

From Ancient Models to Byzantine Literature:

Studying Classics in Byzantium

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Ancient Greek literature was an important source of inspiration and imitation for Byzantine authors: they modelled their language on the Attic authors of the Classical period, were inspired by ancient genres, and included numerous allusions to and quotations from ancient literature in their writings. The role of ancient texts in Byzantine literary culture is inextricably connected to education and scholarship: Byzantine scholars and teachers appropriated ancient literature to express contemporary didactic aims and social values. They taught their students grammar and rhetoric through ancient texts, while also providing them with strategies for creatively engaging with the literature of the past. This lecture explores the close connection between education and literary production by studying various texts that facilitate the use of ancient literature in Byzantine literary culture. It addresses such questions as how Byzantine scholars and authors perceive their relationship to the authors of the past and how they translate the study of ancient models into new literary products expressing contemporary literary aesthetics.