

## Social Geography in the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*

JUDITH PERKINS  
West Hartford

Employing the paradigms of critical geography, this article offers that the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* display the Christian project to reconstitute contemporary power relation through their narrative recoding of some of the dominant spatial categories of their culture. The theme of broken boundaries is central to the *Acts* as seen in their repeated emphasis on women escaping domestic space (and apostles entering it) and characters entering and exiting prison space at will. Through these themes, Christians manifest their intent to 'break out' of the order of things and to resist spatial formulations that keep certain people in their place or out of place. By redefining prison as a place of community, Christians in particular create an alternative space from those defined through the hierarchical practices operating in the contemporary society. For after the division of the empire into *humiliores* and *honestiores* and the calibration of judicial punishment to social status, prison became a space where the elite were patently 'out of place.' By offering the prison as the center of community and the apostles as the sort of people who socially might find themselves in prison, the *Acts* create a countersite to the public spaces where the elite of the period forged their community.

Henri Lefebvre, in his monumental work, *The Production of Space*, posited the basis for any social transformation: 'to change life...we must first change space.'<sup>1</sup> Considerable theoretical attention has recently been directed toward the importance of space in articulating relationships of power. Space is not, as too often has been assumed, some inert, innocent backdrop. Rather, as are all cultural productions, space is a social construct and plays a constitutive role in

---

<sup>1</sup> Lefebvre 1991, 190.

a society's instrumentality of power – 'it tells you where you are and puts you there.'<sup>2</sup> Space is central in every society's imagining of itself, and it is through the covert mechanisms of social spatialities that asymmetrical relations of power get inscribed in societies – things and people have places where they do and do not belong.<sup>3</sup>

That space acts as a means of control also simultaneously makes it a means of resistance.<sup>4</sup> In this paper I suggest that the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* work to resist the spatialities (and the power) of their contemporary society and to institute new spatial imaginaries and a new site for power through their narrative focus on breaking domestic, and political boundaries.<sup>5</sup> As Deleuze and Guattari have suggested: 'any struggle to reconstitute power relations is a struggle to reorganize their spatial bases.'<sup>6</sup> In this paper I will suggest as one project of the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* the narrative recoding of some contemporary notions of space, thereby laying the foundation for reconstituted power relations.

Challenge to the spatial bases of social boundaries is a central theme in the *Acts*, and shows up prominently in their repeated emphasis on the permeability of domestic and carceral space. As John Bender has noted boundaries are 'the emblematic formulation of authority.'<sup>7</sup> The *Apocryphal Acts* by emphasizing how easy it is to penetrate and/or escape from both female quarters and prisons works to resist the authority of contemporary social arrangements. In a patriarchal and hierarchical society such as that of the early empire, domestic space is a particularly heavily charged social space. It exists in a dialectic with 'public' space and, in Donald Moore's words, is 'freighted with histories of seclusion, subordination and control.'<sup>8</sup>

The domestic space of the ancient Greek city suggests a social geography that maps both male authority over females and female subordination and

---

<sup>2</sup> M. Keith and S. Pile 1993, 'Introduction: The Place of Politics,' 37.

<sup>3</sup> Curry 1996, 90

<sup>4</sup> S. Pile 1997, 1–4.

<sup>5</sup> For recent interpretive work on these texts, see Bremmer 1996; Bremmer 1998; Bovon *et al.* 1999; Hock *et al.* 1998.

<sup>6</sup> G. Deleuze and F. Guattari 1977. The sentence preceding the one quoted begins: 'If space is indeed to be thought of as a system of 'containers' of social powers..., then it follows that the accumulation of capital is perpetually deconstructing that social power by reshaping its geographical bases.' The context thus refers to capitalist societies. LeFebvre 1991 asserts: 'a revolution that does not produce a new space has not realized its potential...' 54.

<sup>7</sup> J. Bender 1987, 44.

