

In conclusion, the volume provides a useful overview of past and especially recent work on eleventh-century Byzantium with a strong regional focus. The authors offer discussion on a range of important issues and promote further research into the eleventh century, while its many new data sets can be further used in multidisciplinary and comparative studies.

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DRPIĆ (I.) **Epigram, Art, and Devotion in Later Byzantium**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Pp. 490, illus. £120. 9781107151512.  
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The primary subject that Ivan Drpić is concerned with is dedicatory epigrams as they appear in artworks, and the volume as a whole thus falls within the compass of patronage studies. Yet it does not pose the traditional questions about patronage, which usually focus on the patron as a historical person in their specific individualities and circumstances. Rather, it investigates the larger thought and spirit of the milieu that patrons themselves inhabit.

This is a beguilingly good book, beguiling because it is so smoothly written and lucid that it is not until the reader is more than halfway through that they begin to grasp the prodigious leaps of interpretation that are underway. Take, for example, chapter 2, on the (apparently) modest subject of *kosmos*. This is a term that refers generally to adornment, embellishment or ornamentation, although it is also used, by extension, for the metal revetments that often encase Byzantine icons from the twelfth century onwards. To our modern sensibility, it thus carries with it implications of attractive but minor decoration. For the Byzantines, however, as Drpić argues, nothing could be further from the truth, and he brilliantly finds a connection between *kosmos* and the twentieth-century French philosopher Jacques Derrida's conception of the frame. In *The Truth in Painting* ((Chicago 1987), 37–82), Derrida contends that the frame, often considered, like adornment, to be surplus to the artwork, is indispensable to it; indeed, he even asserts that it is through the operations of the frame that a work comes to be constituted as an artwork. Drpić, by means of a virtuoso unpacking of epigrams that might, to the uninitiated, appear by turns to be either obscure or banal, demonstrates that, similarly, elements such as the revetments or jewelled borders of Byzantine art are fundamental components of the artwork. Like the frame, they may be defined as the essential inessential; they 'qualify the object, organize and stage its appearance, and communicate its significance' (161); in many senses, *kosmos* is conceived of as bringing the work to its final completion.

With this notion of a framing that is both extrinsic and intrinsic to the artwork, several new avenues are opened. In chapter 3, in a further stretching of the metaphor, epigrams themselves are treated as '*kosmos*-frames', fashioned 'not from earthly materials, but from the supremely precious stuff of *logos*' (185). They, too, are shown to provide a re-presentation of the primary features of the artwork that comes to form part of the artwork itself. Together, these two chapters constitute the most powerful arguments I am aware of for the interweaving, synergistic operations of revetments, adornments, words and images in Byzantium.

If the dominant concept of the first half of the book is the frame, that of the second half is intense emotionality. This is investigated primarily through the notion of *pothos*, translated as 'desire' or 'longing'. The most significant use of the idea is made in chapter 7, where, in a discussion that broadens out in scope, Drpić examines the issue of icon worship in general. Sidestepping the conventional questions that have so long obsessed Byzantinists regarding theological debates of, for example, the manner in which the icon

might or might not resemble its prototype, he focuses instead on the intimate emotional connection that icons enable between worshipper and holy figure. In this scenario, the image becomes a mediator between the two parties, allowing the ardent desire of the worshipper to (almost) requite itself in the (almost-)presence of the holy figure. In Drpić's recounting, desire is the key that unlocks the mysteries of Byzantine devotions to the icon, more than any pronouncements regarding the ontological status of the icon itself. Although he does not quite go this far, it is but a short step to declare that it is desire that is the cause of the image itself, desire that brings the image into being.

This focus on the emotional drives of the worshipper is a particularly welcome step in Byzantine studies. I wonder if the book does not stand at the beginning of a paradigm shift that will turn more to passion and desire as the motivating forces of so many aspects of cultural and spiritual life. In topic after topic (and special mention must be made here of the vexed issue of reciprocity in relation to gift exchange, examined in chapters 5 and 6), Drpić demonstrates just how useful these are as devices for forging new investigative paths.

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## RECEPTION & HISTORY OF SCHOLARSHIP

DOUGHERTY (C.) **Travel and Home in Homer's *Odyssey* and Contemporary Literature: Critical Encounters and Nostalgic Returns**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. x + 164. £67. 9780198814016.

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In this rewarding book Carol Dougherty brings improvisatory studies (the way human beings, inveterate role-players that we are, adjust our personae and, ultimately, our very characters to cope with new and unexpected circumstances) to bear upon the *Odyssey* and its reception. Given that Odysseus himself is a master of improvisation, and that Homeric poetic technique has improvisation in its DNA, Dougherty argues that her model works particularly well with the *Odyssey* (while being generalizable). She distinguishes her approach both from 'classical tradition' and 'reception' studies, though admitting that there is a substantial amount of simplification in her characterization: the former 'explores the uses of and responses to classical texts ... focusing on the ways that ancient texts have influenced those that followed', whereas the latter focuses 'on the ways that a contemporary text reworks or rejuvenates its ancient model, asking, for example, how Virgil rewrites Homer or what new insights to the *Odyssey* we gain from Walcott's Caribbean epic' (13–14). The temporal direction of movement in the first is from the original text forward, whereas in the second it is from the receiving text backward. Dougherty pleads instead for "simultaneous" readings that participate in an Einsteinian rather than a strict chronological notion of time', following, among others, Walcott himself, who is quoted as saying that chronological thinking will inevitably patronize one or other of the people under consideration, but that 'if you think of art as a simultaneity that is inevitable in terms of certain people, then Joyce is a contemporary of Homer (which Joyce knew)' (15). I am not sure this is radically new. T.S. Eliot had already written in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London 1920), that tradition depends on an historical sense involving 'a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence', which 'compels a man to write not merely with his own generation