

***Mother of the Lamb: The Story of a Global Icon.* By Matthew J. Milliner. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2022. viii + 298 pp. \$28.00 cloth.**

Visitors to the Monastery of Hagios Ioannis Prodromos, perched seven miles northeast of the Greek town of Serres, can access this monastery's *katholikon*, see therein its Byzantine icons, and, upon their departure, obtain paper copies of one of these icons. These copies replicate a fourteenth-century icon that depicts a bust-length Mary holding the infant Jesus and identified by the epithet "Hodegetria." By the fourteenth century, this epithet had two main referents, including Constantinople's Hodegon Monastery and its icon of the Mother of God Hodegetria. Through its image of Mary holding Jesus, combined with its epithet, the icon at Ioannis Prodromos is a copy of Constantinople's *Hodegetria*, and the personal icons distributed are copies of that copy. Visitors leaving Ioannis Prodromos take their personal icons to many destinations, distributing Byzantine imagery throughout the world.

An additional icon participating in this distribution is the subject of Matthew Milliner's *Mother of the Lamb: The Story of a Global Icon*. The book charts an icon's history, beginning with its earliest related composition of the twelfth century, discussing its later adoption by the Redemptorist order, and concluding with its uses in the twenty-first century. That icon is the so-called "Virgin of the Passion," which has become known as "Our Lady of Perpetual Help." Neither title was assigned to Byzantine images prior to 1453. The seminal icon is a late-twelfth-century fresco of the Mother of God assigned the Greek epithet *Arakiotēssa*, which refers to its residence, the Church of the Panagia *tou Arakos* of Cyprus. Both the *Arakiotēssa* and its fifteenth-century variant by the painter Andreas Ritzos, Milliner argues, were visual outcomes of Orthodox Christian communities attacked by non-Orthodox invaders. Yet, neither the *Arakiotēssa* nor Ritzos's icon succumbed to the defeat suffered by their Orthodox viewers: Milliner shows how the *Arakiotēssa*'s theological resonances reverberate within its church, and Ritzos's Virgin of the Passion provided the prototypical form for later icons. Both icons endured in spite of their violent origins, participating in the global dissemination and "peaceful conquest" of Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

The author has divided the book into three parts followed by a conclusion and an appendix. These parts include "the artist" (Part I), "the fresco" (Part II), and "the icon" (Part III). Scholars of Byzantine art will benefit from Part II, which intelligently unpacks the frescoes' messages of predestined salvation for humanity, Mary's roles as priest and embodiment of Eucharistic prayer, and the *Arakiotēssa*'s contribution to these messages. In the appendix, Milliner argues that a single painter, Theodore Apevdhis of Constantinople, was responsible for the *Arakiotēssa* and additional twelfth-century frescoes.

In its objective to map a particular icon's history, Milliner's book aligns with earlier publications dedicated either to a singular icon or to an icon's characteristic representation and that representation's development past the Middle Ages. If past investigations have stressed the Virgin Mary's participation in military victories and consolidation of imperial power, Milliner reminds scholars "that Mary was a chief source of support during the empire's collapse as well," pointing out the Virgin of the Passion's proximity to "flash points of military failure" (5). For example, as Venetian or Ottoman invaders encroached on Zara, Kastoria, and Kosovo, wall paintings and icons of the Virgin of

the Passion, Milliner suggests, appeared—in some instances, “centuries afterward”—in response to defeats Christians suffered (112). Milliner discusses the icon through the lens of loss, whether it be militaristic, communal, or personal, but he represents the icon also as a buffer mediating loss. The Virgin of the Passion “teaches us how to bear suffering when, despite our legitimate efforts to forestall it for ourselves or for others, suffering finds us still” (135).

In writing this review, I have distinguished the twelfth-century *Arakiotēssa* from Ritzos’s fifteenth-century icon—a distinction not made clearly in Milliner’s study, which often conflates the icons. (Milliner never addresses why he refers to the former image by the modern title “Virgin of the Passion” rather than its original epithet.) Does this conflation overlook an additional stage in the *Arakiotēssa*’s development or, perhaps, a different icon altogether? An early-seventeenth-century Cretan icon preserved at the Monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai replicates Ritzos’s Virgin of the Passion. The Cretan icon has the epithet *Amolyntos*, “undefiled” or “immaculate.” A fourteenth-century manuscript (GIM Syn. gr. 429) attributed to Constantinople contains a penitential canon dedicated to the Mother of God *Amolyntos*. Nancy Ševčenko has suggested this canon might have addressed an actual icon of the Mother of God (“Icons in the Liturgy,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 45 [1991]: 55 n. 75). Does the history of the icon type at the center of Milliner’s study, then, include a Constantinopolitan icon labeled *Amolyntos* and visually akin to Ritzos’s icon? If so, might the Virgin of the Passion’s dissemination be attributed not to violence and defeat, as Milliner proposes, but to the combination of elements used in various icons of the Mother of God? Robert S. Nelson’s recent article, which offers critical nuance to Milliner’s overview of the Mother of Perpetual Help’s post-medieval history, mentions the latter possibility (“From Crete to Singapore via Rome and St. Louis: An Orthodox Icon becomes Catholic,” *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 77–78 [2022]: 144).

At times Milliner’s book provides fully imagined scenarios. For example, in the twelfth century, Theodore Apevdis might have entered Constantinople’s Church of Hagia Sophia prior to his departure for Cyprus. Once inside, so Milliner invents, “as Theodore’s eyes extended upward . . . massive seraphim in each of the four pendentives . . . beckoned Theodore farther upward” (17–18). But Natalia Teteriatnikov has attributed these seraphim to the fourteenth century (*Justinianic Mosaics of Hagia Sophia and their Aftermath* [Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2017], 33). Scholars of Byzantine art will find in Milliner’s text additional inventions as well as interpretive leaps.

*The Mother of the Lamb* evokes Byzantine icons’ theological richness and significances, and the book attests to their persistence into today’s visual landscapes. The *Arakiotēssa*, the Virgin of the Passion, the *Hodegetria*, and additional icons of Mary equally participate in this persistence.

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