

Abstracts

JENNIFER EYL

Why Thekla Does Not See Paul:
Visual Perception and the Displacement
of Erōs in the *Acts of Paul and Thekla*

This paper argues that the opening scene of the *Acts of Paul and Thekla* demonstrates a rejection of human sexuality, and is crafted to excise eros from the narrative. In the Greek novels, the moments of first encounter between protagonists always result in erotic love at first sight. To prevent this from happening, the *Thekla* author presents Thekla sitting in her window listening to the words of Paul instead. Drawing on contemporary theories of visual perception, combined with the theorized relationship between visual perception and desire, the author presents alternative ways in which male and female Christian protagonists can bond in *storgē*, rather than in *eros*.

ROBIN J. GREENE

(Un)Happily Ever After:
Literary and Religious Tensions
in the Endings of the *Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla*

This paper examines the original and the variant endings of the *Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla* as examples of the literary influence of the Greek novel on early Christian narrative and the subsequent reaction against this influence as the incipient genre of martyr *Acts* matured. I argue that the author of the later ending, which describes Thecla's ultimate martyrdom, attempts to rewrite her life and death so that she conform to the idealized concept of the suffering martyr advocated by the martyr *Acts*.

PAOLA FRANCESCA MORETTI

The Two Ephesian Matrons:
Drusiana's Story in the *Acts of John*
as a Possible Christian Response to Milesian Narrative

In this paper I try to demonstrate that the literary tradition of *fabula Milesia* might lie in the background of both Petronius' tale of the Milesian matron and the story of Drusiana, told in the apocryphal *Acts of John*. This view is supported by some elements common to the two stories: the location in Ephesus; the theme of virtue, causing the women to long for death; the place – a tomb – where their fidelity is put to test; and above all, the motif of return to life. And, if Petronius reflects the profane Milesian tradition, the author of the *AJ* criticizes it, aiming at re-using it to teach Christian morality.

VINCENT GIRAUDET

Virginity at Stake: Greek Novels, Apocryphal Acts
of the Apostles, and the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus Panopolitanus

From an analysis of the *Chalcomedeia* (*D.* 33-35), it is clear that the *Dionysiaca* shares some common features with the ancient novels, including early Christian narratives, and in particular the erotic theme and doctrinal design of Söder's list. Nevertheless the treatment of the virginity motif in the rest of the epic exhibits a kind of paradox: Dionysus is like an apostle travelling around the world with his army of chaste women (*Chalcomede* and the other *Bacchae*), but an apostle punishing reluctant women who reject love and marriage (*Nicaia* and *Aura*). This paper shows that the *Dionysiaca* lies thematically at the intersection between the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles and the Greek novels, and stages the contradictions between the two related genres in the handling of the erotic theme.

JANET SPITTLER

Wild Kingdom: Animal Episodes
in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles

The second and third century apocryphal acts of the apostles are highly entertaining narratives; particularly amusing are the many episodes in which animals play central roles. In these episodes, the most well-known natural

characteristics of the animals selected for inclusion often have key significance in the context of the broader narratives, underscoring central themes of the works. The natural history works of the first centuries CE provide comparative material, indicating what information about particular animals was circulating at the time when the apocryphal acts were composed (that is, what the authors of the acts might have expected their audiences to have known about these creatures). A comparison with other second and third century prose works meanwhile indicates the compositional techniques used by contemporary authors to incorporate animal episodes and anecdotes into their works and the narrative effects achieved.

NINA BRAGINSKAYA

Joseph and Aseneth in Greek Literary History:
The Case of the “First Novel”

I believe that *JosAs* was neither conceived as a novel nor subject to the novel’s influence but is of immense importance for the study of the novel’s history. *JosAs* as a story about the marriage of Josephus has a plot that *coincided* with that of a love novel. Ch. Burchard in his commentary singled out the parallels between *JosAs* on one hand and Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* and Chariton’s novel on the other. Exploring them I prove that in each case closer and more convincing parallels exist between *JosAs* and folklore, biblical, and Judeo-Hellenistic literature than between *JosAs* and the novels. *JosAs* is better explained as a missing link between stories about national heroes of the Hellenistic people and the romantic novel.

