
FROM NARRATIVE HISTORIOGRAPHY TO HISTORICAL BIOGRAPHY. NEW TRENDS IN BYZANTINE HISTORICAL WRITING IN THE 10TH –11TH CENTURIES

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It is generally accepted that apart from enjoying a greater flowering than it did, for example, under the Amorian or even earlier dynasties, the historiography produced under the Macedonians displays certain unmistakable features which, taken together, constitute a singular stylistic modernity. I should like to state from the outset that, as a number of the historical works of the era make clear, these features can be identified with the exaltation and laudation of a prominent personality, but also radiate outwards to other, constituent, qualities which then achieve prominence, though – and this is of the utmost importance – without their being echoed in later periods.¹ Much has already been written about ‘palace’ historiography which, having begun to develop with rapidity during the reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (945–959), manifests the above qualities (in having obvious aims), and about historians who strove to remain as unaffected as possible by this authorial and largely ideological trend.² It is worth noting, however, that a writer’s interest in promoting a personage of their choice – from, as a rule, a courtly or military background – was neither limited to nor introduced by the historiography incubated in the imperial palace, as one might have expected, but can actually be ascribed to virtually all the authors of the period. It is therefore quite clear that it constitutes a contemporary *trend* which manifested itself in various cultural contexts, and which clearly warrants systematic research. I should, however, like to note that as far as I know, it was very recently, in the second volume of Alexander Kazhdan’s posthumous, important and uniquely personal work on Byzantine literature, that the term ‘chivalresque historiography’ was first used, in this case with reference to Leo the Deacon and other contemporary

¹ See A. MARKOPOULOS, Byzantine history writing at the end of the first millennium, in P. MAGDALINO (ed.), *Byzantium in the year 1000*. Leiden/Boston 2003, 183–197, *passim*, esp. 184 note 10, which includes the relevant, and in recent years greatly expanded, bibliography. The present paper revises and extends the above, and it would be best if the two were read in tandem. One could also add: E. ANAGNOSTAKIS, *Οὐκ εἶσιν ἐμὰ τὰ γράμματα*. Ιστορία και ιστορίες στον Πορφυρογέννητο. *Σύμμεικτα* 13 (1999) 97–137; A. MARKOPOULOS, Κύρου Παιδεία και Βίος Βασιλείου, ένας πιθανός συσχετισμός, *Σύμμεικτα* 15 (2002) 91–108; A. KARPOZILOS, Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι. Athens 2002, 2, 315 ff., 345 ff. and *passim*; A. KAZHDAN, *A history of Byzantine literature (850–1000)*, ed. C. ANGELIDI. Athens 2006, 133 ff. and *passim*. See also *infra* p. 699 ff.

² MARKOPOULOS, Byzantine history writing (as note 1 above) 189 ff., which includes an initial discussion of the subject. See also *infra* p. 703 ff.

historians.³ Although the term calls to mind classic stereotypes of the Western Middle Ages, it can still, to a certain extent, be used in reference to Byzantium.

It is widely known that the two key historiographical works to emerge from Constantine VII's court – the so-called, by dint of synecdoche, Theophanes Continuatus and Genesios – were written with two ultimate aims in mind: heaping unbounded and unreserved praise on the founder of the Macedonian dynasty, Basil I (867–886), and condemning Michael III (842–867).⁴ If we momentarily set to one side Genesios, who, in any case, explicitly states that he was ordered to write his work by Constantine VII,⁵ the involvement of the latter in the Continuatus project is not so easily discerned; nonetheless, the design of the work and the composition of the prologue to the *Life of Basil*, its fifth and, in retrospect, most important book – as it is very well known –, are ascribed to him, while there can be no doubt that the remaining text of the *Life* is as the emperor initially conceived it.⁶ Individuals from his entourage were

³ KAZHDAN, History (as note 1 above) 273 ff.

⁴ See MARKOPOULOS, Byzantine history writing (as note 1 above) 184–186, with the preceding extensive bibliography which has to be compared with above p. 697 and note 1. It is worth stressing once again that JA.N. LJUBARSKIJ (Man in Byzantine historiography from John Malalas to Michael Psellos. *DOP* 46, 1992, 177–186, esp. 184 =id., *Vizantijskie Istoriki I Pisateli*. St Petersburg 1999, 318–337) rightly notes that the approach adopted to Michael III and Basil I in the Theophanes Continuatus is a typical example of *Schwarzweißmalerei* in Byzantine historiography. KAZHDAN adopts the same stance in his analysis of the *Life of Basil*, describing the text in question as “... totally partisan” (History, see note 1 above, 137). See below p. 699 ff.

⁵ ... ἄτε ταῦτά γε καὶ διατεῖσθαι προστεταγμένος πρὸς Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος (3.14–15, ed. LESMÜLLER-WERNER/THURN). See also H. HUNGER, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*. Munich 1978, 1, 351–352; KAZHDAN, History (as note 1 above) 145; KARPOZILOS, Βυζαντινοὶ ἱστορικοὶ καὶ χρονογράφοι (as note 1 above), 2, 317. Although efforts to identify the historian have yielded little – indeed, it is probably an unfeasible task – I consider it excessive to argue, as KAZHDAN has so fervently, in favour of an anonymous author (*ODB* 3, 828–829 and History, see note 1 above, 145), since Skylitzes' testimony (3.27, ed. THURN) is especially powerful on this point and cannot be ignored. See also KARPOZILOS, Βυζαντινοὶ ἱστορικοὶ καὶ χρονογράφοι (as note 1 above) 2, 315–317. Let me state at this juncture that the link between Joseph (but not Genesios !) mentioned in Skylitzes' preface and Joseph Bringas proposed by J. SIGNES CODOÑER (*El periodo del segundo Iconoclasmo en Theophanes Continuatus*. Amsterdam 1995, xxix–xxxi), is unconvincing.

⁶ It is conceded that we do not know if the *Life of Basil* was written as part of Theophanes Continuatus. See I. ŠEVČENKO, The title of and preface to Theophanes Continuatus. *Bollettino della badia greca di Grottaferrata* 52 (1998) 77–93, esp. 88 and note 13; see also MARKOPOULOS, Κύρου Παιδεία καὶ Βίος Βασιλείου (as note 1 above) 93 and note 9; KARPOZILOS, Βυζαντινοὶ ἱστορικοὶ καὶ χρονογράφοι (as note 1 above) 2, 353–354 and KAZHDAN, History (as note 1 above) 144. Ultimately, the key issue of whether the *Life of Basil* can or cannot be attributed to Constantine remains open to debate, since it would be difficult, perhaps even impossible, to provide conclusive proof one way or the other; see MARKOPOULOS, Byzantine history writing (as in note 1 above) 184 and note 8 and id.,

burdened with the task of writing the remaining four books of the *Continuatus*⁷ in accordance with an entirely pre-specified authorial line; although we do not know their names, we know they each assumed one of a number of competencies (copyist, compiler etc.).⁸

Both Genesios and Theophanes *Continuatus* constitute attempts at making a clean break with the past: the old, formalist style of unbroken historical narrative was largely discarded in favour of historical biography in which the influence of rhetorical methods and tropes can be taken for granted.⁹ We do not know precisely which criteria tipped the balance in favour of such a development, though we would do well to consider both the influence of Antiquity, and writers such as Xenophon and Plutarch, and the close ties which bound biography to hagiography, which from the empire's very beginnings (e.g. *Vita Constantini*) also served as a uniquely Byzantine mode of promoting the image of the emperor.¹⁰ The results, however, were far from uniform:

Κύρου Παιδεία και Βίος Βασιλείου (as note 1 above) 93 and note 5, with the relevant bibliography. Of the more recent surveys, KARPOZIOS (Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονγράφοι, see note 1 above, 2, 355–358) has his reservations, as, earlier, did HUNGER (Profane Literatur, as note 5 above, 1, 340), while KAZHDAN rejects such an attribution outright, considering both the *Life of Basil* and Books I–IV of Theophanes *Continuatus* to be the work of some “... anonymous intellectual at the court of Constantine VII” (History, see note 1 above, 144; also 142).