<sup>8</sup> D. Moore 1997, 91.

exclusion.<sup>9</sup> This especially holds true for elite women; a scene from Achilles Tatius's romance, contemporary with the *Acts*, indicates, even as it mocks, conventions of female confinement. Kleitophon, the hero of the romance, describes the sleeping arrangements of his beloved, Leukippe:

Her room was situated as follows: one wing of the house had four rooms, two on the right, two on the left. A narrow hallway ran down the middle, which was closed by a single door at one end. This was where the women lodged. The farther two rooms were occupied by the girl and her mother, directly opposite each other...Each night Leukippe's mother tucked her in bed and locked the door of the wing from the inside. She had someone else lock the door from the outside and pass the key to her through the opening. She kept the keys with her all night until the next morning, when she called the servant and passed him the key again to open the door.<sup>10</sup>

The scene depicts the protection of a virgin's body, but it is noteworthy that her mother and the other women of the household are described as sharing this same segregated and heavily bounded space.<sup>11</sup>

Domestic space is clearly one of those spaces that 'keeps you in your place,' where individuals are taught to experience their social position and subjecthood. It is for this reason, I suggest, that the *Apocryphal Acts* so often

---

<sup>9</sup> See B. Egger 1990, L. Nevett 1999, M. Jameson 1990, S. Walker 1983. Jameson comments: 'the household was the domain of women. The stranger was admitted only within limits, physical limits when possible, but conceptual limits always' (192). Egger examining the Greek novel, narratives contemporary with and thematically related to the *Apocryphal Acts*, says: 'Classic romance heroines just do not move or act, leave the domestic sphere, let alone travel the world on their own account' (270); 'Female confinement in the house, then, is a prominent romance fiction and a major aspect of the female image' (271). Egger also notes that acting outside of the house was a characteristic of the anti-heroine (270). Egger recognizes that the portrayal of women confined inside the house may have been actually anachronistic for the period, but it was a 'popular myth in Graeco-Egyptian society in which the Greek novel was read' (275). This is the same society as that of the *Apocryphal Acts*.

<sup>10</sup> Achilles Tatius 2.19. Translations of the novels are taken from B. P. Reardon 1993.

<sup>11</sup> Did husbands and wives share the same bedroom? This is a contested question. In her study of the Greek novel, Egger (1990) states that married couples generally do share a bedroom (248). Jameson (1990) points to the evidence from forensic speeches for separate sleeping rooms, but believes that a bedroom for married couples was normal (192 note 30). Keuls (1985) proposes that men and women slept in the same bed only to have sex (212).

represent violations of female space, either the wrong males entering it, or females brazenly exiting it. By representing the breakdown of this central social boundary, the *Acts* metaphorically challenge all boundaries that exclude certain groups from influence in the public sphere. The *Acts of Andrew* particularly emphasizes the motif of the penetration of private space. Andrew Jacobs notes, for example, how often in this text elite bedrooms are turned into Christian meeting places.<sup>12</sup>

In an early episode, the Christians are meeting in the the governor's house when his arrival is unexpectedly announced, Andrew notices that Maximilla, the governor's wife, fears the group will be discovered. He prays that they may exit without her husband's detecting them. The Lord answers this prayer: 'As the governor came in, he was troubled by his stomach (εἰσελθὼν ὑπὸ τῆς γαστρὸς ὠγλήθη), asked for a chamber pot, and spent a long time sitting, attending to himself. He did not notice all the brethren exit in front of him.'<sup>13</sup>

As soon as Aegeates recovers, he rushes into the bedroom to see his beloved wife. But Maximilla rejects her husband, having embraced Andrew's preaching on sexual continence. When the proconsul leaves her, Maximilla instructs her maid: 'go to the blessed one so that he may come here to pray and lay his hand on me while Aegeates is sleeping...[and] Andrew entered another bedroom where Maximilla was.'<sup>14</sup> In the representational context of this period, there could hardly be a clearer image for penetrated boundaries than a strange man in a woman's bedroom at night. Moreover the two scenes, a wife denying her husband access to her body, only to entertain in her bedroom a socially excluded male visitor, emphasizes the connection between the function of these two spaces in the *Acts*. One's body is, in Lefebvre's phrase, 'at the every heart of space,'<sup>15</sup> and the woman's reappropriation of her body from her high ranking husband as well as her reorganization of female space signify a radical Christian recoding of social space for their own ends.

<sup>12</sup> Jacobs 1999, 127. Jacobs points out that Andrew's conversion speech to Stratocles takes place in Maximilla's bedroom, and that the baptism of the brethren also 'takes place in this elaborate network of bedrooms' (fn 106, 127).

