

Chapter 1

Contexts

1.1. Why focus on Thecla?

The fascination in scholarly circles with the *Acts of Paul*, and particularly the Thecla episode,¹ is not hard to explain. Here is an action-packed story of the apostle's encounter with a well-born pagan and her conversion and rejection of her intended marriage. The consequence is two narrow escapes from martyrdom, first by burning, and then in the arena, followed by her ultimate triumph over her enemies and subsequent career as an independent evangelist. The Thecla episode (henceforth *ATH*) attracts those interested in gender, power, asceticism, Pauline reception and Christianity's self-definition. As J.K. Elliott drily remarks, "The *Acts of Paul* has spawned a great deal of secondary literature."²

The *Acts of Paul* is a key text for understanding the relationship between early Christianity and its second century pagan *milieu*, a relationship in which Christian believers frame a discourse of faith in a way that appropriates the existing literary and cultural narratives of their environment. In this narrative, one can see certain premises of the Pauline paraenetic literature being adapted and worked out in narrated lives, making this text one in which 'the Christian self was expounded',³

1. This study is concerned primarily with the section of the *Acts of Paul* dealing with the conversion of Thecla, called here the *Acts of Thecla (ATH)* to differentiate it from the complete work, which survives in a very fragmentary form.
2. J.K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 362.
3. Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: the Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 116.

and Christian self-understanding developed over against, but also in dialogue with, Hellenistic culture. In the striving for self-definition taking place amongst Christian communities in the first and second centuries, the *ATH* seeks to answer the question 'what does it mean to be a Christian?' through telling stories of Christian life.

This study analyses the *ATH*'s answer to this question of identity formation¹ in terms of the interior life of the Christian, namely the text's attitude to the emotions: both how emotion is evoked by literary rhetoric and how the text constructs and displays emotion in individual character. The mastery of the emotions is an important preoccupation of first and second century Graeco-Roman culture, much discussed in philosophical treatises in antiquity, but also a theme of the romantic literature. Ancient pagan fiction uses narrated lives to explore, challenge and ultimately to tease the philosophical contention that it is possible to conquer the passions. The Christian fiction of the *ATH* also takes part in this debate, and this study seeks to establish its distinctive contribution by reading it in conversation with the pagan romance.²

We will first examine the way in which the construction of the Christian text, its plot, relates to the construction of the pagan romance. How does the Christian narrative echo (or diverge from) the methods of the romantic plot, both in its evocation of affective response and display of character emotion? These two narrative forms show remarkable congruence, both in aspects of plot and in what might be called the emotional 'atmosphere' of the narrative. The romantic novels, summarised baldly, comprise the

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1. Important works on Christian identity include: Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: the Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Judith Lieu, *Neither Jew nor Greek? Constructing Early Christianity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002); *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (London: Routledge, 1995); *Roman Imperial Identities in the Early Christian Era* (London: Routledge, 2009); Isabella Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity: Greeks, Jews and Christians in Antioch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
 2. Rosa Söder is usually cited as the first to point out the influence of the romantic literature on the Apocryphal Acts, in *Die Apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und die Romanhafte Literatur der Antike* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1932). Nina Braginskaia cites Olga Freidenberg's work of the 1920s as the earliest study to draw out the similarities in plot and theme between the romantic literature and Christian non-canonical literature: see, 'From the Marginals to the Center: Olga Freidenberg's Works on the Greek Novel', in *Ancient Narrative*, vol. 2 (2002), ed. Maaike Zimmerman et al (Groningen: Barkhuis & the University Library Groningen, 2003), pp. 64–85. Unfortunately, as the author points out, Freidenberg's work is virtually unknown outside the Russian-speaking world.

adventures of a young, beautiful and aristocratic couple who fall in love and either before or soon after marriage are separated. They experience a variety of hair-raising incidents, and are then reunited, returning to their native city for a happy ending. The novels are awash with emotion: love strikes the couple as a *coup de foudre* which physically shatters them, and the variety of situations in which the pair find themselves provoke jealousy, rage, intense misery and moments of joy. Both plot and characterisation work together to produce intense emotional ‘affect’,¹ which finds final closure in the restoration of the couple to their place in urban society.

Even the most cursory glance through the *ATH* reveals the relationship with the romantic literature: the urban setting in which an unrelated man and woman have the opportunity to encounter one another; the element of travel, with its attendant dangers; the basing of the narrative around a central couple, Paul and Thecla; the use of erotic language and imagery to describe the relationship between the two. The prominence of Thecla within the narrative mirrors the prominent role allotted to female characters within the romantic literature.

But it is the variations from expectation in the shape of the *ATH* plot that deserve particular attention, such as the lack of closure for Thecla, as compared to the pagan heroine. For the story to end with an unmarried girl travelling alone (instead of returning to home and family) is a startling departure from the romantic plot. It is by no means clear that this is the equivalent of a ‘happy ending’ for Thecla – how is the reader to interpret it? This leads to related questions over the alteration in ‘narrative contract’² between author and reader in the Christian, as opposed to the romantic, plot.

In recent years, those studying early Christianity have caught classical scholars’ longstanding interest in the emotions.³ Studies of emotion in the ancient world have taken various approaches to the topic. Some,

1. Throughout this study, the term ‘affect’ will be used for the emotive rather than cognitive response evoked by the text; a lighter term than ‘emotion’, it is intended to convey the subtlety of the atmosphere a text creates, not only through overt emotional language but also through aspects of the plot such as setting and story time.
2. John Winkler’s work on Apuleius is the foundational study for this approach: *Auctor and Actor: a Narrative Reading of Apuleius’ Golden Ass* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). See also Irene J.F. de Jong, *Narrators and Focalizers: The Presentation of the Story in The Iliad*, 2nd edn., Bristol classical paperbacks (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 2004).
3. See, for instance, Stephen Voorwinde, *Jesus’ Emotions in the Gospels* (London: T&T Clark, 2011); Stephen Barton, ‘Eschatology and the Emotions in Early Christianity’, *JBL* 130, no. 3 (2011), 571–91.

such as Richard Sorabji¹ and Martha Nussbaum² have explored the issue from a philosophical/ethical perspective, while David Konstan³ has positioned his studies within a literary and cultural context. This study follows the latter, more literary approach in exploring the presentation of and attitude to character emotion within the *ATh*, while recognising the enormous influence of popular philosophy (particularly Stoicism) in forming concepts of the self in antiquity.

The role of gender in the *ATh* is an aspect of characterisation within the text deserving a more even-handed approach than it has received. Studies of the *ATh* have tended to concentrate on the role of Thecla herself, understandably since she is the most prominent character in this section of the *Acts of Paul*. Earlier works saw the *ATh* almost as the manifesto for a second century feminist movement: Willy Rordorf, for instance, calls the *Sitz im Leben* of the text 'a female liberation movement',⁴ and Stevan Davies goes so far as to argue for female authorship.⁵ The pendulum has swung almost entirely in the other direction: more recent work sees the person of Thecla as a cipher in which male power struggles are inscribed.⁶

For decades, dating perhaps from Sarah Pomeroy's⁷ seminal work, the predominant interest in gender studies within classical literature has been in assessing the portrayal of women in narrative. The portrayal of men has been seen as a 'given', as the social norm against which women's characterisation can be read. There has, however, developed an increasing interest in the concept of ἀνδρεία, masculinity, in the classical and Hellenistic world, and a recognition that the masculine and feminine are frequently defined in terms of one another and in apposition (as well as in opposition) to one another. Studies of masculinity in antiquity can therefore throw light not just on the literary function of gender role within this text but also on the social context which informs these roles: a point of conflict between the ideology of the text and its social setting.

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1. Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: from Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
 2. Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
 3. See bibliography for a list of David Konstan's works consulted for this study.
 4. Willy Rordorf, 'Tradition and Composition in the Acts of Thecla: the State of the Question', *Semeia*, no. 38 (1986), 43–52.
 5. Stevan L. Davies, *The Revolt of the Widows: the Social World of the Apocryphal Acts* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980).
 6. See, for instance, Rosie Ratcliffe, 'Violating the inviolate body – Thecla uncut', in *The Body as Cultural Entity in Biblical, Early Christian and Jewish Texts*, ed. Joan Taylor (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2013).
 7. Sarah Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken, 1975).

So, how does the relationship between Paul and Thecla function in the text? Is Thecla intended as an example for emulation, or does her character function in some other way? What does Thecla's lack of integration into any social structure at the end of the narrative imply for the reader's understanding of her role? We will pay as much attention to male characterisation as to female, recognising the fact, for example, that aspects of Paul's presentation in the text are as problematic as Thecla's. Characters in a narrative cannot be understood in isolation but only as part of a network of relationships woven by the text.

To conclude, the identity of a group is formed over against, indeed often in opposition to, that of other groups; the *ATH* uses the literary forms¹ already familiar to its readers from pagan discourse to present an alternative story of the Christian self, of the pursuit of the beloved and the mastery of the emotions. By its appropriation and manipulation of the genre of romance, the *ATH* reveals its own ideology, not only through the text's content, but also through its form.