⁷ On Book VI of Theophanes *Continuatus*, see below p. 703 and note 20.

⁸ For more detail, see ANAGNOSTAKIS, *Ιστορία και ιστορίες* (as note 1 above) 99–109.

⁹ MARKOPOULOS, Byzantine history writing (as note 1 above) 184–185; id., *Κύρου Παιδεία και Βίος Βασιλείου* (as note 1 above) 99 ff.; KARPOZIOS, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονγράφοι* (as note 1 above) 2, 331 ff., 352 ff.; KAZHDAN, *History* (as note 1 above) 149, 151 and *passim*; see also the following note.

¹⁰ Of considerable relevance to this discussion is the article by AV. CAMERON, *Form and meaning. The Vita Constantini and the Vita Antonii*, in T. HÄGG/PH. ROUSSEAU (eds.), *Greek biography and panegyric in late Antiquity*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 2000, 72–88. See also very recently E. AMATO/I. RAMELLI, *L'inedito Πρὸς βασιλέα δι' Ἑμιστίου*. *BZ* 99 (2006) 1–67. Nonetheless, in the light of the texts' importance, it is clear that insufficient progress has been made with regard to the sources, models, structure and narrational technique of both Theophanes *Continuatus* and the *Life of Basil*; there is a clear need for a holistic study. In addition, the older, classic contributions by P. ALEXANDER (Secular biography at Byzantium. *Speculum* 15, 1940, 194–209 = id., *Religious and political history and thought in the Byzantine Empire*. London 1978, no I), R.J.H. JENKINS (The classical background of the *Scriptores post Theophanem*. *DOP* 8, 1954, 13–30 = id., *Studies on Byzantine history of the 9th and 10th centuries*. London 1979, no IV) and A.P. KAZHDAN (O sostave tak nazyvaemoj ‘Khroniki prodolzatelej Feofana’. *VV* 15, 1961, 76–96; id., *Kniga carej i žizneopisanie Vasilija*. *VV* 21, 1962, 95–117), having now been fully utilized, have nothing else to yield. Recent years have seen historians turn to the search for motifs, narrational tropes and possible paradigms put to suitable use by Porphyrogennetos' entourage during the writing of, chiefly, the *Life of Basil*. See, for instance, E. ANAGNOSTAKIS, *Το επεισόδιο της Δανηλίδας. Πληροφορίες καθημερινού βίου ή μυθοπλαστικά στοιχεία*; in CH. ANGELIDI (ed.), *Η καθημε-*

Genesios and the first four books of *Continuatus* tell of the same authorial environment, share contiguous guidelines and describe the lives of emperors; it is also more than obvious, despite everything that has been written, that they drew upon common sources, especially with regard to Basil's personality, mythical lineage and achievements.¹¹ They differ in terms of the period they cover (*Genesios* deals with 813–886; the fourth book of the *Continuatus* draws to a close with the assassination of Michael III [867]), and in terms of style, which is only natural, as multiple authors were involved in their composition. *Genesios* evinces obvious signs of a hastily written, unfinished text: consid-

ρινή ζωή στο Βυζάντιο. Athens 1989, 375–390; id., Το επεισόδιο του Αδριανού. 'Πρόγνωσης' και 'τελεσθέντων δήλωσις', in N. MOSCHONAS (ed.), Η επικοινωνία στο Βυζάντιο. Athens 1993, 195–226; id., Ιστορία και ιστορίες (as note 1 above) passim esp. 130–131; P. A. AGAPITOS, Η εικόνα του αυτοκράτορα Βασιλείου Α' στη φιλομακεδονική γραμματεία 867–959. *Ελληνικά* 40 (1989) 285–322, esp. 306 ff.; MARKOPOULOS, Κύρου Παιδεία και Βίος Βασιλείου (as note 1 above) 93–96 and passim. An especially painstaking literary analysis of Theophanes *Continuatus* written using classic tools is that by J. A. N. LJUBARSKIJ, *Prodolžatel' Feofana. Žizneopisanie vizantijskih carej*. St Petersburg 1992, 201–265, who notes that, with the exception of JENKINS, contemporary academe has failed to recognize the full aesthetic value of the work (Man in Byzantine Historiography, see note 4 above, 183–184). Finally, one could describe as somewhat excessive the critique of Alexander's views recently proffered by KAZHDAN, *History* (as note 1 above) 142, who essentially argues in favour of the originality of the *Life of Basil*, something which no one, let alone Alexander, has ever doubted.

- ¹¹ On the much-discussed question of whether Theophanes *Continuatus* and *Genesios* used common sources – I, for one, think there can no longer be any doubt that they did –, see MARKOPOULOS, Byzantine history writing (as note 1 above) 186 note 18 and KARPOZILOS, Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι (as note 1 above) 2, 318–324. The bibliography on the mythological narratives surrounding the leading figure in the Macedonian dynasty has expanded considerably. I note at random: G. MORAVCSIK, *Sagen und Legenden über Kaiser Basileios I.* *DOP* 15 (1961) 61–126 (=id., *Studia Byzantina*. Amsterdam 1967, 147–220); P. MAGDALINO, Observations on the Nea Ekklesia of Basil I. *JÖB* 37 (1987) 51–64; id., Basil I, Leo VI, and the feast of the Prophet Elijah. *JÖB* 38 (1988) 193–196; AGAPITOS, *Εικόνα* (as note 10 above) 285–297, 306 ff.; ANAGNOSTAKIS, Το επεισόδιο της Δανιηλίδας (as note 10 above) 388–390; A. MARKOPOULOS, An anonymous laudatory poem in honor of Basil I. *DOP* 46 (1992) 225–232 (=id., *History and literature of Byzantium in the 9th–10th centuries*. Aldershot 2004, no XIV); id., Constantine the Great in Macedonian historiography: models and approaches, in P. MAGDALINO (ed.), *New Constantines*. Aldershot 1994, 159–170, esp. 160–164 (=id., *History and literature of Byzantium*, see above, no XV); id., Kaiser Basileios I. und Hippolytos. Sage und Geschichte, in I. VASSIS et al. (eds.), *Lesarten. Festschrift für Athanasios Kambylis zum 70. Geburtstag* dargebracht von Schülern, Kollegen und Freunden. Berlin/New York 1998, 81–91 (=id., *History and literature of Byzantium*, see above, no XIX, in English); id., Κύρου Παιδεία και Βίος Βασιλείου (as note 1 above) 100–103 and note 59; A. SCHMINCK, The beginnings and origins of the 'Macedonian' Dynasty, in J. BURKE/R. SCOTT (eds.), *Byzantine Macedonia, identity, image and history*. Melbourne 2000, 61–68. On the historical view of this mythological framing, see G. DAGRON, *Empereur et prêtre*. Paris 1996, 201 ff., 205 ff. See also below p. 701 and note 14.

erable repetition, mutually contradictory accounts of the same event, and, in its fourth and last book, an obvious hankering to incorporate disparate events, such as Michael's reign and the new era ushered in by Basil, into a unitary whole.¹² The *Life of Basil* is clearly different: its narrative is detailed and impressively lucid, its rhetorical underpinnings unusually robust, the feel of a Menander-style imperial eulogy especially pronounced (in its presentation of Basil's family life in an entirely Christian setting, his noble descent from the Arsacids and Constantine the Great, his physical strength, his mercy, his sense of justice¹³, his virtues in times of war and peace, his peaceful death etc.),¹⁴ though it does not slavishly follow older, standardized conceptions of biographical writing. Prevailing academic wisdom would also have it that the *Life of Basil* tends more towards the form of a grandiose *speculum principis* with structural elements that allude to virtually novelistic motifs and techniques.¹⁵

¹² KAZHDAN (History, see note 1 above, 144–152) recently published an extensive parallel reading of Theophanes Continuatus and Genesios which, containing numerous notes on the individual features of the two works, was based on guidelines specified by LJUBARSKI (Man in Byzantine historiography, see note 4 above, 184) and differed considerably from the conjectures he formerly espoused in relation to the sources, stating that the *Life of Basil* predated both the other books in Theophanes Continuatus and Genesios; see also KARPOZIOS, Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι (as note 1 above) 2, 317 ff., 345 ff. On Genesios' style in particular, see HUNGER, Profane Literatur (as note 5 above) 1, 353–354, who, however, restricts himself in the main to linguistic problems posed by the work. More relevant to the issue at hand are the comments made by KARPOZIOS, Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι (as note 1 above) 2, 327–329). See also very recently G. M. GRECO, Sulla lingua e sullo stile di Giuseppe Genesio. *Siculorum Gymnasium* 57 (2004) 333–352.

