

he did not make it explicit – but this book physically embodies the gigantic impact that his work has had (and will have) on generations of specialists in Byzantine architecture, and on other readers too.

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Andrew Mellas, *Liturgy and the Emotions in Byzantium: compunction and hymnody*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xii, 206.
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This book explores diachronically how the emotion of compunction (κατάνυξις) was presented, performed, and perceived in liturgical hymns. Mellas achieves this by drawing on recent studies in the history of emotions and on recent scholarship in Byzantine hymnography, as well as thoroughly contextualizing the analyses of the hymns with insights from aesthetics, musicology, theatre studies, and, not least, from the theological treatises on compunction by the fathers of the Byzantine/Orthodox tradition.

The book is divided into five chapters. After an introduction focused on the definition of compunction, M. sets out to establish the liturgical context in which the hymns were performed in the second chapter, choosing as time and place for the investigation the Early to Middle Byzantine period and Constantinople. The following three chapters are each devoted to particular poet and hymnic genre: Chapter 3 to Romanos the Melodist and his *kontakia* (sixth century); Chapter 4 to Andrew of Crete and the *Great Kanon* (seventh to eighth century); and chapter five to the nun Kassia and her monostrophic *sticheron* on the sinful woman (ninth century). The book ends with a brief conclusion summing up the results of the investigation. The conclusion is followed by a glossary of words related to Byzantine hymnography and liturgy, a bibliography, and an index. The book is well written, albeit somewhat dense and compressed at times.

Overall, this book is a very important contribution to Byzantine hymnography as well as the history of emotions. My criticisms are concerned mainly with M's methodology. M. adapts from Sarah McNamer a method which combines empirical research and 'informed speculation' (p. 25). At times, this informed speculation turns into mere speculation or overinterpretation of the sources. This is especially the case concerning the melodies of the hymns. For instance, M. concludes the section on the melodies of the *kontakia* with this highly speculative assumption: 'even if a member of the congregation had not talent in singing, the action of listening to the sacred narrative and melody of a hymn, and hearing the voices of its biblical exemplars, opened a shared world of "aural images" that were impressed upon the heart' (p. 111). I think this assumption, sympathetic as it might be, is problematic: would a member of

the congregation in the sixth to tenth centuries or later even grasp all the words? would the melodies and modes elicit the same affective response? would a person who could not sing not feel excluded? Likewise, addressing the melody to Kassia's *sticheron*, M. writes: 'The sacred melody, with its occasional cadential melismas, represented the ladder of tears that link God and the world, allowing music to become a medium of transfiguration' (p. 168). This claim is not substantiated with musicological evidence that would shed light on how composers treated compunction in melody and therefore remains pure speculation or outright overinterpretation.

When it comes to his methodology, M. does not engage much with recent literary and cognitive studies discussions on the emotions, as he explicitly states that he does not want to impose a 'second-order discourse on Byzantium and its liturgical performances' (p. 24). I understand this need to study the past in its alterity to avoid the danger of presentism but M. does use several concepts from modern theory such as 'affective mysticism' (pp. 60–3), 'chronotopos' (p. 158), 'liminal experience of gender' (p. 159), and he asserts that the Great Kanon 'deconstructed the rational and irrational, inner and outer, sensory and intelligible' (p. 139), without engaging with the theory behind these concepts.

In the analyses of the poets and their hymns, the chapter on Kassia and her *sticheron* stands out as the most thorough: here, M. devotes considerable space to one single, short poem and offers a very good close reading of the *sticheron*. The chapter on Andrew of Crete's Great Kanon, a hymn consisting of no fewer than 250 stanzas, necessarily has to choose which stanzas to present in the analysis, but the excerpts are surprisingly few. This may be due to the fact that there is no scholarly edition of the Great Kanon, so M. has had to work with different manuscripts in his analysis.

The chapter on Romanos is a bit more compressed. Rather than devoting space to close readings of one or two *kontakia*, M. traverses ten in a few pages (pp. 85–108). M. does indeed demonstrate, using these examples, how compunction is an important theme in the poetry of Romanos. However, compared with the Great Kanon and Kassia's *sticheron*, the *kontakia* have a much stronger narrative and dramatic unity. This narrative aspect is missing in M's analyses, and I believe that it would actually strengthen the conclusion had he taken the plots of the *kontakia* into consideration and not just the instances where the word compunction is used. Compunction is part of the plot in, for instance, the *kontakion* 'On the Victory of the Cross', where Hades quickly realizes that the crucifixion of Christ entails his defeat. The Devil, however, blinded by his own haughtiness, only discovers the reality of the Crucifixion too late. He too shows a kind of compunction seeking refuge in Hades. To my mind, the analyses of the *kontakia* of Romanos would have benefited from a close reading of a few *kontakia in toto*, including such devices as plot and dialogue, and making occasional references to other *kontakia* as appropriate.

Besides these critical remarks on methodology and analysis, a few minor details arise: some quotations of ancient and Byzantine authors are only given in English

without the Greek text (pp. 7, 14–15, 81, 107, 108, 110 and 133). Notwithstanding, M's study of compunction as a liturgically performed emotion in Byzantium is an important contribution to Byzantine hymnography and the history of emotions.

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Rico Franses, *Donor Portraits in Byzantine Art: the vicissitudes of contact between human and divine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. xiii, 247, 64 figs.
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In *Donor Portraits in Byzantine Art*, Rico Franses analyses representations of persons who have commissioned a manuscript or an icon, or constructed or decorated a church, in which the patron appears in the company of holy figures, whether Christ or a saint.

Such portraits are of particular interest in that they visualize a direct confrontation between an actor in the physical world with an actor, or actors, in the spiritual realm, a situation which for the modern viewer is an apparent impossibility. The emphasis of the study is on the post-iconoclastic period, although some pre-iconoclastic examples are selectively considered. Drawing on theology and structuralist anthropological theory, together with symbol and metaphor theory, the five densely argued chapters aim to achieve a new and more complex understanding of the issues of interpretation that these images present, stressing their productive role as active proponents in the creation of meaning. The book is well documented and generously provided with illustrations, which for the most part are reproduced clearly, with occasional indistinct exceptions.

Chapter 1 argues that not all scenes commonly called 'donor portraits' are properly portraits of donors, in that many do not represent the act of giving with an image of the gift, such as a book or a model of a church. Instead, F. suggests that the term 'contact portrait' should be used for the class of images that he is considering in his book, with 'donor portraits' being a subset restricted to those cases in which a gift is specifically portrayed. He sees 'donor portraits' as illustrating donations for the forgiveness of sins, whereas the others, which he terms 'non-donation contact portraits' may convey additional meanings. For example, the imperial *ktetor* portrait can be interpreted as a 'mitigated form of the full imperial image', in that it may act as a statement of command and ownership of a building.

Chapter 2 seeks to shift the traditional focus of interpretation from the identity of the donor, or supplicant, to the overall significance of the image. Here F. takes as his focus the well-known mosaic in the narthex of Hagia Sophia depicting an unnamed emperor kneeling before the throne of Christ, discussing previous scholarship and suggesting an