<sup>13</sup> Andrew, Passion 13; MacDonald 1990, 341–3. For the *Acts of the Apostles*, I am using the following editions: Andrew, MacDonald 1990; John, E. Junod and J.-D. Kaestli 1983; Peter, Paul, Thomas, R. Lipsius and M. Bonnet reprint 1959. Translation are based on J. K. Elliott and M. R. James 1993, except MacDonald 1990 for Andrew.

<sup>14</sup> Andrew, Passion 13–4; MacDonald 1990, 345.

<sup>15</sup> H. Lefebvre 1976, 89.

The *Acts of Andrew* repeats the theme of the wrong person showing up in the wrong place in the rather discordant episode where Maximilla in her effort to remain continent disguises Euclia, her maid, as herself and sends her to her husband's bed. The switch goes unnoticed for eight months, until Euclia's boasting annoys her fellow slaves and they betray Maximilla's plot to her husband. He learns that Maximilla had rejected sex with him as 'a heinous and despicable act' and that 'Euclia had shared his bed as though she were his spouse' (ἡ σύμβιος).<sup>16</sup>

The narrative explicitly represents that the apostle's entrance into the proconsul's space has disrupted and confused both position and identity. For immediately preceding this episode describing the detection of Euclia's ruse, the narrative tells how Maximilla, returning home earlier than expected from spending the night with Andrew, had disguised herself and tried to sneak in the gates. The household servants, however, stop and detain her, mistaking her for some foreigner (ἄλλοδαπῆς).<sup>17</sup> The apostle's presence results in radical displacement of the normal spatial arrangements of the elite household: to the point that the mistress entering her house is stopped as a stranger, and the master of the house does not even know who shares the space of his own bed. Since any 'metaphor of displacement,' according to Kaplan, 'includes referentially a concept of placement, dwelling, location, position,'<sup>18</sup> the text here introduces the possibility of changed positionality, of individuals occupying spaces other than those allotted to them. If part of any society's dominating practices is to insure that 'things and people have places where they do and do not belong,' the representation in the *Acts of Andrew* resists these practices.

This theme of disruption and resisted social confinement continues in the depiction of Andrew's imprisonment. A servant identifies Andrew for Aegeates in terms that emphasize his unsettling effect on domestic space: 'there is the man by whom your house is now disrupted.'<sup>19</sup> It is specifically for his invasion of this forbidden domestic space that Aegeates castigates Andrew: 'you stranger, alien to this present life, enemy of my home, destroyer of my entire house. Why did you decide to burst into places alien to you....'<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Andrew provokes others to burst boundaries. When Aegeates orders An-

<sup>16</sup> Andrew, Passion 21–22; MacDonald 1990, 351–353.

<sup>17</sup> Andrew, Passion 20; MacDonald 1990, 351.

<sup>18</sup> Kaplan 1996, 143.

<sup>19</sup> Andrew, Passion 26; MacDonald 1990, 357.

<sup>20</sup> Andrew, Passion 51; MacDonald 1990, 393.

drew imprisoned, Maximilla immediately determines to visit him. She shows her unfamiliarity with public space, however. She must first send her maidservant, Iphidama, to find out where the prison is. Iphidama finds the prison and Andrew. He prays that the Lord will protect the women when they return to visit him that night because, in his words, ‘they have made every effort to be bound together with me’ (συνδεδεμέναι).<sup>21</sup> Earlier in the narrative a servant had used the same image of the Christian community, when he explained to Aegeates that Maximilla ‘had bound, tied up (περιέδησεν) your brother with the same passion for [Andrew] that has bound her (δέδετα).’<sup>22</sup> In the *Acts* the only bounds that hold are those of Christian love. For Andrew assures Iphidama that the prison gates will be open for her.

When Iphidama returns to Maximilla, the theme of breakable and broken boundaries is reinforced. For Maximilla exults: ‘I am about to see your apostle...even if an entire legion kept me locked up; it would not be strong enough to keep me from [him].’<sup>23</sup> Aegeates tries mightily to confine his wife. He orders four guards to go to the prison and tell the jailer to secure the prison doors and let no one in under any circumstances, not even himself; or he would have his head. He orders four more guards to stand outside his wife’s bedroom.<sup>24</sup> All to no effect, that night, the women leave the bedroom and reach the prison and find the doors open for them and a beautiful young boy (the Lord?) awaiting to lead them to Andrew.<sup>25</sup> Until Andrew’s death, the Christian group, including Maximilla and Iphidama, continue to gather together at the prison guarded by the ‘Lord’s grace and protection’ (τῆ περιβολῆ, enclosure).<sup>26</sup> Christian boundaries protect, but all other boundaries, even those most emblematic of social confinement – the woman’s bedroom, the prison – are represented as vulnerable in the *Acts*.