¹³ On the issue of Basil dispensing justice, see A. E. LAIOU, Law, justice, and the Byzantine historians: ninth–twelfth centuries, in A. E. LAIOU/D. SIMON (eds.), Law and society in Byzantium: ninth–twelfth centuries. Washington, D.C. 1994, 151–185, esp. 154–156.

¹⁴ See above p. 700 and note 11, which contain the bibliography relevant to mythological motifs relating to Basil. On the narratives dealing with the lineage of the founder of the Macedonian dynasty, see B. KRSMANOVIĆ/N. RADOŠEVIĆ, Legendarne genealogije vizantijskih careva i njihovih porodica. *ZRVI* 41 (2004) 71–98, esp. 77–81 and very recently É. PATLAGEAN, Un Moyen Âge grec. Byzance IX^e–XV^e siècle. Paris 2007, 108–111.

¹⁵ A widely accepted proposition put forward by AGAPITOS (Εἰκόνα, see note 10 above, 311–312). See, e.g. MARKOPOULOS, Byzantine history writing (as note 1 above) 186; id., Κύρου Παιδεία και Βίος Βασιλείου (as note 1 above) 95, 100–101; KARPOZIOS, Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι (as note 1 above) 2, 356; KAZHDAN, History (as note 1 above) 149. On the *speculum principis* in Byzantium up until the 11th century, see K. PAIDAS, Η θεματική των βυζαντινών «κατόπτρων ηγεμόνος» της πρώιμης και μέσης περιόδου (398–1085). Athens 2005. I note that although the critical reading of the *Life of Basil* proffered by KAZHDAN (History, see note 1 above, 139–144) summarizes a good deal, it fails to distance itself from various stereotypes he espoused early in his career: for example, that the author of the *Life of Basil* deliberately painted an idyllic view of life in

Personally, I consider *Genesios* and *Theophanes Continuatus* to be *test runs* at writing a historiographical work whose primary aim it was to exalt a *single* person who qualifies for reasons given.¹⁶ Moreover, these texts manifest concrete choices made by the palace with regard to the form and symbols used, but also to their content, since they are predominantly and intensely didactic, a characteristic which clearly stems from the design of the works in question; it is indicative that the reader of *Genesios* – and, even more so, of the *Life of Basil* – is inducted into an *ethical* paragon which they are exhorted to emulate in their everyday lives, seeing that the founder of the Macedonian dynasty is elevated to “...καὶ τοῖς ἐκγόνοις ἐκείνου οἴκοθεν εἴη ἀνεστηκὼς ὁ πρὸς ἀρετὴν κανὼν τε καὶ ἀνδριὰς καὶ τὸ ἀρχέτυπον τῆς μιμήσεως”¹⁷ in a clear attempt at mythologizing. It may thus be legitimate to speak of a new *type* of historical writing which, incorporating obvious narrational features, is specifically designed for the extremely beautified career of its subject¹⁸; indeed, one could talk of a form of *catharsis* in the State – in this case, with the death of Michael III – which has in essence been prophesized or justified by God, whose presence can be discerned in the host of divine signs recorded in the work. In this way, the violence committed against the last of the Amorion line is incorporated into the historical narrative as a generally accepted phenomenon¹⁹.

the countryside to chime with Porphyrogennetos’ policy towards farmers, which was diametrically opposed to the view maintained by Romanos I Lekapenos (919–944) on the same issue.

¹⁶ KAZHDAN (History, see note 1 above, 151) rightly considers both works to assign precedence to their protagonist at the expense of chronological narration. For a more theoretical approach to the matter, though one that does not cover the period examined here, see the recent paper by H.-A. THÉOLOGITIS, *La forza del destino: Lorsque l’histoire devient littérature*, in P. ODORICO (ed.), *L’écriture de la mémoire. La littérature de l’historiographie*. Paris 2006, 181–219, esp. 190 ff. and passim. On the development of the phenomenon in later eras, see the general but always interesting comments of A. KAZHDAN/A. WHARTON EPSTEIN, *Change in Byzantine culture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1985, 196 ff., 204 ff., 210 ff., 220 ff.

¹⁷ *Life of Basil*, prologue 212. 11–13 (ed. BEKKER). – See AGAPITOS, *Εἰκόνα* (as note 10 above) 310–311. A more theoretical approach, albeit one with a different axis, is provided by H. A. THÉOLOGITIS, *Pour une typologie du roman à Byzance. Les héros romanesques et leur appartenance générique*. *JÖB* 54 (2004) 207–233, esp. 218–221, 233.

¹⁸ I do not think there can be any doubt that Porphyrogennetos was consciously breaking new ground when he chose the innovative composition of *Theophanes Continuatus* and – still more – the *Life of Basil*. See recently MARKOPOULOS, *Κύρου Παιδεία και Βίος Βασιλείου* (as note 1 above) 100–101 and note 54; KAZHDAN, *History* (as note 1 above) 139.

¹⁹ “... καὶ τούτων ἐπιλειπόντων ἤδη ἀνάγκη ἦν...καὶ ναοὺς περισυλᾶσθαι καὶ εὐαγεῖς οἴκους αἰχμαλωτίζεσθαι καὶ πάντας τοὺς πλεόντων ἄλλων κεκτημένους εἰς χρήματα ἀναιρεῖσθαι καὶ ἀποσφάττεσθαι. δι’ ἃ δὴ πάντα συμφρονήσαντες τῶν ἐν τέλει οἱ δοκιμώτατοι καὶ τὸ

Genesios and Theophanes Continuatus are the best known – but not the only – works representative of this newly-minted style of historical writing. The sixth book of the Theophanes Continuatus, which was definitely written after, if not long after, the death of Porphyrogennētos,²⁰ contains a specific reference to Manuel the protospatharios and judge who dedicated eight books to describing the deeds of the celebrated military commander John Kourkouas: “...οἱ δὲ λαμπρῶς ποθοῦντες καὶ θέλοντες μαθεῖν τὰς τοῦ Ἰωάννου Κουρκούα ἀριστείας καὶ συγγραφὰς εὐρήσουσιν ἐν ὀκτὼ βιβλίοις ἐκτεθείσας παρὰ Μανουὴλ πρωτοσπαθάρου καὶ κριτοῦ”.²¹ One can conclude from the Continuatus’ account that Manuel’s historical work has been used at numerous points in the text and, moreover, that this writer, known from no other source and perhaps identifiable with the historian Manuel listed in John Skylitzes’ preamble (3.27), composed a biography in Kourkouas’ honour which contained all the rhetorical features of which we have just spoken (noble descent, education, compassion, performance in battle etc.). At the same time, Kourkouas clearly emerges from Manuel’s work as a formal example of the ideal military man, though without additional virtues.²²

While Manuel’s lengthy work has survived indirectly in a limited number of fragments, precisely the opposite is true of the so-called second version of the chronicle of Symeon the Logothete (henceforth: Log B), which is believed to have been written during the reign of Nikephoros Phokas (963–969), though we can rule out the possibility that its composition dates to the rule of Phokas’ heir, John Tzimiskes (969–976).²³ The Logothete’s chronicle was published in

ἔμφρον τῆς συγκλήτου βουλῆς, διὰ τῶν προκοιτούντων τοῖς βασιλεῦσι στρατιωτῶν, ἐν τοῖς παλατίοις τοῦ ἁγίου μάρτυρος Μάμαντος ἀναιροῦσιν αὐτόν, ἐκ τῆς ἄγαν οἰνοφλυγίας ἀνεπαισθήτως τὸν ὕπνον τῷ θανάτῳ συνάψαντα” (*Vita Basilii* 254. 12–20). For a recent analysis of the sources that deal with the assassination of Michael III, see KARPOZIOLOS, Βυζαντινοὶ ιστορικοὶ καὶ χρονογράφοι (as note 1 above) 2, 367–389. An especially interesting view of relevance to the present discussion is proposed by H. R. JAUSS, *Theory of genres and medieval literature*, in id., *Toward an aesthetic of reception*. Brighton/Minnesota 1982, 76–110.

