could also be added ‘well camouflaged patronage’<sup>65</sup> in which we must deduce from wordplay or allusion the identity of patron or occasion. The camouflage is particularly but not exclusively to be sought in groups 3 and 4. Group 3 is apparently author-generated but represents in fact a kind of institutional patronage, of a kind that was hugely sought after by twelfth-century literati.<sup>66</sup> *Adelphata* (corrodiēs), teaching jobs, positions as rhetor or bishop ensured survival and required literary output which was not dependent on piece-work or maintaining a sufficient number of pupils. It might include perhaps the works Leo *ho tou Megistou* wrote as *grammatikos* to George Palaiologos after auditioning for the job by improvising verses on a statue of a Muse (Lampsidis, “Die Entblösung der Muse Kalliope”). And the works of his we have<sup>67</sup> are suggestive: how many of the rhetorical works we have placed in the first group were not one-off commissions but ‘comes with the job’ expectations? We are no further forward, it seems to me, in deciding who was expected to speak whose funeral oration.

Finally we need to look more closely at the fourth group (the well-known ‘literary’ pieces, the autographic long poems, the hybrids). Why did literati write these pieces? There seem to me to be two answers to that question. One is that these texts are the means of achieving a commission. The *theatron* was the place for display pieces that could attract a patron or pupils. Our texts could be *theatron* pieces with their exuberant *deixis*: the hybrids scream ‘I can write lament, satire, parody, tragedy, epic, letters, and I can tell stories; I’m equally good at diegesis and mimesis, and I can combine them in any way you like!’ It is also true that the highly original diptychs and triptychs and polymetric cycles<sup>68</sup> also shout “I can say it in prose, *politikos stichos*, 12-syllables, hexameters, anacreontics, schedography, anything else you want.” Their setting is clearly different (court/oikos rather than *theatron*) and they belong largely to the occasional commissioned group 1. The hybrid pieces are unlikely to be patron-generated (‘how about next time combining a riddle with a saint’s life?’) though it is not a million miles away from the improvisation challenges of the period,<sup>69</sup> but could well be written with potential patrons in mind. Even the *Life of Cyril* could have been read in part in a *theatron*, maybe of the author Nicholas Kataskepenos’s correspondent<sup>70</sup> Eirene Doukaina. And it might explain why he came to the notice of her grandson Manuel I when he was collecting

71. On the foundation of Kataskepe see van Dieten, *Chronike diegesis* 206–20; Tafel 244.

72. On the speeches of Manuel see Gautier, “Le dossier d’un haut fonctionnaire;” Mullett, “Imperial vocabulary of Alexios I Komnenos” 370–71.

73. On the relation between the texts see Messis, “Deux versions de la meme ‘verité’” esp. 315 and n. 38 on the manuscripts.

74. Conca, 306–496, tr. Jeffreys 351–458. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 2908 (ca. 1500) has a brief prologue: “the work of kyr Niketas Eugenianos in imitation of the late wise Prodrornos;” see Jeffreys 343.

75. Letters, whether prose, see Riehle, *Companion*, or in the small corpus of verse letters, see Kubina and Riehle, *Epistolary Poetry*, tend to be regarded as ‘occasional’, largely on grounds of ephemerality, and they were certainly performed in *theatra*, yet in our terms they are seldom associated with an occasion.

super-monks for his foundation of Kataskepe; he may have been looking for someone to express the reform ethos of his monastery.<sup>71</sup>

Clearly this is not the only way patrons could be sought: good performances in the bread-and-butter commissioned works might lead to more, and some authors clearly wrote some longer prose pieces on spec; the career of Manuel Straboromanos is a case in point.<sup>72</sup> And flashy performance in *theatron* might have other goals: the envy and admiration of one’s peers for example. Or the maintenance of a literary reputation under threat, by exile from Constantinople for example. The extravagant revivals and innovations of this group of works could do both at once for the writer: move him up the pecking order of peers and attract him a patron. We need perhaps to look more at matching kind of work with stage of career, as Nilsson has done for Constantine Manasses (*Writer and Occasion* 185–89) and Zagklas for Theodore Prodromos (*Theodoros Prodromos* 31–70). For both are posited:

- 1) early large narrative and/or ekphrastic works before
- 2) the major commissions, from 1122–43 ceremonial poetry for John II in the case of Prodromos and from the late 1130s to the end of the 1150s commissions for Eirene the Sebastokratorissa in the case of Manasses, followed by
- 3) 1143-death for Theodore; c.1160–70s for Constantine, a readjustment to more self-generated works or writings for a variety of patrons.

