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The Romance of the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles

by

C. Shaun Longstreet

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies : Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Religion

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ABSTRACT

The Christian writings that are collectively known as the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles bear a striking resemblance to the Hellenistic literary form of ideal Greek romances. While scholars have been aware of such a resemblance, a systematic, comparative reading of both forms has not been done. This comparison is necessary before the apocryphal Acts may fully be understood. Such a comparison reveals that the readers of the apocryphal Acts would have been guided in their readings by the generic conventions used in the Greek romances. It is in this manner that modern scholars studying these texts must also read them. Furthermore, the consequences of reading the apocryphal Acts as romantic literature must also be considered when using the texts in studying the early Christian communities of the second and third centuries.

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THE ROMANCE OF THE APOCRYPHAL ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

submitted by Shaun Longstreet, B.A.
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Stephen G. Wilson, Thesis Supervisor

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date

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overall uniformity of the Acts and wrote:

If however the composition of the AP was so uniform and if it was the author's intention to give expression to the "image" of Paul current in his time in the form of edifying description of the Apostle's missionary journey, then it is improbable that the AP was published piecemeal and, so to speak, as a serialized novel.²²

Like the AJ, the AP has been described not as a theological treatise, but as a religious text for entertainment. It is quite orthodox in nature, promoting a simple faith and lacking gnostic overtones.²³

Asia Minor is often mentioned by scholars as the place of provenance for the AP. This is based primarily on Tertullian's statement that a text similar in description to the AP was composed by a presbyter from Asia.²⁴ The date of the AP is probably the end of the second century. This date is often arrived at, first, by the citation of Tertullian, whose *De Baptismo* was written at that time, and second by claims of intertextual relations between AP and other AAA. Scholars have noted similarities between various passages and have raised the issue of possible interdependency of the AP and other AAA.²⁵ MacDonald has argued for interrelationships between some of

²²Schneemelcher, "Acts of Paul." 348.

²³See Elliott, *ANT*. 357; and Schneemelcher, "Acts of Paul." 349.

²⁴Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 1.17. Elliott contends that the large Asia Minor content of the story points to the same direction. *ANT*. 351.

²⁵For example, F. Stanley Jones argued that "it is crucial" for the comprehension of the apocryphal Acts to understand their relationship between each other. See "Principal Orientations on the Relations Between the Apocryphal Acts (*Acts of Paul and Acts of John; Acts of Peter and Acts of John*)" *SBL Seminar Papers* #32 (ed. E.H. Lovering; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993) 486.

Introduction

A contemporary reader of the early Christian writings known as the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles (AAA) will find many things that he or she might also come across on a drugstore paperback shelf: virtuous heroines, dashing heroes, and malicious lovers in tales of adventure; harrowing trials, miraculous escapes, and even lost love, all of which take place in wondrous and mysterious lands. The AAA are a series of popular tales about the deeds, and often the deaths, of early Christian apostles composed in the late second to the early fourth centuries.

Yet, however popular they may have been, the mainstream church, for one reason or another, rejected these texts and decried their use in ecclesiastical teaching. Early Christian sources on the AAA are neither common nor affirmative in nature. Despite some affirmative references by early Christian figures such as Augustine, Philaster of Brescia, Jerome, and some early church councils,¹ all of the AAA were eventually condemned by the mainstream church.

As the Church began to consolidate its position and engaged in struggles over orthodoxy, it dissociated itself from those groups which it considered heretical. It was often the case that those texts that were highly valued in heretical groups were rejected as part and parcel of the church's condemnation of them. Dennis MacDonald remarks that, "the failure of the apocryphal Acts to survive in the Great Church was assured by

¹See Dennis R. MacDonald, "Introduction: The Forgotten Novels of the Early Church," *Semeia* 38 (1986) 5.

their popularity in groups on the fringes.”²

Various Christian writers censured the AAA as part of their attack on rival Christians and their attempt to develop a stronger position for their brand of orthodoxy. Writers such as Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* III.25.6), Epiphanius (*Panarion* 47.1.5), Tertullian (*De Baptismo* 1.17), and Jerome (*Illustrious Men* 7), all attack the AAA. Church councils denounced the Acts as well. As late as the Nicene Council of 787 C.E., the texts were censured, even though three centuries earlier, Leo I (the Great) had already rejected the AAA, charging that

The apocryphal writings, however, which under the names of the Apostles contain a hotbed of manifold perversity, should not only be forbidden but altogether removed and burnt with fire. (*Ep* 15.15; *Pl* 54, 688 A)³

The ‘apocryphal’ connotation of the non-canonical Acts has had a large effect on the way scholars of early Christian history have approached them and has contributed to their neglect. Many scholars of early Christian history deemed the texts unimportant because they considered them fictional rather than historical. They also denied the value of the AAA for the study of early Christianity because of their perceived unorthodoxy. Those scholars who did study these texts primarily sought them out to isolate them, or parts of them, with the purpose of portraying them as products of peculiar, peripheral, and unorthodox Christian communities.

²*Ibid.* 5.

³K. Schäferdiek, “The Acts of John,” *NTA* 2. 193.

Recently however, the AAA have received increased attention by those scholars looking to find more about the early Christian world. Several scholars, and feminist scholars in particular who note the prominence of female characters in the texts, have argued the need for further research on the various AAA. These scholars argue for the recognition of non-canonical texts such as the AAA as legitimate manifestations of early Christian religious understanding.

Many scholars, both in the biblical and classical fields, have observed that the AAA bear a resemblance to the ancient Greek romance (GR).⁴ The GR was a popular form of prose narrative that had its beginnings in the eastern Hellenistic world around 200 B.C.E. and reached the height of its popularity at the turn of the Common Era.

The ancient GR, while popular, was virtually ignored by the literary elite of antiquity as a low and not very respectable type of writing. This view of the GR as a less worthy object of interest continued from antiquity into the current century until a few classical scholars began to re-examine the texts. G. Anderson noted that many classical scholars followed the path of their counterparts in antiquity, assuming that "the novel represents a cheap and trivial romanticism incompatible with the world of

⁴At the outset, the use of the terms "romance" and "novel" should be clarified. Despite the connotations of "romance" as being more trivial in contemporary English-speaking society, I tend to use the term in favour of the term "novel". "Romance" is better suited for the purposes of this paper as it is a term that is more inclusive, more comprehensive, than "novel".

B.P. Reardon notes the vagaries of the distinctions between the "romance" and "novel" set out by modern literary critics and admits that he does not "set great store by the distinctions." *Form of the Greek Romance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991) 4.

Plato or Demosthenes...".⁵

Reardon argued for the respectability of the romance, and in an indirect manner, the AAA as well:

...ancient prose fiction deserves more than the obscure corner in literary history it has often had in our own day. These romances are not merely a literary-historical phenomenon; they have a claim to attention in themselves. Their main attraction is quite simply that they are good stories in popular form. They offer adventure not the less interesting for being often improbable, and a romantic vision of life whose attraction lies precisely in that quality of romances. In sum, they offer a coherent imagined world.⁶

In this way, the GR already shares something in common with the AAA in that both literary forms have been relatively unexplored as artistic expressions from antiquity.

An essential consideration in studying the AAA is how they relate to other literature from antiquity. Scholars who have directed their efforts toward understanding the genres of early Christian literature, have insisted that we must locate them within the literary environment of the Greco-Roman world at the beginning of the Common Era. Several scholars of early Christian narrative have noted the importance of Hellenistic literature for understanding Christian writings.⁷

⁵Graham Anderson, *Ancient Fiction: The Novel in the Greco-Roman World* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1984) 1.

⁶Reardon, *Form*. 12.

⁷For example, see F.F. Bruce's address; "The New Testament and Classical Studies," *NIS* 22:241; "The conclusion of the whole matter is that the Greco-Roman contribution to early Christianity should not be depreciated as though it were an alien accretion upon the pure gospel."

Especially relevant for the purpose of this paper is the growth of studies initiated by scholars who see the relevance of the GR for the study of early Christian texts. See Douglas R. Edwards, "Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*: Religions and Politics Do Mix," *SBL Seminar Papers* #24 (ed

It is the purpose of this paper to reexamine the AAA. I will argue for the importance of the ancient GR for fully understanding the AAA. I seek to demonstrate that the AAA and the GR have common narrative elements which must be considered in the pursuit of a proper understanding of the Acts.

The first chapter introduces the historical and literary horizons of the paper. It includes an excursus on the date, place, and manner of composition of the individual AAA from the second and third centuries. It also sets forth the methodological basis for the paper, that of generic analysis.

The second chapter is primarily a review of twentieth century scholarship on the AAA. This chapter gives a picture of how the AAA are read by scholars of classical literature and of the early Christian church. It also addresses the studies of the genre of the AAA which are most important to this paper.

The similarities and differences between the AAA and the GR will be examined in the third chapter. The similarities include characterization, type-scenes, and narrative technique. The differences noted are the expressions of the erotic, the expansion of the male protagonist's role in the AAA, and the presence of a profound religious element. The nature of these similarities and differences will then be discussed in order to demonstrate that there is a meaningful connection between the

K.H. Richards; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985) 175-181; Susan Marie Praeder, "Luke-Acts and the Ancient Novel," *SBL Seminar Papers* #20. (ed. K.H. Richards; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1981) 269-292; Schierling, S. and M. Schierling, "The Influence of the Ancient Romances on Acts of The Apostles," *Classical Bulletin* 54.6 (1978) 81-88; and P.W. Van der Horst, "Chariton and the New Testament," *Novum Testamentum* XXV.4 (1983) 348-355.

two literary forms which must be recognized if the AAA are to be properly understood.

The concluding chapter is a discussion of the consequences of reading the AAA as romantic literature. It will be argued that second and third century audiences would have recognized the romantic content in these texts and would have adapted their readings of them accordingly and that, subsequently, modern scholars should do so as well.

Chapter One: The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles.

1.1 Introduction

The following chapter provides the methodological and textual horizons of this study. The chapter outlines the general approach of genre criticism that the paper will follow in its study of the AAA. It also presents a description of the AAA, and some general points concerning their provenance, date of authorship and character.

1.2 Generic Analysis and the Apocryphal Acts

One of the most interesting and important issues in the study of literature is that of genre. Genre is a way in which the author of a text and the reader interact. Through the use of certain conventions, the author of a text invites his or her reader to react to the text in a certain manner. Genre describes what a text is and prescribes a particular reading of it. Generic conventions provide a set of expectations which program the reader's understanding of a text and its content. For example, the contemporary reader will have certain expectations from a text which begins with "Once upon a time, in a land far, far away..." but will have different expectations from a text which begins with "It was a dark and stormy night. A shot rang out...". An understanding of genre is thus a major interpretive key for a clear understanding of the text.

Genre is a system for communication of meaning. Therefore, in order to

understand the meaning of a text, the reader must master its genre.⁸ Here then, one may see the significance of genre studies for literary works such as the New Testament and other early Christian literature. It is with the aid of an understanding of generic conventions that scholars of early Christian history may partially bridge the large cultural and temporal gap between themselves and the authors of ancient texts. The main purpose for determining the genre of a text is hermeneutical; it may be argued that if a text is not read through the filter of an appropriate genre, it will not be understood properly. Understanding the genre of a text allows the reader to break into the hermeneutic circle.⁹ The text's genre works as a guide for the reader to reconstruct its meaning, and acts as a check to validate or refute an interpretation.

Genres are not only a means by which to categorize or identify literature, they are also principles of production. Mary Gerhart argued that "genres can be said to produce as well as to identify meanings."¹⁰ In this way, authors of texts produce meaning by arranging the content of their texts in such a manner that it gives that content meaning. Thus, the substantial use of generic features from a particular literary form in the AAA contributes to their meaning as narratives. In the same vein, Gentilli and Cerri further explain that genres provide meaning because they:

⁸For a discussion of genre, see T. Todorov, "Literary Genres," in *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975) 3-5, 17-23.

⁹Burridge, *Gospels?* 43.

¹⁰M. Gerhart, "Generic Competence in Biblical Hermeneutics," *Semeia* 43. 33-34.

[Genres] reflect the most conservative and lasting tendencies in the development of literature, and their conservative capacity is in direct relationship to their capacity of being renewed in each individual work in the function of new cultural realities. As an institution, the genre is always old and new because it lives in the present and, at the same time, recalls the past and its origins.¹¹

The authors of the AAA wrote for a Greco-Roman audience and drew from Greco-Roman literary traditions. Scholars who argue for the development of early Christian literature within a larger literary and social tradition, claim that the authors of the AAA had to communicate through the use of conventions that their audiences would have understood. By understanding the genre of the AAA, scholars attempt to read the texts in much the same manner as the early Christian communities to whom they were addressed.

It is in the path of these arguments that this paper follows. A comparison of the AAA with the GR through the generic criteria of characterization, type-scenes and narrative structure will demonstrate that, while there are differences, the similarities shared by the two literary forms indicate a significant connection between them. However, this connection does not necessarily indicate that the two are cast in the same literary form, an issue which is raised in later discussion.

1.3 The Apocryphal Acts

The apocryphal Acts that fall within the scope of this study are the five earliest.

¹¹Bruno Gentili and Giovanni Cerri, *History and Biography in Ancient Thought* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1988) 97.

The *Acts of Paul* (AP), *Acts of Thomas* (ATh), *Acts of Peter* (APt), *Acts of Andrew* (AA), and the *Acts of John* (AJ), all of which were composed anonymously in the second and third centuries. These texts constitute the greater part of the known apocryphal Acts of the Apostles and will provide the material for our analysis.

1.3.1 Acts of John

The AJ relates the story of the apostle John's travels from Miletus to Ephesus and Smyrna and back to Ephesus. In these travels John preached the story of Jesus's passion, converted those who listened, and raised the dead.

Through citations from the *Stichometry* of Nicephorus, scholars estimate that a little over two-thirds of the AJ are extant.¹² The date of origin of the AJ is uncertain. Most scholars agree on a late second century date, although some have argued for earlier or later dates.¹³ The provenance of the text is unknown, although some think there is evidence that suggests Asia Minor.¹⁴

¹²K. Schäferdiek, "The Acts of John," *NIA* 2. 193.

¹³See Eric Junod and Jean-Daniel Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis: Praefatio-Textus. Corpus Christianorum: Series Apocryphorum* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983) 694-695; J.K. Elliott, *ANT* 306. Schäferdiek claimed that evidence for a date earlier than the third century was unconvincing. See "Acts of John," 214.

¹⁴Elliott, *ANT*. 306; and Schäferdiek, "Acts of John." 214. Schäferdiek writes: "The Acts as a whole, however, are possibly to be assigned to Asia Minor, which they make the scene of their Apostle's activity; the pronounced Monarchianism may also point to that district, which was the homeland of Praxeus and Noetus; however the information that has come down to us, setting aside a general tradition of activity of John in Asia Minor and his death at Ephesus, contains nothing which can stand as genuine local tradition."

Views on the milieu of the AJ have changed recently. It was once commonly thought that the AJ represented a form of gnostic, probably Valentinian, Christianity. Early in the twentieth century scholars began to deny the validity of this hypothesis. They argued that the “gnostic” elements within the Acts are limited to modest docetic or modalist ideas that would have sat comfortably within popular Christianity in the second century.¹⁵ Junod and Kaestli described the AJ as:

Ecrit de propaganda, les *AJ* sont également un ouvrage d'édification à l'intention de chrétiens. Le thème de l'affermissement y est souvent évoqué. Les protagonistes supportant difficilement l'absence de l'apôtre, ils sont perplexes devant les apparitions polymorphes du Seigneur, ils sont guettés par le découragement ou la tristesse. Jean est là non seulement pour convertir, mais aussi pour fortifier la foi afin que les hommes conservent leur sérénité et qu'ils restent tournés vers les réalités spirituelles.¹⁶

The AJ is not a gnostic text as scholars had originally thought, for the elements generally attributed to gnosticism, while present, are not overly significant. Rather, it is an entertaining story, written primarily for the purposes of simple edification.

1.3.2 Acts of Paul

The AP narrates, in very distinct episodes, the travels of the apostle from Damascus to various places in the Roman Empire and then to Rome, where he is beheaded. A large portion of the AP is in the AP+Th, where Paul converted a young

¹⁵Elliott, *ANT*. 94-102, 109.

¹⁶Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis*. 686.

Iconian woman named Thecla who then becomes a devout follower, renounces earthly marriage and vows sexual continence. The story relates how Thecla then endures several trials for her piety and sexual continence. After the Thecla episode, Paul continued to travel through the Roman world and was eventually martyred during a persecution of Christians by Nero.

The reconstruction of the AP is made difficult by the fragmentary nature of the surviving texts, and the early independent circulation, or origins, of parts of the narrative.¹⁷ The AP consists of eleven episodes, according to Elliott.¹⁸ These episodes describe Paul's life and travels from Damascus to his martyrdom in Rome.

The AP was very popular, especially the episode of Thecla and Paul, which circulated independently very early in Christian circles. The Thecla legend itself encouraged the development of a Thecla cult that spread throughout Christendom and reached the height of its popularity in the fifth century.¹⁹ Some scholars have argued that the Thecla episode circulated earlier and was incorporated into the AP.²⁰ However, recent discoveries and research into manuscript evidence points to the very early inclusion of the Thecla narrative in the AP.²¹ Schneemelcher argued for the

¹⁷W. Schneemelcher, "Acts of Paul," *NTA*. v. 2. 347.

¹⁸Elliott reconstructed the AP primarily from the Heidelberg and Hamburg fragments. *ANT*. 355-357.

¹⁹*Ibid.* 353.

²⁰See discussion p. 37 below.

²¹See Elliott's discussion on his reconstruction of the text, *ANT*. 355.

overall uniformity of the Acts and wrote:

If however the composition of the AP was so uniform and if it was the author's intention to give expression to the "image" of Paul current in his time in the form of edifying description of the Apostle's missionary journey, then it is improbable that the AP was published piecemeal and, so to speak, as a serialized novel.²²

Like the AJ, the AP has been described not as a theological treatise, but as a religious text for entertainment. It is quite orthodox in nature, promoting a simple faith and lacking gnostic overtones.²³

Asia Minor is often mentioned by scholars as the place of provenance for the AP. This is based primarily on Tertullian's statement that a text similar in description to the AP was composed by a presbyter from Asia.²⁴ The date of the AP is probably the end of the second century. This date is often arrived at, first, by the citation of Tertullian, whose *De Baptismo* was written at that time, and second by claims of intertextual relations between AP and other AAA. Scholars have noted similarities between various passages and have raised the issue of possible interdependency of the AP and other AAA.²⁵ MacDonald has argued for interrelationships between some of

²²Schneemelcher, "Acts of Paul." 348.

²³See Elliott, *ANT*. 357; and Schneemelcher, "Acts of Paul." 349.

²⁴Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 1.17. Elliott contends that the large Asia Minor content of the story points to the same direction. *ANT*. 351.

²⁵For example, F. Stanley Jones argued that "it is crucial" for the comprehension of the apocryphal Acts to understand their relationship between each other. See "Principal Orientations on the Relations Between the Apocryphal Acts (*Acts of Paul* and *Acts of John*; *Acts of Peter* and *Acts of John*)" *SBL Seminar Papers* #32 (ed. E.H. Lovering; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993) 486.

the AAA. Using a sort of synoptic analysis, he has argued that the AP drew upon the APt.²⁶ Others are more cautious, contending that MacDonald's parallels consist of simple literary functions or devices that do not demonstrate interdependence.²⁷ Robert Stoops agreed that the APt and the AP share enough material to suggest intertextual relationships, but:

Unfortunately, the evidence presently in hand may not be sufficient to decide the nature of the relationship or the direction of dependence. The question is further complicated by the probability that both of these texts underwent changes and development before arriving at the state in which they lie before us.²⁸

Stoops further argued that in light of the possible independent origins of some of the material within the Acts (a point that MacDonald strongly argued in his study of AP; see section 2.3.2, page 37 below.), we should be wary and not assume that "conclusions based on one portion of a document will apply to the whole."²⁹

²⁶See MacDonald, "The *Acts of Paul* and The *Acts of Peter*: Which Came First?" *SBL Seminar Papers* #31 (ed. E.H. Lovering; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992) 214-224. In this article he subsequently argued that the AA and the ATh also drew from the APt-AP source and from an independent AJ source.

²⁷Richard Valantasis, "Narrative Strategies and Synoptic Quandaries: A Response to Dennis MacDonald's Reading of *Acts of Paul* and *Acts of Peter*." *SBL Seminar Papers* #31 (ed. E.H. Lovering; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992) 234.