²⁰ It is now generally accepted that Book VI of Theophanes Continuatus did not figure in the initial design of this great work and was added considerably later. See, for instance, HUNGER, *Profane Literatur* (as note 5 above) 1, 342–343; SIGNES CODOÑER, *El periodo del segundo Iconoclasmo* (as note 5 above) ix–x; KARPOZIOLOS, Βυζαντινοὶ ιστορικοὶ καὶ χρονογράφοι (as note 1 above) 2, 359–360; KAZHDAN, *History* (as note 1 above) 167.

²¹ 427.20–428.2 (ed. Bekker). – Skylitzes (230. 33–37) paraphrases the text of Theophanes Continuatus.

²² See A. MARKOPOULOS, *Η ιστοριογραφία των δυνατῶν κατὰ τη μεσοβυζαντινὴ περίοδο. Ο Ἰωάννης Κουρκούας στην ιστορική συγγραφή του πρωτοσπαθάρου καὶ κριτῆ Μανουήλ. Παρουσία* 17–18 (2004–2005) 397–405.

²³ See MARKOPOULOS, *Byzantine history writing* (as note 1 above) 187–189, with the previous bibliography; KARPOZIOLOS, Βυζαντινοὶ ιστορικοὶ καὶ χρονογράφοι (as note 1 above) 2, 358–364, 399–400; KAZHDAN, *History* (as note 1 above) 162–170 (with a

this form in 1922 by Istrin;²⁴ written in a higher register than the first version (henceforth: Log A), its salient features include a lengthy laudation lavished on Nikephoros Phokas the Elder, the grandfather of the man who would later be emperor.²⁵ It must be stated at this point that Log A, which comes to an abrupt end in 948, the year of Romanos Lekapenos' death, totally departs from Log B in maintaining a friendly stance towards the latter, an attitude which is evident at several points in the narrative of the chronicle's final section.²⁶ That the chronicler is favourably disposed towards the emperor, however, does not necessarily imply that the Log A made use of a biographical/laudatory pro-Romanos composition in the writing of his chronicle. On the contrary, both the Log B as published by Istrin, and another variant of it known as the Vaticanus gr. 163,²⁷ reveal the use of an unknown but lengthy pro-Phokas text in circulation at the time, fragments from which are artfully embedded in the Log B. Research has already revealed that Nikephoros Phokas, and hence the Phokas family as a whole, have been praised in a variety of ways in texts ranging from scholarly to populist, beginning with historical works, traces of which are discernible in Leo the Deacon and Skylitzes, to whom we shall turn below, as well as in the Log B and other works, continuing with genealogies such as the one used by Michael Attaleiates (which includes a note for the reader stating that the Phokas family traced its line back to the Fabii), services, references to hagiographic texts, inscriptions etc, and ending with the pride of

number of omissions). See also S. WAHLGREN (rec.), *Symeonis magistri et logothetae chronicon*. *CFHB*, 44/1. Berlin/New York 2006, 5*–7*, which is sceptical about the dating. The same author is currently working on a critical edition of the Log B; see also below note 25.

²⁴ V.M. ISTRIN, *Khronika Georgija Amartola v drevnem slavjanorusskom perevod*. Petrograd 1922, 2, 1–65; WAHLGREN, *Symeonis magistri et logothetae chronicon* (as note 23 above) 84*, 133*.

²⁵ See Log B 20.19–21.13; 22. 20–31; 24. 19–33; 28.12–23 (Istrin). Still useful H. GRÉGOIRE, *La carrière du premier Nicéphore Phocas*, in: *Προσφορά εἰς Στυλιανὸν Π. Κυριακίδη*. Thessaloniki 1953, 232–254, esp. 240 ff., 250 ff. See also infra note 27.

²⁶ See e.g. Log A 136. 33 (WAHLGREN). See also MARKOPOULOS, *Byzantine history writing* (as note 1 above) 188–189 and WAHLGREN, *Symeonis magistri et logothetae chronicon* (as note 23 above) 7*.

²⁷ A. MARKOPOULOS, *Le témoignage du Vaticanus gr. 163 pour la période entre 945–963*. *Σύμμεικτα* 3 (1979) 83–119 (=id., *History and literature of Byzantium*, see note 11 above, no III); WAHLGREN, *Symeonis magistri et logothetae chronicon* 44*–45*, 84*. Especially noteworthy is the fact that the text of the Vaticanus codex is, for the years 945–959, extremely close to the narrative of the last part of Book VI of Theophanes Continuatus, which is particularly pro-Porphyrogenetos. The possibility that an unknown encomium to Constantine VII is the source of both the Vaticanus gr. 163 and Theophanes Continuatus cannot be ruled out.

place John Geometres affords in his poetry to praising Nikephoros.²⁸ Michael Psellos' statement that there were numerous texts on Phokas in circulation during the 11th century which one could easily consult for information relating to Nikephoros' life and achievements, is therefore well-founded.²⁹

Leo the Deacon, who probably composed his *History* at the close of the 10th century, manages to combine the continuous narrative technique with the prescribed structure for biographical texts. His chosen method involved selecting two key figures, in this case the emperors Nikephoros Phokas and John Tzimiskes, and one secondary figure – Svjatoslav, the leader of the Rus – and weaving his narrative around them, attempting to impose order on heterogeneous material including historical sources (which he does not cite),³⁰ verbal testimonies and letters. He devotes almost five entire books to each of the emperor-generals, while Svjatoslav is introduced in the fifth and appears occasionally until the ninth.³¹ A host of other figures orbit these three figures – including Leo Phokas, Joseph Bringas and the general Pastilas – in whom Leo displays varying amounts of interest. None of these tertiary figures, however, score high on the scale of virtues Leo seeks to promote; indeed, their primary function may well be to act as foils for his three archetypal subjects.³²

²⁸ A. MARKOPOULOS, Zu den Biographien des Nikephoros Phokas. *JÖB* 38 (1988) 225–233 (=id., History and literature of Byzantium, see note 11 above, no XIII); id., Constantine the Great (as note 11 above) 166 ff.; R. MORRIS, The two faces of Nikephoros Phokas. *BMGS* 12 (1988) 83–115; M. LAUXTERMANN, John Geometres – Poet and Soldier. *Byz* 68 (1998) 356–380, esp. 366–367; id., Byzantine poetry from Pisides to Geometres. Vienna 2003, 1, 232–236, 305–306, 309–312; also id., Byzantine poetry and the paradox of Basil II's reign, in MAGDALINO, Byzantium in the year 1000 (as note 1 above) 199–216, esp. 207–208. See also KAZHDAN, History (as note 1 above) 273–278, 287 ff. and more recently E.-S. KIPRIDOU, Η Σύνοψη Ιστοριών του Ιωάννη Σκυλίτζη και οι πηγές της. PhD dissertation, University of Ioannina 2006, 244–252 (unpublished).

²⁹ ... Ὑπὲρ τοῦ βασιλέως Νικηφόρου τοῦ Φωκά πολλοὶ τῶν κατ' ἐκείνον καὶ τῶν [οὐ] μετ' οὐ πολὺ ὕστερον διεξοδικὰ συγγράμματα ἐκδεδώκασι καὶ ὁ ἀναγινώσκων ἐκεῖνα εἴσεται, ὅποσα ὁ ἀνὴρ οὗτος ἐν τε ἰδιώτου σχήματι ἐν τε βασιλείᾳ κατώρθωκεν (*Historia syntomos* 98. 82–85, § 105, ed. AERTS).

³⁰ A.-M. TALBOT/D.F. SULLIVAN (transl.), The history of Leo the Deacon. Byzantine military expansion in the tenth century. Washington, D.C. 2005, 14. KAZHDAN conjectures a great deal that would be extremely hard to prove (History, see note 1 above, 281).