1.2

Literary background and origins

Place of origin and dating

It is now regarded as beyond doubt that the *ATH* was originally part of a longer narrative, the *Acts of Paul*, despite its long independent circulation as a self-contained text. There remains only a collection of fragments of the *Acts of Paul*; one of these, a fifth or sixth century Coptic papyrus (PHeid), contains extensive fragments of the entire *Acts of Paul*, including the *ATH* section which follows on directly in the papyrus from an episode dealing with Paul in Antioch. This is definitive evidence for the original inclusion of the *ATH* episode within the longer narrative.²

The *ATH* was detached and preserved separately from the rest of the *Acts of Paul*, probably because of its use in the Thecla cult: Egeria, a fourth century pilgrim, in her record of a visit to Thecla's shrine near Seleucia in May 384 CE recounts how she hears the *ATH* read as part of the devotions to the saint.³ The text's origin in south central Asia Minor seems certain:

1. I do not argue that the *ATH* is influenced only by the romantic literature, but simply that comparison with this genre is the most fruitful for understanding the *ATH*'s literary portrayal of emotion.
2. Willy Rordorf, 'Tradition and Composition in the Acts of Thecla: the State of the Question', in *Semeia*, no. 38 (1986), pp. 43–52.
3. '... facta oratione ad martyrium nec non etiam et lectione actu sanctae Teclae. . .' *Égérie Journal de Voyage* (ed. Pierre Maraval, (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1982), 23.5.

as D.R. MacDonald¹ argues, Tertullian's identification of this as the place of origin is supported within the text itself. The geography of the area is accurate and the prominence of women in the narrative accords with the situation in Paul's letters to the region. Riet van Bremen's study of women in the Greek East in the Hellenistic and Roman periods reinforces this last point: 'Female members of local ruling élites played a prominent and visible role in public life.'² Jan Bremmer³ puts forward interesting linguistic evidence based on the self-designation of the aristocratic protagonists as *πρώτη* and *πρώτος*, which he shows to be found in inscriptions from Eastern Phrygia, Bithynia and Pisidia. Although it is impossible to be certain of the exact place of composition, Bremmer's suggestion of a possible place of writing in Iconium would accord with the exclusively urban setting of the narrative.

The precise dating of the *Acts of Paul* is a more difficult issue. The *terminus ante quem* is provided by Tertullian's allusion to the work at *De Baptismo* 17.5, written around 200 CE. How long before that the *Acts of Paul* was written is hard to establish: the consensus of modern scholarship favours a mid second century date, around 150 CE. Jan Bremmer suggests a *terminus post quem* of around 160 CE, because of the appearance of the name 'Falconilla' in the narrative: 'This very rare name is most likely derived from Pompeia Sosia Falconilla, the wife of the Roman consul of AD 169 (M. Pontius Laelianus), who is known from various contemporary inscriptions.'⁴ Peter Dunn stresses the range of early references to the *Acts of Paul* in authors such as Origen and Clement of Alexandria, and its appearance in Eusebius' list of non-canonical works, amidst other works dating from the first and second centuries: 'By virtue of association, the APl must also be early in order to have been so well received. Thus, a date near the middle of the second century is by no means unreasonable.'⁵ One opposing view is that of A. Hilhorst,⁶ who suggests that we should take more seriously Jerome's

1. Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle: the Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), p. 38.
2. Riet van Bremen, *The Limits of Participation: Women and Civic Life in the Greek East in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1996), p. 1.
3. Jan N. Bremmer, 'The Novel and the Apocryphal Acts: Place, Time and Readership', in *Gron. Coll.*, vol. IX, ed. H. Hofmann and M. Zimmerman (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), pp. 157–180.
4. Jan N. Bremmer, 'The Novel and the Apocryphal Acts', p. 161.
5. Peter Dunn, 'The Acts of Paul' (PhD diss., the University of Cambridge, 1996), p.11. Willy Rordorf also supports a date of around 150 CE: see his introduction to the 'Acts of Paul' in *Écrits Apocryphes Chrétiens*, vol. I, ed. Francois Bovon and Pierre Geoltrain (Paris: Bibliotheque de la Pleiade, 1997), p. 1122.
6. A. Hilhorst, 'Tertullian on the Acts of Paul', in *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul*, ed. Jan N.

statement that the presbyter was expelled from his post ‘apud Iohannem’, in the time of John (*De Viris Illustribus* 7). Hillhorst argues this must be a reference to John the apostle and evangelist, whom Jerome says to have died in 98 CE. Hillhorst suggests that even if we do not wish to support as early a date as this, we should at least allow a wider range of dates for the *Acts of Paul* than is usually the case.

In his survey of this evidence, Jeremy Barrier notes the discovery of Bodmer X as evidence that 3 *Corinthians* circulated independently before being incorporated into the *Acts of Paul*. This suggests that the various parts could have been written at different times and that the final work may have taken as long as a century to come together: he proposes the last thirty to forty years of the second century as a date for the entire work.¹

A dating around mid-to-late second century would better allow for the interaction with the motifs and themes of the romantic novel so clearly discernible within the text. Chariton’s *Chaireas and Callirhoe* (henceforth *Callirhoe*), regarded as the earliest of the five extant romantic novels, is generally dated to the end of the first or the beginning of the second century CE.²

Authorship

The only information about the author is contained in Tertullian’s reference in the *De Baptismo*, addressed to those who use the text as support for women’s ministry:

‘They should know that in Asia the presbyter who put together that document, thinking to add of himself to Paul’s reputation, was found out, and though he claimed he had done it for love of Paul, was deposed from his position.’³ Tertullian writes to deny the authority of this text and so is not unbiased; with this proviso, one can with caution conclude from his statement that the (final) author is male, holds (or held) a position of some responsibility within his local Christian community, and that his (self-confessed?) motivation in writing was respect (love) for Paul.

Bremmer (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996), pp. 150–163.

1. Jeremy Barrier, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), p. 24.
2. Simon Swain in his introduction to *Oxford Readings in the Greek Novel*, ed. Simon Swain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 24. B.P. Reardon dates the work a little earlier, ‘about the middle of the first century AD’ in *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, ed. B.P. Reardon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 17.
3. Tertullian, *De Baptismo*, 17.5, *sciunt in Asia presbyterum qui eam scripturam construxit, quasi titulo Pauli de suo cumulans, convictum atque confessum id se amore Pauli fecisse loco decessisse.*

This last point is worth bearing in mind when we come to assess the presentation of Paul's behaviour in the *ATH*, which occasionally seems distinctly questionable to the modern reader.

The use of the verb 'put together' (*construxit*)¹ leaves open the question of women's involvement in the development of the text. This is an issue not just because of the prominence of Thecla, but also because the text at some points seems divided along gender lines (particularly in the second Antiochene section), with men in general as 'the enemy'; 'the men in the story all conspire against Thecla';² 'not one male . . . befriends Thecla.'³ This has led to the suggestion that it is women's stories⁴ that are being narrated here; an influential proponent of this view was the early work of Virginia Burrus,⁵ but her view did not go unchallenged: Peter Dunn rightly points out that a marked concern for women does not automatically mean that they were the stories' main narrators, arguing that the negative attitude towards men in the text has been exaggerated. Kate Cooper⁶ and Judith Perkins⁷ have adopted a view which might be called the 'hermeneutic of suspicion' towards the text's attitude to gender, taking the tradition of male authorship of the text seriously and seeing the *ATH* as located within a male culture where women are the objects, rather than subjects, of discourse. Elisabeth Esch-Wermeling's study⁸ presents a nuanced theory, arguing that this is a text in which an older layer of tradition (the Antioch section)⁹ that does present Thecla as an independent female evangelist has been framed by later traditions (the stories based in Iconium and Seleucia), in effect 'taming' Thecla and subordinating her to Paul's apostolic authority.¹⁰

1. See Stephen J. Davis for a discussion of the implications of vocabulary here: *The Cult of St Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 14.
2. Stephen J. Davis, *The Cult of St Thecla: a Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 11.
3. Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle*, p. 36.
4. Sources are discussed further below.
5. Virginia Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of Apocryphal Acts* (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1986).
6. Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996).
7. Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (London: Routledge, 1995).
8. Elisabeth Esch-Wermeling, *Thekla – Paulusschülerin wider Willen?* (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2008), p. 140.
9. See Appendix 1 for an outline of the *ATH* narrative.
10. For an excellent review of the history of scholarship on this issue, see Ross Kraemer, 'Thecla of Iconium, Reconsidered', in *Unreliable Witnesses: Religion, Gender and history in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 117–152.