The large *theatron* pieces make the case for occasional commissions and when they end the authors return to writing longer works or educational pieces, with the odd work on demand for various patrons.

But there is another possibility which we have lost sight of with our concentration on commission and occasion. Are we so cynical that we are unable to envisage that authors might write for themselves or their friends? It seems that some texts were written in response to other texts, Prodromos’s *Life of Meletios*, for example,<sup>73</sup> or Niketas Eugeneianos’s novel,<sup>74</sup> for peers rather than for patrons. And the autographic ‘long poems’, indeed the self-portraiture of letters,<sup>75</sup> might be just that: author-generated with identity, reputation and legacy at stake, rather than an eye on the next job. And it is this possibility that makes me uneasy about writing the pretext into our view of all twelfth-century literary production or accepting *in toto* Browning’s dictum quoted above. There is no doubt that we are dealing with a patronage society, that patrons may be lurking in shadows where

76. This is the argument of Mullett, “Whose Muses?”

77. Krause, *Divine Inspiration* esp. 7–12, 22–30 on concepts of origination. A secular equivalent to this study would be a daunting endeavour.

we might least suspect them, and that muses are mostly patronesses in twelfth-century literature,<sup>76</sup> but in our diagrammatic view of the genesis of Byzantine literature in this period we need to make space for inspiration<sup>77</sup> as well as patronage (fig. 3 rather than fig. 2). A pretext may not be necessarily extra-literary, and performance is a broader category than occasion.

Fig. 2 Nilsson’s working model of occasionality

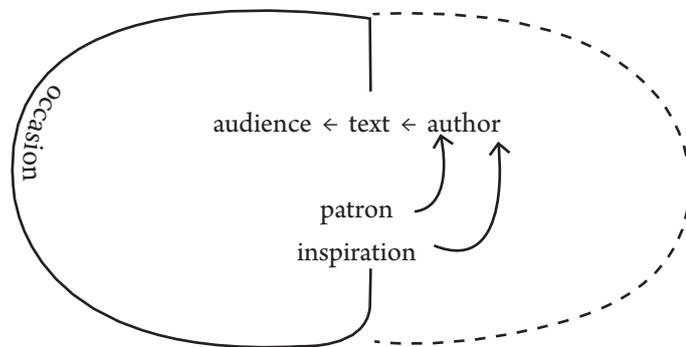
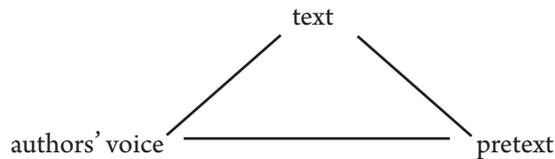


Fig. 3 Another possible model

## Concluding thoughts

So we may be in a position to draw together some preliminary thoughts. We have seen the importance of occasion in Byzantine literature, in the vast majority of writings, both secular and theological. “Byzantine literature is an occasion-defined literature,” says Zagklas (*Theodoros Prodromos* 23). Ceremonial and liturgical cycles, the human life-cycle, the marking of career points all create occasion, which is fulfilled in deme hymns, encomia, sermons, saints’ lives, laments, marriage songs, birthday pieces, dedication epigrams and many more. Occasion moreover is crucial to genre, to the understanding between author and audience that communicates ideas.<sup>78</sup>

When we ask how much twelfth-century literature is self-generated, how much other-generated, we have collected three whole groups of material which have clear evidence of other-generation: speeches, celebratory poems, educational materials, narratives, and

78. On the developing view of genre as a means of communication see Nilsson, “Greco-Roman love letters and modern genre theory.”

are clear that we need to be constantly on the alert for the ‘well-camouflaged patron’ as well as for the ‘well-camouflaged occasion.’ But we have also collected a body of material – revivals, experiments, hybrids, autographies – which does not immediately fit into a model of dominant patronage and ubiquitous occasionality.