³¹ See A. MARKOPOULOS, Ζητήματα κοινωνικού φύλου στον Λέοντα τον Διάκονο, in S. KAKLAMANIS et al. (eds.), Ενθύμησις Νικολάου Μ. Παναγιωτάκη. Herakleio 2000, 475–493, esp. 481 ff. (=id., History and literature of Byzantium (as note 11 above) no XXIII, in English); KARPOZIOLOS, Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι (as note 1 above) 2, 475–525, esp. 484–485; KAZHDAN, History (as note 1 above) 278–289, esp. 283–286. See also TALBOT/SULLIVAN, The history of Leo the Deacon (as note 30 above) 25.

³² MARKOPOULOS, Ζητήματα κοινωνικού φύλου (as note 31 above) 484–485, 491; KAZHDAN, History (as note 1 above) 284.

Leo the Deacon praises his main characters in a manner diametrically opposed to that adopted in Genesios and Porphyrogennetos.³³ For his part, Leo honours their virility and bravery on the battlefield while expressing nothing but scorn for palace life, which does not square with his image of the emperor.³⁴ He embellishes his narrative with *somato(psycho)grafemata* which Ljubarskij has attempted to codify,³⁵ and which form fascinating portraits, two or even three of which can deal with a single individual, thus introducing an element of constant variation. Structurally interrelated, they often operate cumulatively in the manner of a ritual to heighten intensity.³⁶ Overall, however, one can say that the virtues these *somato(psycho)grafemata* choose to underscore are decidedly earthly, and that the heroes themselves are not far removed from mortal men; Leo's protagonists excel as leaders on the field of battle and defend the Empire against infidel Arabs and Rus, but can also be fond of drink, fall easy prey to a woman's erotic allure, or, rendered powerless by human treachery and violence, be assassinated without raising a finger in their defence.³⁷ Leo's is not the ideal, almost Neoplatonic world of the *Life of Basil*, where everything functions in a predetermined direction, and even death displays perfect timing; his is an entirely human and frequently fragile world whose heroes' flaws serve the same didactic purpose as their virtues – which is something Porphyrogennetos reserves for the enemies of the Macedonian dynasty's standard-bearer. These diametrically opposed views on what is proper and moral signify different authorial starting points, but also the ideological underpinnings of a new era with its own distinct intellectual processes.

In an article which remains very interesting after many decades, M. Sjuzjumov argues that both Leo the Deacon and John Skylitzes drew upon a pair of unknown texts which were pro and anti the Phokas family respectively;³⁸ Sjuzjumov also made an attempt at dating the two works, employing non-transparent criteria to assign their composition to the late 10th

³³ See the interesting recent perspective of L. HOFFMANN, *Geschichtsschreibung oder Rhetorik? Zum logos parakletikos bei Leon Diakonos*, in M. GRÜNBART (ed.), *Theatron. Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter*. Berlin/New York 2007, 105–139.

³⁴ MARKOPOULOS, *Ζητήματα κοινωνικού φύλου* (as note 31 above) 481.

³⁵ JA.N. LJUBARSKIJ, *Zamečanija ob obrazah i hudožestvennoj prirode «Istorii» L'va Djakona*, in *Vizantijskie Očerki*. Moscow 1991, 150–162, esp. 152–153 (= id., *Vizantijskie Istoriki i Pisateli*, see note 4 above, 149–160); also id., *Man in Byzantine Historiography* (as note 4 above) 179–180 and *passim*.

³⁶ MARKOPOULOS, *Ζητήματα κοινωνικού φύλου* (as note 31 above) 482 ff.; see also KARPOZIOS, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι* (as note 1 above) 2, 484–485; KAZHDAN, *History* (as note 1 above) 285.

³⁷ MARKOPOULOS, *Ζητήματα κοινωνικού φύλου* (as note 31 above) 485, 490.

³⁸ M. SJUZZUMOV, *Ob istochnikakh L'va Djakona i Skilitsii*. *Vizantiiskoe Obozrenie* 2 (1916) 106–166.

or early 11th century. Sjuzjumov's views were given a fresh lease of life by Kazhdan with only minor alterations (Kazhdan believes the pro-Phokas text included Tzimiskes' reign), and have presided over the literature ever since.³⁹ Of course, we cannot rule out the possibility of Leo having made use of a work from the pro-Phokas literature, with which he was clearly familiar. Indeed, I have reservations as to how much he actually drew upon an anti-Phokas text: both Sjuzjumov and Kazhdan base their arguments on certain comments in the *History* which display elements of *Kaiserkritik* with regard to Phokas, while it is widely accepted that this is a feature of Leo's style. He is critical of the ruling dynasty, sometimes extremely so, the prime example being his well-known criticism of the emperor Basil II (976–1025), though he composes an exceedingly laudatory text to the same figure.⁴⁰ As I see it, Leo's – ultimately mild – criticism of Phokas⁴¹ is one thing, and his having used an anti-Phokas work for exactly the same purpose quite another: any assertion to this effect should surely be backed up by additional and more persuasive proof.⁴²

John Skylitzes, whose *Synopsis Historion* is structurally unrelated to Leo's work, presents us with a range of different and more complex issues. It is indicative that Holmes considers the chronicler's coverage of Phokas' reign entirely schizophrenic, seeing that the writer oscillates between absolute praise for the emperor and equally absolute rejection;⁴³ more recently, Kiapidou, too, studied the issue in depth for her doctoral thesis on the chronicler's sources and reached similar conclusions, even if she does adopt a rather sympathetic stance towards Skylitzes.⁴⁴ The extent to which Skylitzes made use of pro- and anti-Phokas works – a possibility we cannot rule out – is interwoven with another question, which Kiapidou poses: whether the chronicler studied Leo

³⁹ A. P. KAZHDAN, *Istočniki L' va Djakona i Skilitisy dlja istorii tretej četverti X stoletija*. VV 20 (1961) 106–128. The author makes no additional comment in his new *History*. The argument proposed in the meantime by JA. N. LJUBARSKIJ (Nikephoros Phokas in Byzantine Historical Writings. *Byzantinoslavica* 54, 1993, 245–253) – that a pro-Phokas text existed which provided material both for Leo the Deacon and, to a lesser degree and somewhat selectively, for Skylitzes and Psellos – share KAZHDAN's orientation. A short summary of the additional bibliography is provided by TALBOT/SULLIVAN, *The History of Leo the Deacon* (as note 30 above) 13–15 and esp. note 41, while both KARPOZILOS, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι* (as note 1 above) 2, 477–478, and KIIAPIDOU, *Σύνοψη Ιστοριών* (as note 28 above) 253 and note 72, 257 note 82, 263 ff., 286 ff., 288–294 offered more detailed accounts. See also C. HOLMES, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976–1025)*. Oxford 2005, 95 and notes 62–63, 223.

⁴⁰ MARKOPOULOS, *Ζητήματα κοινωνικού φύλου* (as note 31 above) 478 and note 12. A recent reading of the encomium from KAZHDAN, *History* (as note 1 above) 279–280.

⁴¹ KIIAPIDOU, *Σύνοψη Ιστοριών* (as note 28 above) 261, 291.

⁴² See also below p. 708 ff.

⁴³ HOLMES, *Basil II* (as note 39 above) 94–95 and note 62.