All this is in tune with modern work on the romantic novel, which sees these narratives as discourses with a major interest in masculinity, despite the apparent prominence of women within the action. It can no longer be argued that the *ATh* in the form in which it has been transmitted is a simple manifesto for the rights of women in ministry, even if Tertullian's contemporaries tried to use it in this way. Even if one wishes to argue for at least some female contribution to the narrative in the form of oral legend, these contributions have been absorbed into a masculine literary culture.

Target audience

The *Acts of Paul* was written for the entertainment and edification of a Christian readership; the narrative is full of incident and adventure, and also seeks to present its Christian characters as exhibiting virtues surpassing (and subverting) those of the pagan culture. It is cited by a range of Christian writers; although Tertullian disapproves of the text, Hippolytus and Origen¹ quote from it without criticism. Eusebius, writing at the end of the third or early in the fourth century, classifies the *Acts of Paul* amongst the 'disputed' books (τῶν . . . ἀντιλεγομένων); not canonical, but not heretical, and familiar to most in the Church.²

Those who argue for female involvement in the production of the text also see it as particularly slanted towards female readers; a view that has also been expressed about the romantic novels. This is not only because of the prominence of female characters in both kinds of literature but also the supposedly feminised interests of the narrative: private life, romance and so on, rather than war and politics. But arguments³ that attempt to infer the target readership from the nature of the text are not altogether on safe ground: the nature of the text is a clue to the background of the writer, not necessarily of the intended, or indeed actual, reader.

1. Hippolytus, *Comm. Dan.*, III.29; Origen, *Princ.* I.2.3; *Comm. Jo.* XX.12, cited by J.K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, p. 350.
2. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* III.25.
3. See for instance Ewen Bowie, 'The Ancient Readers of the Greek Novels', in *The Novel in the Ancient World*, ed. Gareth Schmeling, revised edition (Boston, Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 87–106. See also Richard Hunter, 'Ancient Readers', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel*, ed. Tim Whitmarsh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 261–271 (Hunter suggests a 'diverse and complex audience' for the texts); Tomas Hägg, 'Orality, Literacy and the "readership" of the Early Greek Novel', in *Contexts of Pre-Novel Narrative: the European Tradition*, ed. Roy Eriksen (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), pp. 47–81; Susan A. Stephens, 'Who read ancient novels?', in *The Search for the Ancient Novel*, ed. J. Tatum (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 405–418.

To consider the readership of the ancient romances first, very little secure evidence has been found for either men or women specifically as readers of novels.¹ The novel is not much mentioned in ancient literature and seems to have been rather despised as a genre – even if one did read novels, one might not want to admit it.² However, if instead one asks, who *could* have read the novels, it is clear that certain classes of women are almost as likely to have had access to this literature as their male counterparts. For a widow in the position of the *ATH*'s Tryphaina, for instance, or a businesswoman in her own right such as Lydia, the dealer in purple cloth of *Acts* 16:14, it would clearly be advantageous to be able to check accounts or send and receive letters of business without being wholly reliant on intermediaries.

The motivation for literacy is not simply functional: literacy brings with it status and prestige. It is evidence of education and participation in culture, of wealth and its concomitant possibility for leisure, and it gives access to power through the ability to influence others and exert control at a spatial and temporal distance. Through letters an apostle can exert control over a remote church, or an Emperor direct the actions of his Governors. The prestige of literacy is clear from the efforts made even by the semi-literate to display the skills they have,³ for instance by appending a signature to a letter or other document; there is a wide range of evidence for this level of basic practical literacy amongst some women across the ancient world and papyri finds in Egypt show that hundreds were written to and by women.⁴

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1. There is one reference commonly cited, the dedication by Antonius Diogenes of his novel to his sister Isidora (Phot. *Bibl. Cod.* 166, 111a 41ff.).
 2. Berber Wesseling usefully lists the major references to novels on page 68 of her article 'The Audience of the Ancient Novels', in *Gron. Coll.*, vol. I, ed. H. Hofmann (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1988), pp. 67–79. On the issue of genre, Tim Whitmarsh argues that consistency in titles given to the novels indicates to the reader the genre 'ideal Greek novel', in 'The Greek Novel: Titles and Genre', *AJPh*, 126 (2005), 587–611 (p. 604). Simon Goldhill discusses the implications of the category of 'genre' for study of the novel, emphasising the need to see the 'porousness' of the form and the interaction of the texts with other works of prose fiction to understand them in their cultural context ('Genre', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel*, ed. Tim Whitmarsh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 185–200 (p. 199).
 3. For discussion of awkward signatures as evidence of a wish to show off literacy, see Raffaella Cribiore, *Writing, Teachers and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), p. 6.
 4. For some examples, see Sarah Pomeroy, 'Women in Roman Egypt (A Preliminary Study Based on Papyri)', in *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*, ed. Helene P. Foley (New York: Gordon & Breach, 1981), pp. 303–322.

A basic education in literacy¹ reached beyond the élite class; opportunities for schooling existed throughout urban areas in antiquity, for those who had the financial resources to send their children there, and there is evidence from the first to the sixth century of women teachers in Egypt at least at the elementary level, possibly originally as an extension of the maternal role in teaching young children.² The existence of subsidised elementary education for both boys and (more rarely) girls in Greek cities in the east from the second century BCE, specifically at Teos and Pergamon, points to acceptance of the notion that at least a basic level of education for girls is desirable, and that it was accessible to the poorer classes. Its funding, however, through endowments by local rulers and aristocracy, does not seem to have survived the coming of the Empire and its financial drain on cities.³ It should be noted that élite families might choose to educate slaves in clerical skills,⁴ extending literacy to classes who otherwise would have no hope of access to education. Some of these slaves were female: Kim Haines-Eitzen cites evidence for women scribes in private (not public) contexts, including an allusion in Eusebius (*HE* 6.23) to Origen's use of girls trained to write beautifully.⁵

Still, as Wesseling points out, '*literate* is not necessarily the same as *literary*':⁶ it seems likely that only the wealthier classes would have had the leisure to gain sufficient facility in reading to be able to enjoy reading fiction for themselves.

Books were expensive to produce and to buy, and Susan Stephens argues that the physical appearance of the papyri containing the surviving romances suggests that they were aimed at the 'high end' of the

1. For a general survey of levels of literacy in the ancient world, see William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989). See Raffaella Cribiore, *Writing, Teachers and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996) for discussion of approaches to education and literacy, especially p. 15 for evidence for female literacy, and pp. 22–3 for evidence for women teachers. For a fuller discussion of women's education, see also pp. 74–101 in Cribiore's *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). For a discussion of women as readers of the novel, see Brigitte Egger, 'The Role of Women in the Greek Novel: Woman as heroine and reader', in *Oxford Readings in The Greek Novel*, ed. Simon Swain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 108–136.
2. Suggested by Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, p. 79.
3. W. V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 133.
4. Kim Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power and the Transmitters of Early Christian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 55.
5. Kim Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters*, pp. 41–52.
6. Berber Wesseling, 'The Audience of the Ancient Novels', footnote 19, citing Ernest Best.

book-buying public: they do not differ in their style and layout from the papyri containing the classical authors such as Thucydides.¹ This reflects the general scholarly consensus that the intended audience for these works comprised the educated, literary élite;² *Callirhoe*, for instance, quotes or alludes to Thucydides, Xenophon and Homer.

It should be remembered that in antiquity, reading was an aural and social experience as much as (if not more than) a private one; Tomas Hägg³ points out that a much wider audience for literature than those that can actually read is possible, if one envisages a social situation in which literature is read aloud to a group. This particularly chimes with allusions in the Pauline letters that imply they are being read to gatherings of the early Church.⁴ It is worth noting in connection with this point both that the audience for Paul's letters was mixed in socio-economic background, and that polemic against Christianity characterises it as a religion appealing to women and slaves.⁵

Jan Bremmer has collected evidence specifically for the existence of Christian women readers, citing, for instance, Hermas in the *Shepherd of Hermas* making a copy of a book for a woman called Grapte, Dionysius of Corinth's letter to Chrysophora in the second century, and Origen's female pupils.⁶ There is no reason to suppose that converts to Christianity should be any less literate than their pagan counterparts in class and status, and indeed familiarity with texts is urged on believers: 'All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness' (2 *Tim.* 3:16). The *ATH* itself is an intertextual document, freely quoting from a range of New Testament letters. It fails, however, to quote at all from even the most familiar classical author of pagan literature, Homer, whose prevalence as a school text meant that anyone with a pretence to a literate education

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1. See Susan A. Stephens, 'Who read ancient novels?' in *The Search for the Ancient Novel*, ed. J. Tatum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 405–418.
 2. See, for instance, Ewen Bowie, 'The Ancient Readers of the Greek Novels', in *The Novel in the Ancient World*, ed. Gareth Schmeling, revised edition (Boston, Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 87–106.
 3. Tomas Hägg, 'Orality, literacy and the "readership" of the early Greek Novel', in *Contexts of the Pre-Novel Narrative: the European Tradition*, ed. Roy Eriksen (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), pp. 47–81 (p. 65).
 4. See, for instance, the closing greetings, e.g., 2 *Cor.* 16:19.
 5. See particularly Origen's *Contra Celsum*, 3.44. Origen counters this by arguing that the gospel calls these despised groups so that it can make them better, and in addition calls others very different: *καὶ τοὺς πολλῶν τούτων διαφέροντας* (3.49).
 6. Jan N. Bremmer, 'The Novel and the Apocryphal Acts: place, time and readership', in *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel*, vol. IX, ed. H. Hofmann and M. Zimmerman (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), pp. 157–180 (p. 172).

must have been able to recognise a few tags. This could be taken as an indicator of a less than élite audience (and author) for the narrative, along with the nature of the text's Greek: fairly restricted in vocabulary, uncomplicated in syntax, and nearer to the Greek of Mark's gospel than to a literary text.

