



**Börsenverein des
Deutschen Buchhandels**



Geisteswissenschaften International Nonfiction Translators Prize (GINT)

Jury Statement for Winner Frances Clarke

In this fifth competition of the Geisteswissenschaften International Nonfiction Translation Prize, entrants were asked to translate an excerpt from **Mischa Meier's** groundbreaking work **Geschichte der Völkerwanderung Europa, Asien und Afrika vom 3. bis zum 8. Jahrhundert n.Chr.**, published in Germany by C. H. Beck in 2020, and awarded the wbg-Wissen!Prize in 2021.

This text posed a set of unique semantic, syntactic, and scholarly challenges. The jurors sought out submissions that demonstrate a fine understanding of the text and an ability to convey its content and style persuasively to a new English-language readership.

We are pleased to declare two winners in this year's GINT competition: **Lydia J. White** and **Frances Clarke**. Both translators have demonstrated considerable skill in conducting research to familiarize themselves with the terminology and historical context for this complex piece. They deconstructed and reconstructed complex structures to attain translations into English that are marked by accuracy and flair.

Frances Clarke's translation stood out for her fine sense of how and when to tweak the wording and syntax to enhance the text's accessibility to its new target readership, resulting in ingenious solutions to thorny problems and a smooth overall tone. The winning translators show that they have what it takes to make their mark in the field of nonfiction translation.

The jury congratulates both winners and looks forward to reading their future translations from German.

Geisteswissenschaften International and C.H. Beck publishers will present the winning translations in an online Translation Slam on 9 November 2021. The event will start with an introduction of author Mischa Meier and his award-winning book. Afterwards, the two winning translations will be compared live on stage. Moderated by Emma Rault, a member of the GINT jury, Lydia J. White and Frances Clarke will discuss their individual approaches to semantic, syntactic, and scientific challenges. After an interesting hour devoted to translation the audience is invited to ask questions and to network with the participants.

The international jury was composed of: Shelley Frisch, distinguished translator, instructor, author, and jury chair; Sarah Pybus, translator and winner of the first GINT Prize in 2015; Emma Rault, translator and winner of the GINT Prize in 2017; and Paula Bradish, translator and foreign rights manager at Hamburger Edition.

Please note Frances Clarke's Sample Translation on the following pages

A History of the Migration Period

in Europe, Asia and Africa
from the Third to the Eighth Century AD

C.H. Beck

3rd edition, 2020

© Verlag C.H. Beck oHG, Munich 2019

1.2.2

The Religion Factor

Constantinople's miraculous deliverance from the clutches of the barbarians due to the personal intervention of the Mother of God not only left a profound impression on those who lived through the event but also had a lasting impact on subsequent generations of Byzantines. For the Romans, divine assistance in the fight against the barbarians was nothing new. In 396, several years before he invaded Rome, Alaric I was thwarted outside the walls of Athens after the intervention of the city's eponymous goddess Athena and mythical hero Achilles; several decades earlier, the miraculous works of the ascetic and city bishop Jacob (died 338) forced Sasanian king Shapur II (died 379) to abandon his siege of the fortified Roman city of Nisibis (now known as Nusaybin, in south-east Turkey). In 540, a relic of the True Cross in Apamea, Syria, caused invading Persian forces to spare the city's inhabitants; in 542, the martyr Sergios saved Sergiopolis, the city bearing his name and the place where his relics were kept, from being conquered by Persia, while an image of Jesus Christ performed miracles to protect Edessa (now Urfa, Turkey) from the Persians in 544. In addition, the present-day town of Marsas (in Gironde, France) was saved from besieging Saxons by a "heavenly host" (*militia caelestis*). This kind of miracle was not specific to late antiquity, as attested by reports on the "Rain Miracle" that kept Marcus Aurelius's army safe from the Quadi, probably in 173 AD, and