⁴⁴ KIIAPIDOU, *Σύνοψη Ιστοριών* (as note 28 above) 283–288. See also above note 39.

the Deacon's text.⁴⁵ The issue remains unresolved despite the well-known reference in the classic preamble to his chronicle as Ἀσιανὸς Λέων (3.28) and Kazhdan's occasional – and probably axiomatic – assertions.⁴⁶ The problem posed by the sources Skylitzes employed as an *apparatchik* of the Comnenian court⁴⁷ arose from the confusion that surrounds the manner in which they were used; the famous preamble with which he prefaced his work, and in which he lists a vast number of chroniclers and historians, many of whose works are now lost, has always posed a challenge to academics, who lack contemporary sources for the period starting with Basil II's ascent to the throne. Both Holmes and Kiapidou have recently re-examined this list of authors, and I no longer believe the subject has anything new to yield.⁴⁸ I must stress, however, that among the fellow chroniclers Skylitzes mentions, apart from Genesisios⁴⁹ and Leo the Deacon, there are at least another two scholars who wrote biographies: Manuel, the probable biographer of Kourkouas,⁵⁰ and Theodore of Sebasteia, to whom the lost biography of emperor Basil II has been ascribed (3.28–4.30).⁵¹ That said, we still do not know which of Theodore Daphnopates' works the chronicler used or perhaps hinted at (3.16);⁵² whether the *Historia syntomos*, with its purely biographical design, or Psellos' *Chronography* lies behind the harsh criticism levelled at the ὑπατος τῶν φιλοσόφων (3.19);⁵³ or

⁴⁵ Ibid., 234 and passim.

⁴⁶ See above note 39. Though inspired, KIIPIΔOY's hypothesis (Σύνοψη Ιστοριῶν, see note 28 above, 291–294) that an unknown copyist incorporated two passages from Leo the Deacon into Skylitzes' text is hard, if not impossible, to prove.

⁴⁷ The term is HOLMES', Basil II (as note 39 above) 87.

⁴⁸ HOLMES, Basil II (as note 39 above) 91–99, 121–125, 548–550; KIIPIΔOY, Σύνοψη Ιστοριῶν (as note 28 above) 22–26. Still very useful B. FLUSIN/J.-C. CHEYNET, Jean Skylitzès. Empereurs de Constantinople. Paris 2003, vii–xii.

⁴⁹ See above p. 698 and note 5.

⁵⁰ See above p. 703 ff.

⁵¹ On Theodore of Sebasteia in particular, see the reservations expressed by HOLMES (Basil II, see note 39 above, 96–99) in relation to a lengthy study by N.M. PANAGIOTAKES, Fragments of a lost eleventh century Byzantine historical work? in C.N. CONSTANTINIDES et al. (eds.), Φιλῆλλον. Studies in honour of Robert Browning. Venice 1996, 321–357. That said, a biography of Basil II, with no additional information, is referenced in a manuscript catalogue in Patmos; see K. SNIPES, The *Chronographia* of Michael Psellos and the textual tradition and transmission of the Byzantine historians of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. ZRVI 27–28 (1989) 43–62, esp. 57.

⁵² Regarding P. FREI's hypothesis (Das Geschichtswerk des Theodoros Daphnopates als Quelle der *Synopsis Historiarum* des Johannes Skylitzes, in E. PLOCKINGER [Hrsg.], Lebendige Altertumswissenschaft: Festgabe zur Vollendung des 70. Lebensjahres von Herman Vetters. Vienna 1985, 348–351) that Skylitzes used the lost historical text written by Daphnopates which covered the reigns of Constantine VII and Romanos II, see the reservations of HOLMES, Basil II (as note 39 above) 93–94.

⁵³ See e.g. FLUSIN/CHEYNET, Jean Skylitzès (see note 48 above) ix–x; HOLMES, Basil II (as note 39 above) 122 note 3; KIIPIΔOY, Σύνοψη Ιστοριῶν (as note 28 above) 23.

what sort of historical texts were produced by Nikephoros the Deacon of Phrygia (3.27–28), Theodore of Side (3.18) or John Lydos (4.31–32), on whom the sources are otherwise silent.⁵⁴ What we can be certain of, however, is that while Skylitzes does not draw on all the authors listed in his preamble,⁵⁵ he also fails to mention many works by name which he undoubtedly used, such as an unknown encomium to the Skleros family (987–991), the now lost laudatory biography of Katakalon Kekaumenos, a text in a similar style relating to Eustathios Daphnomeles and, finally, the apologetic work written on the occasion of George Maniakes' revolt (1042–1043).⁵⁶

J. Shepard had already noted Skylitzes' clear preference for biographical texts of a laudatory nature dealing with powerful men, mostly generals.⁵⁷ The chronicler was truly privileged in having a large number of works of this sort at his disposal; on the basis of references in the sources, it would seem the genre proliferated rapidly under the Macedonians, and most probably after Nikephoros Phokas' ascent to the state's highest office (963). The texts in question do not follow the model provided by the eclectic *Life of Basil*, and are in fact far closer to that of the purely laudatory biography which could also be composed with greater ease, in the light, at least, of Menander and the authorial tradition which had emerged in the meantime. Although there is insufficient evidence to be certain, it is almost definite that these biographies were commissioned from scholars equipped with the ability – and the knowledge – to compose works of this sort designed to pander to the aspirations of the powerful men who commissioned them, who were usually the offspring of the Kourkouas, Phokas, Skleros and other important families. The considerable influence exerted by this biographical trend, in the broadest

⁵⁴ The *didaskalos* Sikeliotes (3.18) was in my opinion rightly identified with the historian Theognostos by FLUSIN/CHEYNET (Jean Skylitzès, as note 48 above, ix note 29). As to Niketas David Paphlagon (3.26) see recently S. A. PASCHALIDES, From hagiography to historiography: the case of the *Vita Ignatii* (BHG 817) by Nicetas David the Paphlagonian, in P. ODORICO/P. AGAPITOS (eds.) *Les vies des saints à Byzance. Genre littéraire ou biographie historique?* Paris 2004, 161–174, esp. 166 ff.

⁵⁵ HUNGER, *Profane Literatur* (as note 5 above) 1, 391.

⁵⁶ See HOLMES, Basil II (as note 39 above) 99, 111, 113, 153–154, 240 ff., 255 ff., 268 ff., 289 ff. 292–293 and passim. ΚΙΑΡΙΔΟΥ, *Σύνοψη Ιστοριών* (as note 28 above) 332 and note 88, 378–382 lists a number of objections. See also the following note.

⁵⁷ An extremely good theoretical analysis of the contributions of this British academic to the study of Skylitzes' sources and the general historical 'atmosphere' of the 11th century, and including the relevant bibliography in full, is provided by HOLMES, Basil II (as note 39 above) 99–100 and note 73, 101–115. On Kekaumenos see also CH. ROUECHÉ, The literary background of Kekaumenos, in C. HOLMES/J. WARING (eds.), *Literacy, education, and manuscript transmission in Byzantium and beyond*. Leiden/Boston/Cologne 2002, 111–138, esp. 113.

sense of the word, is evident in Skylitzes,⁵⁸ but also in the authors who threw themselves with such zeal into the writing of biographies modelled on the directions set by Porphyrogenetos. These would clearly include Michael Attaleiates, who penned the 'rhetorical panegyric' of Nikephoros III Botaneiates (1078–1081), as Kazhdan describes his *History*,⁵⁹ though it would perhaps be more correct to speak here, too, of a *speculum principis*.⁶⁰ Attaleiates considers Nikephoros III an "ὁπόδειγμα κάλλιστον",⁶¹ a description that directly references the founder of the Macedonian dynasty and the *Life of Basil*,⁶² and which does not fail to mention any of the familiar virtues typically assigned to the protagonist of a text of this kind (noble lineage [=the Phokas family], bravery, a talent for dispensing justice,⁶³ humility, compassion etc.). The historian wavers between a rhetorical structure and a traditional narrative exposition of the events: from this point of view, the *History* is closer to Leo the Deacon than it is to Porphyrogenetos.⁶⁴

It is well known that the atmosphere of Psellos' works – his *Chronography* and the *Historia syntomos* alike – is quite different from the other works analyzed thus far. The *Chronography* is governed by clearly literary perceptions: the author dwells on the respective definitions of the encomium and history, stressing from the start that he is writing his memoirs, and that eulogies and history must be strictly demarcated, because to mix the two is an affront to the art of writing.⁶⁵ By intruding thus into everything he narrates,

⁵⁸ HOLMES, Basil II (as note 39 above) 111, 181, 191, 202, 216, 292 and passim, who also notes the courtiers' influence on the writing of similar texts, a view with which I am not in agreement. Still useful C. ROUECHÉ, Byzantine writers and readers: storytelling in the eleventh century, in R. BEATON (ed.), *The Greek novel AD 1–1985*. London/New York/Sydney 1988, 123–133, esp. 127 ff.