When the powerful control space resistance can be no more than acting out of place.<sup>27</sup> The *Acts of Andrew* with its emphasis on strangers in female bedrooms, and elite women in prisons can be read as a text resisting and transgressing prevailing spatial configurations.<sup>28</sup> The motif of the apostle’s subver-

<sup>21</sup> Andrew, Passion 29; MacDonald 1990, 363.

<sup>22</sup> Andrew, Passion 25; MacDonald 1990, 356.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew, Passion 30; MacDonald 1990, 365.

<sup>24</sup> Andrew, Passion 31; Macdonald 1990, 365.

<sup>25</sup> Andrew, Passion 32; Macdonald 1990, 365.

<sup>26</sup> Andrew, Passion 34; Elliott 1993, 369.

<sup>27</sup> S. Pile 1997, 16.

<sup>28</sup> Prison escapes are also a feature in the Greek ideal romance. When elite women fall into

sion of normative spatial practice is prevalent throughout the *Apocryphal Acts*. In the *Acts of Thomas*, for example, Mygdonia, escaping the sexual advances of her husband, Charisius, runs naked from the bedroom. Her husband is shocked, in his words that ‘she, a woman of nobility, in whom none of the servants had ever detected a flaw, ran uncovered from her chamber.’<sup>29</sup> Her husband reads her leaving her proper place as a transgression of her status position (a woman of nobility) and decides she must be mad, driven out of her mind by the apostle. Charisius had already attempted to come to terms with the apostle’s putative madness through a complex of spatial/status metaphors: ‘I will speak of the madness of the stranger, whose tyranny throws the great and illustrious into the depths.’<sup>30</sup> Charisius translates the apostle’s threat into terms of status displacement.

The *Acts of Thomas* also represents the elite forsaking their own places and entering the prison to be instructed by the apostle. The King and Charisius, for example, had both locked up their wives to keep them from the apostle. But Thomas’s twin, the Lord, frees the women and leads them to the prison. There they bribe the guards and enter to find the apostle instructing Vazan, the king’s son, and his family, along with the other prisoners. When the jailer orders the group to put out their lamps lest they give themselves away, Thomas prays and the Lord illumines the whole prison.<sup>31</sup> Later when Prince Vazan wishes to leave and finds the doors locked, Thomas reassures him: ‘Believe in Jesus, and you shall find the gates open.’<sup>32</sup> Thomas is represented as coming and going from the prison at will.

In the *Acts of Paul*, not only Thecla, but the wife of the governor of Ephesus, Artemilla, visits Paul in prison. Paul greets her invoking a rhetoric of spatial displacement: ‘Woman, ruler of the world, mistress of much gold, citizen of great luxury...sit down on the floor and forget your riches and your beauty and your finery.’<sup>33</sup> Artemilla wishes to get a smith to remove Paul’s fetters,

---

prison, this is represented as outside the boundaries of their own cities. In Achilles Tatius, Melite does visit the confined Kleitophon, but he is imprisoned in her own home (5.23ff). See Pervo 1987, fn.15,147 for citations for prison escapes in ancient narratives. See T. Cresswell 1996 for the dialectic of place and transgression.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas 99; Elliott 1993, 485.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas 99; Elliott 1993, 485.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas 153; Elliott 1993, 503.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas 154; Elliott 1993, 503.

<sup>33</sup> Paul, for Thecla 18; Elliott 1993, 367. For Artemilla, see Schmidt 1936 for text; Elliott 1993, 377.

but Paul refuses, trusting, he says, in God who delivered the ‘whole world from its bonds,’ and a young man appears and frees him. After Paul baptizes Artemilla, he freely returns to the prison past the sleeping guards. In these episodes the permeability of domestic space is matched with that of the carceral space. If boundaries are emblematic of power, the depiction of prisons unable to confine their prisoners would seem to be a direct assault on contemporary institutions of power. Richard Pervo has shown that prison escapes were a favorite literary topos of the period.<sup>34</sup> What is distinctive in the *Apocryphal Acts*, however, is that, while the narratives consistently represent that neither bonds nor doors have the power to confine, nevertheless the prison, ultimately, is not escaped, but rather redefined as a space of instruction and community building.