If we ask where innovation comes from in the twelfth century the answer is not always or entirely ‘the occasional muse.’ Though small-scale innovation may be found in the bread-and-butter speeches and in ‘comes-with-the-job’ exercises, larger-scale innovation resulted from polymetric verses for life-cycle occasions, and though patronal wishes may have encouraged the haute vulgarisation of classical works to be found in the non-occasional commissioned works, most of the largest-scale innovation is to be found in the fourth, highly experimental, group: in language with the learned adoption of a vernacular, in metre with a similar learned adoption of a non-metrical metre as well as revivals of classical metres, in genre with revival of satire, the novel, drama. Hybridity does not in this literary society produce new genres (with the exception of the epistolary novel which is forever being revived)<sup>79</sup>; it does produce lively hybrid works which serve simultaneously as claim to literary reputation, inspiration to other authors and a pitch for material support. It is also an aesthetic choice, a poetics of hybridity.<sup>80</sup>

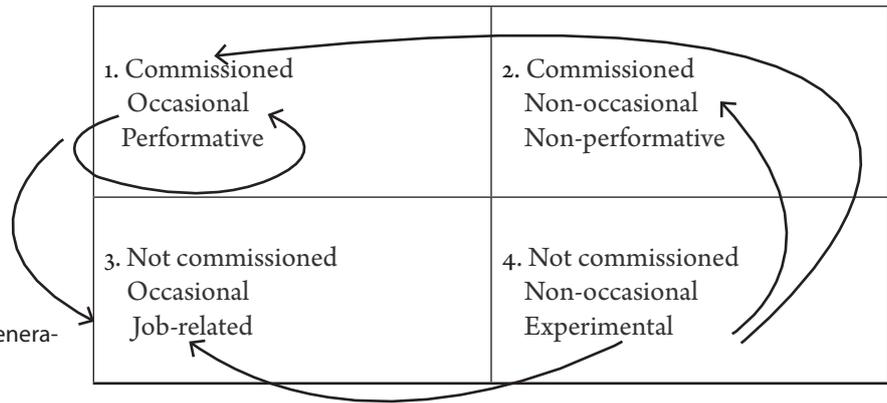
But if we ask how occasional literature was valued in the period, we must admit immediately that it was the greatest desideratum, the grand prize. To be commissioned to write a speech or a cycle of poems for a major state occasion paid for itself (and was more visible so less easy to welch on, unlike the non-occasional commissioned works), provided ceremonial visibility for the author and encouraged future commissions in turn. Other occasional rhetoric in palace or aristocratic *oikos* could maintain and develop patronage relationships already in place as well as floating potential alternatives; well delivered ‘on-the-job’ occasional pieces in church, monastery or school could encourage promotion, add supporting resources, or fan metropolitan fame.<sup>81</sup> The task of revealing new talent, bolstering fading reputations, recruiting new patrons, and contesting with peers fell to less occasional works, less obviously patron-generated, but still imbued with the thematics of a patronage society: heroic deeds, thwarted love, impoverished genius, in which passive literati, patrons and peers could appreciate the rhetorical skills and innovative abilities of learned and competing authors in an agonistic system of literary genesis (fig. 4). *Gelegenheit macht Dichter*, patronage provides for

79. Ovid’s *Heroides*, the correspondence of Abelard and Heloise, Guilleragues’s *Lettres portugaises* (1669), Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740) and Sally Rooney’s *Beautiful World, Where Are You* (2021) are other such points of reinvention; Janet Altman’s *Epistolarity* is still inspirational.

80. Henry and Eunice Maguire do not quite argue this in *Other Icons*, but I attempted to pursue it in my Runciman lecture (February 2022) “Hybrid by nature.”