⁵⁹ *ODB* 1, 229.

⁶⁰ See A. MARKOPOULOS, The portrayal of the male figure in Michael Attaleiates, in V.N. VLYSSIDOU (ed.), *The Empire in crisis (?) Byzantium in the 11th century (1025–1081)*. Athens 2003, 214–230, esp. 219–21. A. KAZHDAN's arguments have an entirely different starting point: The social views of Michael Attaleiates, in A. KAZHDAN/S. FRANKLIN (eds.), *Studies on Byzantine literature of the eleventh and twelfth centuries*. Cambridge/Paris 1984, 23–86.

⁶¹ 282.5 (ed. BRUNET DE PRESLE/BEKKER) = 202.7 (ed. PÉREZ MARTIN).

⁶² See above p. 702.

⁶³ See esp. LAIOU, Law, justice, and the Byzantine historians (as note 13 above) 176 ff.

⁶⁴ KAZHDAN, The social views (as note 60 above) 27–32 and passim; MARKOPOULOS, The portrayal (as note 60 above) 217–219, 220–221. If I may be allowed to note here that I am not convinced by D. KRALLIS' hypothesis that Psellos served as a model for Attaleiates in the composition of the latter's encomium to Botaneiates: Attaleiates as a reader of Psellos, in C. BARBER/D. JENKINS (eds.), *Reading Michael Psellos*. Leiden/Boston 2006, 167–191.

⁶⁵ See the detailed analysis provided by JA.N. LJUBARSKI, Η προσωπικότητα και το έργο του Μιχαήλ Ψελλού. Athens 2004², 268 ff.; see also E. PIETSCH, *Die Chronographia des*

Psellos shows himself to be the diametrical opposite of Leo the Deacon and Attaleiates, both of whom are most sparing in their intrusions.⁶⁶ As Ljubarskij has correctly pointed out, Psellos' *Chronography* is unprecedented in Byzantine historiography in being a text which displays so plainly the personal choices of its author, who is extremely eager to distance himself from formal historiographical writing⁶⁷. Consequently, the concern of earlier historiography with what is 'proper' and with 'setting a good example' is inconsistent with the central axis the 'hypatos ton philosophon' has chosen for his mainly anthropocentric narrative, as the personalities he analyzes so vividly and in such painstaking detail are not univocal; far from being bound to particular ideals, they are changeable.⁶⁸ Psellos tends to demystify his heroes, over whose weaknesses he lingers more than their strengths.⁶⁹ On the other hand, the resultant portraits are models of clarity and detail, as far removed from

Michael Psellos. *Kaisergeschichte, Autobiographie und Apologie*. Wiesbaden 2005, passim, esp. 32–61, which includes a number of illustrations; ead., *Αυτοβιογραφικά και απολογητικά στοιχεία στην ιστοριογραφία: η Χρονογραφία του Μιχαήλ Ψελλού*, in P. ODORICO (ed.), *L'écriture de la mémoire* (as note 16 above) 266–280. It should, however, be stressed here that the analysis of the *Chronography* as an autobiographical text attempted by G. MISCH (*Geschichte der Autobiographie. Das Mittelalter*. Frankfurt 1962, III/2, 760–830) remains a classic. See also the subtle observations of M. HINTERBERGER, *Autobiographische Traditionen in Byzanz*. Vienna 1999, 33 ff., 103, 140 ff., 305, 348, 387–389 and passim. A different viewpoint is presented in A. KALDELLIS, *The argument of Psellos' Chronographia*. Leiden/Boston/Cologne 1999, 23–28, while LJUBARSKIJ's brief critique of the work in question is of interest on a number of counts (Η προσωπικότητα και το έργο [see above] 31–32 and note 51).

⁶⁶ On intrusions see JA. N. LJUBARSKIJ, 'Writers intrusion' in early Byzantine literature, in: XVIIIe Congrès International des Études Byzantines. Rapports pléniérs. Moscow 1991, 433–456; R. MACRIDES, *The historian in the history*, in C. N. CONSTANTINIDES, *Φιλέλλην* (as note 51 above) 205–224; ead., *George Akropolites, The History*. Oxford 2007, 45–46; also HINTERBERGER, *Autobiographische Traditionen* (as note 65 above) 305 ff.

⁶⁷ LJUBARSKIJ, *Η προσωπικότητα και το έργο* (as note 65 above) 270, 284, 287 and passim; also PIETSCH, *Die Chronographia des Michael Psellos* (as note 65 above) 61–65, 129 ff. The numerous allegories in Psellos are underpinned by precisely this view; see P. ROLOS, *Amphoteroglossia*. Washington, D. C. 2005, 121 ff.

⁶⁸ Of especial interest in relation to everything under discussion here are the arguments laid out by I. NILSSON, *To narrate the events of the past: on Byzantine historians, and Historians on Byzantium*, in J. BURKE et al. (eds.), *Byzantine narrative. Papers in honour of Roger Scott*. Melbourne 2006, 47–58, esp. 49–51, 52–55.

⁶⁹ Of course, the frequency with which we encounter terms like 'theatre', 'stage' and 'mask' in Psellos is far from random and alludes to the author's knowledge of ancient theatre, which he puts to good use. See among recent publications A. KARPOZILOS, *The narrative function of theatrical imagery in Michael Psellos*, in S. KAKLAMANIS, *Ενθύμησις Παναγωτάκη* (as note 31 above) 303–310 with the previous bibliography.

classical and/or rhetorical models as they are from Leo the Deacon's *somato(psycho)grafemata*.⁷⁰

Though its structure is totally unlike that of any other Byzantine historical text, the *Historia syntomos* is closer to the biographical model.⁷¹ The narrative, which is divided into chapters, begins with Romulus and comes to an abrupt halt with Basil II, before recommencing, in essence, where the *Chronography* left off. Of its 106 chapters, 52 are laid out in portrait style, depicting kings, sovereigns and emperors of Rome in broad strokes (§§ 1–7 and 9–54); another 52, similarly laid out, deal with the Byzantine emperors – all apart from John Tzimiskes, who is omitted for reasons unknown (§§ 55–106); only chapters 8 and 15 are not linked to a particular reign.⁷² The *Historia syntomos* is divided into two halves by design: it is more than likely that Psellos chose this particular structure with a view to highlighting the older, Roman, history and thus underscoring the equivalence of the Old and the New Rome.⁷³ If the work really was written for the emperor Michael VII Doukas (1071–1078), as is believed, then Psellos has undertaken a purely didactic – in addition to his authorial – role: together, the *Historia syntomos* and the *Chronography* provide his emperor/student with an all-embracing *Roman* history written in the new style and beginning with the city's early history rather than with the Creation or with Adam.⁷⁴ Finally, it should be pointed out that the didactic

⁷⁰ The analyses of Psellos' portraits by LJUBARSKIJ, Η προσωπικότητα και το έργο (as note 65 above) 294–328, 329–348 are exemplary. An altogether different approach is evident in PIETSCH, Die Chronographia des Michael Psellos (as note 65 above) 66–128, where Psellos is examined via the emperors whose work is described in his *Chronography*. KALDELLIS (The argument, see note 65 above, 51–61, 167–178) compares Basil II (976–1025) and Isaac I Komnenos (1057–1059) and reaches noteworthy conclusions, though he does not really concern himself with the importance of Psellos *per se*. See also very recently R.-J. LILIE, Fiktive Realität: Basileios II. und Konstantinos VIII. in der «Chronographia» des Michael Psellos, in M. GRÜNBART (ed.), Theatron (as note 33 above) 211–222.