²⁸Robert F. Stoops Jr, "Peter, Paul and Priority in the Apocryphal Acts," *SBL Seminar Papers* #31 (ed. E.H. Lovering; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992) 225.

²⁹*Ibid.*

1.3.3 Acts of Peter

The APt begins with Paul preaching in Rome and then receiving the command to travel to Spain. Meanwhile, Simon Magus infiltrates the Roman community to corrupt it, and faithful Christians sought Peter to come and help them. Peter left Jerusalem and confronted and defeated Simon Magus in a series of amazing and miraculous showdowns. Peter continued to preach, converting the concubines of the prefect Agrippa, as well as Xanthippe, the wife of a high-ranking Roman. Agrippa and Xanthippe's husband had Peter arrested and then crucified. After his death, Peter returned again briefly to appear in visions to his followers.

Like other AAA, the AP was once thought to be a Gnostic text but this has since been reconsidered. Schneemelcher noted that the APt was used in Catholic circles for many centuries, and that even after falling into disfavour after Nicea was still read in revised, more orthodox forms.³⁰ The use of Simon Magus in the APt has been discounted as evidence that we are dealing with a treatise against Simonian Gnosticism because there is no detailed discussion of the Gnostic group's teachings. Simon Magus is simply an antagonist who counters the protagonist and his god.

Schneemelcher argued that the APt is rather better described as an example of popular piety, where the author attempts to "supplement the canonical Acts with regard

³⁰W. Schneemelcher, "Acts of Peter," *NTA* 2. 268. Elliott also argued for the Catholic nature of the APt and suggested its use by those groups out of favour with the church in Rome ensured its removal from official church lists. See *ANT*. 392.

to the personal history of Peter.”³¹ Elliott agreed that the APt is neither a Gnostic text, nor a theological argument, the author having “only limited theological competence or concerns.”³²

Scholars generally assign the APt to the end of the second century, a date further supported if indeed the AP drew on the APt.³³ The provenance of the text is unknown, although both Rome and Asia Minor have been suggested as possibilities.³⁴

The extant text of the APt is probably two-thirds of the original, based on reconstruction from the *Stichometry* of Nicephorus. Two short, separately circulating stories are thought to be parts of the original that are missing; these are a story of Peter’s daughter and a story of a gardener’s daughter.³⁵

1.3.4 Acts of Andrew

The AA relates the adventures of the apostle Andrew in Patras in the house of the proconsul Aegeates. Andrew interacts with Aegeates’s wife Maximilla, a Christian convert, and converts Aegeates’s brother, Stratocles. Now celibate, Maximilla deflects Aegeates’ sexual advances and avoids him by substituting a concubine for herself.

³¹Schneemelcher, “Acts of Peter.” 274.

³²Elliott, *ANT*. 392.

³³*Ibid.* Schneemelcher went so far as to specify the decade of 180-190, “Acts of Peter.” 275.

³⁴Elliott, *ANT*. 392; and Schneemelcher “Acts of Peter.” 275.

³⁵See Schneemelcher, “Acts of Peter.” 268-270.

Aegeates discovers the ruse but still Maximilla refuses his advances. Andrew is arrested by Aegeates and is then hung on a cross where he preaches for four days. After refusing Aegeates's pardon, Andrew dies and is buried by Maximilla and Stratocles. They become models of piety, while Aegeates commits suicide.

The AA may be the least preserved of the AAA used in this study. The textual evidence for the AA is fragmentary and was often preserved in altered forms.³⁶ One of the issues facing scholars of the AA, is whether or not the AA included the Acts of Andrew and Matthias (AAM).

The separation of the AA and the AAM has been contested recently by MacDonald.³⁷ He based his theory on the epitome of Gregory on the miracles of Andrew and several very late sources of the Andrew tradition, and counters the suggested literary and theological differences cited by other scholars. MacDonald has not convinced all scholars that he is correct. Prieur counters MacDonald's argument on three major points. The first is that MacDonald's arguments for the joining of the two texts are made by citing elements typical throughout the AAA as a whole, and not just typical in the AA and the AAM. The second is that the differences in language and style are much greater than MacDonald recognized, the AAM is very simple and the AA is much more literary and sophisticated. And third, Prieur noted that there are

³⁶See M. Horschuh, "Acts of Andrew," *NTA* 2. 390.

³⁷D. MacDonald, "The *Acts of Andrew and Matthias* and the *Acts of Andrew*," *Semeia* 38 (1986) 9-26; and *The Acts of Andrew and the Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of Cannibals. Texts and Translations*, Christian Apocrypha Series (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990) 22f.

problems with the size and sequencing of the episodes of the AA and the AAM. For MacDonald does not convincingly address the problem of the disproportionate differences in the size of the episodes in the AA from the AAM, and his reconstruction of the order of episodes has some difficulties in that it lacks solid support from extant texts.³⁸

Like other AAA in this study, the gnostic elements in the AA have been re-evaluated. Hornschuh has argued that:

In view of the absence of more important and more characteristic traits of Gnosticism, e.g. cosmic dualism, and an interest in the Pleroma within its Aeons, the thesis of the Gnostic character of the AA can only be defended with qualifications.³⁹

Once again, the supposed Gnostic elements in the AAA are explained by the ill-defined boundaries of orthodoxy in early Christianity, and the existence of such elements within popular Christianity.

The date of the AA is uncertain, but most scholars have suggested a date in the second or third century. Those arguing for an early date based their arguments on supposed interrelationships between the AA and other AAA.⁴⁰ The provenance of the AA is unknown although Egypt and Syria are possible.⁴¹

³⁸Jean-Marc Prieur, "Response to MacDonald." *Semeia* 38 (1986) 31.

³⁹Hornschuh, "Acts of Andrew." 392.

⁴⁰See Elliott, *ANT*. 235-236; Hornschuh, "Acts of Andrew " 396-397; and MacDonald, *Acts of Andrew*. 59.

⁴¹See Elliott, *ANT*. 235; MacDonald, *Acts of Andrew*. 59

1.3.5 Acts of Thomas

The ATh begins with Thomas refusing his lot to travel to India to preach the gospel. Thomas is then sold by an incarnation of Jesus to an Indian slaver, Aban. Aban took the apostle to India, where Thomas accepted his fate. In his travels, Thomas preached sexual abstinence, converted, healed, exorcized demons, and talked with animals. In the martyrdom of Thomas, the apostle converts Mygdonia, the wife of an Indian nobleman, Tertia, the wife of the King himself, and Vazan, the King's son. Thomas suffered a martyr's death by being impaled with four spears, but re-appeared to comfort and guide the converted royal court.

The only apocryphal Act to survive in its entirety, the ATh was written in Syriac probably in the third century. Scholars generally accept the provenance to be Syrian and, more specifically, the city of Edessa.⁴²

The ATh is often considered by scholars to be the most Gnostic of the AAA. Bornkamm, in his commentary on the ATh, claimed to find Gnostic elements throughout.⁴³ However, this conception has been challenged. Klijn argued that the ATh is a representation of primitive Syriac Christianity that drew from several elements of early Christian traditions.⁴⁴ In agreement with such an assessment, Elliott

⁴²A.F.J. Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas*. Supplements to Novum Testamentum (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1962) 30-33.

⁴³G. Bornkamm, "Acts of Thomas," *NTA* 2. 429-437.

⁴⁴Klijn, *Acts of Thomas*. 39f.

wrote:

Some of the Acts [of Thomas] are strongly Encratite, but such teaching may well have been characteristic of third-century Christianity in Syria ... If seen as basically orthodox rather as Gnostic, the whole may be read as a kind of early 'Pilgrim's Progress', being a fictional romance of conversion. Chapters 79, 80, 143 reflect orthodox views of incarnation, chapter 72 teaches redemption through Christ's suffering. Unworldliness and abstinence as Christian virtues and true marriage seen only as marriage to the heavenly bridegroom are pushed to the extreme, but the idea that the redeemed life begins in this world is orthodox.⁴⁵

1.4 Summary of Chapter One

To summarize: the early Christian apocryphal Acts are prose narratives that describe the deeds of various apostles. Most of them were written between the early second century C.E. and the end of the third century, when they appear to have been replaced by the rise of more popular hagiographical novels of Christian saints.⁴⁶

A typical narrative of an apocryphal Act relates the story of a single apostle, and the story often begins soon after Jesus's death. The tale is full of extraordinary events and miraculous episodes. There are travels fraught with danger and adventures. There is at least one beautiful and noble heroine in the narrative who, upon hearing the words of the apostle, converts to Christianity and renounces her relationship with her spouse or fiancé. This renunciation brings about trials and dangers for the apostle and

⁴⁵ANT. 440.

⁴⁶Hägg claims that the Christian hagiographical novel reached its classical form by the fourth century in Athanasius's *Life of St. Antony*. See *Novel in Antiquity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971) 164.

the heroine(s) and often leads to the death of the apostle.

We have also discussed the importance of the understanding of the genre of the AAA if we are to understand them as examples of early Christian literature. In the following chapters, generic criteria such as characterization, type-scene, and narrative structure, will be used to compare the AAA with the GR demonstrating the affiliation of the two literary forms.

Before continuing with this comparison, it is first necessary to describe some of the issues that scholars have explored in their examination of the AAA. For while scholars have sometimes recognized similarities between the AAA and the GR, they have not always kept these similarities in mind when they have written about them.

Chapter Two Scholarship and the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles

2.1 Introduction

Only recently have the AAA received the attention from scholars that they deserve. This chapter reviews some of the contemporary studies of the AAA and hypotheses about their background and purpose. One of the more common, but often contested, observations made about the AAA is the similarity that they share with other forms of ancient literature. Since this observation is central to the theme of this paper, the issue of the relation of the AAA to different forms of Hellenistic literature will be of primary concern. We will review the work of scholars of early Christian history as well as the reactions of some classical scholars in their studies of the Greek romances.

2.2 Early Modern Studies of the Apocryphal Acts

In the early twentieth century, several European scholars sought to understand the AAA by identifying them with ancient Greek writings. Scholars such as Richard Reitzenstein, Karl Kerényi, and Rosa Söder all examined the AAA in the shadow of various forms of Hellenistic literature.

Reitzenstein studied the AAA by drawing from the theories of rhetoric in various classical texts. The main focus of his paper was the understanding of the AAA in the light of ancient aretalogical hymns and fantastic travel tales (*Wundererzählungen*). Reitzenstein saw a connection between the AAA and hymns of praise to various gods

that list their attributes and glories.⁴⁷ He disputed the idea that the AAA were to be placed in the same generic category as the GR because they, like the aretalogical works, made truth claims that were not to be found in the GR.⁴⁸ Furthermore, he argued that the fantastic content of certain Apostles' travels (especially of Andrew, in the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals*) was indicative of influences from wondrous travel tales.⁴⁹ He contended that the AAA were created out of these genres rather than the ancient novel.⁵⁰

However, the suggestion that the AAA are modelled after aretalogies is problematic. The lists that Reitzenstein compares the AAA with are not prose works as the Christian texts are, and at the same time, the aretalogies are lacking in narrative structure.

The same is true of the comparison of the AAA with the ancient *Wundererzählungen*. The settings and backgrounds of the AAA are relatively realistic and lack the sort of fantastic elements that one may read in Antonius Diogenes's *The Marvels Beyond Thule*.⁵¹ Central features of the AAA and the GR, interpersonal

⁴⁷*Ibid.* 134f.

⁴⁸*Ibid.* 97-98.

⁴⁹*Ibid.* 130-134.

⁵⁰R. Reitzenstein, *Hellenistische Wundererzählungen*. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1906) 94-99.

⁵¹The protagonist travels to far lands to discover such things as: people who are blind at day but can see in the night, marvellous sights throughout the Mediterranean, the Arctic regions, and even the moon. See Photius's summary of *The Wonders Beyond Thule*, trans. G.N. Sandy; in *AGN*. 775-784.

relationships and the erotic element, are of lesser importance in the travel tales. Moreover, travel tales were designed solely to entertain and have a lightness of tone which contrasts with the more serious and idealistic tone which the AAA share with the GR.⁵²

Another scholar who compared the AAA with other forms of Hellenistic literature was Karl Kerényi.⁵³ Following Reitzenstein, he stressed the religious content of the AAA and argued that they were evidence of a Christian mythic-cultic literature. Kerényi proposed that the GR were cultic stories of the ancient Mystery religions and that the AAA were modelled after such stories.⁵⁴ He further suggested that there are similarities between the two in that both stress the religious importance of the sexuality of the heroine who becomes "betroted to god".⁵⁵

Other scholars have followed Kerényi's work in attempting to connect the AAA

Lucian writes a parody of the travel stories wherein he describes societies with only the male sex, tree-nymphs that entrap any man who comes too close to them, cities in the sky with bird men, and whole villages of crab-men living in the belly of a whale. See Lucian's *A True Story*, trans. B.P. Reardon; in *AGN*. 619-649.

⁵²See Hägg, *Novel in Antiquity* 120.

⁵³K. Kerényi, *Die griechische-orientalische Romanliteratur in religionsgeschichtlicher Beleuchtung*. (2nd ed.; Darmstadt: Tübingen, 1962).

⁵⁴*Ibid.* 67f. He concludes that, "[a]n die Stelle des heidnischen Romans tritt die christliche Legende, d.h. eine Reihe von Novellen, welche im kleinen dem Clemensroman ähnlich, Romanstücke mit Aretalogie mehr oder weniger glücklich vereinigen." 262.

⁵⁵*Ibid.* 219-220.

with Mystery religions.⁵⁶ However, proposals that the GR were religious texts of the Mystery cults have generally not been well received by scholars. Reardon explains:

the general criticism was that they [Kerenyi and Merkelbach] are too ready to twist the smallest detail in such a way as to make everything fit a predetermined pattern, when simpler and more obvious explanation lies to hand [*sic*].⁵⁷

Anderson agreed and added that religious motifs already occurred in secular literature to such an extent that it was not very useful to insist, without further evidence, that they were essential to the genre of GR.⁵⁸

One of the first scholars to have compared the GR and the AAA in this century was Josef Flamion in his study of the *Acts of Peter*. He argued for a direct affiliation of the AAA with the GR.⁵⁹ In a brief analysis, he noted similarities between the GR and the APt and the Thecla episode in the AP. He then argued that the AAA were

⁵⁶See L. Rademacher, "Hippolytos und Thekla. Studien zur Geschichte von Legende und Kultis," *Sitzungsberichte, Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaft in Wien, Philosophisch-historische Klasse* 182:3 (Vienna: 1916); and R. Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike*. (Munich: 1962). Merkelbach attempts to further Kerenyi's work by systemizing his theories with the GR. For reviews of Merkelbach, see R. Turcan, "Le roman 'initiatique': à propos d'un livre récent," *Revue d'Histoire des Religions* 163 (1963) 149-199.

⁵⁷Reardon, *Form*. 171. In *Courants Littéraires Grecs des I^{er} et III^e Siècles Après J.C.* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1971), p. 396, he further explains: "L'air de religiosité qu'on a trouvé un peu partout dans les romans en est presque la preuve - sans parler de Longus. D'ailleurs, il est indiscutable que Kerenyi et Merkelbach ont réussi à trouver bon nombre de ressemblances assez précises entre l'action des romans et les détails supposés des mystères. Mais la vérité nous semble être plutôt que mystères et roman ont leur origine dans la même imagination religieuse."

⁵⁸*Ancient Fiction* 75.

⁵⁹Josef Flamion, "Les Actes Apocryphes de Pierre," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 9-10 (1909-1910) pp. 465-490, 5-29. He concluded that "[l]a relation entre les deux récits n'est pas contestable..." v. 11 28.

simply Christian versions of the pagan texts. In fact, Flamion contended that the AAA were written by converts who had written pagan romances and simply switched to writing Christian romances.⁶⁰

While Flamion's approach to the comparison of the APt and the GR is generally sound, his study suffers from overgeneralizing and oversimplifying. His across-the-board equation of the AAA with the GR, on the basis of an inconsistent gathering of content-based similarities, is not altogether persuasive. There are significant differences between the two literary forms which will be discussed below that negate sweeping claims of equivalency. The application of his conclusions from his comparison with the APt and the Thecla episode in the AP to all of the AAA is not tenable, as his comparison is based on too small a sample.

Also, aside from dubious Middle Age traditions that authors of GR like Heliodorus had converted to Christianity and were known to write romances,⁶¹ there is no evidence to prove that authors of the AAA also wrote GR.

Rosa Söder, in a more systematic manner than Flamion, also compared the AAA with the GR. She followed some of Erwin Rohde's⁶² analysis of the GR, and

⁶⁰*Ibid.* 29.

⁶¹There existed a tradition that Heliodorus was a Bishop of Tricca, from the 14th century by Nicephorus Callistus, based on the writing of a 5th century ecclesiastical writer by the name of Socrates. See Thomas Underdowne, *An Ethiopian Story* (New York: AMS Press, 1976 [reprint 1895 ed.]) vii-viii.

⁶²E. Rohde, *Der Griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer*. (reprint of 2nd ed. 1902; Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1974)

Reitzenstein's proposal of a connection to folk stories for the AAA.⁶³ She claimed that the AAA had not developed out of the GR. Söder argued that the AAA are to be placed in a general category of Hellenistic novelistic literature. Such a category included a broad range of prose literature such as historical and comical novels. She concluded that while there was some resemblance between the AAA and other forms of Hellenistic literature, the Christian texts could not be classified as conforming exactly with any one genre on the basis of her comparative criteria of five narrative elements (*Hauptelemente*)⁶⁴ and five narrative motifs.⁶⁵ She explained that the similarities were due to the dependency of the AAA and the Greek novelistic literature on a common tradition of oral sources.⁶⁶ She concluded that the AAA were best understood as early Christian folk literature, whose purpose was to relate, in simple form, edifying stories of the Christian faith.⁶⁷

However, due to inaccurate dating of the texts, both pagan and Christian, Söder proposed theories that were founded on inaccurate evidence. She followed earlier scholars' speculations that the simplicity of style evident in texts like that of Chariton's

⁶³Rosa Söder, *Die apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und die romanhafte Literatur der Antike*. (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1969) esp. 185-187.

⁶⁴These included travel, aretology, teratology, tendentiousness, and erotica.

⁶⁵These include selling into slavery, persecution, crowds, divine aid in crises, and oracles, dreams and divine statements.

⁶⁶*Ibid.* 187.

⁶⁷*Ibid.* 186-187.

work were a result of a decadent writing style. Therefore, she wrongly speculated that the dates of several texts were much later than subsequent papyrological finds have shown. Subsequently, Söder thought that many of the Greek novels were written later than the AAA.

As a consequence, a further misunderstanding of the romances by Söder was that she thought that they were sophisticated literature. It is now the consensus that the GR were, in fact, popular literature. An indication of this is that the language of the romances is often quite simple. Also, these texts, like much of early Christian literature, were often bound in the more convenient *codex* (book) form rather than written onto papyrus scrolls. This indicates that they were probably popular texts meant for wide circulation. Generally, more prestigious literature continued to be written in scroll form.⁶⁸

Finally, Söder's understanding of the genres of the ancient GR and the AAA was too vague. An example is found in her definition of the genre of the Hellenistic novel which is quite broad, including not only the romances, but also historical, philosophical and comical works as well. It deals with a broad literary type rather than a precise genre, and is not very helpful. Moreover, her choice of the five elements and motifs is erratic, as four of the elements are content based, while the element defined as tendentious represents the moral intentions of the author and is independent of

⁶⁸Hägg, *Novel in Antiquity*. 94-95.

content.⁶⁹ Most important of all is Söder's failure to go beyond identifying her elements and motifs in the texts. That is, she does not examine the dynamics or the structures of the narratives in her study and thus "her folk-stories remain purely hypothetical and her literary genres formless."⁷⁰

2.3 Studies of the Apocryphal Acts by Historians of Early Christianity

As scholars of early Christian literature look to extra-canonical texts in searching to know more about the early Christian movement, the AAA have received more attention. Furthermore, the texts have been used by scholars in various historical, sociological and feminist studies of early Christianity.

2.3.1 Schneemelcher and Aune and Comparing Genres

In the 1960's, the AAA received an extensive examination under the editorship of W. Schneemelcher.⁷¹ Schneemelcher contended that the primary aim of the AAA was to supplement, without displacing, the New Testament sources on the history of the early Christian tradition.

Schneemelcher made two main points in his study of the AAA. The first is that

⁶⁹Jean-Daniel Kaestli, "Les principales orientations de la recherche sur les Actes apocryphes," *Les Actes Apocryphes des Apôtres: Christianisme et Monde Païen* (Genève: Editions Labor et Fides, 1981) 62-63.