81. Fame in the sense of the superstar reader Kroustoulas described by Michael Psellos, *Encomium for the monk Ioannes Kroustoulas* (Littlewood, 137–51, tr. Papaioannou *Michael Psellos on Literature and Art* 224–44) or of the priest Michael’s knowledge of the latest Prodromos verses in Michael Italikos, ep. 1 (Gautier, *Michel Italikos* 64). It should be noted that in one case the fame is of the performer, in the other of the author, but in neither case do we see performance by the author.

Fig. 4 The four groups and text generation



rhetors, but neither is quite enough to explain the explosion both of writing and of literary innovation in the Byzantine twelfth century.

Table 1 Examples in Group 1  
Commissioned occasional performative texts

<b>PUBLIC</b>	<b>Annual occasion</b>	<b>Special occasion</b>	<b>Life-cycle occasion</b>	<b>Literature</b>
<b>Empire</b>	6 January	1133 triumph 1138 Isaac rapprochement		Magdalino, <i>Empire</i> , 413–70; Magdalino, “Triumph;” Lovato.
<b>Church</b>	Lazaros Saturday Pantokrator	1090–91 John the Oxite  1112 Grossolano debates  1114 Philippopolis debates		Loukaki, “Samedi;” Kotzabassi; Sághy and Ousterhout; Gautier, “Diatribes;” Ryder; Grumel; Darrouzès, “Les conferences;” Anna, <i>Al</i> , 14.8.1–14.9.5; for context: Cameron, 91–99.
<b>Individual</b>		Manasses siskin hunt	Birth  Marriage  Death	Nilsson, <i>Writer and Occasion</i> , 6–12; Nilsson and Messis forthcoming; e.g. Hörandner, <i>Historische Gedichte</i> , no XLIV; Lauxtermann, <i>Byzantine Poetry</i> , vol. 2, 101–117M; Agapitos, “Ancient Models.”
<b>PRIVATE</b>				

Table 2 Examples of acts of patronage mentioned above in Group 2  
Commissioned non-occasional non-performative texts

<b>Patron</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Text</b>	<b>Reference</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Emperor Alexios I Komnenos	Euthymios Zigabenos  Symeon Seth	<i>Dogmatic Panophy</i>  <i>Stephanites and Ichnilates</i>	PG 130: 9–360  Sjöberg	Narrative: Anna, <i>Al</i> , 15.9.1;  Title: author translated “at his command”
Emperor Manuel I Komnenos	John Kamateros  Michael Glykas	<i>Introduction to Astronomy</i>  <i>On Proverbs</i>	Long: 15 syll, Weigl; Short: 12 syll, Miller, 53–111; see Magdalino, <i>Astrologues</i> , 111–13 Sathas, vol. 5, 544–63	Long: title; short: in lines 2–4, naming emperor and poet  Lines 337–38 address an emperor

Nikephoros Bryennios, Caesar	Theodore Prodromos	<i>Rhodanthe and Dosikles</i>	Marcovich, tr. Jeffreys, 19–156, see Nilsson, <i>Raconter</i> , 74–78	Epigram, see Agapitos, “Poets and Painters”
Maria, ex-basilissa	Theophylact of Ochrid  Eustratios of Nicaea	<i>Commentary on Mark and Luke</i>  <i>On Thunder and Light- ning</i>	In Vind.gr. 29  Caudano,	Epigram, De Rubeis, PG 123: 35 Dedication in BL Add. 34060, 416r: Eustratios of Nicaea to the despoine kyria Maria of Alania
Eirene Doukaina, Empress	Nicholas Kallikles  Nikephoros Bryennios, Caesar	Poem 6  <i>Material for History</i>	Romano, <i>Nicola Callicle</i> 81  Gautier, <i>Nicéphore Bryennios</i> ; see Neville, <i>Heroes and Romans</i>	Title: despoina; line 6 Eirene of the Doukai  Narrative: Anna, <i>AL</i> , 7.2.6; also in Prologue
Anna Komnene, Kaisarissa	Michael of Ephesus  Eustratios of Nicaea	Commentary on <i>Nicomachaeon Ethics</i> 5, 9, 10 and other works of Aristotle  Commentary on <i>Nicomachaeon Ethics</i> , 1, 6	Hayduck <i>EN</i> 5; Heylbut, <i>EN</i> 9–10; see Ierodiakonou, “Some Observations;”  Heylbut, <i>EN</i> 1, 6; see Barber and Jenkins; Trizio; Browning, “Unpublished funeral oration”	George Tornikes, funeral oration on Anna Komnene; Darrouzès, <i>Georges et Dèmetrios Tornikès</i> 283 (all-night labours)  Dedication in 6 to god-fearing empress who loves <i>logoi</i> , goodness and beauty

