



## The Gustav Karlsson Lecture on Byzantine Culture and Literature 2022:

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### *Readerly pleasures in Byzantium*

#### ABSTRACT

As in other pre-modern societies with rich written traditions, so also in Byzantium, reading constituted a seminal part in the making of shared culture as well as the formation of individuals. It offered entertainment and information, it produced systems of knowledge, and functioned as a decisive tool for social advancement; for, in a world of limited literacy, those few who could cultivate substantially their reading skills commanded a capital of learnedness that was often translated into illustrious careers.

But reading was much more than that. Reading was also associated with the ideal person and the hope for a better way of life. Christian saints, those major heroes in Byzantine cultural imagination, were often depicted as model readers, for whom reading was instrumental in their ability to transform themselves, transcend the world, and enter spaces of otherworldly pleasure. The present talk explores the ways in which the high value of reading and, particularly, its association with various kinds of pleasure were constructed and conceived in Byzantium.

The lecture takes place on **Tuesday, December 20, 2022**, at **19h** (Athens time), at the Swedish Institute at Athens, Mitseon 9, and via zoom link.

To participate either at the Institute or via Zoom, please register at <https://www.sia.gr/en/events.php?eid=306#ParticipationForm>.

Warmly welcome!