Having said this, there are Christian writers who explicitly reject pagan culture, pointing to an ideology of deliberate dissociation from its ideals. Tertullian's *Apology*, while displaying his own rhetorical erudition, distances the Christian from Greek learning: 'What do a philosopher and a Christian have in common? – A disciple of Greece and of heaven?'¹ This makes it somewhat problematic to deduce a lower social class for the *ATH* readership based on the lack of literary reference alone.

The foregoing suggests that the writer of the *ATH* could be fairly certain that women would have access of some sort to his work, and of course there is evidence from Tertullian's disapproving remarks that women in fact were amongst the readership. Although likely to include those from an educated, élite class, it is also probable that the readership was quite mixed, both in gender and class, in line with the readership implied for Paul's letters and potentially more mixed than the readership for the romantic literature.

Sources, oral and literary

It seems certain that the author worked with sources, i.e., that the story was not invented *ex nihilo*.² The debate as to whether oral origins in the *ATH* should be stressed or whether it is primarily a literary narrative has been very much interlinked in scholarship with gender issues around authorship and target audience. Broadly speaking, scholars who see oral characteristics within the *ATH* also tend to argue for women's involvement in the telling of the original stories and usually also for the work as a whole as representing the worldview of early Christian women. Those who see the work primarily as a literary construct tend to put far less stress on the possibility of female involvement since this view stresses the role of the male author/editor, the presbyter.³

1. Tertullian, *Apology* 46:18 *quid simile philosophus et Christianus? Graeciae discipulus et caeli?* For further references see Sara Rappe, 'The New Math: How to Add and to Subtract Pagan Elements in Christian Education', in Yun Lee Too ed., *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 405–32.
2. See Lynne C. Boughton for the view that much of the Thecla story is embellishment of a martyrdom account found in Eusebius: Lynne C. Boughton, 'From Pious Legend to Feminist Fantasy: Distinguishing Hagiographic Licence from Apostolic Practice in the Acts of Paul/Acts of Thecla', *Journal of Religion*, 71 (1991), 362–83.
3. The question of the gender of the primary target audience is not so intertwined with

Several scholars¹ have argued that the stories within the *ATH* circulated as oral literature or folk tales before being incorporated into the written text, and that they are in fact closer to this kind of narrative than to the literary Greek romantic novel. It is indeed possible to discern elements reminiscent of folk tales within the *ATH*: MacDonald, for instance, finds a number of characteristics such as the 'law of the single strand' (economy of plot) and the 'law of repetition' (evidenced by Thecla's repeated ordeals).² Ironically, however, those who want to see the *ATH* as either 'oral' in character or literary are presumably unaware of the parallel debate over the origins of the romantic novels; Tomas Hägg³, for instance, traces some markers of orality within the work of Chariton, such as stereotyped linking phrases between incidents, the use of recapitulation/anticipation, stereotyped phraseology and stereotyped scenes, motifs and plots. This does not prevent him from arguing that the work is primarily a literary product, 'bookish' because of its intertextuality; for instance, Chariton frequently quotes from other literary texts, which Hägg argues 'show the author writing with another book in front of him – physically or mentally'.⁴

Similarly, the fact remains that what we have before us in the *ATH* is a written narrative. There are indisputable links with canonical Christian literature in the *ATH*, and the number of quotations and range of allusions indeed suggest a literary environment for the *ATH*. However, the extent and nature of the text's relationship to these other texts is again a subject of much debate: a particular focus of discussion is, unsurprisingly, the relation of the *Acts of Paul* to the canonical *Acts*.

Clearly the episodic structure of the *Acts of Paul* as a whole, with Paul moving from city to city and encountering a number of adventures on his eventual journey to Rome, is strongly reminiscent of the structure of the Lukan *Acts*, and the action takes place over much of the same ground.

the oral versus literary debate, or with the question of authorial gender.

1. See, for instance, Virginia Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of Apocryphal Acts* (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1986); Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle: the Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983); Stevan L. Davies, *The Revolt of the Widows: the Social World of the Apocryphal Acts* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980); Margaret P. Aymer, 'Hailstones and Fireballs: Redaction, World Creation and Resistance in the Acts of Paul and Thecla', in *Semeia*, no. 79 (1997), pp. 45–61; Esch-Wermeling, *Thekla – Paulusschülerin wider Willen?* (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2008).
2. Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle*, p. 21.
3. Tomas Hägg, 'Orality, literacy and the "readership" of the early Greek novel', in *Contexts of Pre-novel Narrative: the European Tradition*, ed. Roy Eriksen (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), pp. 47–81.
4. Tomas Hägg, 'Orality, literacy', p. 49.

The title of the work (whether assigned by the author or later editors) echoes that of the canonical *Acts*. However, when one looks beyond these broad similarities, the differences when considering specifics of plot and incident are puzzling: there are, for instance, hardly any shared characters; the itinerary is different; where events occur in the same city in both texts, they are treated differently. How might one explain these phenomena?

Perhaps the most straightforward response is that the author of the *Acts of Paul* did not know the canonical *Acts*, the view of scholars such as Willy Rordorf¹ and Peter Dunn.² Dunn is prepared to allow the remote possibility that the *Acts of Paul* may be early enough not to view the canonical *Acts* as sacrosanct, but maintains that there is just not enough similarity between the two works to be certain that the author of the *Acts of Paul* knew the canonical *Acts*. Any resemblances are due to a common use of early tradition.

Alternatively, the author did know the canonical *Acts* and the differences are due to his reworking of the material available to him.³ Within this overall stance towards the text, scholars believe either that the author of the *Acts of Paul* wrote to ‘correct’ the canonical *Acts* in some way, i.e., was dissatisfied with it (the view of Richard Pervo), or that the *Acts of Paul* is some sort of creative supplement to the canonical *Acts*. Richard Bauckham,⁴ for instance, argues that the *Acts of Paul* is written as a ‘sequel’ to the events recorded in the earlier text, Daniel Marguerat⁵ that it is a form of ‘rereading’, just as *The Aeneid* is a rereading of *The Iliad*.

The stance of this study is that the text of the *Acts of Paul* does stand within an overall relationship to the canonical *Acts*: the similarities with the overall structure and plot of the canonical *Acts* are too striking to be

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1. Stated in Rordorf’s article ‘In welchem Verhältnis stehen die apokryphen Paulusakten zur kanonischen Apostelgeschichte und zu den Pastoralbriefen?’, in *Text and Testimony: essays on New Testament and Apocryphal Literature in honour of A.F.J. Klijn*, ed. T. Baarda et al (Kampen: Kok, 1988), p. 236.
 2. Peter Dunn, ‘The Acts of Paul’ (PhD diss., the University of Cambridge, 1996), p. 8.
 3. The view of, for instance, Richard Pervo, *Profit with Delight: the Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Fortress Press: Philadelphia, 1987); Pieter Lalleman, ‘The Canonical and the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles’, in *Gron. Coll.* vol. IX, ed. H. Hofmann and M. Zimmermann (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), pp. 181–192.
 4. Richard Bauckham, ‘The Acts of Paul as a sequel to Acts’, in *The Book of Acts in its Ancient Literary Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke, vol. 1 of Bruce W. Winter ed., *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 105–152.
 5. Daniel Marguerat, ‘The Acts of Paul and the Canonical Acts: a Phenomenon of Rereading’, in *Semeia*, no. 80 (1997), pp. 169–183.

discounted. The divergences from the canonical *Acts* are best accounted for by seeing the presbyter's narrative as indeed a creative reworking of the traditions at his disposal, drawing from a number of other texts and genres to create a Christian fiction.

Particularly relevant for a study of the *ATH* is the relationship with other 'Pauline' (in the broadest sense) literature: a number of characters' names¹ in the *ATH* also appear in the Pastoral Epistles. There are some broad concerns in common, such as the role of women in the Church, the rejection of marriage and heretical teaching (the latter being only a side issue in the *ATH*), but the two texts take rather different views on the first two of these issues. It seems certain that the *ATH* is to be dated later than the Pastorals, and there is, as Dunn² notes, no sign of polemic against the view of the Pastoral letters within the *Acts of Paul*. MacDonald's³ approach is that the Pastorals, which do have a polemical edge, were written to combat the kinds of view manifested by the *Acts of Paul*, which were circulating in the form of Pauline (oral) legend. Bauckham,⁴ however, in his carefully and persuasively argued article, includes the Pastorals amongst the literary sources for the author of the *Acts of Paul*, who uses them in order to create his imaginative reconstruction of the activities of Paul mentioned in the letters that do not appear in *Acts*.