Sebastokratorissa Eirene	Constantine Manasses	Verse chronicle	Lampsidis, <i>Synopsis chronike</i> ; see Nilsson, “Literary Voice”	Addressed in lines 1–26 (15 syll) and also in a hexameter nine-line poem either at front as prologue or at end as book epigram
	Constantine Manasses	Astrological poem	Miller, 8–39; see Nilsson, <i>Writer and Occasion</i> , 117–24	Title: to Sebastokratorissa Eirene; lines 1–15 address her as basilissa Cloths and covers ‘produced by Sebastokratorissa’
	Manganeios Prodromos	Poems 89–96 in Magdalino’s list, <i>Empire</i> , 494–500	Jeffreys and Jeffreys, <i>Manganeios Prodromos</i>	In almost all mss dedicated to a Sebastokratorissa, in most to Eirene; corroborated by art-historical arguments about the illuminated copy (Taphou 52)
	Theodore Prodromos	Grammar	Goettling; see Zagklas, “Byzantine Grammar Treatise;” Spatharakis	
	James of Kokkinobaphos	Centonic letters	ed. Jeffreys and Jeffreys, <i>Jacobi monachi epistulae</i> ; see Jeffreys, “As patron” 180	Addressed to her as spiritual daughter
	James of Kokkinobaphos	6 Homilies on Theotokos	PG 127:544–700; see Jeffreys, “Twelfth-Century Context”	Similarity with letters; spiritual relationship; art historical argument
	John Tzetzes	<i>Theogony</i>	Matranga 577–98	Prologue addressed to a Sebastokratorissa
John Tzetzes	<i>Allegories of Odyssey</i>	Goldwyn and Kokkini, <i>Allegories of the Odyssey</i>	Prolegomena A lines 15–17: “I speak on request of my queen” Proposed by editors (as against Bertha or Maria of Antioch)	
Bertha-Eirene, empress	John Tzetzes	<i>Allegories of Iliad</i> , books 1–15	Goldwyn and Kokkini, <i>Allegories of the Iliad</i> ;	Dedicated to “most powerful and Homeric empress” in title, addressed lines 1–50 of Prolegomena

Constantine Kotertzes	John Tzetzes	<i>Allegories of Iliad</i> , books 16–24	Goldwyn and Kokkini, <i>Allegories of the Iliad</i> ; see Rhoby	16.1–6: money is mentioned
George Palaiologos	Constantine Manasses	<i>Cyclops</i>	Sternbach; see Nilsson, “Constantine Manasses, Odysseus and the Cyclops”	Word-play: <i>palaios logos</i> ; see Magdalino, “In search” 162
Marc.gr.524 patrons, 80% of syllogai B&C	Anon	Epigrams	Lampros; Spingou, <i>Words and Artworks</i> , 65–89; <i>Poetry for the Komnenoi</i>	In titles, some in text
Seal patrons	Anon	Metrical inscriptions	Wassiliou-Seibt; see McGeer, “Discordant Voices”	Named in text

Table 3 Examples of job-related texts in Group 3  
Not commissioned occasional (or not) performative (or not)