⁷¹ See recently J. DUFFY/E. PAPAIOANNOU, Michael Psellos and the authorship of the *Historia Syntomos*: final considerations, in A. AVRAMEA et al. (eds.), Byzantium, state and society, in memory of Nikos Oikonomides. Athens 2003, 219–229; also LJUBARSKIJ, Η προσωπικότητα και το έργο (as note 65 above) 255 ff.; D. DŽELEBDŽIĆ, Ιστορία σύντομος του Μιχαήλ Ψελλού. MA dissertation, University of Athens 2003, 5–19 and *passim* (unpublished); id., Η δημοκρατική Ρώμη στην πολιτική σκέψη του Μιχαήλ Ψελλού. ZRVI 42 (2005) 23–33; A. MARKOPOULOS, Roman antiquarianism: aspects of the Roman past in the middle Byzantine period (9th–11th centuries), in: *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies*, London, 21–26 August 2006, 1. Plenary papers. Aldershot 2006, 277–297, esp. 293–296; A.P. LITTLEWOOD, Imagery in the *Chronographia* of Michael Psellos, in BARBER/JENKINS, Reading Michael Psellos (as note 64 above) 13–56, esp. 54–56.

⁷² MARKOPOULOS, Roman antiquarianism (as note 71 above) 294.

⁷³ DŽELEBDŽIĆ, Ιστορία σύντομος (as note 71 above) 21.

⁷⁴ MARKOPOULOS, Roman antiquarianism (as note 71 above) 294–295 and note 105.

manner in which Psellos has composed the text in question backs up the opinion that the *Historia syntomos* displays many of the features of a *speculum principis*.⁷⁵

It would seem self-evident that the biographical genre as a *new* historical style was at the peak of its popularity from the mid 10th century on. Many writers considered themselves under a virtual obligation to compose texts which approach this technique at times, and mimic older models or blaze new trails at others. The anthropocentrism the Porphyrogenetos 'school' introduced in the context of Basil's imposing personage, shaped mentalities and delineated an ideal personality model which echoed the *Life of Basil* (and which affected even Genesios) and was some distance from older stereotypes. I appreciate that the influence of the imperial milieu was strong enough to exert a more generalized effect, even if many of the new biographical works were primarily opportunist and lacked a profound historical perspective. It is generally accepted that the 11th century gradually extricated itself from these older tendencies and embarked on a quest for new *mores* in history, too; while Psellos could be considered the theoretician of the new era and the prime example of individualism who came up with a range of solutions, Skylitzes upholds tradition, consciously steering clear of issues that typify Psellos and his vivid – often allegorical – quests,⁷⁶ which were not always successful or accepted.

By further spotlighting only the most powerful figures, I would say the discernible change in the style of hagiographical texts during the same period also casts the matter a different light. From the mid 10th century on, one can detect an underlying secularization marked by the divergence of ecclesiastical and social affairs, and a decline in the image of the 'classic' saint.⁷⁷ The *new* saints, when they appear on the scene, differ first of all in being educated, a

⁷⁵ Ibid. 295 and note 111. Though some reservations have been expressed by DŽELEBDŽIĆ, *Ιστορία σύντομος* (as note 71 above) 28 ff., 64.

⁷⁶ Note that Psellos' allegorical irony is elegantly examined by JA.N. LJUBARSKIJ, *The Byzantine irony. The case of Michael Psellos*, in AVRAMEA, *Byzantium* (as note 71 above) 349–360.

⁷⁷ See C. RAPP, *Byzantine hagiographers as antiquarians*. *Byzantinische Forschungen* 21 (1995) 31–44, esp. 31; S. PASCHALIDES, *Ο ανέκδοτος λόγος του Νικήτα Στεφάνου κατά αγιοκατηγόρων και η αμφισβήτηση της αγιότητας στο Βυζάντιο κατά τον 11^ο αιώνα*, in E. ΚΟΥΝΤΟΥΡΑ-ΓΑΛΑΚΗ (ed.), *The heroes of the Orthodox church, the New Saints, 8th–16th c.* Athens 2004, 493–518, esp. 493–494, 502–503, 510 and passim; N. ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΔΗΣ, *How to become a Saint in eleventh century Byzantium*, *ibid.* 474–491, esp. 481 and passim. See also the interesting perspective of M.-F. AUZÉPY, *Les saints et le triomphe de l'Orthodoxie*, *ibid.* 17–29, on this subject. For the image of the saint as a *model* in earlier years, see the fascinating article by P. BROWN, *The saint as exemplar in late Antiquity*. *Representations* 1 (1983) 1–15.

facet Psellos underlines in his classic *enkomion* to Symeon Metaphrastes;⁷⁸ secondly in usually belonging to rich and powerful families, and, thirdly, in performing miracles that are clearly of a lower 'grade' than those described in the classic literature. Lastly, high-status monasteries now played a part in canonizing new-style saints. The image of the new saints painted by the era's hagiographical works is indisputably melancholy, entirely unlike the older saint who served as an example to all. If I may dwell on this subject for a moment, I should like to recall the reaction of Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022) who, on perceiving the general trend in religious matters, countered with his 'theosis' which afforded pride of place to divine love, an issue clearly at the core of Orthodoxy. Far from changing anything, Symeon's actions earned him harsh criticism, mockery, backstabbing and even prosecution.⁷⁹ So it is highly likely that the saint, who rises to a plane above that of the everyday, increasingly came to be replaced by the heroes described in the historical texts. The *new* hero, whose underpinnings are now clearly fictional, may be incorruptible and graced with all the virtues Porphyrogenetos reserves for the charismatic personage, or more insecure in the manner of Leo the Deacon and Psellos. Either way, however, times being as they were, the hero was active in an entirely secular environment and in which his achievements on the battlefield earned him the highest prestige and the respect of all,⁸⁰ despite the human weaknesses Porphyrogenetos (and, to some extent, Attaleiates) goes to such pains to conceal, and which both Leo the Deacon and Psellos positively dwell on. The feats of Digenes Akrites would not be long in making an appearance.⁸¹

⁷⁸ As rightly observed by A. KAZHDAN, Hagiographical notes. *Byz* 53 (1983) 538–558, esp. 555 ff. (= id., *Authors and texts in Byzantium*. Aldershot 1993, no III). See very recently E. A. FISHER, Michael Psellos in a hagiographical landscape: the life of St. Auxentios and the Encomion of Symeon the Metaphrast, in BARBER/D. JENKINS, *Reading Michael Psellos* (as note 64 above) 57–71, esp. 58–59; see also RAPP, *Byzantine hagiographers* (as note 77 above) 39, 41–42; PASCHALIDES, *Ο ανέκδοτος λόγος του Νικήτα Στηθάτου* (as note 77 above) 511–513.

⁷⁹ See, for instance, H. ALFEYEV, *St. Symeon the New Theologian and the Orthodox tradition*. Oxford 2000, 38 ff.

⁸⁰ Although only indirectly relevant to our research, the observations on the historic work of Bryennios are fascinating in E. JEFFREYS, Nikephoros Bryennios reconsidered, in VLYSSIDOU, *The Empire in crisis* (as note 60 above) 201–214, esp. 206–207.

⁸¹ In connection with all the above, see THÉOLOGITIS, *Pour une typologie du roman à Byzance* (as note 17 above) passim, esp. 223 ff. See also P. ODORICO, Ἄπερ εἰσὶν ψευδέα: les images des héros de l'antiquité dans le *Digénis Akritas*, in S. KAKLAMANIS/M. PASCHALIS (eds.), *Η πρόσληψη της Αρχαιότητας στο βυζαντινό και νεοελληνικό μυθιστόρημα*. Athens 2005, 31–47.

Abstract

It is well known that the historical texts composed under the Macedonian dynasty (Theophanes Continuatus, Genesios, but also Leo the Deacon, Manuel protospatharios, John Skylitzes or even Michael Psellos) display certain element, which can be seen as attempts to make a clean break with the past; the formalist style of unbroken historical narrative was largely rejected in favour of historical biography in which the influence of rhetorical methods is self-evident. It is not known which criteria tipped the balance in favour of such a development, though we would do well to consider both the influence of Antiquity, and the close ties that bound biography to hagiography, which from the empire's very beginnings (*Vita Constantini*) also served as a uniquely Byzantine mode of promoting the image of the emperor. It may be legitimate to speak of a new type of historical writing which is specifically designed for the extremely beautified career of its subject and constitutes a contemporary movement which manifested itself in various cultural contexts.