⁷⁰Virginia Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of the Apocryphal Acts*. *Studies in Women and Religion*, Vol. 23. (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1987) 20.

⁷¹See Chapter XIII *NTA* 2. 167-431.

any consideration of the texts as a whole poses formidable problems. There are significant differences between the texts, ranging from matters of date and place of origin to theological and devotional ideology. The second is that claims that the AAA were the product of gnosticism or of primitive popular Catholicism are made difficult by the indistinct boundaries of these two movements at the time the various Acts were written.⁷²

Schneemelcher proposed that entertainment and propagandist activity were the real objectives of the AAA. He asserted that the apocryphal texts "did not intend to execute an explicit theological programme."⁷³ Rather, the texts were "directed by practical intentions" whereby authors of the AAA sought to disseminate the message that sexual continence was "an essential feature, or sometimes indeed the authentic content, of the Christian message."⁷⁴

Schneemelcher, in his study, followed Söder's hypothesis that the apocryphal Acts were the literary representations of earlier oral traditions. He also dissociated the AAA from the GR, agreeing with Söder that:

...the pattern of the Hellenistic novel can hardly be regarded as determinative, principally because the novel almost entirely lacks the themes of teratology and aretalogy. ... There is, it is true, no presumption against a new literary form having been created within Christian circles

⁷²He concluded that "there is no justification for any great emphasis on the unity of the apocryphal Acts on the score of literary affinity." "Introduction," *NTA* 2. 169.

⁷³*Ibid.* 172.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

out of the most diverse elements; but the pronounced differences among the various apocryphal Acts tell against this view.⁷⁵

As popular literature, Schneemelcher argued that the texts were designed to entertain, teach and edify the common people, not the educated elite. Because of his contention that the AAA represented oral traditions, Schneemelcher was critical of attempts to identify the origins of the texts as a whole. He claimed that the literary activity of the authors of the AAA was "primarily the collection and arrangement of various traditions that circulated by word of mouth."⁷⁶

Because of his dependence on Söder's analysis of the GR, Schneemelcher's conclusions on the AAA did not advance the understanding of their genre much further. He argued that the AAA are each atypical works, that there are such extensive differences between them that we can find a certain unity among them only if we understand the AAA "as narratives coming from the people for the people, which made use of a variety of stylistic devices drawn from Hellenistic literature."⁷⁷ Here Schneemelcher emphasizes too starkly the differences between the AAA by stressing each text as a unique literary composition dependent on the communities who gave them their own individual arrangement and form.⁷⁸ But these observations do not prove that each of the AAA is *sui generis*, a unique literary form; for the individuality

⁷⁵*Ibid.* 175.

⁷⁶Schneemelcher, "Acts of Peter." 273.

⁷⁷Schneemelcher, "Introduction." 169.

⁷⁸*Ibid.* 176.

of a text does not always entail a new genre. Schneemelcher underestimated the similarities of narrative elements not only within the corpus of the AAA but also within other Hellenistic literatures. This issue will be addressed more fully in the following chapter.

In his analysis of the AAA, Schneemelcher noted that an important consideration with the apocryphal texts was their relation to the canonical texts. The earliest *praxeis* text prior to the composition of the AAA was written by the author of Luke-Acts. Most scholars date the canonical Acts around 80-85 C.E. Thus, an important issue regarding the AAA is the possible genetic relation they have with the canonical text. Schneemelcher designated the similarities between Luke's Acts and the AAA as elements of the *praxeis* form: they contain the actions of prominent persons, whether historical or mythical; both have aretalogical elements; both have an ethnographic/geographic interest in their description of the *periodoi* of the characters; and finally both have significant religious interests.⁷⁹ David Aune argued that the generic links between the apocryphal and the canonical texts go beyond a shared title. He claimed that the canonical Acts gave the inspiration for the subsequent production of the AAA.⁸⁰

Although there are some similarities between the Lucan Acts and the AAA, the

⁷⁹*Ibid.* 174.

⁸⁰In *The New Testament and Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987) 152.

two do not belong to the same genre. Aune here noted the following differences: there is a stress in Luke-Acts on the presentation of the narrative as history, while the AAA are, to Aune, "clearly fictional"; the strongly stereotyped use of the apostles as "holy men" in the AAA is muted in the canonical Acts; and the AAA lack plot, depending rather on a loose connection of a series of episodes, while the Lucan Acts presents a plot based on a chronological movement initiated by God.⁸¹ Aune described these differences as "superficial", and maintained that the New Testament Acts provided the paradigm for the apocryphal writings.⁸²

Schneemelcher, taking a different position, made the important point that the early AAA do not make reference to canonical texts. He contended that they are presented as autonomous texts: "everything is said and related within the text itself; there is no other text which has its place as a reference."⁸³ This is problematic for claims that the Lucan Acts provided the model for the creation of the AAA. He also contended that there are fundamental differences in theology between the Lucan Acts and the AAA that indicates their independent development.⁸⁴ Furthermore, he argued that the AAA had a focus that was different from the historical thrust of Luke's work

⁸¹*Ibid.* 152.

⁸²*Ibid.* 153.

⁸³Schneemelcher, "Introduction." 1-1.

⁸⁴*Ibid.* 173.

thus necessitating, from a literary point of view, a different form.⁸⁵

While clear-cut distinctions between the literary genres of prose texts written in antiquity are often difficult, if not impossible, to make the argument for the New Testament Acts as an example of ancient historiographical writing provides the strongest grounds for distinguishing it from the AAA. Several scholars have argued that the Lucan Acts is an example of an early Christian historiography. They note that the Lucan Acts relates, in a chronological, historical order, the story of key figures in the early Christian church and documents the spread of the Christian mission from Jerusalem to Rome.⁸⁶

The AAA, on the other hand, lack many of the important rhetorical features of historiographical writings, and this strengthens the contention that they are to be distinguished from the Lucan Acts. Such features include a historical preface (the *prooimion*),⁸⁷ speeches modelled after other historiographical writers such as

⁸⁵Ibid. 174. Schneemelcher concluded: "To sum up, we may say that the apocryphal Acts are essentially different from the Lucan Acts in genre and literary form as much as in content and theology, and despite many borrowings of details and points of connection, the apocryphal works cannot be put on a level with the Lucan work."

Here, Schneemelcher is revealing a theological agenda in which he clearly subordinates the AAA in favour of the canonical Acts. He also gave his position away earlier when describing the AAA as "luxuriant fancy and extremely free compositions." to contrast with Luke's "historically oriented text." p. 169.

⁸⁶See David Aune, *Literary Environment*. 77f; David Balch, "Acts as Hellenistic Historiography," *SBL Seminar Papers* #24. (ed. K.H. Richards; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985) 429-432; Donald Jones, "Luke's Unique Interest in Historical Chronology," *SBL Seminar Papers* #28 (ed. D.Lull; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989) 378-387; and George Sterling, "Luke Acts and Apologetic Historiography," *SBL Seminar Papers* #28 (ed. D.Lull; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989) 326-342.

Also, the preface in Luke 1:1-4, introduces the text as having, among other things, a historiographical purpose. Cf. the preface in Josephus's *Antiquities*.

Thucydides,⁸⁸ and the use of digression.⁸⁹ The lack of these attributes suggests that the authors of the AAA were not trying to write historiographical texts.⁹⁰ Furthermore, the death of the Apostle is the most important point in the AAA, but the canonical Acts does not relate the death of its central apostolic characters, Peter and Paul. This in itself demonstrates that there is a fundamental difference between the two.

In his discussion of the genre of the AAA, Aune remarked that the complexity of the problem is indicated by the texts' affinities with more than one genre from the corpus of ancient Mediterranean literature. The AAA share a title with the canonical Acts, but this may or may not indicate a connection between the two. The AAA also

⁸⁷See note 85 above.

⁸⁸These speeches are to provide explanation and analysis of situations. (See Aune *Literary Environment*. 91-93. However, in the AAA (and the GR), speeches are used generally to describe the characters' emotional state of mind.

⁸⁹For a discussion of conventions of ancient historiography contemporary with the AAA, see B.P. Reardon, *Courants Littéraires*. 206f. See also Aune's analysis of Luke-Acts' relationship to historiographical literature, *Literary Environment* 77-110.

⁹⁰An argument that indirectly supports this claim was made by Richard Pervo, *Profit With Delight*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987). Pervo argued primarily that the Lucan Acts was not written as a historiographic work, but as a historical novel. He contended that the Lucan Acts was essentially an entertaining text, used for religious edification, and contains within it several elements of romantic fiction. By extension, he claimed that the AAA, with an even greater romantic content, were not historiographic writings either.

However Pervo's definition of the historical novel is quite broad and includes not only the Lucan Acts, GR, and the AAA, but also texts such as Judith, Esther, Tobit, and the pseudo-Clementine writings. Certain aspects of Pervo's arguments are problematic, as David Aune noted: Pervo's definition is quite vague and not very helpful in defining genre; there are texts that are better termed historical novels, such as Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* and pseudo-Callisthene's *Alexander Romance*; the historical accuracy of Luke's narration is not altogether relevant if it was not the author's intention to relate actual events; Pervo did not deal effectively with the problem of treating Luke and Acts in isolation from each other; and many of the themes and episodes that Pervo used to support his argument are part of the Hellenistic literary milieu, found in both factual and fictional writings, and were not unique to the GR and the Acts. See Aune, *Literary Environment*, 153, 80-81.

share similarities with ancient biographies, travel-journals, and Greek romance.

Despite some shared traits, the AAA do not conform well with the design of fantastic travel tales or of biographies, for the differences carry greater weight than the similarities. The dissimilarities between the AAA and the *Wandererzählungen* have already been discussed above.⁹¹ The AAA are not biographies of the early Christian apostles either. Aune has noted that biographies were concerned with the entire life of a person. The AAA were interested only in a small part of the lives of the apostles, that which takes place after the death and resurrection of Jesus.⁹² Also, the AAA contain elements that were not common to ancient biographies, such as complex narrative plot lines, multiple protagonists, and erotica.

To summarize, Schneemelcher and Aune have re-examined the issue of the genre of the AAA. Schneemelcher noted the importance of viewing the AAA as individual works and that they might not be representative of unorthodox or even heretical Christian sects. Aune discounted the connection between ancient biography and the AAA. Both scholars focussed on the relations between the apocryphal texts and the canonical *praxeis*. Despite disagreeing with Schneemelcher in the matter of the relationship between the canonical and the AAA, Aune did agree that the intention of the authors of the latter was both edification and entertainment, in which:

[the] chief vehicles for edification are the apostolic speeches, which give

⁹¹See pages 22-23 above.

⁹²Aune, *Literary Environment*. 153.

expression to distinctive Christian beliefs and practices that separate the authors and their audiences from the world of paganism.⁹³

The question of how the AAA relate to other Hellenistic literary forms such as ancient historiography and biography was also addressed in this section, and it was concluded that the Acts do not conform well to these types. Thus, it seems, the AAA are not to be placed in the same generic category as the Lucan Acts, fantastic travel tales, or ancient biographies.

2.3.2 MacDonald and the Pauline Tradition

Another scholar of early Christian history who has analyzed the AAA as a part of a more focussed study is Dennis R. MacDonald. In an investigation of the early Christian traditions involving the apostle Paul, he argued that there was a struggle in the early church between two streams vying for the authentic portrayal of the apostle: one stream was represented by the Pastoral epistles and the other by the apocryphal *Acts of Paul*.

In his study, MacDonald examined only one of the AAA, that of Paul and, more specifically, his analysis is based on three episodes within the AP: the Thecla story, the Ephesus story, and the martyrdom of Paul. He contended that these stories originated in previously circulating oral traditions. He outlines the oral sources through the use of folklorist theories on oral narrative, primarily from Alex Orlick, but

⁹³*Ibid.* 149.

also from other folklorists' material.⁹⁴

MacDonald claimed that the oral stories behind the AP were told by women. He argued that such oral traditions were transmitted by women primarily on the basis of the order in 1 Tim 4:7 to "...reject profane and old wife's tales...". He maintained that this was an attack on the stories within the AP that portray the apostle in a different light than the author of the Pastoral epistles, and that the critics of these stories were pointing to their historical creators.⁹⁵ MacDonald further claimed that the recurring themes of the strife caused by Christian women's continuance in the AP "almost certainly reflects actual circumstances in some communities" where women did convert to Christianity.⁹⁶ He then extended his arguments concerning tales of women in the AP to other AAA, claiming a whole tradition of oral sources by early Christian women.⁹⁷

MacDonald's consideration of competing streams of Pauline tradition is interesting; however some aspects of his study are not convincing. Scholars have been critical of his method in establishing an argument for the existence of oral traditions behind the AP. Jean-Daniel Kaestli countered that MacDonald's criteria are generally

⁹⁴MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983) 26f.

⁹⁵*Ibid.* 14.

⁹⁶*Ibid.* 37.

⁹⁷*Ibid.* 33.

applicable to written as well as oral narrative.⁹⁸ Thus, MacDonald did little to prove the existence of an oral tradition behind the texts. His subsequent employment of sweeping applications to an entire literary form based on three "sources" is not feasible. Also, his claim that 1 Tim. 4:7 pointed to the historical writers of the AP (and consequently other AAA) is entirely speculative. Finally, the extension of his analysis of the AP to other AAA is problematic because he did not even integrate the separate stories in his study with the whole text of the AP. Other scholars, besides MacDonald, have examined the AAA in a social or feminist light as well, emphasizing the function of women in the texts.

2.3.3 Burrus and Davies and the Women of the Apocryphal Acts

Notable studies of the AAA have been initiated by scholars seeking to examine the possibilities of the involvement of women in the creation, development, or narration of such texts. Virginia Burrus and Stevan Davies, following the work of MacDonald, have argued that the AAA were indeed representative of early Christian narratives composed by women.

Davies, in his monograph on women in the AAA, claimed the AAA are evidence for the historical presence of communities of celibate Christian women in the first few centuries of the Christian tradition. Davies, studying the AAA in a

⁹⁸In "Fiction littéraire et réalité sociale: que peut-on savoir de la place dans le milieu de production des Actes Apocryphes des Apôtres?" *Apocrypha: Le Champ Des Apocrypha* 1. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991) 287.

synchronic manner, argued that the texts were written from within a particular community of Christians. He described this community not as a structured social organization or institution that opposed an "orthodox" church; rather, he used the term community to mean groups with similar outlooks on life and religion.

Because there is considerable stylistic and conceptual similarity among the apocryphal Acts, we judge that they were shared within a dispersed circle of persons who appreciated them and whose interests and concerns they reflect.⁹⁹

Davies suggested that the community behind the AAA was probably reflected in the audiences implied by those texts. He further argued that exemplary figures in the texts might have served as role models for members of the continent Christian community from which the AAA were derived. Davies claimed that

the main thrust of the teachings in the Apocryphal Acts is directed toward women, particularly in the creation of exemplary figures or role models for emulation...If the intended audience of the apocryphal Acts can be inferred from the overall thrust of the edificatory intent of the Acts, then that audience was Christian women.¹⁰⁰

In a further attempt to support his theory of a female community behind the AAA, Davies claimed that most of the texts show concern for the welfare of widows.¹⁰¹ From this concern, and with the apostolic approval of the establishment of

⁹⁹Stevan L. Davies, *Revolt of the Widows: The Social World of the Apocryphal Acts*. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980) 16.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.* 63.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.* 77. Davies goes so far as to argue that the concern for the health and financial security of widows in the AAA is over and above a general concern for the poor and weak; however, he does not provide textual examples that demonstrate this.

communities of widows in the Acts of Thomas, he arrived at the conclusion that there were communities of widows known to the composers of the AAA and that they show a profound respect for such communities.¹⁰²

Davies' conclusions, while aiming to restore women to early church history, are based on a somewhat problematic method. David Cartlidge, in a review of Davies's book, argued that the synchronic approach used by Davies paid too little attention to the theological, chronological and cultural differences that exist between the AAA.¹⁰³ Also, Davies's analysis tended to rest on generalizations and oversimplifications about the early Christian community. For example, he argued:

If these men [who wrote texts like the Pseudo-Clementines] did not write the Acts, and if the Acts were not written by such church officials as bishops, presbyters, or deacons...then who did write them? They were quite possibly written by continent Christian women.¹⁰⁴

This argument by Davies is a gross simplification of the early Christian church in proposing that the range of Christian writers at that time was so limited.

Virginia Burrus made similar claims to Davies about the AAA, arguing that the stories of women in the AAA are characterized by a positive outlook on female chastity. Burrus also contested some scholars' attempts to explain the genre of the AAA as the product of other genres. She claimed that scholars who studied the AAA

¹⁰²*Ibid.*

¹⁰³David Cartlidge, "Review of the *Revolt of the Widows*," *Religious Studies Review* 7.3. 258.

¹⁰⁴Davies, *Revolt*. 94.

in the past, in their eagerness to identify the Acts with a known Hellenistic genre, have undervalued both the uniqueness of the AAA and the significance of the contemporary social and cultural factors which produced them.¹⁰⁵

Burrus followed Söder and MacDonald in connecting the stories in the AAA to folktales, and contended that the stories relating the conversion, ordeal, and fate of female protagonists in the AAA tend to follow a similar structural pattern.¹⁰⁶ She based her theory of structural patterning on Vladimir Propp's analyses of narrative structure. She divided the apocryphal stories of female chastity, through the use of her adaptation of Proppian structural analysis, into fourteen functions.¹⁰⁷

Burrus claimed that the folktales behind the chastity stories are reflections of positive and inspirational models designed to aid women to be creative in their religious community. Through a process of socialization encouraged by these stories, women would find support in the conflicts aroused by their attempts to develop spiritually and to become autonomous.¹⁰⁸

Although her study is interesting and raises some valid points regarding folktales and the AAA, there are some problematic aspects to Burrus's hypothesis. The first is that the sample upon which she created her list of Proppian functions is

¹⁰⁵Burrus, *Chastity*. 25.

¹⁰⁶Burrus, *Chastity*. 33f.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.* 34-35.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.* 81f.

extremely small. Propp, in coming to his structural theory, had available to him hundreds of Russian folktales to make comparisons and develop his hypotheses. Burrus had only seven stories to work from.¹⁰⁹ At the same time, Kaestli criticized Burrus's choice of Propp's system because it uses categories which are overly broad and applicable to many different types of narrative.¹¹⁰

The second problem is that, even with such a small sample, Burrus sometimes had difficulty in meshing her structural model with the stories of women in the AAA. For example, Burrus divided several of the stories into two or more episodes to accommodate her model and to include as many of her functions as possible.¹¹¹ She admitted that the story of Artemilla and Eubula (in the Ephesus story in the AP) fits the chastity story type only in a partial manner and remains unclear due to the fragmentary nature of the texts.¹¹² Furthermore, Burrus's need to explicate the difficulties in applying her model to the texts in her study steadily weakened her argument.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹The seven include: the story of Agrippina, Nicaria, Euphemia, Doris and Xanthippe (*Acts of Peter*); the story of Maximilla (*Acts of Andrew*); the story of Drusiana (*Acts of John*); the story of Thecla (*Acts of Paul and Thecla*); the story of Artemilla and Eubula (*Acts of Paul and Thecla*); the story of the "Princess Bride" (*Acts of Thomas*); and the story of Mygdonia and Tertia (*Acts of Thomas*).

¹¹⁰Jean Daniel Kaestli, "Response to Burrus," *Semeia* 38 (1986) 121.

¹¹¹See her analysis of the stories of Agrippina *et aliae*, of Drusiana, and of Thecla, in *Chastity*. 35-38.

¹¹²*Ibid.* 38.

¹¹³A comparable study to Burrus's is that of Consuelo Ruiz-Montero, "The Structural Pattern of Ancient Greek Romances and the *Morphology of the Folktale* of V. Propp." *Fabula* 22 (1981) 228-

A third drawback in Burrus's analysis is that, in asserting the folkloric aspects of the stories of women in the AAA, she failed to recognize the textual nature of the stories as they stand within the larger work. She downplayed the fact that the stories, whether they circulated as oral folk-lore or not, exist solely in later written texts, and that these texts represent a wide diversity of thought within the early Christian community.