With the trope of the elite woman’s escape from domestic space, the *Acts* metaphorically worked to expose and to resist all spatial formulations that keep certain people in their place or out of place. Similarly the recoding of prison from a place of confinement to one of community is an example of the *Acts*’ agenda to create alternative spatialities from those defined through the hierarchical practices operating in the contemporary society. For the prison is quite emphatically not the space of the elite and to make it the center of community is to imagine a community where the elite are patently ‘out of place.’

Christians by redefining the prison, the public space of social containment, manifest their intent to ‘break out’ of the order of things, to de-center and displace things as they are. Recall that it was around the period of the earlier *Apocryphal Acts* (the late second century) that society became legally divided into two groups, *honestiores* and *humiliores* (note the spatial reference of the latter term – ‘the more low’), and, on this basis, the severity of judicial punishment was calibrated to status. Belonging to the *honestiores*, that is being a member of the group in society with high social standing based on ‘power, style of life or wealth,’ exempted a person from many punishments.<sup>35</sup> Only in exceptional circumstances would a member of the *honestiores* be found in a prison.<sup>36</sup> Thus prison, in the context of the social divisions of the early empire,

<sup>34</sup> Pervo 1987, 18–23.

<sup>35</sup> P. Garnsey 1970, 235–259.

<sup>36</sup> P. Garnsey 1970, 147–148. Garnsey suggests *honestiores* were usually only imprisoned for capital crimes. He also notes that with respect to the harsher punishment in the second and third century ‘it was not...the position of the *honestiores* in general which improved, but that of the *humiliores* which worsened’ 152.



is a striking example of how social space can be used to tell people who they are and to inscribe asymmetrical relations of power onto shared social life.

Ramsay MacMullen has described the mechanics of the very public display of power in the Roman empire and how such practices taught people from childhood to know their place.<sup>37</sup> In the public spaces of the ancient cities, the powerful ostentatiously displayed their rank through retinues and insignia and arrogance. In the *Acts of Thomas*, for example, Mygdonia's actions before her conversion can be considered typical of her rank (the wife of a 'near relative of the king'): 'And she was carried by her slaves, but could not be brought to him [Thomas] on account of the great crowd and the narrow space. So she sent to her husband for more servants. They came and went before her pushing and beating the people.'<sup>38</sup>

By focusing on the prison, the *Acts* look away from the public spaces, the streets, temples, gymnasia, theaters, agorai, palaces, where the elite manifested their power and the have-nots learned their place.<sup>39</sup> Instead they focus on a civic space that is outside the order of privilege, in fact, legally, the place of the unprivileged; and they recode this space as their place of instruction and community building. In its focus on the prison, Christian narrative opens new space, undeniably civic space (the apostles are always consigned to prison by a ruler or high magistrate), but at the same time an anti-civic space, the space reserved for those without honor. By reinscribing the prison as a place for community and instruction, Christian narrative metaphorically rejects the social structures that confine all except the established elite to the position of the 'more low.'<sup>40</sup> If the the first step in reconstituting power relations is to reor-

---

<sup>37</sup> MacMullen 1988, 58–84. MacMullen describes how people learned their social place early: 'Indeed a great deal of the arrogant behavior [of the Haves] had the more or less conscious intent of instructing other people, even causal observers, in the responses that would be expected of them. Those who had wealth, esteem and influence secured these things ever more completely by asserting them; those who lacked them understood how they must conduct themselves; and their education of the one or the other sort was no doubt well begun while they were still children...' 70.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas 82; Elliott, 1993, 479. Macmullen 1974 and 1988, 58–84, provides many examples of the methods the 'Haves' had for publicly inscribing their power. For the hierarchical ordering of theatrical space: J. Kolendo 1981, 301-315; E. Rawson 1987, 83-114. For the hierarchy of dining: J. D'Arms 1990, 308-320. For the relation of status to food choices: P. Garnsey 1999, 113-147.

