fixated on "moralism and nationalism" but which can aspire to a mission more akin to the Large Hadron Collider (x–xi), a transcendent, unifying quest to comprehend the universe and its meaning.

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Gefängnis als Schwellenraum in der byzantinischen Hagiographie: Eine Untersuchung früh- und mittelbyzantinschen Märtyrakten. By **Christodoulos Papavarnavas**. Millennium Studies, vol. 90. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021. xiv + 246 pp. $103.99 hardcover.

After the apostles, martyrs were the earliest Christian heroes. Under the label of *Passions* or *Acts of the Martyrs*, a vast literature developed commemorating their unflagging commitment to the faith and bolstering their cult as saints. The low value of these texts as historical documents and the formulaic character of their plot long hindered their study as works of literature in their own right. Nonetheless, the recent, albeit belated, rehabilitation of Byzantine literature as a whole, combined with the reconsideration of late antiquity as a period of cultural transformation, has given way to a more positive approach favoring a literary reading of these texts, paying due attention to the creative aspects of their narratives.

The book under review reflects this noteworthy shift in perspective, dealing as it does with the hagiography of saintly martyrs and treating in particular the theme of prison as threshold after which the martyr enters upon the final path of personal sacrifice. The basic aim of this study, which grew out of a doctoral dissertation submitted in 2018 to the University of Vienna, is to pin down and examine from different angles related passages selected from a wide range of texts dating from the early and middle Byzantine periods, i.e., the fourth to tenth centuries. It consists of four chapters that are further divided into relatively short subchapters, which facilitate reading the book and at places delve into questions of literary theory. The book is richly filled with Greek passages quoted with a German translation.

The introduction chiefly rehearses the occurrences of prison accounts in the Old and New Testaments as well as in classical, postclassical, and Byzantine literature. The introduction concludes by bringing into the discussion the anthropological concept of "liminality," in the particular ways in which it was introduced by Arnold van Gennep (*Rites de Passage*, 1909) and reaffirmed by Victor Turner (1963ff.). The second anthropological concept employed by the author is "hybrid third space," as launched by Homi K. Bhabha in the 1990s. From this perspective, the author considers prison scenes as attested in hagiographic acts of martyrdom to be a threshold of binary opposites. As a literary space, prison acquires a double meaning: it constitutes a building block of martyrdom and identifies as an independent phase of the entire process of sanctification. In other words, in such a liminal space, the martyr develops spiritual and physical strength as a Christian hero: his or her confrontation with demonic and divine powers ultimately shores up his or her identity as a saint.

The corpus of texts that Papavarnavas collected and studied is impressive: 176 *Acts* (or *Passions*) *of Martyrs*, a number comprising pre-Metaphrastic and Metaphrastic texts, the latter being the reworkings of Symeon Metaphrastes that were included in his famous *Menologion*, while the former are mostly their model-texts. Symeon's *floruit* has now been placed in the late tenth century and the large collection of hagiographical texts that goes under his name represents a massive enterprise, undertaken by this enigmatic Byzantine scholar and his team, to recast older, chiefly late antique, hagiographical texts into a more polished and concise narrative. As the author has it, out of these 176 texts, only 106 feature snapshots from the prison life of their subjects. A useful list of them is provided in an appendix of the book.

As set forth in chapter 1, in terms of vocabulary and imagery, prison narratives display a noteworthy diversity. The detention of the martyr-to-be takes place in either a public or private (chiefly domestic) space, may qualify as a mild or a harsh seclusion, and may receive a brief mention or be described in much detail. Chapter 2 delves into the phases in which the confinement narrative of a *Passio*, individual or collective, might unfold, no doubt as the result of a literary elaboration of the theme of the main hero or heroine's imprisonment. Their parallel function is to uphold the denouement of the plot and to lengthen the period during which the martyr proves courageous against temptations and witnesses ecstatic experiences of all kinds. Chapter 3 intersects with gender theory, bringing into discussion the oppositions between the woman martyr and her male pagan persecutor, or the sexual temptations the former might be subjected to while imprisoned or confined in a domestic space. Chapter 4 offers an overview of the question of the emotions linked to the martyr's state of confinement and their contribution to his or her development as a heroic character. The chapter owes its inspiration (and at the same time adds much) to the field of the *History of Emotions*, pinning down references to fear and distress, feelings that go with the martyr's harsh experiences, while, on the other hand, paying attention to the physical pain that the martyr must withstand with endurance till his or her end.