Kaestli addressed the issue of possible oral legends behind the AAA, specifically in regards to Burrus' studies. His comment regarding Burrus's analysis is also applicable to the studies of Söder, Schneemelcher, MacDonald and Davies. He argued:

In fact, this preliterate existence remains a postulate which is not supported by analysis of the relationship between the stories and their overall context. For my part, I am rather struck by the unity of composition in the apocryphal Acts (despite a few exceptions) and I do not see any criteria valid enough to allow one to isolate the oral or written sources used by their authors. The considerable place taken by the speeches coupled with the complexity of their intrigue clearly speak in favour of a *literary* origin to the chastity stories.¹¹⁴

Kaestli here makes a strong argument to counter the suppositions created by scholars looking for sources that are virtually irretrievable. He also acknowledged the need for a closer examination of the texts themselves as complete narratives rather than as collections of pieces of forgotten stories.

38. Ruiz-Montero's study, like that of Burrus, suffers from having to continually make concessions to numerous exceptions to, and deviancies from, the structural model.

¹¹⁴Kaestli, "Response." 129.

To conclude this section, a number of scholars have recently examined the AAA and have attempted to establish a more prominent position for the texts and their supposed women authors in early Christianity than has usually been assigned to them. Burrus and Davies have claimed that texts such as the AAA are significant indicators for the participation and/or the empowerment of women, or communities of women in early Christianity. However, a close analysis of the narratives in the AAA will demonstrate that this might not be as well founded as their analyses seem to indicate. Such an analysis is developed in the following chapters.

2.4 Classical Scholars and the Apocryphal Acts

Since the early part of the twentieth century, classical scholars studying the GR have again examined the AAA. However, they have not examined the Christian texts to the same extent as scholars of early Christianity. This is apparent in the attitude expressed by classical scholars towards the AAA, which is not always sympathetic. Nevertheless, the analyses of these classical scholars are useful because of their understanding of the GR, an understanding that sometimes is lacking in the analyses by scholars of early Christianity.

2.4.1 Perry

Ben Perry, writing a literary-historical analysis of the GR, briefly reviewed the AAA. He described the AAA as edifying stories that were designed to teach and

convert. He claimed that the AAA do not belong to the same genre as the GR. He supposed that other scholars had reached the conclusion that the two were the same genre because of the material within the Christian books:

The content of these narratives [the apocryphal Acts], externally considered as usual, has led to their being classified by many as 'romances'. Certainly the subject matter is romantic in the sense that it includes much that is wonderful, thrilling, glamorous, or sensational, but this is only a means by which simple souls might be overawed and led into the way of salvation.¹¹⁵

That Perry has a bias against the AAA is evident in his above description of the Christian audience as "simple souls".¹¹⁶ He further displayed this attitude in his synopsis of the typical plots of the AAA that contain "fanatical heroines" who "attach themselves" to an apostle and try to save themselves and others from "the filth of marriage" causing "much trouble" that leads up to an ending that "purports to be a happy one."¹¹⁷ It appears that Perry has fallen in with the early church fathers in his assessment of the AAA by characterizing them in such a negative light.

¹¹⁵Ben E. Perry, *The Ancient Romances: A Literary-Historical Account of Their Origins* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) 30.

¹¹⁶In his denial of the possible grouping together of the AAA and GR in the same literary category, Perry describes the "apocryphal Acts of Christian martyrs, such as those of Paul and Thekla [sic] or of Xanthippe and Polyxena with their theatrical exploitation of miracles and sensational events as propaganda for a fanatical, antihumanistic creed;..." Perry, *Ancient Romances* 85-86.

Perry does not have a high opinion of the GR either. He finds the expression of the ideal in the romances a product of "naive authors who were of small understanding and whose moral sentiments was narrowly conventional and jejune." According to Perry, qualities of "virtue and heroism meant little more than sexual respectability, confirming to middle class mores generally, and the heroic readiness to die." Perry, *Ancient Romances* 117.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*

Perry argued that the AAA and the GR are not of the same genre on the basis of his method of classifying genres. He claimed that authorial purpose was the only feasible criterion by which to separate genres.¹¹⁸ Perry then summarizes his view on what the AAA are in light of his understanding of their authorial intent:

In the apocryphal Acts, which are all alike in their tendency, it ought to be clear to anyone that the principal purpose of the writers was to propagate the ideal of Christian asceticism, and not, as in the secular romances properly so called, simply to entertain the reader by a series of adventures of whatever kind.¹¹⁹

However, Perry's sweeping generalizations about the AAA demonstrates that his reading of them is overly brief. The AAA were written over a widespread geographical area and a long period of time. The assumption that the purpose of the AAA was primarily to propound ascetic forms of Christianity is another superficial generalization about the texts. Also, Perry's analysis of the AAA is based on contradictory methods. He created his theories about the Christian works from their content, that is, the rejection of sexual contact by the protagonists. From this, he constructed the authorial intent of the AAA. In this reverse construction of authorial intention, Perry does not rise above the speculation for which he criticized others. His hypothesis of the authorial intent of the AAA is dependent on his selection of a single

¹¹⁸ "...the most satisfactory basis on which to draw [the lines between genres] if they are to be clear, sharp, and deep reaching is the author's intention; even though, in the nature of things, this criterion may elude us. To classify on the basis of anything else than the author's primary intention is to lose one's way in the labyrinth of means and materials, which are endlessly variable and complex and of minor consequence." Perry, *Ancient Romances*. 30-31.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

element within the texts.

At the same time, Perry's assumption of the retrievability of the authorial intent in itself is open to question, given the vast time span separating the reader of today with the writers of late antiquity. Moreover, literary critics have debated the relevance of such "intent", outside of historical interest.¹²⁰ The narrators of the AAA do enter into the texts to address the readers directly; but this does not necessarily explain the historical authors' intentions in writing their narratives.¹²¹

Perry, in his analysis of the GR, only briefly examined the AAA, concluding that the two do not belong to the same literary genre. However, his treatment of the Christian texts was overly superficial and negatively biased. Despite his defence of the paramount importance of authorial intent, Perry in fact relied on messages that he constructed from the content of the texts and on a simplified account of the AAA and the people who wrote them.

¹²⁰David Robey, in his summary of the arguments of Wimsatt and Beardsley, noted their criticism of the "intentional fallacy"; historical authors' intentions, Wimsatt and Beardsley contended, do not determine the meaning, effect or function of their creations. "Anglo-American New Criticism" *Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction*. (A. Jefferson and D. Robey, eds.; London: Batsford Academic and Educational, 1982) 3-74.

¹²¹Adele Berlin explains the difference between the writer in the text and the writer in history: "Literary critics distinguish between the 'historical author', that is the actual writer of the work, and the 'implied author', which is the abstract authorial presence that stands behind all the *dramatis personae*, including the first person narrator. The implied author has no real existence; he is part of the text although not part of the story. It is he whom the reader perceives as being responsible for the selection and expression of the events narrated." *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983) 145 n.1.

2.4.2 Reardon

Another classical scholar who examined the AAA in a study of the GR is B.P. Reardon. He argued that the GR had a large effect on such Christian literature as the AAA.¹²² Reardon maintained that Christianity adapted romantic literature to its own needs, so there appeared within the Roman Imperial period an increasing number of Christian and para-Christian narratives of adventure. However, Reardon does not equate the two:

They [the apocryphal Acts] can hardly be narratives of love and adventure in the full sense, for ordinary human love is suspect (to say the least), and the erotic content of such stories is very tightly circumscribed, sometimes totally eliminated. Nonetheless, they are what Christian ideology could make of the romance form.¹²³

Neither did he claim in his study a direct descent from the novel to the Acts, for he argued that no model was necessary for the Christians to write the AAA.¹²⁴

Regarding the possible oral sources in the Christian writings hypothesized earlier by MacDonald and Burrus, Reardon contended that the Christian texts are not folktales but, like the GR, they could readily accept and develop folktales.¹²⁵ He stressed in particular that the Christian works were literary creations. He also

¹²²Reardon, *Form.* 165.

¹²³*Ibid.*

¹²⁴*Ibid.* He continues: "The biographical gospels, one supposes, would have been composed whatever course Greek literature might have taken; so would the account of Paul's missionary journeys, which already includes wanderings in distant lands."

¹²⁵*Ibid.* 168.

suggested that composers of literature would not have circulated among those who told folktales.¹²⁶

2.4.3 Hägg

Tomas Hägg is another classical scholar of the GR who studies the AAA. He devoted an entire chapter of his study of the ancient novel to Christian narrative fiction.¹²⁷ Hägg also noted the differences between the various Acts and attributed them to different Christian groups attempting to propagate their views of their faith: for example, he claimed that the ATh has "a clearly gnostic bent" and that in the AP+Th, "besides the advocacy of an ascetic form of life, we are certainly aware of a feminist tendency."¹²⁸

The AAA, according to Hägg, were created out of a need to supplement the apostolic tradition found within the canonical Acts. His description of the AAA is as follows:

If the Hellenistic novel of love offered its readers romanticism of the kind today provided by the serials and short stories in weekly magazines, the apocryphal apostle's stories in addition correspond to the gossip column: meet Paul in private! This, however, is just one aspect of it: primarily the stories had a serious edifying purpose, containing quantities of Christian preaching put into the mouths of the apostles as sermons on

¹²⁶*Ibid.*

¹²⁷Hägg, "The New Heroes: Apostles, Martyrs and Saints," *Novel in Antiquity*. 154-165.

¹²⁸*Ibid.* 162.

suitable occasions.¹²⁹

Recognizing the existence of "novelistic motifs" within the AAA, Hägg hesitated to designate them as Christian novels too quickly. He claimed that there are other Hellenistic literary genres that the AAA share important elements with such as aretology and fabulous travel tales. Therefore he cautioned against trying to fix direct connections between the genres.

2.4.4 A Literary Trajectory?

One point the classical scholars all make is that the most prolific period in the composition of the GR occurred just prior to the time of the composition of many of the early AAA. They have all recognized the possibility of connections between the two literary forms because of this, but have come to different conclusions. Reardon and Perry traced a bridge between the GR and the Byzantine hagiographies of the lives of the saints.¹³⁰ Perry contended that the romances were a popular literary form, but:

[t]he bridge over which the Greek romance passed on its way from the ancient world to the Byzantine was purely scholastic and had almost no support in popular favour. ... What replaced it on the dynamic level of literature was the biography of a saint.¹³¹

Perry argued that the Byzantine hagiographies were the true inheritors of the romance

¹²⁹*Ibid.* 161.

¹³⁰*Ibid.* 101.

¹³¹Perry, *Ancient Romances*. 101.

tradition, for he had already discounted the AAA as not belonging to the same literary category as the GR.¹³² Thus, he claimed that the AAA, while similar to the GR because of certain borrowed generic conventions, had risen and fallen with a particular form of Christianity, while the GR passed out of popular favour with the rise of the Byzantine hagiography.

Reardon wrote that "Greek romance did not altogether die; it merely faded away into hagiography."¹³³ He too did not propose a genetic relationship between the AAA and the GR; rather, he suggested that the Christian texts were influenced by the Greek tales of love and adventure. Supporting Perry, Reardon argued that the AAA may have borrowed certain literary conventions of the GR, but was not necessarily dependent on the genre.¹³⁴ However, he claimed that the Christian hagiographies followed more closely the pagan hagiographies of Cyrus the Great, Alexander and Apollonius.¹³⁵ Thus, both Perry and Reardon have argued that the Byzantine biographies of the saints replaced the stories of love and adventure in the romances.

¹³²See *Ancient Romances* page 85, and pages 46-47 above.

¹³³Reardon, *Form*. 166.

He further writes, p. 167: "Popular fiction such as *Ninus* and the *Ephesiaca*, appears to die out by the third century (with the possible exception of the *Ethiopian Story*); the sophistic trio appear to be the latest examples of the genre. But at this point another form of popular fiction takes the place of Xenophon and his like. That form is hagiography. Typically, the hagiographic romance is the largely fictitious biography of a saint. Material was plentiful; all that was needed was the saint's name and a tradition of his or her martyrdom, and both existed in profusion in the Byzantine period."

¹³⁴He argued: "No 'model' was needed, certainly, for the adherents of the Christian religion to use this method of capturing their tradition." *Form* 165.

¹³⁵Reardon, *Form*. 168.

At the same time, the AAA were influenced by the literary conventions of the GR, even though they were not strictly speaking romances. They passed away with the demise of the GR.

Hägg, like Perry and Reardon, has proposed a trajectory for the ancient romances. He, however, recognized a deeper connection between the GR and the AAA, and suggested that the more popular novels of the first and second centuries had been replaced by the AAA, while the sophistic novels of the third century developed among the literary elite outside of popular circles. In his view, the same audience that gave the GR a market subsequently turned to stories of adventure involving early Christian heroes.¹³⁶ It is this point that is important in terms of this paper: if the same audience who read the AAA also had read the GR, then they would have had similar literary expectations of both kinds of text.

2.5 Summary of Chapter Two

The above review examined several scholars' approaches to the AAA, ranging from early modern studies to later studies by scholars of early Christian history and of classical literature. This chapter reviewed comparisons of the AAA and different forms of Hellenistic literature.

Reitzenstein proposed that the AAA be classified with ancient aretalogies, and

¹³⁶Hägg, *Novel in Antiquity*. 161. Here Hägg suggests that the AAA could very well be more representative of popular literature than the novels of Chariton and Xenophon.

was followed by Kerenyi, who suggested the texts emulated a religious pattern based on the ancient mystery cults. Aune and Schneemelcher debated the relationship the AAA had to the Acts of the New Testament. Aune took the position that the Acts provided the paradigm for the AAA. Schneemelcher argued that the historical thrust of Acts and the fictional quality of the AAA necessitated a different genre.

We have also seen that several scholars have argued that there are oral traditions and folktales within the AAA. An important conclusion from the above analysis of the AAA as folktales is that the AAA are to be treated as literary works and that to create theories about them based on the potential oral elements behind them is a precarious procedure. If the AAA did draw upon earlier oral traditions, these traditions have been consumed and absorbed into the literary works. And if oral sources were transformed into literary elements, we must treat them as literary phenomena, especially since the oral stage is at any rate virtually irretrievable. This issue is further examined in the final chapter of the paper when the topic of mimetic reconstruction is addressed.

The AAA have also been compared with the GR. The suggestion that the writers of the AAA were influenced by the GR is not a new concept. Christian scholars have discussed the hypothesis since the turn of the twentieth century: Josef Flaminio noticed similarities between the GR and the APt and the Thecla episode in the AP; Rosa Söder later attempted a more systematic analysis of the AAA and the GR on the basis of her five comparative *Hauptelemente* and narrative motifs. Both comparative studies, we have seen, were built on an inadequate understanding of the

textual and historical evidence.

A key issue in the understanding of the genre of the AAA is the criteria used to classify genre. This is especially true for the comparison of the AAA and the GR, which has been, for the most part, based on a comparison of content. Previous studies have not been satisfactory. For example, Flamion, in his analysis, makes a comparison with too small a sample base (the APt and the Thecla episode in the AP). Söder's five narrative elements are overly vague and for the most part, content-based, therefore adding little to her other comparative criteria of five narrative motifs. Even though she attempts to be more systematic than Flamion, the number of Söder's elements is still too small and general. In order to make the best judgement of generic classification, content-based criteria should be fairly specific and the number of such criteria should be as large as possible, with examples found in most, if not all of the items of comparison.

While the content of texts is important in understanding genre, the use of such content must also be somewhat consistent within the different texts. Previous studies have been open to criticism because they have chosen a number of similarities in the content of the texts with little regard to their usage within the overall structure of individual narratives.¹³⁷ In a comparison of genres, it is necessary to examine the dynamics of how content functions within texts, as well as the manner in which that content is utilized.

¹³⁷For example, see the criticism of Flamion and Söder above, pages 26-28.

The following chapter is a comparison of the AAA with the literary form they most closely resemble, that of the Greek romances of the first through third centuries. I will examine and compare the texts dividing the analysis into three sections: characterization, type-scenes, and narrative technique. In this manner, I am able to examine not only the content, but also its presentation within the texts, as well as its place in the structure of the literary forms in question.

One of the greatest weaknesses of previous studies is that the GR and the AAA have often been misread by scholars of early Christianity and classics. For example, analysis of the AAA by classical scholars shows that they often view the Christian texts as a second-rate co-opting of pagan literary forms.¹³⁸ We have also seen that Christian scholars have paid too little attention to the GR and have depended too readily on the studies from classical scholars. This dependency has had two consequences. The first is that in analyzing the AAA using early studies of the GR, Christian scholars have deprecated the AAA by seeing in them the jejune character ascribed to the GR in general. The second is that the studies of the GR by classical scholars naturally stress those elements which interest them. Consequently, most classical scholars have devalued certain elements of the GR, such as their religious

¹³⁸A further example of this can be found in Graham's text: "In the Apocryphal Acts and their relatives, one is simply conscious of juxtapositions of material rather than consciously artistic storytelling. The anonymous narrator is passing on received information to the best of his limited ability, and that is all that seems to matter to him." *Ancient Fiction*. 132

content, that are more significant for a scholar of religion.¹³⁹ This has led many Christian scholars to see greater differences between the two literary types than is perhaps warranted.¹⁴⁰

In the following chapter, it will be demonstrated that the reading of the AAA and the GR by scholars has not been as thorough as it could have been. Too often scholars, both Christian and classical, have not paid sufficient attention to the texts that are not of primary concern to them. There is a need to analyze both the GR and the AAA on an equal basis, seeking not to allow either one to supersede the other.

Another issue connected with the genre of the AAA is the implication it has regarding various historical issues. The studies of Davies, MacDonald, and Burrus have all examined the AAA with an eye to possible historical reconstructions of the development of the early Christian church. Their reconstructions are founded upon their readings of what they suppose the AAA are. For example, Burrus read the texts as folktales originating from communities of celibate Christian women and their supporters. In the fourth chapter of this paper, the issue of mimetic reconstructions

¹³⁹This is especially true since the theories of Kerenyi and Merkelbach, that did stress the religious element in the GR, have been generally rejected.

¹⁴⁰There is a growing recognition of the religious element in the GR however. See Edwards, "Chantou's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*: Religions and Politics Do Mix."

from the AAA will be addressed. For, if the AAA are to be read as Christian romances, then the conclusions of these scholars need to be re-evaluated. The question of what the reading of the AAA as romantic literature could mean for our understanding of the early Christian community will also be raised.

Chapter Three The Apocryphal Acts and the Greek Romances

The question raised in this chapter is, how alike are the AAA and the GR?

Could a heroine from the AAA such as Thecla be compatible material for the narratives of such authors as Chariton with his heroine, Callirhoe? In the narrative worlds of *Acts of Paul and Thecla* and *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, would it have been impossible or even unusual for Thecla and Callirhoe to have been neighbours or even acquaintances? In other words, to what extent are the elements of the AAA and the GR similar enough that the readers of antiquity would have recognized them as being similar, or even the same? Would they have recognized them as being similar at all?

When examining the AAA and the GR, a comparison is necessary to point to similarities and differences. The comparison of the texts through selected generic criteria will demonstrate the significant similarities shared by the AAA and the GR. These similarities may be divided into three elements: character, type scenes, and narrative structure. At the same time, there are significant differences between the AAA and the GR. The Christian texts treat the erotic element, found throughout the GR, in a somewhat different manner. In the AAA, there is a stronger emphasis on matters religious. Also, in the AAA there is more of a marginalization of the female protagonist with the plots centering on the male apostolic protagonist.

3.1 Greek Romance

The GR are ancient fictional prose narratives of love and adventure. They flourished in the Hellenistic societies of the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁴¹ As noted above, the form in which the romances were written indicated that they were a type of popular literature.¹⁴²

Reardon claimed that one may find the vague beginnings of the GR in the fourth century B.C.E.¹⁴³ However, the most probable early example of GR is the "Ninus-Semiramus" fragments which date to the second century B.C.E..

Archaeological and textual evidence has shown that the popularity of the GR reached its highest point during the first few centuries of the Common Era.

The ancient romance authors were initially restricted by the literary convention

¹⁴¹Hägg, *Novel in Antiquity*. 96-98 Hägg cites Egypt and Asia Minor in particular as two regions that probably saw the rise of the GR

¹⁴²See page 28 above.

¹⁴³*Form*. 97. Reardon cautions that the lack of recognition of the romance as literature in antiquity will make difficult any claims about the genre's origin. Perry is quite adamant regarding the search for the origins of the novel. "The analogy of biological evolution is false and misleading in the realm of literary history, because it ignores the human will and capacity to create new forms at frequent intervals in response to its own spiritual or intellectual needs." (*Ancient Romance*. 12.)