Milieu	Genre	Author	Text	Reference
<b>Patriarchate</b> See Darrouzès, <i>Offikia</i>	Inaugural lecture	George Tornikes	Or. 1 (Psalter), 2 (Gospel), 3 (stand-in for <i>oikoumenikos</i> <i>didaskalos</i> )	ed. Darrouzès, <i>Tornikès</i> , 74–106; Mullett, “Inaugural”
<b>Monastery</b> See Mullett, “Monastic culture”	Katecheseis	Paul of Evergetis	<i>Katechetikon</i>	Crostini, <i>Katechetikon of</i> <i>Evergetis</i> ; see Crostini, “Katechetikon of Paul”
	Answers to Questions	Michael Glykas	<i>Theological Chapters</i>	Eustratiades; see Magdalino, <i>Empire</i> , 370–82
	Spiritual anthology	Nikon of Black Mountain	<i>Pandects</i>	uned., see Richard; Alexakis;
		John the Oxite	<i>On Eucharist, Eclogae</i> <i>asceticae</i>	
	Typikon	Isaac Komnenos <i>porphyrogenetos</i>	<i>KosmosoteiraTyp</i>	Petit, tr. Ševčenko
	Saint’s life	Theodosios Goudelis	<i>Life of Leontios</i>	Tsougarakis
<b>Diocese</b> see Angold, <i>Church</i> <i>and Society</i> , 137–262	Hagiography	Theophylact of Ochrid	<i>Martyrion of 15 Martyrs</i> <i>of Tiberioupolis</i>	Kiapidou
	Sermon	Eustathios of Thessalonike		or. 1, 9 Feb 1180 on prepara- tion for Lent, Tafel, 1–7
<b>City church</b> (by confraternities) see Magdalino, “Elite Religious”	Verse prologues to homilies	Manganeios Prodromos	Poems 67–88 in Magdalino’s list, <i>Empire</i> , 498	Jeffreys and Jeffreys, <i>Manganeios Prodromos</i> ; see Antonopoulou

<b>School</b> See Nesseris, <i>Paideia</i>	Commentary	John Tzetzes	<i>Scholia on Aristophanes</i>	Koster et al.; see Pizzone, “Cultural Appropriation;”
	Didactic Poem	Constantine Manasses	<i>Origins of Oppian</i>	Colonna; see Hörandner, “Teaching with Verse,” 465; Nilsson, <i>Writer and Occasion</i> , 124–30
	Schedos	Theodore Prodromos or Constantine Manasses	<i>Sketches of the Mouse</i>	Papathomopoulos; tr. and see Marciniak, “A pious mouse;” Nilsson, <i>Writer and Occasion</i> , 134–38.
	Dialogue	Anon	<i>Timarion</i>	Romano, <i>Satira bizantina</i> 107–75 and see Marciniak, “Heaven for Climate” with bibliography on readings by Alexiou, Macrides, Kaldellis, Krallis, MacDougall and Nilsson

Table 4 Examples of texts mentioned in Group 4  
Not commissioned non-occasional (mostly) non-performative

Genre	Author	Text	Reference
<b>‘WELL KNOWN’</b>			
<b>Novels</b> See Nilsson, <i>Raconter Byzance</i> ; Beaton	Eumathios Makrembolites	<i>Hysmine and Hysminias</i>	Conca, 499–687, tr. Jeffreys, <i>Four Byzantine Novels</i> 177–283; see Nilsson, <i>Erotic pathos</i> ;
	Niketas Eugeneianos	<i>Drosilla and Charikles</i>	Conca, 305–497, tr. Jeffreys, <i>Four Byzantine Novels</i> 351–458; see Nilsson, <i>Raconter</i> , 78–86;
	Constantine Manasses	<i>Aristandros and Kallithea</i>	Conca, 689–777, tr. Jeffreys, <i>Four Byzantine Novels</i> 284–337; see Nilsson, <i>Writer and Occasion</i> , 153–59