was later attributed to the soldiers' Christian faith. For Constantinople, however, the events of 626 marked the culmination of a very specific process that first emerged in the fifth century, gained tremendous momentum around the middle of the sixth century and then headed straight for the dramatic summer days of 626. From this point on, it was clear to all that Constantinople was the city of the Mother of God. Marian devotions had been steadily increasing in popularity beside the Bosphorus since the fifth century. Controversy surrounding the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ – which initially came to a head at the Council of Ephesus in 431 where Mary's role as the *Theotokos*, or "God-bearer", was first formally recognized – focused particular interest on her, while the saintly ambitions of Roman empress Aelia Pulcheria, sister of emperor Theodosius II, did the rest. The sibling emperors then began to build more and more churches dedicated to St. Mary that played host to relics of the Mother of God, while Mary emerged as one of the stricken population's most popular patron saints when plague ravaged the Roman Empire to devastating effect in 541/42. The emperors shared their subjects' widespread devotion to Mary, and an ever-greater number of miracles and legends involving the Mother of God were handed down in tradition from this point on. The poet Romanos the Melodist, a singer who took personal inspiration from Mary, boosted the popularity of Marian devotion by penning a specific type of hymn known as *kontakion* for sung worship at church services. Festivals dedicated to the Virgin Mary were added to the calendar – and eventually the *Theotokos* herself came to the rescue of "her" city in 626.²⁹

Yet despite all of the focus on the Mother of God, this event was primarily a manifestation of an overriding and deep-seated piety whose practical ramifications – including processions, collective public prayer, the construction of more church buildings, an increase in theological and broadly Christian literature, the glorification of the emperor and the ceremonies surrounding him, the religious significance accorded to warfare, the development of iconolatry, and more besides – had long dominated everyday life in the Byzantine Empire. The profound permeation of religion into every facet of life – a process we call "liturgization" – began around the middle of the sixth century and helped bring new stability and direction to a population

brought to its knees by terrible catastrophes including earthquakes, floods, plague and famine, war and dashed hopes of Christ's imminent return, as well as bringing fresh cohesion to a society that had been on the brink of collapse. This in turn prevented Constantinople with an opportunity not only to boldly overcome a tremendous challenge that wrought a sustained attack on the collective mentality of its population but also to consolidate its power. This gave the city the strength to withstand subsequent threats, not least the siege of the city by the Persians and Avars during one of the biggest military crises the Byzantine Empire ever faced. Yet the cost of this tremendous push for stabilization was obvious. The liturgization of Eastern Roman and Byzantine society took its toll: religion was now everywhere, while religious symbolism overshadowed all other forms of expression open to society. As the center of this world, Constantinople was indeed the city of the Mother of God, yet Mary was protecting people who now saw themselves as a conglomeration of saints; an empire that believed – in theory, at least – that it no longer had need of earthly weapons, even though its inhabitants saw themselves surrounded on all sides by belligerent barbarians; a realm ruled by emperors whose sacrality had already taken on unprecedented dimensions. Justinian I (527-565) had elevated himself to dangerously near-Christ-like status. Herakleios was hailed as the new David and the new Constantine after defeating the Persians; when he decreed that the restitution in 630 of the relics of the True Cross stolen from Jerusalem by the Persians in 614 be commemorated, he conferred an eschatological Messianic character upon himself and even surpassed Justinian's delusions of grandeur by presenting himself as *kosmorhýstes* ("the savior of the world") – a term coined specifically in this context. This kind of atmosphere enabled the repelling of the barbarian threat in 626 to mutate into a salvation event and strengthened the Byzantines in an assurance that already guided them, namely: as long as Constantinople endured, as long as it did not allow itself to fall into the wrong hands or even be destroyed, as long as there was a clear separation between the divinely protected Roman world within the city walls and the barbarian world outside them, the earthly world would continue to exist. The fate of the Christian world thus hinged on the fortress on the Bosphorus remaining intact; this was the essence of the eschatology of the Byzantine Empire.³⁰