The origins of the GR is not a topic to be pursued here. Rather, it is sufficient to indicate some important similarities between the GR and other literary forms. Hägg, in an examination of the "literary pedigree" of the GR, cites the epic genre as important for the rise of the romance genre, claiming that Homer was the natural departing point for the romantic writers, who drew heavily from earlier Greek epics. He argues that historiography, as the first prose literature to flourish among the Greeks, had the deepest influence on the ancient romance. Hägg also notes that biography, fantastic travel tales and erotic poetry, as early contemporary relatives, are all significant literary forms which could have contributed to the development of the GR because of the shared elements between them. See *Novel in Antiquity*. 109f. Once again, here one can see how the AAA are associated with these genres.

which opposed the writing of pure fiction. In early antiquity, prose, by convention, was reserved for non-fictional writing; free invention by a writer of prose was unacceptable, as this was equated with lying.¹⁴⁴ The early romancers were not concerned with the veracity of the events they were relating. However, to maintain literary convention and at the same time create his/her story, the romancer was able to use the creative license of the tragedian or epic poet by developing fiction out of quasi-historic figures. This creative license was acceptable in drama and poetry as long as it only extended traditional historical knowledge and did not transgress any information that was traditionally accepted.

The importance of history and historiography has to be emphasized in the genre of early GR. The author presents characters who are from the myths and legends of a distant age and are presumed to be historical.¹⁴⁵ For example, the earliest GR, such as *Ninus and Semiramus* and *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, were developed out of Hellenistic historical legends.¹⁴⁶ Even before the rise of the romance, myth and history had been mixed together for more distant times by such historians as Herodotus, Xenophon, and Ctesias. However, the romance author and his audience knew that the romance was

¹⁴⁴Perry, *Ancient Romances* 71; and Reardon, *Form* 101. For a Christian example of this phenomenon, see Thomas L. Brodie, "Greco-Roman Imitation of Texts as a Partial Guide to Luke's Use of Sources," *Luke-Acts: New Perspectives* (ed. C. Talbert; New York: Crossroad, 1984) 17-46.

¹⁴⁵Albert Heisserman, *The Novel Before the Novel* (Chicago; University of Chicago Press, 1977) 293. See also Perry, *Ancient Romances* 77; and Reardon, *Form* 93.

¹⁴⁶The Ninus-Semiramus story is based on the legendary founder of Ninevah, and Chariton's heroine is the daughter of the Syracusan general, Hermocrates. Chariton also uses the historical Persian king, Artaxerxes, as a character in his narrative

not a historical work, that the romancer did not intend to write history but, as a matter of decor, was obliged to appear to be writing history.

As well as the convention of working with figures from history, the early romance genre was heavily dependent on pre-existent literary materials and genres for content. If historiography was an influence on the works of the early romancers, so was the epic. There are many similarities between the epic and the romance, and the romance borrows heavily from epic motifs, situations and characters.¹⁴⁷

Even as they were creating escapist fiction and entertaining narrative, the authors of romance were still restricted by the literary conventions of their time. Thus, there are aspects of the ancient romance which are also found in several other literary genres. These common aspects are due to borrowing by authors of antiquity of elements from different literary forms to include their own creations, as well as to their participation in a common ethos. These literary forms included the fable, narrative account, moralizing anecdote, philosophical maxim, proof and refutation of a position, speeches of praise and blame, comparison of two items, character sketches, spatial

¹⁴⁷Hägg, *Novel in Antiquity*. 110-111. Perry argued that the main difference between the epic and the romance is that of size. While the epic is a long, open form with a broad literary appeal, the romance is much shorter and simpler; an episode of an epic rather. *Ancient Romances* 45f. Reardon argued the *fons et origo* of the romance is the *Odyssey*. See *Form* 15.

M. Fusillo provided an example of the importance of the epic to the novel by arguing that Heliodorus's romance from the third century, *Ethiopian Story*, is a reworking of the Odyssean pattern. This example, he argued, demonstrated the change occurring in literature at the time when the heroic and mythic are transformed to the human and modern. See "Textual Patterns and Narrative Structures in the Greek Novel," *Groningen Collection on the Novel* Vol. 1 (H. Hofmann ed; Groningen; Egbert Forsten, 1988) 20f.

description, and legal topics.¹⁴⁸ And while there was no theory on the romance genre, the romance authors had to be thoroughly schooled in different rhetorical techniques.¹⁴⁹

While many ancient GR are known today only through fragmentary remnants or references in other texts, there exists a core of romances from the period in question. It is this core which will serve as a comparative base against which the AAA will be studied. There are five texts which account for the bulk of the genre of ancient GR:¹⁵⁰ Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Xenophon's *An Ephesian Story*, Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon*, Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe*, and Heliodorus's *An Ethiopian Story*.¹⁵¹

The plot of the stories in GR generally follow similar paths: two young people with extraordinary qualities, not least of which is their beauty, meet in a fortuitous or heavenly-devised manner and fall in love. As a consequence to their love, obstacles arise to prevent their union; the couple are separated and undergo cycles of travel and

¹⁴⁸Reardon *Form* 86

¹⁴⁹*Ibid* 77, 84-96. Reardon arrived at this conclusion after examining the ideal romance novel in the light of Aristotle's *Poetics*. He suggested that the elements of tragedy and romance are largely the same and therefore, the author had to be familiar with the theory of drama. He concluded that the romancers necessarily had to be familiar with, and be capable of, rhetorical composition.

¹⁵⁰The list is neither an exhaustive nor authoritative. Reardon, in his introduction to *AGN* 3-5, mentioned the difficulties he faced in compiling a collection of ancient Greek novels, noting that others might have chosen differently. For example, Reardon included the historiographical *The Alexander Romance* and *The Story of Apollonius King of Tyre*, yet excluded *Cyropaedia* of Xenophon of Athens, and the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*

¹⁵¹The dating of the texts according to Reardon (*Form*. 4): *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, first century C.E.; *An Ephesian Story*, second century C.E.; *Leucippe and Clitophon*, late second century C.E.; *Daphnis and Chloe*, end of the second century C.E.; and *An Ethiopian Story*, third century C.E.

adventure, where they endure many harrowing trials and tribulations while remaining faithful to each other. With the help of their deities, to whom the protagonists are steadfastly devoted, the heroine and hero are guided through their ordeals eventually to be re-united and live happily ever after.

3.2 Similarities

The AAA and the GR share several similar features. It is important to observe that these similarities are not merely content-based, but share the same functions, and are structured in like manner.

3.2.1 Characterization

One of the most striking similarities between the AAA and the GR is in their characters. Characterization is surprisingly similar in the two literary forms. As was noted above, the characters of the romance are often chosen from historical or semi-historical sources. Most often the romancers chose to deal with more obscure figures so as to have more freedom in developing their plot. Here, then, a similarity is evident, for the authors of the AAA also chose their primary characters from amongst legendary early Christians who dwelt in the past and were presumed to be historical!

The heroine of the romance is a strong figure, a young daughter, usually of a citizen, who is often of marrying age. Her beauty is comparable to a goddess, and her

noble character is beyond reproach.¹⁵² Often the heroine is a special devotee of a divine being, and has a particularly steadfast faith.¹⁵³

Throughout the GR, one of the most important features of the heroine is her chastity, proven through her abstention from sexual intercourse. It is imperative in the romances that the female protagonists abstain from unsanctioned sexual relations. The heroine's chastity is usually the greatest element in the creation of conflict within the plot. The heroine, through the advancing plot, endures several trials whereby her chastity, or virginity, is threatened. The heroine is restored to normal sexuality only when the proper circumstances have been achieved in the narrative, usually the denouement of the story, after she has been re-united with, or wed to, the hero.

In the AAA, the female protagonists are also strong characters, consisting of women born to the higher social classes.¹⁵⁴ Like their romance counterparts, they are

¹⁵²Callirhoe in Chariton's story is the daughter of Hermocrates, a famous Syracusan general, her beauty is like that of Aphrodite herself and she is often mistaken for the goddess. In the Ephesian story of Xenophon, Anthia's beauty is beyond compare and she is mistaken for the goddess Artemis. Chariclea, in *An Ethiopian Story*, is the beautiful daughter of the king of Ethiopia.

¹⁵³For example, Callirhoe is devoted to Aphrodite and pays homage to her several times in the story (1.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.8, 7.5, and 8.8). Anthia is a devotee of Artemis, but shows devotion to local deities such as Isis, Hera, Apis, and Helios in her travels. Leucippe has a special relation with Artemis as well. Chloe is dedicated to the nymphs and Pan, and is often portrayed as a participant in the cult of Dionysus. Chariclea is an acolyte virgin of the Temple of Artemis at Delphi.

¹⁵⁴Maximilla in AA is the wife of the proconsul, Aegeates; Drusiana in the AJ is a woman of noble birth; Thecla is an upper-class woman of Iconia; Peter converts four concubines of the Roman prefect and Xanthippe, the wife of Albinus a friend of the Emperor; and the heroines in ATh include an unnamed princess, Mygdonia, the wife of Charisius, a relative of the Indian king, Misdæus, and Tertia, Misdæus's wife.

not only wealthy and of noble birth, but they are also beautiful.¹⁵⁵ They are also devout. They all convert quickly to the word of the apostles and their devotion to their god is thorough and unshakable. This devotion is proven in their rejection of their former lives with the adoption of a new god.

As in the GR, the issue of the heroines' chastity in the AAA is a primary element of the story. The women in the AAA, like the heroines of the romances, are usually in real (i.e. married) or potential (i.e. engaged or threatened with rape) sexual situations. Upon conversion however, the women in their religious ardour become sexually abstinent and are willing to endure much for such convictions.

The hero in GR is a young citizen, worthy of the heroine by his noble birth.¹⁵⁶ He also possesses a godlike beauty and, like his female counterpart, is sometimes mistaken for a god.¹⁵⁷ Also, he is virtuous, devout and chaste.¹⁵⁸ In the GR there are,

¹⁵⁵See AA (23); Maximilla is described as beautiful and is treated like a goddess. Thecla's beauty is recognized in API+Th (25, 29, 34): note that Paul himself also remarks on this. Albinus describes his wife, Xanthippe, in APi (34), as very beautiful, and Mygdonia in ATh (116) is told that she is the most beautiful in all of India.

¹⁵⁶Chariton's Chaereas (1.1) is of noble birth and is compared to ancient heroes like Achilles, Nireus, Hippolytus, and Alcibiades. Xenophon's hero, Habrocomes, is also of noble descent with phenomenal good looks (1.1). Clitophon of Tatius's romance is the son of a Byzantine noble, and Longus's Daphnis is the beautiful son of a Mytelinean lord. Finally, Theagenes traces his line not only through the great Achilles, but to the first of the Greeks, Hellen the son of Deukalion.

¹⁵⁷See Chariton (1.1) and Xenophon (1.1). Daphnis is likened to several gods: Zeus and Pan (1.7), Dionysus (1.13), and Apollo (1.16). There is an extended account of Theagenes's beauty by Heliodorus in *An Ethiopian Story* (2.35, and 3.3).

¹⁵⁸All heroes respect the gods: Chaereas is a devotee of Aphrodite; Habrocomes vows chastity (1.11) to Anthia and gives offerings to Hera and Helios (1.11, 1.12); Clitophon is a devotee of Zeus (5.1, 5.2) and Eros (5.25); Daphnis, like his love, is devoted to the nymphs and to Pan and Dionysus (2.31, 3.11) and vows fidelity to Chloe (2.39); Theagenes is an acolyte of Apollo, and is also a

in equal proportion to the female protagonists, threats to the hero's chastity. The romance hero fends off threats to his chastity, not only from his patron's wife and slaves but sometimes also from his brigand captors.

The male protagonist of the GR is charismatic and often has a following.¹⁵⁹ At the same time, this charisma is sometimes attributed to acts of sorcery.¹⁶⁰ In contrast to the female protagonists, however, the male hero of the romance is often quite a passive figure. Many times in romances, secondary characters play a more active role than the male hero.¹⁶¹

The heroes of the AAA share much with the men of the GR. They too, are larger-than-life characters, for they are the apostles, the first followers of Jesus. This alone makes them equal to the noble figures who graced the stories of authors like

descendent of mythical divine figures (2.34).

¹⁵⁹For example, Chaereas has a loyal group at the gymnasium (1.1), and in the war between the Persians and the Egyptians, he is so popular that, "Everyone wanted to go with Chaereas; they thought more of him than of their own countries or children." (8.3). Habrocomes too, has a group of admirers. See Xenophon (1.1) and Heliodorus (2.2), (3.17).

¹⁶⁰For example, Clitophon is accused of sorcery twice. See Tatius 6.17, and 7.11.

¹⁶¹The heroes tend to passively follow wherever the plot takes them, often left awaiting good fortune. The hero of the romance is quite willing to die: often by suicide, thinking his lover dead and wanting to join her. For example see Chariton, where Chaereas tries to kill himself at least three times (3.7, 5.10, 7.1)

Scholars of the GR have remarked that the standards of the heroes are not quite on the same level as that of the heroines. The heroes are sometimes faulted for not paying due homage to the gods (Chariton, Habrocomes, and Daphnis), and in two cases, have sex with women who are not the heroine (Clitophon and Daphnis). These incidents are part of the overall passivity of the heroes. The heroines of the GR are more active in religious services. The heroes who fail in their sexual abstinence are seduced by active, aggressive female characters in the story.

Chariton and Heliodorus.¹⁶² However, their noble status is further reinforced by whom they associate with in their travels. Throughout the AAA, the apostles are portrayed as interacting primarily in the circles of the rich and well-born, thereby associating the character of the apostles with characters of nobility.

The apostle, in the AAA, is a religious man seeking inspirational aid and guidance from the divine throughout the story. He is chaste, abstaining completely from sexual conduct. The apostle, like the hero of the GR, also has charismatic qualities: he is constantly portrayed as having many followers, is associated with, or mistaken for, the divine,¹⁶³ is described as beautiful,¹⁶⁴ and is accused of being a sorcerer.¹⁶⁵ In fact, the AAA tend to fashion the male protagonist explicitly as a later embodiment of Jesus.¹⁶⁶ The pattern of his life is much like that of Jesus: he travels,

¹⁶²By the end of the first century, the apostles were already revered founding figures of the past, who both exemplified and proclaimed the gospel, and were the keepers of Christian truth. See the Lucan Acts, Rev. 21:14, and 1 Clement 5.5-7.

¹⁶³See AA (3), AJn (27,44), API+Th (3, 21), APt (22, 29), and ATh (106)

¹⁶⁴See API+Th (3.3) and ATh (8).

¹⁶⁵See API+Th (15, 21), APt (28), ATh (96).

¹⁶⁶The reasons for this are probably threefold. First, by modelling the hero on Jesus, the author is creating a more noble character. As discussed above, if the hero is like the divine, then he is that much more of a romantic hero.

Second, by making the apostle a parallel character with Jesus, the authors of the AAA are able to tell the story of their god again in a fresh, new manner.

Third, and most important, the author is making Jesus more contemporary to second and third century audiences. For the text does not only contain the writer's own imaginary, self-contained world, but also the external, historical, objective world of the author's own time. The author does not do so through directly reporting his/her historical world, but indirectly incorporates it by writing in it, unconsciously reflecting it, and its assumptions and aspirations. In making the hero like Jesus, the author is *actualizing* Jesus in a later time frame. Therefore, Jesus of the gospels of 100-200 years ago now becomes, through the characters of the apostles, the Jesus of the *praxeis* of 50 years ago or even

preaches the word of God, performs healings and other miracles until he comes to an untimely and, with the exception of John, a martyr's death.¹⁶⁷

Although not always to the same extent as the hero of the GR, the hero of the AAA is also a passive character. He goes wherever the divine dictates. The apostle willingly follows the path set before him by his god, even if that path leads to his death.¹⁶⁸ And while secondary characters may not be more active than the apostolic protagonist, the female protagonist of the AAA often is.

Outside the arena of the protagonists, there are a number of secondary characters from which the romancer and the writers of the AAA could draw to set up, or move, the plot. The common stock includes: rich and doting parents;¹⁶⁹ amorous cruel pirates/brigands;¹⁷⁰ sympathetic crowds;¹⁷¹ dull-witted barbarians and the lower

of the reader's present. See Reardon, *Form.* 13.

¹⁶⁷John lies in an open trench and dies (AJn 111-115). However Andrew is crucified (AA 54), as is Peter (APt 37-38). Thomas is pierced by four spears on a mountain (ATh 168). Although he doesn't meet his death in the story with Thecla, Paul is beheaded (API 11.5).

¹⁶⁸In several of the AAA, the apostle is given the chance to escape death, but stands put and proceeds towards his execution. This is enhanced by the fact that the apostle has a great magical/miraculous ability to save himself, as is evident from past miracles he had performed.

¹⁶⁹In the GR, see examples in Chariton (1.1, 3.5, 8.6); Xenophon (1.1, 1.10, 5.6); Tatius (7.14); Longus (1.8, 2.14, 3.9); and Heliodorus (2.33, 10.16). In the AAA, see API+Th (29) and ATh (9,13,16).

¹⁷⁰While there are several examples of piracy in the GR (Chariton (1.7), Xenophon (1.13, 2.11), Tatius (3.9), and Heliodorus (1.18)), there are none in the AAA. The Christian writers replace the clichéd evils of brigandage with a different peril, that of demons and other malevolent spirits.

¹⁷¹See Chariton (2.3, 3.2, 5.3, 8.1), Xenophon (1.2, 1.12, 2.1, 5.13), Tatius (7.14, 8.13), Longus (2.2), Heliodorus (10.8ff), AA(3, 46, 56), AJn (22, 42), API+Th (21, 27, 32, 38), APt (3, 28, 36), and ATh (39-42, 59).

classes;¹⁷² loyal and protective servants;¹⁷³ a faithful companion to the male hero;¹⁷⁴ sympathetically portrayed homosexual characters;¹⁷⁵ and most importantly, the

¹⁷²For some examples, see Chariton (5.2, 5.9, 6.8); Xenophon (2.3, 3.11); and Longus's and Heliodorus's continual portrayal of rural dwellers as unsophisticated hicks throughout their works. In the AAA, see AA (18-20), AJn (83-84), APt (27), and ATh (64).

¹⁷³See Chariton (2.2, 3.9), Xenophon (1.14, 3.4, 2.3-4, 5.10-11), Tatius (1.16), Longus' protagonists are raised by their true parents' servants.

In the AAA, there are still loyal servants in the stories; however they are often devoted converts who claim to serve the apostle or Christ. In ATh, there is an example of the more typical loyal servant figure, found in Marcia, Mygdonia's nurse, and in AA, as Iphidama risks her life to serve her mistress (AA 29).

¹⁷⁴Chaereas was accompanied by Polycharmus, Habrocomes by Hippothous, Clitophon by Kleinias and Menelaus, Daphnis by Philetus, Theagenes by Knemnon, Andrew by Stratocles, John by Andronicus, Paul by Onesiphorus, Peter by Theon and Marcellus, and Thomas by Abban and Siphon.

¹⁷⁵There is a portrayal of a male character having strong affection for another man in the A AA. He is Stratocles, the brother-in-law of the heroine Maximilla in the AA. That Stratocles is a homosexual or has homosexual tendencies may be indicated in the following passage:

As he [Stratocles] was thus engaged, one of the servants under the supervision of Aristocles, whom Stratocles loved dearly [ὃν ἔστειργε πᾶν], was stricken by a demon and lay in filth, out of his mind. When Stratocles saw him he said, 'If only I had never come here but perished at sea this would not have happened to me? Friends I cannot live without him.' As he said this turning to those who were with him, he hit himself about the eyes and became disturbed and unfit to be seen. ... Iphidama likewise said such [comforting] things to Stratocles to restrain him from performing some rash act, in his extreme anguish. (AA 2 [The Passion of Andrew in MacDonald])

Compare with the reaction of the homosexual character, Kleinias, in Tatius's romance, when he hears of his lover's death:

Kleinias was stunned for a time. Recovering his senses, he gave a loud moan and started off running towards the body. I followed along, offering such consolation as I could. Charikles was being carried home, a pitiful and grievous spectacle. He was one continuous wound, at the sight of which no bystander could hold back his tears. ... 'I have lost my master. Why did I give him such a gift? It should have been a golden bowl that he might drink from it and pour libations and use my gift for his revels. Instead-O twisted fate-I gave the lovely boy a wild animal and even decorated the sinful beast...' (Tatius 1.12-14)

Homosexual love was a common component of the GR and Stratocles is merely a further stock character shared by the two literary forms. Even the protagonists in the GR had male lovers, for example, Chaereas has lovers (Chariton 1.3). Some homosexual characters in the GR in the present study include Corymbus and Hippothous (see esp. 3.2) in Xenophon's romance, Kleinias and Menelaos (see esp. 2.34) in Leucippe and Clitophon, and Gnathon in Daphnis and Chloe.

unscrupulous rival(s) or suitor(s) who try to seduce or threaten the protagonists.¹⁷⁶

Divine beings as characters, in the GR generally have some role, often to advance the plot. The most common divine characters include, a jealous and powerful Eros¹⁷⁷ and an equally powerful yet chaste Artemis,¹⁷⁸ but there are also other gods who take an active interest in the romances.¹⁷⁹ Notwithstanding the aforementioned divinities, the primary deity in the GR is a fickle, yet ultimately beneficent Tyche, or Fortune.¹⁸⁰

The divine elements in the AAA have a role in the advancement of the plot as well, and they actively intervene in the stories. The prime divine character in the AAA is Jesus. Jesus appears several times in the stories, not only in visions, but in a

¹⁷⁶One of several examples in Chariton's romance is found near the beginning in (1.2). Xenophon threatens his hero and heroine with Moeris and Manto the pirates, and later with Rhenaea and Polyidus. Tatius has Clitophon pursued by Melite and then by Melite's husband who tries to molest Leucippe. Chloe is sought by Dorcon the cowherd, and Daphnis is wooed by a friend of his brother. In *An Ethiopian Story*, one of the most dramatic attempted seductions is that of Arsake, the wife of an Egyptian satrap who risked everything to gain Theagenes and fails.