This is an admirable approach: any study of the composition of this text must take into account the range of literary sources discernible. There are within the *ATH* allusions to *1* and *2 Corinthians* as well as *2 Timothy* and *Titus* and the Beatitudes. Within the *Acts of Paul* as a whole there are allusions to all of the undisputed Pauline letters as well as *Ephesians*, *2 Thessalonians* and *1 Timothy*. The nature of these allusions bears consideration: sometimes a name is used, sometimes a phrase, sometimes references from two letters are conflated. Stephen J. Davis⁵ has argued that there is at least one example of an even more creative use of a reference to show in the behaviour of Thecla a fulfilment of Pauline teaching on baptism. This accords with Bauckham's view of the text as a work of creative exegesis. Elisabeth Esch-Wermeling⁶ has argued for a

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1. For instance, Demas at *ATH* 1 and *2 Tim.* 4:10; Hermogenes in *ATH* 1 and *2 Tim.* 1:15; Onesiphorus at *ATH* 2 and *2 Tim.* 1:16, 4:19.
 2. Peter W. Dunn, 'Women's Liberation, the Acts of Paul and Other Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles', in *Apocrypha*, 4 (1993), pp. 245–261.
 3. Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle*.
 4. Richard Bauckham, 'The *Acts of Paul* as a Sequel to *Acts*'.
 5. Stephen J. Davis, 'A "Pauline" Defence of Women's Right to Baptize? Intertextuality and Apostolic Authority in the Acts of Paul', *J ECS*, 8:3 (2000), 453–459.
 6. Elisabeth Esch-Wermeling, *Thekla – Paulusschülerin wider Willen?* (Münster:

complex inter-relationship between the *ATh* and the Pastoral Epistles in the Iconium section of the narrative, in which there is some concurrence with the ideology of the Pastorals, such as Paul's doubt about Thecla's steadfastness, her submission to his (male) apostolic authority, her silence. However, she maintains, the narrative also develops a more nuanced attitude to these ideas, for instance showing clearly that Thecla's silence at the beginning of the narrative does not indicate subordination to the authority of her family, and that subordination does not depend on silence in her relationship to Paul.

When the text of the *Acts of Paul* is considered as a whole, the cumulative evidence for a predominantly literary *milieu* for its composition is overwhelming. The author of the *ATh* is seeking to weave local traditions about Paul into the literary framework that he knows, working under the influence of and in conversation with other literary works (both Christian and pagan) in circulation in the second century. This is not to deny that oral legends about the apostle Paul and about local figures such as Thecla also contributed to the composition of this narrative – however, any oral material has been so thoroughly reworked as to leave only traces of its original nature. Furthermore, there is some evidence that even when it comes to his literary sources, the author is not merely a copyist but is also 'doing theology' on his own account.

1.3

The cultural context of the *ATh*

A new focus on the self

The pagan romance and the *ATh* originate in a period where, it is claimed, a cultural shift takes place in society; there is an increased ethical attention to the individual self, to the control of its desires, and a greater valorisation both of chastity and of marriage. Paul Veyne's 1978 essay 'La famille et l'amour sous le Haut-Empire romain'¹ argues for a transformation in sexual and conjugal relations in the period between Cicero and the Antonines, and connects this to the change from a competitive to a managerial aristocracy under the high empire. An élite man no longer has a means of self-affirmation through his dominance in the wider world, and so turns his attention to a new

Aschendorff Verlag, 2008).

1. Paul Veyne, 'La famille et l'amour sous le Haut-Empire romain', in *La Société Romaine* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1991), pp. 88–130.

self-definition via a reordering of his conjugal life, placing a greater emphasis on conjugal love as the source of his power within the home. Veyne emphasises that this new attention to conjugality pre-dates Christian sexual morality, in fact in some sense facilitates a reader acceptance of its ethics.

Michel Foucault took forward Veyne's ideas by arguing that changes in marital practice (increasing reciprocity, if not equality) and in the rules of the political game (decline of the city-states, multiplying centres of power under the Roman Empire) led to an increased attention to the formation of the self as an ethical subject.¹ The body, particularly control of its desires and passions, becomes the locus of concern. This leads to the development of a 'new erotics' during the first and second centuries CE, which, Foucault suggests, 'organises itself around the symmetrical and reciprocal relationship of a man and a woman, around the high value attributed to virginity, and around the complete union in which it finds perfection.'² It is in this context that Foucault sets the pagan romances, which he sees as an expression of this new erotics.

Foucault's work has not gone uncriticised, for his limited, selective use of texts, for his concentration on discourse rather than on the 'real world' of political change,³ and for failing to do justice to the complexity, irony and humour with which these texts tackle the difficult questions of love, fidelity and chastity.⁴ Foucault's summary of the romances tends to present them as a literary form in which the valorisation of marriage (and chastity) is unproblematic, a given; rather, they can be conceived as an exploration of the relationship itself; how it is achieved (or recovered) after trial and tribulation, how far one can go and still remain (technically) faithful, what indeed constitutes a 'real' marriage. Furthermore, the 'paradigm shift' approach of Veyne and Foucault is persuasively countered by Tim Whitmarsh.⁵ He argues for a more nuanced approach of gradual adjustments in focus, citing the example of *The Odyssey* as an ancient text which is nevertheless concerned with the private relations of marriage.

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1. Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self: the History of Sexuality*, vol. 3, tr. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1990).
 2. Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, p. 232.
 3. These criticisms are discussed in Averil Cameron's review, 'Redrawing the Map: Early Christian Territory after Foucault', *JRS*, 76 (1986), pp. 266–271.
 4. See Simon Goldhill, *Foucault's Virginity: Ancient Erotic Fiction and the History of Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
 5. Tim Whitmarsh, *Narrative and Identity in the Ancient Greek Novel: Returning Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 7.

Peter Brown's study¹ of sexuality and continence within early Christianity progressed Foucault's work on the connection between sexuality and self-definition. Brown illustrates the sheer variety of both practice and discourse to be found across the Roman Empire in the first two or three centuries, of which the *ATH* is one example. Chastity, in particular, holds a range of meanings in different Christian communities, from representing the dedication of the body to holiness as a temple of God,² to symbolising escape from the cycle of mortality itself and proclaiming the impending arrival of the new creation.³

Marriage and continence

During this period, a greater interest does seem to develop in the marriage relationship as a subject worthy of discourse, an 'intellectual credibility'⁴ evidenced in the attention given to conjugality by authors such as Plutarch, Seneca, Musonius Rufus and Epictetus. Positive portrayal of marriage of course featured in literature before this (one might think of Hector and Andromache, Odysseus and Penelope), but now the practice of marriage becomes something that might (indeed, should) engage the interest of the thoughtful man. Plutarch, for instance, specifically sets his discussion of marriage in the context of philosophy, and argues that the pleasure of marriage in particular needs rational consideration.⁵ Interest in control of the body's pleasures and desires, and of the mind's preoccupations and passions, finds particular focus in continence.

The *ATH*'s ending that embraces chastity rather than marriage promotes an ideal that already exists as a possibility within Graeco-Roman culture. The relationship of self-control to physical well-being is clearly marked: in antiquity there are sound medical reasons for regulating sexual intercourse, at least for men.⁶ Galen observes that men who are chaste are in better physical condition than those who are not, though he advises against suddenly adopting continence.⁷ But this

1. Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). See also Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (London: Routledge, 1995); James A. Francis, *Subversive Virtue* (Penn: Penn State University Press), 1995.
2. Peter Brown, *The Body and Society*, p. 177.
3. Peter Brown, *The Body and Society*, p. 64.
4. Simon Swain, *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World, AD 50–250* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 120. On this topic see pp. 118–131.
5. Plutarch, *Conj. praec.* 138d: τῆς περι γάμων ἡδονῆς μάλιστα λόγου δεομένης.
6. See Aline Rousselle, *Porneia: on Desire and the Body in Antiquity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 19.
7. Galen, *Gyn.* I.30.

concern for health is only one aspect of sexual continence, which also involves discipline of the mind's desire, a refraining from gratifying the senses with pleasures (including the pleasures of sight), and eventually a freedom from the tyranny of Eros. Continence represents the triumph of rationality and of the autonomous subject.