- 29 Zosimus 5.6 (Athens); Theodoret of Cyrrihus *Historia religiosa*, 1 PG 82,1304D, with PEETERS 1920 (Nisibis); Procopius *History of the Wars* 2 (2).11; Evagrius Scholasticas *Ecclesiastical History* 4.26; MEIER ²2004, 365-373 (Apamea); Evagrius Scholasticas *Ecclesiastical History* 4.28 (Sergiopolis); Evagrius Scholasticas *Ecclesiastical History* 4.27, with MEIER ²2004, 387-401 (Edessa); *VBib.* 7; cf. Gregory of Tours *Glory of the Martyrs* 59 (Marsas). – “Rain Miracle”: BIRLEY ²1977, 316 et seqq.; ISRAELOWICH 2008. – Literature on the history of Marian devotion in late antiquity: see below Chapter 11.1.1, note 14. – There is an increasing focus on the significance of religion for different aspects in the context of the Migration Period, particular with regard to ethnicity issues, in the latest research, cf. POHL 2009a, 446 et seqq.; 2012a; STEINACHER 2012. 106; POHL/HEYDEMANN 2013a; 2013b. HEYDEMANN 2013; 2016b illustrates how ethnic terminology is used to describe religious communitization processes, thus blending ethnicity and religion together.
- 30 Liturgization: see below Chapter 11.1.1 – The Eastern Roman Empire as a Community of Saints under the Protection of God: Corippus *De Laud Justini Augusti* 3.333; Cosmas Indicopleustes 2.66-76, particularly 66 and 74-75; cf. MACCORMACK 1982, 293-295; MEIER 2004a, 163 et seq. – Sacralization of Justinian and Herakleios; MEIER ²2004, 547 et seqq.; 2016b; DRIJVERS 2002, 184 et seqq.; KRESTEN 1991/92, 504, note 13; 2000 (Herakleios). – Herakleios as kosmorhýstes: George of Pisidia *In Bonum patricium* 7; *Heraclias* 1.70; *Contra Severum* 452; *Hexameron* 1800 (ed. TARTAGLIA); in addition, cf. Chapter 11.2.1 and MEIER 2015b. – Eschatology of the Byzantine Empire: PODSKALSKY 1972; ALEXANDER 1985; PERTUSI 1988; BRANDES 1997, 25; 2005a.

Translator's notes

Specific terminological considerations

- How should *Völkerwanderung* be translated in the title of the book?
 - o The term *Völkerwanderung* was originally coined by scholars to refer specifically to the migration of Germanic groups in late antiquity
 - o However, the term is also used in a broader sense to describe the Migration Period or Barbarian Invasions in Europe between approximately 300 and 800 AD
 - o Given the subject matter of this extract and the book as a whole, I have used the English term 'Migration Period' in this instance
- Should "barbarians" be capitalized?
 - o As the term "barbarians" refers not to a single, unified people but a number of different tribes, I have not capitalized it in this text

Broader considerations

- What tone does the original German text have, and how can this be recreated in the English translation?
 - o Dry, academic tone
 - o Translation decision: Recreate this tone in English by focusing on accuracy of terminology and simple presentation of facts rather than seeking to "tell the story" by taking greater license with wording, flow etc. in English
- Who is the target audience for this book, and what level of theological knowledge can they be expected to have?
 - o Academic author writing for an academic audience (Amazon.de reviews include several from peers in the author's field)
 - o EN audience can therefore be assumed to have the same theological/historical knowledge as the DE audience
 - o Translation decision: Given this assumption, I have chosen not to explain or paraphrase any specialist terminology if it has not already been explained in the DE text
- To what extent should sentence and paragraph structure be changed in the English to improve readability for a target language readership?
 - o Sentence structure adjusted in the case of the large list of examples of divine intervention separated by semi-colons in the DE text
 - o I would also be tempted to break up the huge paragraphs – it might be preferable to put proposals to the author on this front

Main sources used for research

[The Mother of God in Late Antique Constantinople: Leading the Romans into Middle Byzantium | Mary Jaharis Center Blog](#)

[Zosimus, New History 5.06 - Livius](#)

[A Historical Account of the Power of the True Cross | MYSTAGOGY RESOURCE CENTER \(johnsanidopoulos.com\)](#)

[Record | The Cult of Saints \(ox.ac.uk\)](#) (record of the Sergios miracle at Sergiopolis)

[A Companion to Religion in Late Antiquity - Google Books](#) (contribution from Mischa Meier himself on several of the events listed in this text)

[Cassius Dio on the Rain Miracle - Livius](#)