In AA, Aegeates tries to win back Maximilla and in AJn, Callimachus woos Drusiana. Thecla is threatened by Thamyris, her fiancé and later by a rich citizen, Alexander. In APt, the evil suitors are Agrippa and Albinus the king, who try to get their wives back. Finally, in the ATh, there is an unusual suitor in the form of a demon (43-46), but there are also more common suitor figures in the form of Charisius, the husband of Mygdonia, and Misdaeus an Indian king.

¹⁷⁷For the works of Eros, see Chariton (1.1, esp. 2.4), Xenophon (1.2), and Longus (1.11).

¹⁷⁸Artemis interacts with the mortals in Tatius's story (7.12).

¹⁷⁹In Chariton's novel, Aphrodite brings the lovers together (8.1). In Xenophon's romance, Helios steps in to save Habrocomes (4.2) and both Apollo and Apis provide oracles to guide the protagonists. Tatius uses the deities Aphrodite and Dionysus. Longus emphasizes the pastoral divinities of the nymphs and Pan, who work to help the heroine and the hero.

¹⁸⁰Heisserman, *Novel Before*. 45. Reardon, *Form*. 26.

physical form as well.¹⁸¹ Note here another similarity between the two forms. Divine beings in both literatures manifest themselves in human rather than animal form.¹⁸²

As Tyche is credited with fortune and pain in the romances, so then Jesus is credited in the AAA for the events which take place. Additionally, it is interesting to note that, besides Jesus and God, there are secondary Christian divine beings in the stories as well, such as the devil, demons and angels.¹⁸³

Thus far, the characters in the AAA and the GR, from the barbaric to the divine, have been shown to be quite similar in type. However, the similarity does not end at character-type. The characters in both the AAA and the GR are also similar in terms of the value system in which they all participate.

The characters of the ancient GR and the AAA are bound by the values and attitudes of their world. The main characters are set as ideal figures maintaining the highest standards of chastity, piety, and love. They also reflect the highest standards of natural value as well. In the GR, beauty and dress reflect the noble character: a beautiful person is a noble and good person, full of virtue and piety.¹⁸⁴ Social themes

¹⁸¹See AA (47), AJn (88, 90-104), APt 35, and ATh (2, 11)

¹⁸²Jean Marc Prieur, *Acta Andreae*. Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphon 5/6 (Turnhout Brepols, 1989) 363-364

¹⁸³For example, there are demons in AA (5). In the ATh, a character is brought to the heavens with the help of angels (122) and there is mention of the devil in a woman's sojourn to Hell (55-57).

¹⁸⁴Reardon, *Form* 26. A simple, yet very clear, statement of this is found in Tatius (5.17) "...your beauty proclaims you a person of no mean birth"

also formed elements around the various characters' world. These include: the commonality and veracity of oracles and dreams; the desirability of death;¹⁸⁵ family loyalty; the goodness of servants of the main characters; the honour amongst barbarians; and the rapacity of thieves.

The writers of the GR and the Christian authors of the AAA, using similar protagonists and methods of portraying characters and their subsequent values, also place their heroines and their heroes in a similarly constructed literary world. There are several typical scenes which the reader will find in the similar narrative worlds created by the authors of both sorts of texts.

3.2.2 Type Scenes

The general setting of both the GR and the AAA is within the Greco-Roman world.¹⁸⁶ Most often, the main plot setting is within a Greek city that is real and well known.¹⁸⁷ The drama of the texts can occur both in the public and private realms.

¹⁸⁵It is important to note again that the willingness to die is not isolated to the arena of the AAA, where the heroine holds out against the threats of death against her and the apostle practically wills to die at the end of the story. In the GR, characters are willing to die rather than surrender their chastity or to live without their beloved. See Chariton (2.5, 3.5), Xenophon (2.1, 3.5, 5.9), Tatius (3.16, 7.6), Longus (2.22), and Heliodorus (2.1, 5.33). See page 62 above.

¹⁸⁶The exception here being ATh, which is set in a Hellenistic India.

¹⁸⁷Chariton's protagonists travel from Syracuse to Miletus to Babylon and back to Syracuse. Cities in Tatius's romance include Sidon, Tyre, Beirut, Alexandria, Ephesus, Tyre, and Byzantium. The primary cities in *An Ethiopian Story* are Delphi, Memphis, and Meroe. In the AJn, the apostle travels to Miletus, Ephesus, Smyrna and back to Ephesus. Peter travels from Jerusalem to Caesarea to Rome. Thomas is swept away from Jerusalem in bondage to Andrapolis and to cities in India.

Typical settings for scenes are religious shrines¹⁸⁸, festivals¹⁸⁹, closed rooms, ships¹⁹⁰, or the homes of parents of the protagonists.¹⁹¹

A significant type scene within the two literatures is that of the prison. There is, in both the AAA and the GR, at least one scene where the heroine and the hero come together in a prison.¹⁹² The prison scene clearly displays the two as a devoted

¹⁸⁸For examples, see Chariton (3.2, 8.8), Xenophon (1.11, 5.12), Tatius (6.16), Longus (1.24, 2.2, 3.11), Heliodorus (8.6-9). In the AAA, see AJn, where the apostle attends a festival at the Temple of Anemias, and then destroys it (41-42).

¹⁸⁹See Chariton (1.1), Longus (2.1-2), and Heliodorus (3.1-5). In the AAA, see AJn (41-42) and ATh (4ff). Religious festivals are replaced in the AAA by the eucharist and baptism: see AJn (85-86, 109-111), APt (2, 5), and ATh (120-122, 131-133). See also AJn (94-96) for another description of a Christian religious event.

¹⁹⁰For examples see, Chariton (1.12, 3.5-6, 7.6), Xenophon (1.11-15), Tatius (5.7-9, 5.15-17), Longus (1.30, 2.25-28), Heliodorus (5.17-27), APt (5), and ATh (3).

¹⁹¹See Chariton (1.1-3), Xenophon (1.3-5), Longus (1.3-6, 3.6-9) Heliodorus (3.16-18) and APt+Th (7-10).

¹⁹²See Xenophon (2.7-8), Tatius (5.25-27), Heliodorus (8.9-10), AA (32), APt+Th (3.18), and ATh (118). Note especially the similarities in the following passages.

And so Habrocomes was bound and imprisoned. But for Anthia all was misery, and whenever she could persuade the prison guards, she went to Habrocomes in secret and lamented their plight. ... So when Anthia realized this and found out that she would be taken to Syria with Manto, she found a way of going to the prison, embraced Habrocomes, and said: "Master, I am being taken away to Syria as a gift for Manto, soon I will be in the hands of the girl who envies me. But you are still in prison and dying miserably, with no one even to lay out your corpse. But I swear by our mutual guardian angel that I will still be yours as long as I live, and even if I have to die." With this she kissed him, embraced him, clung to his chains, and rolled at his feet (Xenophon 2.7-8)

and

When the governor heard this he ordered Paul to be bound and sent to prison until he had time to hear him more attentively. And Thecla, by night, took off her bracelets and gave them to the gatekeeper; and when the door was opened to her she went into the prison. To the jailor she gave a silver mirror and was thus enabled to go in to Paul and, sitting at his feet, she heard the great deeds of God. And her faith also increased and she kissed his bonds. ... And they went and found her, so to say, chained to him by affection (APt+Th 17-19)

couple and accentuates their special relationship. This scene provides a frame around the protagonists and is a method of creating pathos. The prison scene is used to describe the protagonists' state of mind and raises the tension within the story as it draws the audience into stronger, more sympathetic associations with the characters.

The most important type scene in both the GR and the AAA is that of the royal or public courts in the cities. Not only do the courts of nobility add glamour and allure, they also reflect the quality of the characters who frequent them. It is also most often in these locations that trial scenes occur.¹⁹³ Many of the most suspenseful scenes in the plots of the texts in question are developed in exciting, melodramatic trial scenes, replete with immoral and loathsome accusers, compassionate and supportive spectators and, of course, the wrongfully accused and completely innocent protagonist(s). Furthermore, the trial scenes almost always provide the climax to the stories of both the Christian *praxeis* and the pagan romances.¹⁹⁴

Not only are there typical settings for the incidents in the AAA and the GR, but the incidents themselves may be typical. A list of events that generally may occur to a heroine and her hero in their travels are: love/conversion at first sight/hearing;¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³See Chariton (1.5-6, 3.4, 4.2-3, esp. 5.4-10), Xenophon (2.6, 4.2, 4.6), Tatius (5.23, 6.5, 7.7f), Longus (2.14), Heliodorus (8.9, 10.7f), AA (51), API+Th (16-17, 20, 27), APt (28, 30), ATh (104-107).

¹⁹⁴The most elaborate and melodramatic trial scene of them all is that of the trial in Babylon at the royal Persian court of Artaxerxes in Book 5 of Chaereas and Callirhoe.

¹⁹⁵See Chariton (1.1), Xenophon (1.2), Tatius (1.4), Longus (1.13), Heliodorus (3.5), API (3.7), and ATh (87).

marriages;¹⁹⁶ miracles;¹⁹⁷ receiving messages from dreams or warnings from oracles;¹⁹⁸ live burial;¹⁹⁹ tomb robbery;²⁰⁰ and protection from the lower classes²⁰¹. Other incidents that act as primary plot movers found commonly in both the AAA and the GR are: travels to exotic locales; captivity and enslavement or imprisonment; attempted or successful seduction; escapes with the help of the divine; attempted execution or death of the heroine or hero; recognition and reunion; and a homecoming or return.

It should be noted that while the heroine and hero of the GR may travel, a spatial journey is not necessary. What is necessary however, and always occurs in the GR, is a spiritual journey.²⁰² This is the case in the AAA as well. The apostle often

¹⁹⁶Of the GR, there are examples in Chariton (1.1), Xenophon (1.8-9), Tatius (8.19), and Heliodorus (5.29f). In the AAA, the apostles do not marry, of course, but a wedding scene is still possible, see ATh (4-11).

¹⁹⁷See Xenophon (4.2), AA (13), AJn (41-42), APl+Th (3.22) and APt (13).

¹⁹⁸There are numerous examples, see Chariton (2.9, 3.7, 5.5), Xenophon (1.6, 2.8, 5.4), Tatius (1.3, 2.23, 4.1), Longus (1.7, 2.23, 3.27), Heliodorus (2.26, 3.11), AA (19, 40), AJn (18, 48, 87), APl+Th (28), APt (5, 40), and ATh (29, 91).

¹⁹⁹See Chariton, (1.5), Xenophon (4.6), Tatius (3.15), Heliodorus (2.1), and AJn (111-115). In the GR and most especially the AAA, apparent deaths, or resurrections are commonplace: see Chariton (1.8), Tatius (3.18, 8.16), Longus (2.30), AJn (23, 24, 47, 52, 75, 80, 83), APt (13, 28), and ATh (23, 33, 59, 81).

²⁰⁰See Chariton (1.7-10), Xenophon (3.8), and AJn (70).

²⁰¹See Chariton (2.2), Xenophon (2.3-4, 5.10-11), Tatius (1.16), APl+Th (33-34) where Thecla is saved by a lioness, and ATh (120).

²⁰²In Daphnis and Chloe, the heroine and the hero travel not through space, but through time. The spiritual journey which all protagonists undergo in the GR leads them from an initial state through several experiences that eventually end with the protagonists in a more profound state than the one they possessed at the story's beginning. See Reardon, *Form* 33-34, 174.

journeys from place to place, but the heroine often is confined to the city in which she is introduced in the text. And while the apostle may travel spatially, the heroine voyages from a state of pagan ignorance to a state of Christian awareness.

Having noted considerable similarities between the AAA and the GR in characterization and type-scene, there is one other element in which the two literary forms will be compared, the element of narrative technique.

3.2.3 Narrative Technique

The elements of presentation for the ancient novel and the AAA are plain narrative and speech. The narrator is semi-omniscient, knowing the characters' thoughts but not always revealing them. The narrator can enter into the text, even into the story itself.²⁰³ Speech in the romance and the AAA can be either in the form of dialogue or tropes. Within speeches, the writers of the romances and AAA frequently portrayed viewpoints of the persons and events of the novel. Some manners of speech include trial speeches, woeful prayers, mournful laments, and debates of the soul. Letters, philosophical debates, soliloquies, as well as apostrophes to personified attributes or the lost companion are all employed to delineate the characters emotions and points of view. This delineation is "set in the foreground of the reader's attention

²⁰³See Chariton (1.1, 8.1), Tatius (1.2), Longus (in his prologue), Heliodorus (10.41), and AA (63, esp 65)

against a back-cloth of travel and adventure."²⁰⁴ The most common delineators in both the AAA and the romances, however, are the apostrophe,²⁰⁵ discourses on love,²⁰⁶ emotive speeches to oneself,²⁰⁷ trial speeches,²⁰⁸ and prayer.²⁰⁹

The writers of the GR and the AAA frequently embellished their stories with elaborate military, medical and scientific, or religious expositions.²¹⁰ For the authors of the GR, references to classical dramas and epics were a staple in filling out the text.²¹¹ The Christian counterpart comes from the New Testament sources and other stories about the life of Jesus and the apostles. These expositions created a stable element in the plot: they were breathing places where the reader could stop before venturing once

²⁰⁴E.L. Bowie, "The Greek Novel," *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature* Vol 1 (P.E. Easterling, ed.; London: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 685.

²⁰⁵See, for example, Chariton (1.8, 5.2), Xenophon (5.5, 5.9), Longus (2.22), AA (54), AJn (20, 64), API+Th (42), and APt (8).

²⁰⁶Some examples are: Tatius (2.35-38), Longus (2.7-8, 4.17), AA (38-40), API+Th (6-7), and ATh (12, 84, 88).

²⁰⁷See Chariton (2.9), Xenophon (4.6), and ATh (99).

²⁰⁸See Chariton (Book 5), Tatius (6.9-11, 7.7-10), Longus (2.15, 2.16), AA (55-58, 61-62), API+Th (17), and ATh (104-106, 126-129).

²⁰⁹See Chariton (1.14, 3.8, 8.3), Xenophon (2.11, 4.2, 5.4), Tatius (3.5, 3.16), Longus (1.14, 2.2, 3.4), AA (13, 16, 35), AJn (77, 112-115), API+Th (24, 29), APt (32), and ATh (10, 98).

²¹⁰There are innumerable cases of such digressions in the GR and the AAA. Some examples are, Chariton (6.4, 6.8, 7.2), Tatius (1.1-2, 1.5, 1.16, 2.2, 2.36-38, 4.4, 4.19, 8.6), Longus (1.13, 1.27, 2.1, 2.7-8, 2.33-38, 3.23, 4.1-3), AA (9, 48-50, 56-58), AJn (28, 67-69), and ATh (18, 28, 36, 132).

²¹¹Heisserman, *Novel Before* 54

again into the harrowing tale.²¹²

Emotional interest was maintained through the use of stylized and emotive language. The author of the texts used vivid language so as to invoke a sympathetic response and increase the emotional commitment of the reader. This language is provided either by the narrator in description, or by one of the characters in speech.

The reader's interest is further held with the use of suspense. The use of a cliff-hanger style provides the very essence of both the ancient GR and the AAA.²¹³ For the readers are constantly drawn by the author further into the plot, looking to see what will happen to the heroine and the hero next. Suspense is maintained throughout with the use of foreshadowing, repetition, and recapitulation. Foreshadowing in the texts is often provided through dreams and oracles, but the narrator could also break into the story to provide hints of things to come.²¹⁴ Repetition in these texts is a technique to stall the plot while maintaining an ongoing motion, creating suspense through an accumulating effect. Recapitulation is also a common narrative technique in the two literary forms.²¹⁵ Retelling of the plot within the story can act either as simple exposition or, like repetition, as a tool for creating suspense.

²¹²For an opposing view, see Perry, *Greek Romance*, 119: "They [the romance authors] do not tell the love story for its own sake . . . rather [they] use it as a framework within which to display their sophisticated wares"

²¹³For a further commentary on the use of suspense in the GR, see Reardon, *Form*. 16

²¹⁴See page 71, n.179, and page 73, n. 184 above.

²¹⁵See Chariton (5.1), Xenophon (5.15), Tzetus (6.27), API+Th (41), and ATh (103, 104).

In this examination, it has been demonstrated that narrative techniques in the AAA and the GR are very similar. What is even more significant is that the narrative structure of the texts is analogous. Both the GR and the AAA follow the same basic narrative paths. This narrative path is as follows: the plot begins with a setting that introduces the principal character(s) and which quickly leads to the conflict; there follows a series of spiralling, often cyclical and repetitive, developments which eventually culminate in a climactic grand trial or recognition scene; the climax of the narrative is then followed by a rapid denouement in which some sort of judgement usually takes place; and finally the narrative ends with the final condition in which the real identities of the protagonists are fully realized. In this same manner, the plots of the AAA and the GR are structured.

Reardon proposes a general pattern for the GR that is also applicable to the narrative pattern of the AAA. He finds that there is a general setting in which the protagonist finds him/herself that gives rise to his/her initial condition. This condition involves the protagonist in activities that alternate between the demonic and the idyllic. These activities bring experience and ultimately issue in a final condition similar to, but more profound than, the protagonist's original state. In other words, the hero or heroine, at the end of the story, obtains a higher spiritual level. Reardon, using religious terminology, argues that the heroine and the hero are "confirmed" in their condition as human beings and that the final condition of the protagonists is

"salvation".²¹⁶ Therefore, in both the GR and the AAA, the protagonists undergo a journey much like a *Pilgrim's Progress*, and eventually fulfil their ultimate destinies.

3.2.4 Summary

After examining several elements within both the AAA and the GR, it has been determined that extraordinary similarities exist between them. Not only do the writers of both literary forms use similar character types, they also draw on similar values through which these characters are depicted. The protagonists of the AAA and the GR live in the same sort of narrative world, visiting the same type of cities in similar situations, surroundings and circumstances. Furthermore, the very plots themselves are analogous. In this way we have seen not only similarities in the content of the texts, but also its presentation and its place within the texts' structure.

3.3 Differences

Despite all the similarities of character, situation, and narrative, the AAA are typically classified as belonging to a different genre than the GR. The question is, why? The answer is that scholars have argued that there are important dissimilarities between them which are more weighty than the similarities. One of these is the element of the erotic, an element some claim is lacking in the Christian texts. Another is the expanded role of the male protagonist in the AAA. And yet another is the

²¹⁶See Reardon, *Form*. 174

greater prominence of the religious dimension. These dissimilarities must first be examined before the relationship between the AAA and the GR can be fully understood.

3.3.1 Eroticism

One of the most commonly noted dissimilarities between the AAA and the GR is the element of the erotic. Perry argues that the erotic elements of prose narrative saw its demise with the rise of the AAA:

A fitting epitaph for the Greek erotic romance was penned by Nietzsche: "Christianity," he says, "gave Eros poison to drink; he did not die of it, certainly, but degenerated to Vice." How true this is will be realized by anyone who reads the apocryphal Acts of Christian martyrs or the lives of the saints. Eros, healthy, pagan, and not yet poisoned, had been the principal prop of Greek romance in its beginning and in its prime; and when that prop weakened and decayed, by degenerating into vice or trifling, the form supported by it collapsed therewith, inevitably, and died.²¹⁷

But is this evaluation correct? Did Eros really pass away with the development of the AAA, slain by puritanical zealots of the early Christian movement? I shall argue that the erotic element remained an operative element within the AAA. That the erotic element is still present in the AAA is demonstrated by the fact that there are several expositions on the subject.²¹⁸ Further proof lies in the continued use of threats to the

²¹⁷Perry, *Ancient Romances*. 105-06 Note again here the disdainful attitude he displays for the AAA.