<sup>39</sup> This is not to say that the apostles do not also at times in the *Acts* enter these public places and display their own power through miracles and preaching.

<sup>40</sup> H. Lefebvre 1991, 40 identified in cultures what he called 'spaces of representation.' D. Gregory 1994, 403 discusses these counterplaces, spatial representations that 'arise from the

ganize their spatial bases, coding prison as ‘good space’ is just such a maneuver; it opens a new public space for a new kind of actor. Moreover the description of prisons as spaces that can be entered and exited at will rejects any notion of space that keeps you in your place.

During the early empire prison was a place of shame and social abandonment.<sup>41</sup> Sandra Schwartz has shown how the Greek novel regularly employs the motif of the hero’s reduction in status and liability to the punishment of *humiliores* (prison, chains, and torture) to provoke sympathy for the hero and horror at his situation.<sup>42</sup> Schwartz notes: ‘In order to expose a noble hero to a punishment typically restricted to *humiliores* and slaves, the author must change his hero from a noble, free man to a person of lower status...’<sup>43</sup>

Prison was the place of degradation, ‘bad space’ par excellence, but the *Apocryphal Acts the Apostles* make it the space of Christian community.

In the *Acts of John*, for example, the Lord’s particular focus on prisoners and the spaces associated with them is noted: ‘he keeps watch even now over prisons for our sakes, and in tombs, in bonds and dungeons, in shame and reproaches...at scourgings, condemnations, conspiracies, plots and punishments ... as he is the God of those imprisoned.’<sup>44</sup> The fact that the Lord himself in both the *Acts* of Andrew and Thomas conducts elite visitors to the prison shows his approbation of the site. Repeatedly in the various *Acts*, an apostle is described not only instructing the elite who visit him in the prison, but also the other prisoners. In *The Acts of Paul*, Paul is described ‘in great cheerfulness’ laboring and fasting with the other prisoners.<sup>45</sup> In the *Acts of Thomas*, Thomas prays with the prisoners and when he is taken from the prison, the narrative describes their reaction: ‘all the prisoners were sad because the apostle went away from them, for they all loved him very much and

---

clandestine or underground side of social life’ and from the critical arts to imaginarily challenge the dominant spatial practices and spatialities.’

<sup>41</sup> Rapske 1994, 288–298. Rapske cites examples. Apollonius of Tyana’s followers abandoned him on account of their fear of imprisonment, VA 4. 37. Lucian in his *Toxaris* celebrates a friendship so exceptional that one friend goes so far as to follow the other to prison to support him. Lucian’s point would seem to be that prisoners are more commonly abandoned by friends. Ignatius of Antioch writes the Smyrneans to thank them for treating him, in bonds, without the expected ‘hautiness nor shame,’ *Smyrn.* 10.2. In Achilles Tatius’ novel, the epithet ‘jail-bird’ is one of contempt, 8.1.3.

<sup>42</sup> Schwartz 1998, 379.

<sup>43</sup> Schwartz 1998, 117.

<sup>44</sup> John 103; Elliott 1993, 322.

<sup>45</sup> Paul 8; Elliott 1993, 380.

said: ‘even this consolation which we had is taken from us.’<sup>46</sup> Andrew also associates with the other prisoners: ‘speaking with his fellow inmates, whom he had already strengthened by encouraging them to believe in the Lord.’<sup>47</sup> The apostles in the *Acts* are represented as allying themselves with the other prisoners. This differs from the depiction in the Greek novel, where, for example, Chariton shows Chaereas imprisoned in Caria segregating himself from the other prisoners because of their laziness.<sup>48</sup>

But Chaereas is himself an elite person socially displaced in imprisonment, and the *Acts* show clearly that this is not true of the apostles, nor of their Lord. All of whom are clearly represented in the *Acts* as belonging socially to the have-nots. A demon explains in the *Acts of Thomas* how Jesus was able to overpower them: ‘He...left us under his power, because we knew him not. He deceived us by his unattractive form and his poverty and his want.’<sup>49</sup> In the contemporary society good looks, good breeding, and wealth all are understood to entail each other, to denote status, and to keep one out of prison.<sup>50</sup> Like their Lord, the apostles display none of these signs of social power. Thus, in the *Acts of Andrew*, a group of slaves unfamiliar with Andrew’s appearance take him for a mean and paltry person.<sup>51</sup> When Aegeates first meets Andrew, he comments on his appearance: ‘you appear in this manner like a poor, simple old man.’<sup>52</sup>