Continence is a key principle particularly in Stoic thought, the dominant philosophical school in the first centuries CE, which posits the ideal that one should not simply control the emotions but aim to eradicate them altogether: a therapy for the mind or spirit as well as the body.¹ This is achieved through the power of rationality, of recognising emotion as fundamentally an error of judgement. Once the philosopher has realised that virtue is the supreme good, all else by comparison becomes unimportant, a matter of indifference. The philosopher might decide to marry as a duty, but certainly should not allow passion to direct his actions. The stress is on self-sufficiency, on freedom from the domination of the passions and from vulnerability to the vicissitudes of fortune or other external circumstances that the philosopher cannot control. This interest in continence becomes so identified with the popular notion of philosophy in this period that the romances can playfully refer to chastity (or its abandonment) as 'philosophising'. At *Callirhoe* 2.4.5, for instance, Eros expresses contempt for a soul that attempts to philosophise with the god.² At this point the discourse around self-control intersects with the language of educated culture: *Callirhoe* explicitly frames the characters' concern for self-control in terms of παιδεία,³ the term that references not simply an individual's level of education, but defines his identity in terms of 'a fusion of manliness, elitism and Greekness'.⁴ The extent to which characters can control their passions is a marker for their élite, cultured status.

1. On philosophy's role in controlling the passions see Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: from Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
2. *Callirhoe* II.4.5, ψυχὴν ἐν ἔρωτι φιλοσοφοῦσαν; 5.27.1, ταῦτα φιλοσοφήσασα. See also *Leucippe and Clitophon* 5.27.1: Melite's successfully seductive speech is called philosophy.
3. Most often in descriptions of Dionysius: see for instance II.1.5, II.4.1, II.5.11.
4. Tim Whitmarsh, *The Second Sophistic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) p. 15. See also Y.L. Too and N. Livingstone, *Pedagogy and Power: Rhetorics of Ancient Learning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Tim Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: the Politics of Imitation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); T. Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Simon Swain, *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World, AD 50–250* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); G. Anderson, 'The Pēpaideuēnos in Action: Sophists and their Outlook in the Early Empire', *ANRW*, II.33.1, 80–208; Alan H. Sommerstein and Catherine Atherton, eds., *Education in Greek Fiction* (Bari: Levante, 1997).

Christian self-mastery

Unlike *Callirhoe*, the *ATH* does not explicitly employ the language of παιδεία, though displaying a similarly philosophical concern for physical continence and emotional control; the text accentuates and, to some extent, distorts the attitude to desire that is found in the canonical writings of Paul. Paul's own debt to the popular philosophy of his day has been much discussed;¹ he himself is a type of the philosopher who refuses marriage in order to devote himself to philosophy (or in his case, to the gospel). His ideal would be for others to do the same, or at least to stay in the condition they are when they become followers of Christ.² However, recognising the power of desire to distract its sufferers from the faith, his remedy is not the Stoic one of reassessing the value of what is desired, but the pragmatic solution of marriage: desire is slaked by satisfying it.³ As he tells the Corinthians, better to marry than burn with desire (*1 Cor.* 7:9). Asceticism is not the focus or characteristic of the Christian community per se, but a means to an end, which is to facilitate the better centring of the individual on God. In *Galatians*, where Paul seeks to construct a new ethical framework for converts from paganism that does not depend upon the Jewish law, he sets out the two spheres of ethical behaviour, 'the flesh' and 'the Spirit'. As the works of the flesh he lists the sorts of unrestrained gratification of desire and passion that would be condemned by the Stoic as much as by the Christian, including πορνεία (sexual immorality), ζήλος (rivalry) and θυμοί (passions) in his vice list (*Gal.* 5:19-20). The fruit of the Spirit, similarly, is full of virtues that a Stoic might admire, with self-control, ἐγκράτεια (*Gal.* 5:23), bringing up the rear in the list as one among many virtues.

The major difference in Paul's approach is not so much the character of these virtues as how they are attained: not by rationality, not entirely by self-discipline (although this does play a part in the development of

1. For a useful survey of scholars' work on Paul and the passions, see David Aune, 'Passions in the Pauline Epistles: the Current State of Research', in *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 221–37. See also Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989); S.K. Stowers, *A Re-reading of Romans: Justice, Jews and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 66–82; Dale B. Martin, 'Paul without Passion: On Paul's Rejection of Desire in Sex and Marriage', in *Sex and the Single Saviour: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), pp. 65–76; F.G. Downing, *Cynics, Paul and the Pauline Churches: Cynics and Christian Origins II* (London: Routledge, 1998).
2. *1 Cor.* 7:7-9
3. On this see Loveday Alexander, "Better to Marry than Burn": St Paul and the Greek Novel, in *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative*, ed. Ronald F. Hock et al (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), pp. 235–256.

the Christian character), but by the gradual maturing of the believer within the realm of and with the help of the Spirit,¹ into whose sphere he or she has been transferred at the moment of conversion. Paul's focus in his discussion of these ethical values is not the inner condition of the individual believer per se, so much as the condition of the Christian community. His discourse is framed by references to members of the community's savage behaviour towards each other (*Gal.* 5:15, 5:26); the desires of the flesh act to splinter the community, the fruit of the Spirit acts to bind it together in mutual love. Although, then, Paul's attitude to the emotions clearly intersects with philosophical attitudes of his day, he does not adopt the full-scale philosophical approach to the mastery of desire.

In this approach he is followed by later Christian writers: Clement of Alexandria's treatise *Quis Dives Salvetur?*² explains that Christ's command to sell one's possessions need not be taken literally. Instead, it is an exhortation to banish excessive desire³ from the soul – it is the passions, not wealth, that need to be done away with. Jesus himself is the doctor who will cut away the passions, which cannot be achieved all at once, but by God's power, human supplication, the help of the brothers (i.e., the Christian community), sincere repentance and constant practice, the life of the rich Christian can be set straight. Clement does see the passions as a problem for rationality – they choke it⁴ – but, like Paul, the triumph of reason is not, for Clement, the way to conquer the passions. Rather, he combines a Pauline belief in the necessity of divine help with pragmatic advice about getting into good habits, along with a not entirely disinterested recommendation that the wealthy should appoint a man of God as a personal trainer.⁵

As regards continence, then, the control of desire, the *ATH* sits in a cultural context in which its encratic message is clearly recognisable as a familiar component of a philosophical system. The influence of Stoicism on the text is strong, as will become clear in the *Character* section of this study, especially with respect to the text's approval of the almost entire

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1. On the role of the Spirit see Benjamin Fiore, 'Passion in Paul and Plutarch: 1 Corinthians 5-6 and the Polemic against Epicureans', in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: essays in honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, ed. David L. Balch, Everett Ferguson, Wayne A. Meeke (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), pp. 135–143.
 2. On this see L. Michael White, 'Moral Pathology: Passions, Progress and Protreptic in Clement of Alexandria', in *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought*, ed. J.T. Fitzgerald (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 284–321.
 3. *Quis Dives Salvetur?*, 11, τὴν ὑπεράγαν ἐπιθυμίαν.
 4. *Quis Dives Salvetur?*, 15, τὸν λογισμὸν ἄγχει.
 5. *Quis Dives Salvetur?*, 41, ἀλείπτῃν καὶ κυβερνήτην.

extirpation of emotion in its Christian protagonists. But the Christian view of a spiritual dimension to the control of the passions is also discernible: those that remain chaste will please God (*ATH* 6).

The individual in society

The increasing attention to and importance of the individual¹ in this period should not obscure the fact that family, class and wider social and cultural concerns (such as civic honour) remain key to self-understanding. This is not an individualistic age, in the modern sense. This complex of concerns is clearly discernible, for instance, in both the romantic narratives and the *Apocryphal Acts*; their interest is in the particular adventures of individualised (to a greater or lesser extent) figures, but the adventures have their piquancy because they take place against the backdrop of a lost family or in opposition to a disapproving society.