²¹⁸See AA (38-40), AJn (54), API+Th (36-37), ATh (12, 84, 88), and in the Acts of Peter, there are two expositions on the potency of women's erotic power in the story of Peter's daughter and

heroine's chastity as part of the plot in the AAA. Sex is an almost constant theme in the AAA, and is found in a measure equivalent to the GR.

It is important to recognize how the element of the erotic was manifested in the GR. The bawdy, explicit sexual portrayals that one finds in the romances of *The Satyricon* (early second century C.E.) and *The Ass* (late second century C.E.), are not found in the GR that fall within the scope of this study. The most explicit sexual scene in these romances is found in Tatiush's *Leucippe and Clitophon*. In this scene, Clitophon is forced to sleep with his captor's wife, who promises him freedom.

When she released me and embraced me, weeping, I had a normal human reaction. And I was genuinely afraid that the god Love might exact a terrible vengeance; and in any case I had now recovered Leucippe, and very soon I would be separated from Milete, and the act could no longer be considered precisely a marital one but was rather a remedy for an ailing soul. I did not refuse the touch. Everything happened as Love willed. We had no need of bedding or of any of Aphrodite's accoutrements; for Love is handy and resourceful, and a clever *bricoleur*, who can turn any place into a chapel for his mystic liturgy.²¹⁹

In fact, the supposed dearth of erotica in the AAA is lessened by the reality of the type of erotic content in the GR. Perry even claimed that the love motif was not an

the story of the gardener's daughter

²¹⁹Compare the sex scene in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* (10.19-22). See the frankness of the maid's instructions to Lucius in Pseudo-Lucian (*The Ass*. 9; AGN 396):

She stripped off her clothes and, standing up stark naked, started her orders then and there. "off with them, my lad, and rub on some of the scented oil from over there, then get a grip on your opponent. With a snatch hold on my two thighs, drop me on my back, then, from the on-top position, slip through my thighs; once you have them set apart, lift up my legs and stretch them high, then relaxing them and setting them in place, stay glued to the thing. Get closer and hit it; pushing forward, stab it in every which way until you're flagging, and let your tenderloin show its strength. ... And try not to rush it, but have a bit of self-control and match your speed to mine.

essential feature in the GR, but rather a favourite theme.²²⁰ Although one may read many sentimental scenes full of romantic overtones in the GR, they are as straitlaced, erotically, as the AAA.

In the AAA, the element of the erotic can be manifested in a different manner from the GR. Romantic love often is superseded by the love associated with conversion. Notice the romantic clichés in the following passage about the conversion of Stratocles, Maximilla's brother-in-law and future apostolic companion:

After a loud groan, Stratocles answered as follows: "Most prophetic man, truly a messenger of the living God, I too will not separate from you until I recognize myself by having despised all those things about which you rebuked me for idly squandering my time in them." Stratocles was with the apostle night and day and never left him, and the other times remaining silent and enjoying himself, having truly become enamoured with saving attentiveness. (Acts of Andrew (8))²²¹

After hearing Paul preach, Thecla also exhibits the love-sick symptoms of the female protagonists of the GR. Her mother, Theoclia, describes her symptoms to Thecla's fiancé:

I have a strange story to tell you, Thamyris. For three days and three nights Thecla does not rise from the window either to eat or to drink; but looking earnestly as if upon some pleasant sight she is devoted to a foreigner teaching deceitful and artful discourses, so that I wonder how a virgin of her modesty exposes herself to such extreme discomfort.²²²

²²⁰Perry, *Ancient Romances* 29-30

²²¹See note 158 above. Keeping in mind the romantic clichés used in the description of Stratocles's love for the youth, Alcman, the erotic overtones to this passage are further heightened

²²²API+Th (8). Compare Xenophon's description of his love-sick protagonists (1.5) Each of them lamented like this all night. They saw each other before their eyes, as they impressed their mental image on each other. When it was day, Habrocomes went

That there remains the element of the erotic in the AAA is most clearly shown in the relationship between Thecla and the apostle Paul. As noted above, Paul has stirred something very passionate within Thecla's soul, as demonstrated in her pining by her window, and elucidated in more detail later in the story. The inclusion of the erotic element is further betrayed by Paul's constant distancing himself from Thecla. The relationship between Thecla and Paul is more than a simple teacher-disciple relationship. This is revealed in the following passages:

To the jailer she gave a silver mirror and was thus enabled to go in to Paul and, sitting at his feet, she heard the great deeds of God. And Paul was afraid of nothing, but trusted in God. And her faith increased and she kissed his bonds. (18)

and

And Thecla said to Paul, "I will cut my hair and I shall follow you wherever you go." But he said, "Times are evil and you are beautiful. I am afraid lest another temptation come upon you worse than the first and that you do not withstand it but become mad after men." (25)

and

And Thecla longed for Paul and sought him, looking in every direction. ... And he was astonished at seeing her and her companions, thinking that some new temptation was coming upon her. (40)

In the first excerpt, the narrator has provided a typical jail scene in which to vividly portray Thecla's affection for Paul. The reader, accustomed to such scenes,

to his usual exercises, while Anthia went as usual to worship the goddess. Their bodies were worn out after the previous night; their eyes weary; their complexion changed. And this went on and on, and matters went no further. But in the meantime they spent day after day looking at each other in the temple, ashamed and afraid to tell each other the truth

understands the relationship between the protagonists.²²³ However, because of Paul's status as an apostle of Jesus, he must, like Jesus, remain separate from the world of profane love.²²⁴ Thus, Paul trusts in God that his chastity will not be compromised. This is not the case, though, in the latter two excerpts where Paul worries that Thecla's affections might prove too strong for her to withstand.²²⁵

It is possible that Paul, too, suffers from the same pangs of affection that Thecla does. The first reuniting of the protagonists supports such a claim:

And when she had come to the tomb Paul was kneeling and praying, "Father of Christ, let not the fire touch Thecla but stand by her, for she is yours"; she, standing behind him, cried out, "Oh Father who made the heaven and the Earth, the Father of your beloved Son Jesus Christ, I praise you that you saved me from the fire that I may see Paul again" And Paul, rising up, saw her and said, "O God, who knows the heart, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, I praise you because you speedily heard my prayer." And there was great love in the tomb as Paul and Onesiphorus and the others all rejoiced. (24-25)²²⁶

²²³See pages 74-75 above

²²⁴See discussion on the male protagonists of the AAA on pages 68-69, see esp. n. 166

²²⁵Note that Paul, in the excerpt from AP+Th (25), makes references to temptations. These references are vague. do they refer to Thecla's relation with Thamyris, or to her relation with Paul? The problem with the former is that Thecla was not tempted by Thamyris. The idea of Thecla being tempted by Thamyris is also negated in her strong refusal to marry Thamyris after converting to Christianity.

In AP+Th (40) Paul again worries that Thecla has come to challenge his chastity. The reader also wonders the same, knowing that Thecla "longed" for Paul. The tension is soon annulled, however, when Thecla declares her intentions are pure and chaste. That Paul worries about Thecla's designs on him is perhaps demonstrated by his leaving her to her fate with the Syrian, Alexander AP+Th (26).

²²⁶Compare Xenophon's dramatic and sensational reunion scene (5.13):
And when he heard from one of the Rhodians that Anthia had been found, Habrocomes ran through the middle of the city like a madman, shouting, "Anthia!" And so he met Anthia near the temple of Isis, followed by a great crowd of Rhodians. When they saw each other, they recognized each other at

From the above review, it would be difficult to deny that, whether or not Paul felt passionately for Thecla, there is a strong erotic element in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*.

Another example of how the erotic element persisted, in an altered form however, is the distorted eroticism in AJ, where the heroine is almost a victim of a necrophilic rape:

... the lover of Drusiana, inflamed by the influence of the polymorphous Satan to the most ardent passions, bribed the greedy Andronicus with money. And he opened the tomb of Drusiana and left him to accomplish on the body that which was once denied him. Since he had not procured her during her lifetime, he continually thought of her body after she was dead, and exclaimed, "Although when living you refused to unite with me in love, after your death I will dishonour your corpse." Being in such a frame of mind he obtained the opportunity to execute his impious plans through the accursed steward, and both went to the tomb. Having opened the door, they began to take the graveclothes from the corpse ... (AJ (70))

Consider also the romantic overtones in Charisius's impassioned plea to his wife, recently converted to Christianity by the apostle Thomas:

While Charisius was speaking in tears, Mygdonia sat silent and looked on the ground. He came near and said, "My most beloved lady Mygdonia, remember that of all the women in India I selected you as the most beautiful and took you, although I could have married others, more beautiful than you. But no, I lie, Mygdonia. For by the gods it is impossible to find one like you in the land of the Indians. Woe to me for ever, that you do not even answer me! Abuse me, if it pleases you, but

once, for that was their fervent desire. They embraced each other and fell to the ground. A host of different emotions took hold of them at once - joy, grief, fear, memory of past events, and anxiety for the future. The Rhodians cheered and shouted in their excitement, hailing Isis as a great goddess and exclaiming, "Now once again we see Habrocomes and Anthia, the beautiful pair!" They recovered, sprang up, and came into the temple of Isis, saying, "To you, greatest goddess, we owe thanks for our safety, it is you, the goddess we honor most of all, who have restored us."

speak. Look at me. I am far more handsome than that sorcerer. I have riches and honour, and everyone knows that none has such a family as mine. But you are my riches and honour, you are my family and kindred. (ATh (16))

Consequently, with the above examples from various AAA, we may argue that the element of the erotic is very much present in the AAA. It is, however, often a transformed element. The erotic element in the AAA is a further refinement of the romantic love between characters, much like the GR was a refinement of the bawdy tales and erotic poetry of Hellenistic literature.²²⁷ The erotic in the AAA has been shifted from the potent love between two people to the compelling love of people and the divine. The shift in the erotic is accompanied with a shift in the relationship between the male and female protagonists as well as in the manner in which they appear in the narratives. In the following section, we will see that in the AAA, the apostle, taking on the role of the hero, takes a more prominent position

3.3.2 The Expanded Role of the Male Protagonist

One of the most striking features of the GR is that the heroine is the main protagonist of the story. It is not uncommon for the plot to centre around the actions

²²⁷It is important to note here also that classical scholars had already observed a shift in the element of the erotic in the later GR. For example, Perry describes the "preexistently Christian" text of Heliodorus, where

... love is an ideal or as something to be attained and enjoyed is decidedly secondary in interest to religious mysticism, sacerdotal solemnities and strategies. ... From the way in which [Chariclea] and Theagenes behave, especially near the end of the story, one gets the impression that neither of the two is really in love or anxious to possess the other. Here Eros is failing (*Ancient Romances* 107)

Cf. also Reardon, *Form* 167

2 of/de 2

of the heroine,²²⁸ while the plot involving the hero remains secondary until closer to the end of the story. Reardon suggests the romancers might have chosen women as the primary character because a woman would be more susceptible to greater states of peril in the open, very-male-dominated, Hellenistic world.²²⁹ This would give the story a greater sense of tension and would better entertain the readers of the romance.

The female protagonist loses ground in the narratives of the AAA. The decline of the importance of the female protagonist is best demonstrated by the fact that the heroines of the AAA, with the exception of Maximilla in AA, are not present throughout the entire story. For example, in Elliott's reconstruction of the Acts of Paul, in which APt+Th is an episode, the heroine is incorporated in an early part of the plot, but the conflict involving her is resolved early and the apostle never interacts with her again. Also, in the APt, the four concubines and Xanthippe practically disappear from the text after Peter's fate is sealed with his return to Rome.²³⁰

The heroine is not always present in all of the cycles of the apostles' travels. In the AAA there is a different configuration of the roles of the sexes than in the GR, for the narrative involving the female protagonist is secondary in the Christian texts and it

²²⁸Chariton begins and ends his romance with the heroine, in fact, his concluding sentence is, "That is my story about Callirhoe." (8 8)

²²⁹Reardon's suggestion does not negate the possibility of a female writer and/or audience - which still may hold true; however it is an *ad hoc* conclusion without further evidence. Cf. Hägg, *Novel in Antiquity*. 96.

²³⁰See APt (33f) See also AJn (82f) It is only in the AA and ATh that there are women in the text after the death of the apostle.

plays out closer to the end of the text. The primary location of female protagonists in the AAA is in the cycles just prior to the martyrdom of the apostle.²³¹ Therefore, like the writers of the GR, the authors of the AAA use a female character to heighten the suspense and melodrama of the narrative at the most crucial point in the story. That point is the death of the apostle.

The apostle's death, like the happy ending of the GR, is what the Christian author has in mind from the very beginning, and is what he/she constantly leads the narrative towards. This is much like the gospel writers who lead their narratives towards the crucifixion. The apostle is the primary figure in the AAA, for he is analogous to Jesus and, as such, must take up the lion's share of the narrative. However, the role of the female protagonist should not be underestimated, for the heroines of the AAA are more than just literary tools to raise tension. The female protagonists are valid characters who are an integral part of the plot of the AAA, for it is around the experiences and adventures of the heroine that the climax of the AAA is built. Without Maximilla for example, the *Acts of Andrew* would be only a small story of a travelling healer or a fantastic travel tale, as in *The Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals*.²³²

²³¹The exception being the AP, where Paul continues to travel the Mediterranean world until coming to Rome to meet his death.

²³²The same may be said of the ATh without Mygdonia and Tertius. The AP would be little more than a travel-log without the Thecla episode.

3.3.3 Religious Differences

Thus far, two important differences between the AAA and the GR have been noted. In the Christian texts, the element of eroticism is somewhat different, and the male protagonist has an expanded role. Another difference lies in the element of religion.

The Christian author, by virtue of the type of religious content in the AAA, directs the narrative to a more specific audience. In order for readers to participate fully in the narrative of the AAA, they must already be aware of several elements of the early Christian tradition, including: who Jesus was and what he envisaged, who the apostles were and what they did, the history of the early church, and various Christian rites.

There are two significant differences in the utilization of the religious element in the AAA and the GR: that of focus and edification. Reardon argued that the GR, as a description of the situation of man-in-life, where religion played a key role in the development of the identity of a person, had, in a broad sense, a 'religious' focus.²³³ The Christian texts, on the other hand, are more focussed in their treatment of the religious element. Religion takes a more prominent position in the AAA, which present themselves as religious documents, seek to enhance the status of the early Christian apostles, and are packed with religious instruction. The apostles at every turn deliver sermons expounding on various aspect of Christian religiosity, and in all of

²³³Reardon, *Form* 166

the AAA the authors end their tales with a prayer glorifying their God.

At the same time however, there is much more to the religious ethos of the novels than the divine mechanics themselves. Devotion to the gods of the ancient Mediterranean world appears frequently in the GR. As in the AAA, divine beings took an active interest in the activities of humanity and interacted with the characters within the narrative.

This is not to say that the divine was presented in the same manner or extent in the Greek texts. In the romances generally, Tyche had a significant role, creating similar situations for the heroine and her hero. While Tyche and the gods were ultimately beneficent, they could, and often did, throw those enjoying happiness and joy into misery and despair. Tyche personified chance and was a common feature of the romances, where fatalism was a characteristic motif.²³⁴ As the goddess of fortune, Tyche was powerful, had obscure designs, and could be either moral or amoral.²³⁵ The gods are portrayed as potentially brutal or generous. The god Eros was irresistible, and no mortal could escape his summoning. However, it was not only Eros who acted on humankind, for the gods in general could move the psyches of humankind.²³⁶

In the AAA, the presentation of the religious element is more pronounced and

²³⁴Hägg, *Novel in Antiquity* 86. See especially Chariton (1.1, 2.8, 3.3).

²³⁵Heisserman, *Novel Before* 54. For example, in Chariton (3.3), Tyche "arrests" the villains who sold Callirhoe into slavery by stilling the wind around their ship. At the same time, Tyche works against Callirhoe's plan to remain chaste for Chaereas by making Callirhoe pregnant and thus forcing her hand with Dionysius (2.8).

²³⁶Heisserman, *Novel Before* 46.

consistent than in the GR. In the AAA the equivalent of Tyche is the sense of divine providential control throughout the narratives. The divine is always portrayed as good and righteous. The fatalism of the GR is replaced in the AAA by a sense of benevolent Providence in the AAA. At the same time, the eclectic array of devotions to various deities in the GR has been replaced by the more focussed devotion to Jesus in the AAA.

Religion was an inescapable fact of ancient experience, and the religious component of the Greek novel should neither be underestimated nor read as being without significance. There are few scenes in the romances where the divine is not involved, called upon, or alluded to. It is not coincidental that scholars have argued that the GR are ritual texts for ancient Mystery cults. In fact, despite the general rejection of connections between the GR and the Mysteries, other scholars still see possible cultic connections in them.²³⁷

3.4 Summary of Chapter Three

The above examination has established that, while there are some important differences between the AAA and the GR, there are weighty similarities between them too. Not only are the characters similar in nature, they share the same world and

²³⁷Douglas Edwards, "Chariton's Chaereas and Callirhoe: Religions and Politics Do Mix " SBL Seminar Papers #24 (ed. K.H. Richards Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985) 175-181. He argued that the explicit religious content in Chariton's novel shows that it is a text that celebrated the civic and religious pride of Aphrodisians for their cult of Aphrodite.

undergo similar experiences. The time of the texts' composition also lends weight to the theory of the influence of the romance on the AAA.²³⁸ The question then remains, if the AAA and the GR are so similar, are they of the same literary genre? And if so, why do scholars usually separate the two literary forms?

The answer lies in some of the key differences noted above. In our examination of the AAA and the GR, several points of dissimilarity have been observed. The element of the erotic is somewhat different than in the GR. The expansion of the male protagonist's role in the AAA is another characteristic that separates them from the GR. Finally, the religious component in the texts distinguishes the two literary forms from each other.

But we have also observed that these differences are not as significant as some scholars have maintained. There is still an erotic element in the AAA. Far from being expunged from the Christian texts, it was altered to fit into a story about the new Christian heroes' relationships. The female protagonist remains pivotal to the plot, for she brings about the climax of the stories. And finally, the religious element was shown to be an important element in the GR, more so than is commonly recognized.

It is appropriate to mention the issue of the intertextuality of the texts at this point. The issue was addressed above in the discussion on the AP and possible borrowings of earlier material in later AAA. Considering the use of the generic elements from the GR in the AAA, it now appears more likely that the problem of

²³⁸See Section 2.4.4, pages 51-52 above.

many of the parallels between various Acts is not solved through an ill-fitting synoptic-type analysis. Therefore "the appearance of a theme (such as chastity or virginity) at any given point does not necessarily point to literary dependence, but to the narrative structure of the story."²³⁹ The reappearances of various motifs in the AAA are most often due to the re-utilization of generic material adapted from the GR, not from earlier *praxeis* stories.

Our provisional answer, therefore, is that the AAA and the GR do not belong to precisely the same literary genre. Nevertheless, they are related and the similarities cannot be ignored. The authors and the audiences of the AAA would have been familiar with the GR. By incorporating the Christian message into the form of the GR, the writers of the AAA created a new genre, tailored for a new audience with old literary expectations.

This is not an unusual occurrence in either the ancient world or the present. An example from antiquity is the gospel form. The gospel stories have often been compared to ancient biographies, but it is generally accepted that the Gospels are not to be equated exactly with traditional ancient biographies.²⁴⁰ Aune contended that the Gospels

constitute a *subtype* of Greco-Roman biography primarily determined by *content*, reflecting Judeo-Christian assumptions. The Gospels (and other types of early Christian literature) have connections with *both* Jewish and

²³⁹Valantasis, "Narrative Strategies." 238.

²⁴⁰See Aune, *Literary Environment*. 22f.

Greco-Roman literary traditions. Hellenistic Jewish and early Christian literature invariably exhibited various degrees of syncretism. *Adaptation*, not wholesale borrowing was the rule.²⁴¹

A more modern example of a new, or hybrid, genre is that of the new fiction biography.²⁴² In this genre the reader is invited to participate in an imagined life of an identifiable, historical person, consciously combining factual biographical elements with fiction. The writers of the fictional biography do not aspire "to fill the gaps in the biographical record with invented facts, but to overwhelm the biographical facts with the flow of imagined facts to which the former give rise."²⁴³

In both of these literary forms, the readers are presented with a new genre, in which their old generic expectations help them to understand the text. This is also the case with the AAA. The readers would recognize the generic signifiers of the GR in the Christian texts, and these signifiers would have guided their comprehension of those texts.