Similarly in the *Acts of Thomas*, Charisius is incredulous that his wife could prefer a man like Thomas: ‘Look at me. I am far more handsome than that sorcerer. I have riches and honour, and everybody knows that none has such a family as mine.’<sup>53</sup> Charisius lists all the qualities of high status: good looks, wealth, elite family. When Thomas describes himself to Tertia, the king’s wife, it is plain how far he falls from this standard: ‘What have you come to see? A stranger, poor and despised and beggarly, who has neither riches nor possessions.’<sup>54</sup> In fact, Charisius had tried to persuade his wife to

---

<sup>46</sup> Thomas 125; Elliott 1993, 495.

<sup>47</sup> Andrew, Passion 28; MacDonald 1990, 363.

<sup>48</sup> Chariton 4.2. It is Chaereas, ironically, who is too lovesick to work. In Achilles Tatius, Kleitophon is also represented as ignoring the overtures of other prisoners until he overhears the name of Melite: 7.2–3.

<sup>49</sup> Thomas 45; Elliott 1993, 466.

<sup>50</sup> P. Garnsey 1970, 279.

<sup>51</sup> Andrew, Passion 3; MacDonald 1990, 329.

<sup>52</sup> Andrew, Passion 26; MacDonald 1990, 357.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas 116; Elliott 1993, 492.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas 136; Elliott 1993, 499.

discount the apostle's fasting and asceticism. He shares with her his horrified recognition that this was no philosophical stance, but real poverty: 'he rather does it because he has nothing...he is poor.'<sup>55</sup> Paul's description 'a man small in size, bald headed, bandy legged, of noble mein, with eyebrows meeting, rather hook nosed, full of grace' is also 'absolutely not idealized.'<sup>56</sup> In the *Acts of John*, the apostle rejects a portrait of himself requiring, instead, another palette of colors for the soul: 'which cure your bruises and heal your wounds and arrange your tangled hair and wash your face...'<sup>57</sup> This depiction specifically images that of a prisoner whose filthy condition and matted hair are often referred to in contemporary testimony.<sup>58</sup>

By offering the prison as the center of community and the apostles as the sort of people who socially might find themselves in prison, the *Acts* create, I suggest, a countersite to the public spaces where the elite of the period forged their community. In their attempt to rearrange the spatial bases of community, the *Acts of the Apostles* can be seen to be engaged in 'a struggle to reconstitute power relations. The imaginary offered in the *Apocryphal Acts* was in reality enacted in the *Martyr Acts*, which also offered the prison as the focus of Christian community. Both sets of texts opened new social space and both with their representation of the prison resisted the contemporary celebration of civic institutions and revealed the existence of those excluded from its ideal harmony.<sup>59</sup> This new social space in turn empowered new voices to enter the cultural dialogue of the period.

### Bibliography

- Ballok, J. 1996. 'The description of Paul in the Acta Pauli' in J.N. Bremmer (ed.) *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla*. Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1–15.
- Bender, J. 1987. *Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and Architecture of Mind In Eighteenth Century England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

---

<sup>55</sup> Thomas 96; Elliott 1993, 484.

<sup>56</sup> Ballok 1996, 3.

<sup>57</sup> John 29; Elliott 1993, 314. Junod and Kaestli 1983, 452–456 provide a discussion of this portrait with bibliography.

<sup>58</sup> For the filthy condition of prisoners, see C. Wansick, 1996, 33–38; B. Rapske 1994, 216–219.

<sup>59</sup> In a paper that provides a companion piece to this one, I examine the *Acts of the Martyrs* to show how they also offered themselves as prison narratives and functioned to authorize and empower new voices from a newly defined social site, the prison, a countersite to the multiple cultural spaces authorizing the elite voice. J. Perkins 2001, 117–137.