The study concludes with a recapitulation of the most significant points made in the previous chapters, providing further insights into the variations of the prison theme in martyrdom accounts. The final page hints at an important transition that opens up a window to further investigation: the concept and practice of confinement beyond the age of martyrs, i.e., as a self-seclusion now referring to ascetics and monks.

An undisputed quality of this book is that it interferes with modern theoretical tools and adopts a narratological approach without downplaying primary literary analysis. Nowhere does the reader feel that the presence of texts is distant or that theoretical discourse endangers clarity of expression and disrupts the train of argument. In a scene from the famous film *The Shawshank Redemption*, a major character says that "prison is no fairy-tale world." If these words can find an echo in Papavarnavas's book, it is in approaching the theme of prison, a rather ignored or overlooked topic, in serious terms and in bringing its various dimensions and meanings into focus. If a word of criticism may be permitted for a study that otherwise fulfills its purpose, the book does not take into account Megan Cassidy-Welch's extensive scrutiny of medieval prisons in her landmark-monograph (2011) and in a series of articles (2000s–today). True, Byzantium and the medieval West are separate

worlds and cultures, yet an interaction in terms of research findings and ideas would benefit the study of both.

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The Good Shepherd: Image, Meaning, and Power. By **Jennifer Awes Freeman**. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2021. xvii + 187 pp. $44.99 hardcover.

Jennifer Awes Freeman presents a compelling case for the reinterpretation of the image of the Good Shepherd in early Christian images and texts. Many art historians, including Theodore Klauser, Henry Chadwick, R. Grigg, and Robin Jensen, have discussed images of the Good Shepherd as representing the humility and modesty of the early grass-roots movement of Christianity. This traditional interpretation juxtaposes this early humble shepherd imagery with the later imperially sponsored images of Jesus-as-emperor situated on a throne within the spaces of church apses. Awes Freeman charges that these interpretations assume that the Good Shepherd is a Christian invention and overlook understandings of shepherd imagery from the ancient world. The author draws on the work of Thomas F. Matthews, specifically *The Clash of Gods* (Princeton University Press, 1993), to challenge prevailing scholarship. She argues that early Christian writers were employing an image and idea of the Good Shepherd that drew on earlier understandings of this imagery, which "carried connotations of divinity and empire" (4) and was not associated with the humility and modesty that inform current interpretations. Instead of housing a static and straightforward anti-imperialist meaning, the Good Shepherd changes meaning over time and includes conflicting meanings related to power and violence.

This book situates the Good Shepherd within the art and literature of the Ancient Near East and Greco-Roman worlds and demonstrates the flexibility and fluidity of the image and its meaning through the Early Middle Ages. This is an ambitious project of recontextualizing a familiar image type across several thousand years of history and several thousand miles of geography. She describes the particular cultural and geographical meanings of the Good Shepherd through time and place, offering appropriate context without getting lost in any particular contextual tangent. Awes Freeman succeeds in presenting a compelling case for reinterpretation that remedies this literary and art historical oversight. This is no small feat and offers an important model for scholars looking to do similar work in tracing the development of a particular artistic theme.

Chapter 1 examines the ways in which Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Israelite rulers styled themselves in relation to shepherd imagery, which emphasized the king as a shepherd who brought justice to the people (Mesopotamia), guided souls (Egypt), and was divinely appointed (ancient Israelites). The connection between kings and shepherds appears in literary and art historical sources including the Sumerian King List, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, stelae, cuneiform tablets, statues of rulers, numerous inscriptions, and the Hebrew Bible. Chapter 2 examines shepherds as guides of the people in