Consequently, although Thecla never appears in a GR, nor does an Apostle convert the beautiful and chaste Callirhoe, the women from these stories could very well have been each other's neighbour. For the readers of the AAA saw in those

²⁴¹*Ibid.* 46.

²⁴²For a discussion on the rise of this genre and examples, see Naomi Jacobs, "Michael Ondaatje and the New Fiction Biographies" *Studies in Canadian Literature* 11:1 (1986) 2-18. Jacobs's examples are Ondaatje's *Coming Through Slaughter* (Toronto: Anansi, 1976), a fictional biography of the noted jazz musician, Billy Bolden, and *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid: Left Handed Poems* (Toronto: Anansi, 1970)

²⁴³*Ibid.* 4.

stories a narrative world in which both women could have lived in homes across the street and around the corner from each other. One could go so far as to say that Callirhoe and Thecla could have been acquaintances. After all, they were part of the same social circles; they had much in common such as youth, great beauty and strong personalities. In their shared narrative world they undergo similar experiences and adventures and both ultimately discover their fulfilled identity. It is in this manner that the audience would have read the AAA, and it is in this manner that current scholars must read them as well.

Chapter Four The Apocryphal Acts as Romantic Literature

The preceding chapter examined the similarities and differences between the AAA and the GR demonstrating that the two are much alike, with the AAA using generic elements of the GR in abundance. The readers of the AAA would have recognized the romantic elements in the Christian stories and this would have directed their readings of them. It is important now to consider some of the consequences of reading the AAA as examples of early Christian romantic literature. How does such a reading affect our understanding of the texts? What significance does it have for our knowledge of the early Christian community? Does it complement or challenge the historical studies of scholars like Davies and Burrus?

4.1 The Apocryphal Acts and Romance

In reading the AAA as a type of romance, we can better understand the texts, their audience and the purposes they served, for it is likely that they functioned in a similar manner to the GR.

Perry, taking a culturally oriented analysis of the novel, argued that the GR expressed the dilemma of the individual in Hellenistic society who faced an extensive, open world where the individual had a passive, minor role. In this situation, he suggested, people saw themselves as the powerless performers of Tyche's designs.²⁴⁴

²⁴⁴Perry, *Ancient Romances* 48

Reardon agreed with Perry that "man in society" is a major theme of the ideal romance, but he also claimed that "man in the divine context" is a major theme as well.²⁴⁵ He contended that, as a reflection of its time, the romance novel contained within it "the central theme of man's search for a god who will relate personally."²⁴⁶ In the same vein, the Christians of the Roman Imperial period faced a world of discrimination and alienation,²⁴⁷ and the AAA describe their understanding of their situation and their god.

The presentation of personages and situations in the GR is idealistic. As ideals, the characters of romance and their experiences are vehicles for the author to comment on his/her contemporary world. G. Beer explains:

Because romance shows us the ideal; it is implicitly instructive as well as escapist. By removing the restraints of rationalism it can reach straight to those levels of our experience which are also re-created myth and fairy-tale. By simplifying character, the romance removes the idiosyncracies which set other people apart from us; this allows us to act out, through stylized figures, the radical impulses of human experience. The rhythms of the interwoven stories in the typical romance construction correspond to the way we interpret our own experience as multiple, endlessly interpenetrating stories rather than simply as a procession of banal happenings.²⁴⁸

The AAA, as a form of romance, are texts that address simple, universal themes. Both the GR and the AAA developed the themes of isolation, tribulation and

²⁴⁵Reardon, *Form* 11.

²⁴⁶Reardon, "The Greek Novel," *Phoenix* 23 #3 (1969) 304

²⁴⁷For example, cf. 1 Peter, esp. 3-4

²⁴⁸Gillian Beer, *The Romance* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1970) 9

survival. Elements such as pity and fear are done away with by the conclusion of the story.²⁴⁹ In romance, experiences of love and salvation (both sacred and profane) are the principal themes. In an open Hellenistic society, the insecure protagonists seek security in the divine and/or humanity. The heroine and hero of romantic literature lack a social identity and create one through love of each other and/or the divine.²⁵⁰ The apostle of the AAA gains complete identity in joining Jesus in martyrdom, while the heroine finds her identity in loving Jesus and becoming the ideal Christian.

Romance gives form to the particular desires of a community and absorbs the reader into an experience that is otherwise unattainable. The authors of the GR and the AAA tried to entertain their audiences by portraying their world, in a fictional work, in an idealistic manner. The reader is invited to enter the narrative and sympathetically identify with the protagonists, to follow the plot through with them, to share the basic fears and aspirations experienced by the characters and, of course, to experience the happy emotions of the heroine and hero at the end. Thus, the readers of the ideal romance and the AAA are provided with an emotional outlet for their fears and insecurities.²⁵¹ By portraying the ultimately happy ending which follows suffering, the authors of romantic literature take their readers on a journey of escape that is

²⁴⁹Reardon, *Form* 79

²⁵⁰Reardon, "Greek Novel," 294

²⁵¹*Ibid* 100

basically a wish fulfilment.²⁵²

To summarize: the authors of the GR and the AAA sought to entertain their audience and lead them on a path of escape and spiritual edification. As the audience followed the path the texts laid out for them, they saw their fears and insecurities experienced and consequently dissipated by the ideal characters in the story. The sympathetic audience also shared in the feeling of joy which the narrators gave to the protagonists in the story's conclusion.

Romantic literature, in the forms of the GR and the AAA, was thus a widespread and popular form of literature in the late Hellenistic and early Roman periods. And it is here where one may see a glimpse into the Christianity of the everyday. It is in the fears and joys of the characters of the AAA that common early Christianity is manifested. Just as the GR dispelled the insecurities and loneliness of its Hellenistic audience, so too the AAA relieved the Christian audience of their fears and feelings of alienation. The AAA tells the Christians who their god is and that this god will make everything come out right.

4.2 The Apocryphal Acts and Mimetic Reconstructions

Scholars, in trying to understand what the AAA are, have attempted to place them within certain literary categories, and have suggested several possibilities as to what the Christian texts might be. These possibilities have ranged from aretologies to

²⁵²Reardon, *Form* 29

biographies. Despite similarities to several Hellenistic literary forms, we have seen that the AAA very closely resemble the GR. How then, does this reading affect previous analyses of the AAA? To what extent might such a reading affect the manner in which we may read the texts as documents of early Christianity?

4.2.1 The AAA as Popular Texts

One clear trend in the description of the AAA above (Chapter One), is the recent discounting of the so-called Gnostic elements within the texts. Accordingly, the AAA are not seen as the heretical writings that the early church had branded them to be. It was argued that the texts were actually quite orthodox, containing elements which circulated on a popular level within Christian communities of the second and third centuries. In the above chapters, we have seen several indications that the AAA were, like the GR, popular literature. First, as already noted, the AAA were mainstream texts, appealing to wider audiences. Second, the texts were written in *codex* form. Third, the texts of the AAA were found throughout the Roman world, in several versions and in different languages.

Furthermore, Bovon and Junod asserted that too often scholars have been tempted, when researching the AAA, to isolate the texts as products of eccentric, marginal communities. They argued that, on the contrary,

the recourse to dramatic or spectacular episodes, to prodigies and anecdotes which are the pretext for a spiritual and theoretical teaching, suggest that one is in the presence of the texts replete with images, signs,

and metaphors. Their general meaning is provided, of course, but their particular appropriation seems to remain open by intention. Therefore, is it legitimate to consider these Acts clearly paradigmatic or indeed subversive, whether with respect to the institution of patriarchal marriage or to socio-economic relations? They appear too equivocal to have been created by militant communities in as much as such communities would have adapted and recommended a way of life which completely broke with established order and value.²⁵³

Bovon and Junod suggested that perhaps it would be more appropriate to make the hypothesis of the "banality" of the AAA.²⁵⁴ This is consistent with the paper's proposal that the AAA are texts of entertainment and edification. The texts are not Gnostic treatises, nor are they propaganda for religious extremists seeking to create a celibate society. Rather, the AAA are more representative of the interests of unsophisticated Christian readers, who wanted to read or hear of the wondrous power of their God, and of the adventures of the legendary Christians of the past.

4.2.2 Women and Their Role in the AAA

Several scholars have claimed that the AAA contain significant traditions about the history, and sometimes the empowerment, of women in early Christianity. Aside from the studies of Davies, MacDonald, and Burrus, others, like Ross Kraemer have noted especially the conversion stories in the AAA, claiming that the ascetic forms of Christianity portrayed in the Christian texts would have been attractive to marginalized

²⁵³Bovon and Junod, "Reading " 164

²⁵⁴*Ibid.* 166.

women in Antiquity.²⁵⁵ However, a close reading of the AAA demonstrated that this might not be as well founded as their analyses supposed. Without at least some consideration of the AAA as fictional, romantic literature, attempts at mimetic reconstructions directly from the texts are flawed.

The chastity of the Christian heroine in the AAA may be intended to advance a favourable presentation of ascetic Christianity, but it also serves several other literary functions as well. We have seen already that the use of the motif of a threat of sexual violation was the most common method of creating tension within the GR.²⁵⁶ Thus, if the reader is accustomed to the fictional prose of the GR, the chastity of the heroine is a natural means of creating literary tension in order to bring the story to its climactic end (in this case, the Apostle's death). As in the GR, the use in the AAA of female protagonists and the introduction of threats to their chastity made for better melodrama.²⁵⁷

Furthermore, the female protagonists of the GR were identified, on a literary level, as either equal, or even superior, to the male protagonists in social, moral, and/or spiritual terms. The readers of the AAA would thus expect much the same from the

²⁵⁵Kraemer, "The Conversion of Women to Ascetic Forms of Christianity." *Signs* 6.2. 306.

²⁵⁶Here it is interesting to note that Gail Corrington adeptly analyzed the stories involving the abstinence from sex by women, in both the AAA and the GR. However, she attributed the character of the chaste women in the GR to their literary functions, but then ignored the fact that the women in the AAA are also literary characters with similar literary functions. "The 'Divine Woman'? Propaganda and the Power of Celibacy in the New Testament Apocrypha: A Reconsideration." *Anglican Theological Review* 70.3 See esp 216-217.

²⁵⁷See page 82 above.

heroines in the Christian texts. The apostle is the paragon of Christian virtue, modelled on Christ. The female protagonist of the AAA, by the very nature of her role as the partner of the hero, must then match the qualities of the apostle. The Christian heroine must, as the companion protagonist, remain celibate as the apostle is celibate, either as a devoted companion to the apostle or as one betrothed to God.²⁵⁸

Kate Cooper has argued that the stories of women in the AAA might be unrelated to any interest on the part of their authors in chronicling, or commenting on the importance of, the relation of women to ascetic Christianity.²⁵⁹ It has already been noted that the choice of a female protagonist for the GR and the AAA was due more to rhetorical convention than mimetic necessity.²⁶⁰ Cooper further contends that the stories of the AAA are rhetorically male-oriented. She suggests one way in which this could occur:

In the ancient rhetoric of gender, narrative treatment of the actions or intentions of the women relied on a complex system of implicit meanings. One of the main components of the system was that the discussion of women served less to describe (or prescribe for) the behaviour of flesh and blood women themselves, than to amplify significant aspects of the tension to be found not between men and women, but among men. To simplify, this means that wherever a woman was mentioned, a man's character was being judged - an economy of

²⁵⁸See for examples, Maximilla in the AA (16, 23) who swears fidelity to an "inner husband" and not to a "visible husband" (Aegeates), and Mygdonia in the ATh (117) who declares her love for Jesus.

²⁵⁹Kate Cooper, "Apostles, Ascetic Women, and Questions of Audience: New Reflections of the Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocryphal Acts" SBL Seminar Papers #31 (ed. E.H. Lovering; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992) 148.

²⁶⁰See page 81 above.

signs unusually appropriate to a language in which both the generic speaker and audience were understood to be male.²⁶¹

Cooper argued that the female characters in the text are, at best, covert descriptions of men. She claimed that it is by the standards of men that the female characters are portrayed in the narratives. This rhetoric of gender, found in both the AAA and the GR, is again betrayed by the discussions and descriptions of physical passion that, when they do occur, are expressed from the man's point of view. Mary Lefkowitz supports this argument when she noted that:

the descriptions of the women in the novels do not emphasize, or - as far as I can see - even refer to those aspects of women's life apart from men occasionally described by ancient women writers: love for other women, particularly childhood contemporaries, the joys of childhood, and love for a daughter. On the contrary, the author's tendency to describe the heroine's sexuality from a man's point of view leaves the impression that these ancient novels were written by the kind of writers who normally wrote this type of narrative: men.²⁶²

The apostles speak continually against sex and passion. The conflicts in the AAA are often based on the struggle between men. The heroines of the AAA are fought over by the apostle and the heroine's lover. Thus, the conflicts in the stories are male-based, and do not represent female empowerment.

It is possible that the objective world of the authors of the AAA was projected

²⁶¹Cooper, "Apostles " 150. Cf. also, Corrington, "Divine Woman?" 127: "Hence, it must be admitted that the 'divine woman' paradigm is derived from a male model, the 'divine male' paradigm of the male apostles."

²⁶²Lefkowitz, "Did Ancient Women Write Novels?" *Women Like This: New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World*. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991) 212.

into the imaginary world of the text. Thus when women in the AAA separate from their pagan companions, this could well reflect the separations, and attendant tribulations, of Christian women in the historical world. In this way, the AAA perhaps legitimized and exorcized the suffering of female converts in non-Christian marriages through the portrayal of the heroines' trials and tribulations. In this regard, Bonnie Thurston has noted:

Virginity became second only to martyrdom in the hierarchy of merit, and the connection between the two has not been fully plumbed by scholarship. In disregard of Roman law, the most common form of Christian asceticism was the practice of voluntary continence by both sexes.²⁶³

Here we should note the mention of both sexes as practising voluntary abstinence. Throughout the AAA, there are male characters who vow (or have vowed) never to have conjugal relations.²⁶⁴ Contrary to the proposals of Davies and Burrus, there is no greater emphasis on female chastity than on male chastity. Female chastity is sometimes more noticeable because of the tensions that arise from it, but nowhere is the heroine exalted above her male companions in abstinence. This weakens the arguments of those claiming that historical situations and particular interest groups lie behind the stories of female conversion.

Furthermore, some feminist readings of the AAA have led to distortions. As

²⁶³Bonnie Thurston, *The Widows. A Women's Ministry in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989) 86.

²⁶⁴The most obvious being the apostolic protagonist himself, but there are many male converts of the Apostle who vow sexual abstinence throughout the narratives.

Cooper noted with particular reference to Davies and Burrus:

While these assessments of value have an important place, an excessive emphasis on value can have a limiting effect. It is possible that the whole intent and importance of these narratives may go unnoticed, if it is assumed that their main importance must be in face-value prescriptions of what women should and should not do.²⁶⁵

We have seen that the AAA, as examples of a type of fictional romance, do not necessarily lend themselves to such mimetic readings. Therefore, Cooper is correct to warn against any overemphasis on the characters or events in the narrative as mirrors of historical reality. The literary quality of the AAA must be considered in any analysis of them and the early Christian communities that produced them.²⁶⁶

An additional problem in the analyses of scholars who have placed a great emphasis on the role of women in the AAA, is that they have failed to read the texts as a whole. That is, they have drawn on singular and limited aspects of the text without considering the place these have in the texts overall. We have seen the problematic nature of such an approach already in the recent reassessment of the so-called gnostic tendencies in the AAA. To draw on limited elements of the texts, such as female conversion, without consideration of the overall form and content of the AAA is to provide a warped reading of them.

The ascetic element of the AAA has also been overemphasized by scholars.

²⁶⁵Cooper, "Apostles " 152.

²⁶⁶Cooper indicated this also when she argued that "...it is possible that the narrative presentation of women does not reflect the role (real or hoped for) of women *in the contexts of its production*." (emphasis mine) in "Apostles," 150.

Scholars have argued too quickly for a connection between the religion of the readers and the ascetic sexual practices of the characters in the AAA. We have seen the literary nature of the sexual elements in both the GR and the AAA. Love and sex play an important role in such texts: they are interesting in themselves, they provide motivation for the plot, and they provide a means to show the ideal nature of the protagonists. Bovon and Junod have also noted that there has been too strong an emphasis on the asceticism in the texts. They claim that:

In the final analysis, what the principal protagonists in the Acts have in common is not the adoption of such and such a way of life, but the fact that they are called to a concrete change signifying their spiritual conversion: healing, resurrection, driving out a demon, the abandonment of material and pagan practices, abandonment of the army, chastity, etc. They have to detach themselves from the multiple and from the corruptible in order to cleave to the one spiritual and immutable God. Does this eminently religious message imply, in the spirit of those who wrote and those who received the texts, that any conversion and any progress shall have to be concretely marked by healing, abandonment of the army or chastity? This is not at all obvious.²⁶⁷

The question to what extent the AAA may be examined for historical evidence of the early Christian movement must be approached with great caution. Scholars like Davies and Burrus have stressed too strongly a historical matrix for the AAA. Kraemer, in her analysis of the AAA, admitted that "The problematic nature of these texts [the AAA], however, makes the endeavour to examine the appeal of ascetic Christianity to women *admittedly and consciously speculative*" (emphasis mine).²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷Bovon and Junod, "Reading." 164.

²⁶⁸Kraemer, "Conversion" 299.

Thus, the AAA satisfied a demand in the early Christian movement; they provided narratives that spoke to the sentiments of a community. This community it seems, could very well have included women and/or men who were sympathetic to women in the church.²⁶⁹ Yet, it must be recognized that there are limits to the extent to which historical reconstructions of the early Christian communities may be made on the basis of these texts. To see in the world of the AAA simply a mirror of the historical world that produced them is to ignore their literary pedigree and the conventions that bound them.

4.4 Summary of Chapter Four

This chapter has reviewed some of the consequences of reading the AAA as romantic literature. The AAA, as a type of romance, are presentations of an idealistic story where the reader is invited sympathetically to travel with the protagonists on their journey towards a fulfilled identity. As ideal presentations, the characters, events and world found within the AAA do not necessarily draw on precise historical phenomena. The main purpose of the texts is to entertain and to edify.

As we have seen above, the AAA are more concerned with universal human concerns, than with specific historical issues. As such, they provide more insight into

²⁶⁹Hägg wrote that an increased literacy rate in the general population had an effect on the rise of the romance, where reading and listening to tales read aloud became more popular as a leisure activity. He further argued that: "It is tempting to think of the novel as the first great literary form to have had its main support among woman. ... The novel could reach far out into society, into people's homes, and was meant for reading, individually or in groups" *Novel in Antiquity* 90.

the general mind-set of early Christianity than into the historical situation of specific groups or communities. The texts also reveal the rather blurred boundary between orthodoxy and heresy in the early Christian movement, for there are, within the AAA, indications of various christological and "gnostic" points of view. However, the readers of the AAA were probably neither concerned with the intricacies of christological debates, nor with the gnostic potential of some of their ideas. The AAA were not written for this purpose, rather, they were written to relate stories of early Christian heroes and heroines and their god.

We have also seen that the AAA are often used as evidence in historical reconstructions of early Christianity and of particular communities within that movement. However, in their attempts to reconstruct certain aspects of early Christianity, scholars sometimes have too readily come to conclusions based on overly simplistic, and non-literary, readings of the AAA. When reading the AAA, scholars must be aware not only of the genre of the texts, but also of the limitations of mimetic reconstructions from such texts.

Conclusion

Through a comparison of select generic criteria, we have seen that the AAA have an important connection with the GR. Despite some differences, ancient readers would have recognized the generic elements of the GR in the Christian texts. This recognition would have affected the way the readers of the AAA would have interpreted the stories within those texts. Because of this, scholars must also understand and read the AAA with the GR in mind. For to ignore the literary functions within the Christian texts, is to fail to enter into the hermeneutic circle. At the same time, recognizing the romantic elements within the AAA will temper bids to make historical reconstructions based on fictional material.

The AAA are not substandard imitations of pagan romantic clichés. They are important expressions of popular early Christianity, providing a glimpse into the minds of average people living almost two millennia ago. The AAA should no longer be shelved away, and ignored in studies of early Christianity. For they are creative works of literature that represent early Christian adaptations of romantic literature, and they await rediscovery as such.

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