JUDITH PERKINS

Jesus Was No Sophist: Education in Early Christian Fiction

This paper argues that the “Infancy Gospel of Thomas,” a short text that includes four scenes featuring the child Jesus in a classroom setting, offers a Christian critique of the early imperial elite culture’s attempt to construct all but the culturally educated as children, without social presence or authority. The so-called second sophistic’s ratcheted-up educational standards functioned to unite the Greek speaking elite across the empire, as it also disenfranchised more of the non-elite. The depiction of the child Jesus, however, reacting to his teacher’s blows by striking him dead and demonstrating his

surpassing wisdom displays a counterargument to sophistic claims for the primacy of education for establishing social worth.

OLIVER EHLEN

Reading the *Protevangelium Jacobi* as an Ancient Novel

For the *Protevangelium Jacobi* we have evidence on papyrus from the third century, only a hundred years after it was composed. The categories *point of view* and *alternation technique* used by Tomas Hägg in 1971 already allow a comparison of the narration technique of ancient Greek novelists like Chariton or Achilleus Tatius with the anonymous author of the *Protevangelium Jacobi*. In parameters of later philology research the *point of view* can be described in terms of *focalisation* used by Gérard Genette. If the text is regarded in the categories of *focalisation* it is evident that the story is told in a manner which forces the reader and hearer to go into the story because he sees it with the eyes of those who are involved. So the meaning and the message of the whole story is received by the reader or hearer in a deeply emotional manner. The author reaches this effect by borrowing motives and strategies of the then popular ancient novel. Beside this he also uses narrative techniques which can be called prefigurations of modern narrative strategies like *indirect given thoughts* and the *stream of consciousness*.

ROSA M. ANDÚJAR

Charicleia the Martyr: Heliodorus and Early Christian Narrative

I discuss visual and aesthetic representations of Charicleia in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* in relation to *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. My focus is on Heliodorus' discourse of beauty in two scenes in books 8 and 10 in which Charicleia is presented as a spectacle before a crowd. In these scenes, I argue that Heliodorus departs from a traditional description of τὸ κάλλος, in which the protagonist is likened to a goddess, and instead conveys a visual image of Charicleia powerfully reminiscent of those employed by Christian hagiography associated with Thecla, in which beauty is correlated with chastity.

MARTINA HIRSCHBERGER

Marriages Spoiled: The Deconstruction of Novel Discourse
in Early Christian Novel Narratives

The paper analyses the use of typical motifs from the Greek romantic novel (e.g. nobility, beauty, romantic love) in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles and underlines their subversive function. In the Christian narratives these motifs serve to criticize the values of pagan society as expressed in the Greek love romances. There are also real world problems conceptualized in the fictional accounts about the conversions of upper class ladies to Christianity. But as fitting for a good story, in the Apocryphal Acts everything is presented in a more spectacular and exciting way.

WARREN S. SMITH

We-Passages in Acts as Mission Narrative

In the Book of Acts Chapter 16, the anonymous author seems to enter his own narrative by persistently using ‘we’ rather than ‘they’ to describe the journey to Europe by Paul and his companions. This paper compares the ‘we-passages’ with those by other early Christian writers (Clement, Hermas, Boethius) to show how, in appeals to both believers and non-believers, the narrator often switches to “we” to include himself among the believers, and draws his readers into the story by implying their connection with the Christian community. The momentous entry of the Gospel into Europe is the occasion for the change to ‘we’ in Acts, at the point where Christianity begins to fulfill its mission to preach the Gospel to the “ends of the earth.”

PETR KITZLER

Viri mirantur facilius quam imitantur:
Passio Perpetuae in the Literature of the Ancient Church
(Tertullian, *Acta martyrum*, and Augustine)

The paper examines the reception of the *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis* in early Christian literature and refers to the subsequent manipulations of this text. The *Passio Perpetuae*, though highly venerated in the early Church, contained a number of innovative and – in the context of Antique and early Christian society – potentially subversive features. These novel features

were felt to undermine the existing social order and hierarchy, and it was necessary to “explain them away” in order to make the text more compliant with traditional and generally accepted social values. This very point of view was often taken into account, when later authors refer to the text. The paper tries to illuminate how the *Passio Perpetuae* is presented in the later literary tradition (Tertullian, martyr acts, and Augustine), and how this narrative is re-shaped in order to fit later authors’ intentions.

TIMO GLASER

Telling What’s Beyond the Known:
The Epistolary Novel and the Afterlife
of the Apostle Paul in the Pastoral Epistles

This paper analyses the means by which epistolary novels make use of narratives: How do they create their story, and how do they work with preceding stories about their hero?