<p><b>Epic/Romance</b> Beaton and Ricks, <i>Byzantine Heroic Poetry</i>; Goldwyn and Nilsson, <i>Late Byzantine Romance</i></p>	Anon	<i>Digenes Akrites G</i>	Jeffreys, <i>Digenis Akritis</i> ; see Kulhánková, “Narrative Coherence”
<p><b>‘Begging poems’</b> See Kulhánková “Game of Discourses” in response to Kubina, “Begging Poet?” Agapitos, “New Genres.”</p>	Ptochoprodromos	I–IV, Majuri	Eideneier; Majuri; ed.tr. Alexiou in progress; see Kulhánková, “Game of Discourses”
<p><b>History</b> See Neville, <i>Byzantine Historical Writing</i>; Macrides, <i>History as Literature</i>; Odorico et al., <i>L’écriture de la mémoire</i></p>	<p>Anna Komnene</p> <p>Niketas Choniates</p>	<p><i>Alexiad</i></p> <p><i>Chronike diegesis</i></p>	<p>Reinsch, tr. Sewter; see Gouma-Peterson, <i>Anna Komnene</i>; Buckley, <i>Alexiad</i>; Neville, <i>Anna Komnene</i>; Vilimonović, <i>Structure and Features</i></p> <p>van Dieten, tr. Magoulias; see Efthymiadis and Simpson. <i>A Historian and a Writer</i>; Simpson, <i>A Historiographical Study</i>; Urbainczyk, <i>Writing about Byzantium</i></p>
<p><b>Hagiography</b> See Magdalino, “Byzantine Holy Man;” Paschalidis, “Hagiography of Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries”</p>	Theodore Prodromos	<i>Life of Meletios</i>	Polemis; tr. Armstrong; see Messis, “Deux versions”
<p><b>Rhetoric</b> On progymnasmata see Chiron and Sans, <i>Les Progymnasmata en pratique</i></p> <p>On ekphrasis, Taxidis, <i>The Ekphraseis</i> with very useful index, 239–41</p>	<p>Nikephoros Basilakes</p> <p>Constantine Manasses</p> <p>Nicholas Mesarites</p>	<p><i>Progymnasmata</i></p> <p><i>Ekphrasis of Earth</i></p> <p><i>Holy Apostles</i></p>	<p>ed.tr. Beneker and Gibson; see Loukaki, “Training Students”</p> <p>Lampsidis; see Nilsson, “Narrating images,” 124–26</p> <p>Downey; see Daskas, “New critical perspectives”</p>

<b>'LONG' POEMS</b>	Nicholas of Kerkyra	<i>Resignation poem</i>	Strano; see Mullett, "Poetics of <i>paraitesis</i> "
	Nicholas Mouzalon	<i>Resignation poem</i>	Strano; see Mullett, "Poetics of <i>paraitesis</i> ;" Chryssogelos, "Author and politics"
	'Alexios I Komnenos'	<i>The Muses</i>	Maas; see Mullett, "Imperial Renewal," "Whose Muses?"
	Constantine Stilbes	<i>Fires of 1197</i>	Diethard and Hörandner; tr. Layman
	Anon	<i>Toothache poem</i>	Giulia Maria Paoletti in progress
	Michael Glykas	<i>From Prison</i>	Krumbacher; see Bourbouhakis, "Political Personae"
	Anonymous Malta	<i>Exile poem</i>	ed. Vassis and Polemis; see Lauxtermann, "Tomi, Mljet, Malta"
	Constantine Manasses	<i>Itinerary</i>	Chryssogelos, <i>Odoiporikon</i> ; tr. Aerts; see Nilsson, <i>Raconter Byzance</i> , 202–08; <i>Writer and Occasion</i> , 46–54
<b>HYBRIDS</b>			
Vita+florilegium	Nicholas Kataskepenos	<i>Life of Cyril Phileotes</i>	Sargologos; see Mullett, "Literary Biography"
Tragedy+lament	'Gregory of Nazianzos'	<i>Christos Paschon</i>	Tuilier; see Puchner, "Theaterwissenschaftliche;" Mullett, "Contexts"
Mock-epic+tragedy	Theodore Prodromos	<i>War of Cats and Mice</i>	Hunger; see Marciniak and Warcaba, "Mock-epic"
Semeioma+tragedy+lament	Andronikos <i>protekdikos</i>	<i>Cannibal Poem</i>	Macrides, <i>Cannibal Poem</i>
Epistolary narrative	Multiple nested	<i>Partial Account</i>	Meyer

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