The wider context against which these narratives must be read is that of the Greek-speaking Eastern Empire under Rome, the geographical (if not always historical) setting for the works of Chariton, Xenophon of Ephesus and Achilles Tatius, the three romances composed in the first or second centuries. The Christian narrative of the *ATH* is the only one in which the existence of Roman hegemony is acknowledged to any significant extent. Chariton's narrative for instance, set in the glorious past, escapes the realities of life under Rome altogether. This seeming withdrawal from the contemporary political world on the part of the romances is symptomatic of a tension between the acknowledged superiority of Greek culture and the realities of Roman power, a tension in the self-understanding of the élites in the formerly free Greek cities.² As mentioned above, the changes in the scope of aristocratic power that Roman rule entailed are seen by Veyne and Foucault as the catalyst for a turning inwards to focus on the construction of the self as an ethical subject. However, this view needs nuancing; it was not that provincial élites were without the scope to attain a measure of political status

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1. Discussed by a number of scholars: see, for instance, Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Viking, 2006); Maud Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996).
 2. On this see Simon Goldhill ed., *Being Greek under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Tim Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: the Politics of Imitation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

and power. Roman citizenship could be automatic, depending on the status of one's city, or leading citizens could be made a personal grant of citizenship. In 212 CE the Emperor Caracalla extended Roman citizenship to all free men in the empire. Once obtained, citizenship, if accompanied by sufficient wealth and social standing, could lead to the acquisition of posts open to *equites*, and eventually to the Senate itself. That this was increasingly the case over the first two or three centuries is shown in the changing composition of the Senate; by the third century, provincials compose half the Senate, and half of these are Greek.¹

Within the cities themselves, Governors need the support of the local élite: 'It was only by creating a unity of interest between Rome and its emissaries and the provincial upper classes that the Empire survived.'² Something of this can be seen perhaps in the acquiescence of the Governor at Antioch in Alexander's plans for Thecla in the *ATh*. Yet, the Governor himself in this instance is still Roman, and any freedoms that a city might enjoy are granted and held only by the permission of Rome. The authority of any provincial official (whether local or Roman) is contingent, and can be trumped by direct appeal to the Emperor, as happened for instance in the case of Archelaus, who ruled Judea from 4 BCE to 6 CE and, according to Josephus, was deposed after two delegations of local leading men (representing his Jewish and Samaritan subjects) went to Rome.³ Paul himself eventually requested trial in Rome after spending more than two years in prison under successive Governors.⁴

On the other hand, a city is always at the mercy of interference in its local affairs from outside, by, for instance, judicial decisions made by a Governor during his *conventus* tours of the province to administer justice. The élite construction of political identity is, then, complex because of the network of sources of honour and power existing within the cities. Some of these open up possibilities for an individual's progression to the very *fons et origo* of political influence itself, Rome, while others work to limit aristocratic autonomy.

Such a context helps to explain the increasing importance of παιδεία, and particularly its emphasis on self-mastery. At one level, even if ultimate power lies outside one's grasp, everyone can aspire to control the little empire of the self. At another, if one is to operate within the

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1. Fergus Millar, *The Roman Empire and its Neighbours*, 2nd edn (London: Duckworth, 1981), p. 31.
 2. Fergus Millar, *The Roman Empire*, 63.
 3. Josephus, *BJ*, II.115.
 4. *Acts* 25:10.

delicate networks of power and privilege woven by the inter-relationships of Roman and provincial officials, then self-control and in particular mastery of the passions becomes essential for oiling the wheels of the political process, both for the ruler and the ruled. Seneca's *De Ira* is particularly concerned with the impact of uncontrolled anger in those with power over others.¹ In this area the aristocrat of the Greek East can feel himself to be the equal, if not the superior of the Roman; conquered though he might be politically, culturally there is a sort of colonisation in reverse, whereby Greek παιδεία becomes a status marker throughout the Empire.

The romances and the *ATH*, then, sit within a period of cultural change where there is increased focus on the individual self: control of one's self and one's immediate family² is the least a cultured, aristocratic male should hope to achieve. Both the Greek romances and the *ATH* in their different ways are narratives exploring the hazards threatening this élite endeavour.

1.4

Character, plot and emotion

Story and the formation of character

Dio Chrysostom, when wandering as an exile, found that people assuming he was a philosopher approached him to ask about good and evil, forcing him to think what answer he should give. This led him eventually to speak in public about other matters pertaining to philosophy – the duties of human beings, and what appeared to him likely to profit them.³ Good, evil and ethical behaviour: these are also the subjects of Christian discourse. Both forms of discourse, philosophical and theological, seek to explore and to form good character. Both have recourse to story to sugar the pill of ethical exhortation. Jesus used parables; philosophers from Plato to Seneca sprinkle allegory and anecdote through their discourse, in which characters (good and bad) illustrate their precepts in miniature dramas. Story, however, does not simply enliven the narrative and offer light relief, it serves an important function in involving and engaging the emotions of the reader in a way that discourse alone cannot. Both ethical philosophy and theology do not ask only for simple

1. See especially I.2.1–3; I.18.3–6.

2. With a slightly different emphasis, Simon Swain sees marriage as a 'locus for self-identity for the Greek male': see *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World, AD 50–250* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 129.

3. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.*, 13, pp. 12–13.

assent to propositions, they urge a changed life, and this, as Plutarch recognised, demands the involvement of the emotions. Excellence of character requires the involvement of the passions, he says: hatred of evil, for instance, is needed to bring about justice.¹

What follows will examine two texts, a Christian and a pagan narrative, that deal with the passions through a different, fictional, mode of discourse. The romance represents characters contending with the kinds of situation for which philosophy purports to offer a remedy – the pains of anger, jealousy and desire. While outbursts of rage (such as Chaireas' assault on his wife) are shown to reap dreadful consequences, the consummation of desire is the telos of the text and the characters' lives. The notion of sexual continence, chastity, becomes a playful device for exploring the limits of this aspect of 'philosophy'. What counts as chastity? Can chastity be expected from both sexes? How far can you go? The romance is a series of thought experiments around the topic of self-mastery. This could serve as a description of the Christian narrative, too, although with it comes a change in tone. If the romances interact with philosophy, the *ATH* also adds the Christian paraenetic literature into the conversation, but foregrounds chastity far more strongly than its Pauline model. There is nothing remotely playful about the treatment of sex in the *ATH*. The sadistic element which runs through the pagan romances features vividly in the *ATH* in Alexander's treatment of Thecla, unrelieved by the lighter treatment of desire which leavens the more brutal elements elsewhere in the romances. The telos of the narrative too changes from the romance's union of lovers and return home to something more open and unsettling, in which the fulfilment of Christian desire entails leaving home and family.

The approach to the text

For the most part we will focus on the *ATH* as a self-contained narrative. Its lengthy history as an independent story used in the Thecla cult supports this approach to the text, as does the narrator's method of dealing with Thecla herself, narrating her adventures from the reader's first encounter with her through to her death, and so creating a 'closed' account. It is important, however, to bear in mind the text's original setting as part of a longer narrative, both in terms of its function as a piece of text (it is in structure an episode, not a complete text) and in terms of the characterisation of the figures encountered. This is particularly vital

1. Plutarch, *Virt. Mor.*, 451d. On this subject see Steven J. Kraftchick, 'Πλάθη in Paul: the Emotional Logic of "Original Argument"', in *Paul and Pathos*, ed. Thomas H. Olbricht and Jerry L. Sumney (Atlanta: SBL, 2001), pp. 39–68.

when considering the attitude to Paul, often seen as a critical one when this portion of text is considered in isolation. The conversation partner for discussion of the *ATH* will be Chariton's *Callirhoe*, working on the assumption that the Christian text is not only influenced by the romantic literature in terms of theme and motif, but also deliberately functions as a conversation with the worldview of contemporary popular literature.

The choice of *Callirhoe* as a benchmark romance rests partly on its dating, partly on its literary style. It is generally recognised as the earliest of the romances, its popularity and breadth of circulation evidenced by Xenophon's apparent reworking of the earlier text to create his *Ephesian Tale*. In some sense therefore it can be regarded as a kind of prototype amongst the surviving Greek romances, which extend and elaborate the structuring pattern of the meeting of an aristocratic couple, their separation, travels and final union. Its early date, circulation and influence on later works suggest it is the kind of text mostly likely to have been encountered by the author of the *ATH*. Stylistically, it is the closest of the romances to the (relatively) simple linear narrative of the *ATH*, its pre-sophistic narrative lacking the extensive digressions of Heliodorus or the sophistication of Achilles Tatius and his conscious playing with the romantic genre. Although still a more artful, literary construction than the *ATH* in language, vocabulary and story, it is the romance one might imagine emerging from the same kind of *milieu* as the *ATH*.

The approach to emotion

Emotion is a socially determined cultural construct: one cannot assume the exact equivalence of emotion across modern societies, let alone between the ancient and modern worlds. A word such as αἰδώς for instance, which can mean *shame* or *modesty*, may not only describe a different felt experience from those conveyed by the English translation, but the contexts evoking these emotions will also in many instances be foreign to a modern sensibility. This is not to say that it is impossible to talk meaningfully about ancient emotions, but to emphasise that one needs to be sensitive to the contemporary social context. This study will primarily deal with emotion and affect as a literary phenomenon: analysis will not venture into social scientific approaches to emotion, but will follow the approach modelled by the work of scholars such as David Konstan.¹ That is, we will examine the

1. For example in David Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); see also William V. Harris, *Restraining Rage: the Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001); Susanna Braund and

range of emotions portrayed within the *ATH* itself, and consult other contemporary literature as a clue to the stance the reader is intended to take towards their portrayal.

The approach to the study of the narrative

This study falls into two halves: a study of the plot and of the characterisation of the *ATH*.

(i) Plot

The detailed examination of the way in which the *ATH* handles 'emotion' will begin by examining the text at a structural level, at the level of plot, in order to explore the ways in which the author manipulates the response of the reader by controlling and ordering the unfolding of the narrative. The kind of response discussed in this section is perhaps more appropriately called 'affect' – the emotive atmosphere created by the construction of the plot.