- Bovon, F., Brock, A.G., and Matthews, C.R. (eds.) 1999. *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Bremmer, J.N. 1996. *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla*. Kampen: Kok Pharos.
- Bremmer, J.N. 1998. *The Apocryphal Acts of Peter: Magic, Miracles and Gnosticism*. Leuven: Peeters.
- Cresswell, T. 1996. *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Curry, M.R. 1996. *The Work in the World: Geographical Practice and the Written World*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- D'Arms, J. 1994. 'The Roman convivium and the ideal of equality' in O. Murray (ed.) *A Symposium on the Symposium*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 308–320.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. 1977. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. New York: Viking Press.
- Egger, B. 1990. 'Women in the Greek Novel: Constructing the Feminine'. Ph. D dissertation. University of California at Irvine.
- Elliott, J.K. and James, M.R. 1993. *The Apocryphal New Testament: a Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Foucault, M. 1972. *Power/Knowledge*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Garnsey, P. 1970. *Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Garnsey, P. 1999. *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gregory, D. 1994. *Geographical Imaginations*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hock, R.F., Chance, J.B. and Perkins, J. (eds.) 1998. *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative*. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press.
- Jacobs, A.S. 1999. 'A Family Affair: Marriage, Class, and Ethics in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles'. *J ECS* 7.1, 105–138.
- Jameson, M. H. 1990. 'Private Space in the Greek City' in O. Murray and S. Price (eds.) *The Greek City: From Homer to Alexander*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Junod, E. and Kaestli, J.-D. 1983. *Acta Iohannis*. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Kaplan, C. 1996. *Questions of Travel*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.
- Keith, M. and Pile, S. 1993. 'Introduction: Part I: The Politics of Place' in M. Keith and S. Pile (eds.) *Place and the Politics of Identity*. London and New York: Routledge, 1–21.
- Keith, M. and Pile, S. 1993. 'Introduction: Part II: The Place of Politics' in M. Keith and S. Pile (eds.) *Place and the Politics of Identity*. London and New York: Routledge, 22–40.
- Keuls, E.C. 1985. *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens: An Illustrated History*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Kolendo, J. 1981. 'La répartition des places aux spectacles et la stratification sociale dans l'empire romain'. *Ktèma* 6, 301–315.
- Lefebvre, H. 1976. *The Survival of Capitalism: Reproduction of the Relations of Production*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Lefebvre, H. 1991. *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Lipsius, R.A. and Bonnet, M. 1891–8 (reprint 1959). *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*. Darmstadt: George Olms.
- MacDonald, D.R. 1990. *The Acts of Andrew and the Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the city of the cannibals*. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press.
- MacDonald, D.R. 1994. *Christianizing Homer: the Odyssey, Plato, and the Acts of Andrew*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- MacMullen, R. 1974. *Roman Social Relations, 50 B.C. to A.D. 284*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- MacMullen, R. 1988. *Corruption and the Decline of Rome*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Malherbe, A.J. 1986. 'A Physical Description of Paul'. *Harvard Theological Review* 79: 165–70.
- Moore, D. 1997. 'Remapping Resistance' in S. Pile and M. Keith (eds.) *Geographies of Resistance*. London; New York: Routledge, 87–106.
- Nevett, L. 1999. *House and Society in the Ancient Greek World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Perkins, J. 2001. 'Space, Place, Voice in the Acts of the Martyrs and the Greek Romance.' in D.R. MacDonald (ed.) *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity*. Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 117–137.
- Pervo, R. 1987. *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Pile, S. 1997. 'Introduction' in S. Pile and M. Keith, M. (eds.) *Geographies of Resistance*. London: New York: Routledge, 1–32.
- Prieur, J.-M. 1989. *Acta Andreae*. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Rapske, B. 1994. *The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans.
- Rawson, E. 1987. 'Discrimina Ordinum: the Lex Iulia Theatralis'. *Papers of the British School at Rome* 55, 83–114.
- Reardon, B.P. (ed.) 1989. *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Saïd, S. 1993. 'The City in the Greek Novel'. in J. Tatum (ed.) *The Search for the Ancient Novel*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 216–236.
- Schwartz, Sandra. 1998. *Courtroom Scenes in the Ancient Greek Novels*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University.
- Soja, E.W. 1989. *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. London: Verso.
- Stallybrass, P. and White, A. 1986. *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Walker, S. 1983. 'Women and Housing in Classical Greece' in A. Cameron and A. Kuhrt (eds.) *Images of Women in Antiquity*. London: Croom Helm, 81–91.
- Wansink, C.S. 1996. *Chained in Christ: The Experience and Rhetoric of Paul's Imprisonments*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.