There are compelling reasons for beginning with the plot when engaging in a close reading of this particular text. The *ATH* is what might be termed a 'heavily plotted' text: it is full of incident and action, with relatively little space devoted to describing characters' motivations or inner thoughts. This is true even when compared with *Callirhoe*, a narrative equally full of incident but which also takes up significant narrative time with the protagonists' soliloquies. It is important, therefore, to give due attention to structural questions since they form such a dominant feature of the narrative's effect.

There are particular ways in which plot, the structure of the text, has an emotive impact of its own. This derives not only from the nature of the events that constitute the plot, but also from the way in which plot itself works on the reader to draw him or her on through the linear unfolding of the narrative, creating suspense, hope, disappointment and so on, as the reader moves through the story.¹ This is an effect not limited to modern texts, but it is how narrative works on readers: it will therefore be an essential part of this study to analyse both the techniques used to create this kind of effect, and the range of affect the text aims to generate. Part of this effect of plot is accentuated if the reader has in mind other

Glenn W. Most, eds., *Ancient Anger: Perspectives from Homer to Galen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Douglas L. Cairns, *Aidōs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

1. For a discussion of emotive plot see Patrick Colm Hogan, *Affective Narratology: the Emotional Structure of Stories* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2011).

plots, creating an expectation for the way in which events will (or even, 'should') unfold, an expectation which may be deliberately subverted by the author of the text. J.R. Morgan suggests that even Chariton is 'already entered upon a critical dialectic with the tradition in which he was working'¹ by making Callirhoe a bigamist instead of a determinedly chaste heroine. This study will consider, then, how the emotional effect of the *ATH* is nuanced if we posit a dependence on a knowledge of other plots.

Modern narratologists' work will inform the discussion of the plot of both *Callirhoe* and the *ATH*. Some may object that one does violence to texts from antiquity by using modern literary techniques to deconstruct them, although René Nünlist's work on the scholiasts demonstrates their awareness of the emotional impact of literary techniques.² However, as mentioned earlier, modern theories of narratology have been used with great success in the work of classicists such as John J. Winkler³ or, more recently, N.J. Lowe,⁴ who tend perhaps to take a more playful and creative approach to their discussion of narrative than many biblical scholars. John Winkler's recognition that Apuleius' text is 'self-consciously narrative'⁵ forms the key to his sophisticated and sensitive analysis of issues such as the role of rereading and of the 'narrative contract'⁶ between author and reader in a complex and perplexing text. Winkler argues that Apuleius is an author who deliberately uses plot – and especially the ending of the story – to undermine readers' assumptions as to the kind of narrative they are facing. Lowe's use of game theory to present a model for understanding classical plots gives fresh insights into the nature of their composition, which does indeed follow fairly rigid 'rules', and in this respect resembles the environment of a board game. Lowe is not suggesting that classical writers consciously followed his set of rules for composition – but neither are most modern novelists constrained by the theories of narratologists when they construct their

1. J.R. Morgan, 'The Greek Novel: Towards a Sociology of Production and Reception', in *The Greek World*, ed. Anton Powell (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 130–152 (p. 140).
2. See, for instance, Nünlist's essay 'Some ancient views on narrative, its structure and working' in *Defining Greek Narrative*, eds. Douglas Cairns and Ruth Scodel (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp. 156–174.
3. John J. Winkler, *Auctor and Actor: a Narrative Reading of Apuleius' Golden Ass* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).
4. N.J. Lowe, *The Classical Plot and the Invention of Western Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). See also Massimo Fusillo's survey, 'Modern Critical Theories and the Ancient Novel', in *The Novel in the Ancient World*, ed. Gareth Schmeling, revised edition (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 277–305.
5. John J. Winkler, *Auctor and Actor*, p. 27.
6. John J. Winkler, *Auctor and Actor*, pp. 99–100.

plots. Rather, by employing the ideas of narratology (or of other modern literary approaches) we can make use of a language and system of concepts for describing what we see in a text, which may in itself throw up fresh readings.¹

(ii) *Characterisation and its role in the emotion of the text*

The most explicit expression of emotion in a literary text is through the characters of the story, in which the author of the text depicts characters acting emotionally and ascribes named emotions to them. This study will, then, explore the emotions exhibited by and attributed to the characters in the *ATH* by analysing their function within characterisation. By looking at these emotions in the context of the characterisation of figures in the text as a whole, we will propose some conclusions as to the author's attitude to them; what the correlations are between class, age and gender and emotional display, and whether there is a discernible 'Christian' attitude to emotion in the text, which might act as a window into the author's worldview.

An analysis of the emotional characterisation of a selected range of characters from *Callirhoe* will serve as a baseline for assessing the congruity or divergence of the characterisation in the *ATH*. Chariton is a prime example of careful characterisation in a first century narrative aimed primarily at entertaining (rather than instructing) its readership. He presents a range of characters differing in age, social class and prominence in the text, and uses a variety of techniques to unfold the characters to the reader. He shares a number of themes and motifs with the *ATH*, such as marriage, patronage, friendship, the destructive power of beauty, appearance in the law court and so on. The very richness of his work and approach provides a useful background against which to read the briefer *ATH*. He offers as it were a masterclass in early characterisation against which the *ATH* can be read to identify the commonality in techniques and range and to highlight variation.

Specifically, examining the emotional characterisation of Chariton's text will suggest the intended rhetorical effect of the parallel themes in the *ATH*, and what in particular can be inferred about the writer's construction of Christianity. Most importantly for the study of the *ATH*, a major theme in Chariton's novel is the transgressive and even destructive quality of strong emotion, i.e., the emotion controlled by Eros. The novel also to some extent plays with the expectations of gender roles and presents, for

1. Modern narratological approaches are themselves rooted in antiquity and the work of Aristotle, who in his *Poetics* gave plot structure, the events of tragedy, pre-eminence over issues of character (1450a 21–23).

instance, a range of possible ‘masculinities’ with varying stances to the experience of strong emotion, alongside a more limited range of roles for the female characters (which nevertheless offer some interesting role reversals at times). This approach to emotion and to gender will serve as a context against which to read the concerns of the Christian text.

Modern critical theory has rather less to say about the theory of characterisation than about narrative structure: ‘The elaboration of a systematic, non-reductive but also non-impressionistic theory of character remains one of the challenges poetics has not yet met.’¹ There are far fewer creative approaches to the issue of modern character: those that do exist in fact have a great deal in common with the understanding of characterisation (ἡθοποιία) in antiquity, which features in ancient discussion because of its role in the study of rhetoric and in philosophical discussion. Rhetoricians are aware of the importance of understanding the character of their audience, so that they can use appropriate arguments to sway their emotional response; they must also know how to portray characters in their speeches so that they are both convincing and emotive. The formation of character is a central concern of ethical philosophy. While modern critical understanding of character will contribute to this section of the study, it is important that its use be modified and guided by the debate as to how far concepts of ‘personality’² were current in the second century CE – that is, the modern reader must be sensitive to the extent to which real ‘individuation’ features in the *ATH* (or indeed in *Callirhoe*).

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1. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Methuen, 1983), p. 29. The ‘reductive’ approaches to character to which she refers are those of the formalists, notably Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 2nd edition (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968) and A.J. Greimas (*Structural Semantics: an Attempt at a Method*, tr. D. McDowell, R. Schleifer and A. Velie (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska University Press, 1983), who examine characters from the perspective of their function in the plot. The structuralist Roland Barthes (*S/Z*, tr. R. Miller; London: Cape, 1975) focused on traits (‘semes’) as the key to character representation, an influential approach followed in a modified form by Seymour Chatman – *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979). Approaches which might be seen as more ‘impressionistic’ are E.M. Forster’s ‘flat’ versus ‘round’ characters (*Aspects of the Novel*, London: Edward Arnold & Co, 1927), which, although seen as too simplistic by some, has also become part of the accepted ‘language’ of character discussion. Modern approaches to characterisation are discussed further in chapter 3 of this study.
 2. Modern discussion of the portrayal of ‘character’ in antiquity has focused on the difference between ancient *ethos* and modern conceptions of ‘personality’, as well as the role of rhetorical training in the development of conventions for delineating character. See Christopher Pelling (ed.), *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

Emotional affect, then, is a function of plot and characterisation working together to evoke a response from the reader. One cannot entirely separate the two elements: plots are inhabited and enacted by characters, and characters display their attributes through their action in the unfolding plot. By focusing critical attention on each of these aspects in turn, insights can be gained into the role of emotion within the *ATH*. These can in turn inform wider insights about the worldview of the narrative, and indeed how it interacts with the broader pagan worldview in which the characters within the narrative act and in which the *ATH* itself circulates as a text. The *ATH* offers its view of the passions in a world in which there is a variety of modes of discourse with respect to the problem of the control of emotion; through its narrative, it offers the reader a 'worked example' of a Christian emotional life, a Christian response to the philosophical and romantic explorations of the relationship of the passions to good character.

SAMPLE