

Two-sided Faithfulness: Reception of the Greek Novel within the *Acts of Andrew*

The *Acts of Andrew* (AA) belongs to a collection of texts, the apocryphal acts of the apostles, which, because of their themes of marriage and romantic rivalry, overlap with the Greek novel. Yet instead of ending in marriage, the apocrypha typically feature the dissolution of marriage and the death of the central figure. Thus, the scholarly consensus has largely viewed this group of Christian texts as entrenched in a “discursive struggle” (Perkins 1995: 3), revising and resisting elite non-Christian ideologies of chastity (σωφροσύνη) and marriage found in the Greek novel (Cooper 1996, Chew 2003, Eyl 2012, Greene 2012, Hirschberger 2012). My paper, however, views this relationship as more ambiguous. Building on Konstan (1998), who argues the apocrypha’s subversion of novelistic tropes falls short of outright rejection, and Burrus (2005), who examines the two genres’ emergence from a shared “literary contact zone,” this paper accomplishes two things: it first explores the overlap between AA and the Greek novel against the backdrop of the Second Sophistic; then, it exposes how AA, using the same character roles and rhetorical conventions as the Greek novel, shifts how its readers approach those texts.

Section 1 establishes the Second Sophistic as a shared literary context between AA and the Greek novel. It leverages Whitmarsh’s (2005) characterization of the Second Sophistic and Eshleman’s (2012) comparison of sophistic and Christian spaces to show how AA replicates the dynamic of sophistic performance within the text, most prominently in the public exorcism at the beginning (AA 2-7) and Andrew’s stylized address to the crowd at his crucifixion (AA 53-60). This provides us a stronger ground for comparison between the two sets of texts and lets us interpret AA in light of the “ambiguity” or “two-sidedness” characteristic of sophistic literature (Whitmarsh 2005: 65).

Section 2 relies on *Leucippe and Clitophon* and *An Ephesian Tale* to establish the typical features of the Greek novel: the separation of a central couple whose faithfulness (σωφοσύνη) is challenged by circumstance or romantic rival. The challenge to and affirmation of this faithfulness forms a “crutch” which the narrative relies upon to generate conflict and facilitate resolution.

Section 3 argues that *AA* engages with the same narrative “crutch”: its conflict centers on the challenge to/affirmation of the faithfulness of the proconsul’s wife, Maximilla. This section employs an analysis of the couple’s reunion (*AA* 14), the misapprehension of Andrew as romantic rival (*AA* 25), and Maximilla’s declaration of love for God (for whom Andrew stands in, *AA* 23) to show how this two-sided faithfulness, romantic and religious, produces an ambiguity in the text: Andrew and the proconsul at times embody both the novelistic hero and romantic rival.

Thus, instead of strictly subverting or rejecting the Greek novel, *AA* uses the scaffolding of novelistic tropes to offer two alternate valences of σωφοσύνη, pushing the onus of collapsing this ambiguity onto the audience. Yet, by presenting a new interpretive context for the preexisting roles and rhetorical conventions of the Greek novel and by shifting the precise semantic association of σωφοσύνη, *AA* still fundamentally changes how its readers subsequently approach the Greek novel.

Bibliography

- Burrus, Virginia. (2005). "Mimicking Virgins: Colonial Ambivalence and the Ancient Romance." *Arethusa*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Chew, Kathryn. (2003). "The Chaste and the Chased: ΣΩΦΡΟΣΥΝΗ, Female Martyrs and Novelistic Heroines." *Syllecta Classica*. University of Iowa, Department of Classics.
- Eshleman, Kendra. (2012). *The social world of intellectuals in the Roman Empire: sophists, philosophers, and Christians*. Greek culture in the Roman world. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eyl, Jennifer. (2012). "Why Thekla Does Not See Paul: Visual Perception and the Displacement of Erōs in the *Acts of Paul and Thekla*." In Futre Pinheiro, M., et al., (Eds.). *The Ancient Novel and Early Christian and Jewish Narrative: Fictional Intersections* (pp. 3-19). Barkhuis Publishing: Groningen University Library, 2012.
- Greene, Robin J. (2012). "(Un)Happily Ever After: Literary and Religious Tensions in the Endings of the *Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thekla*." In Futre Pinheiro, M., et al., (Eds.). *The Ancient Novel and Early Christian and Jewish Narrative: Fictional Intersections* (pp. 21-33). Barkhuis Publishing: Groningen University Library, 2012.
- Hirschberger, Martina. (2012). "Marriages Spoiled: The Deconstruction of Novel Discourse in Early Christian Novel Narratives." In Futre Pinheiro, M., et al., (Eds.). *The Ancient Novel and Early Christian and Jewish Narrative: Fictional Intersections* (pp. 153-67). Barkhuis Publishing: Groningen University Library, 2012.
- Konstan, David. (1998). "Acts of Love: A Narrative Pattern in the Apocryphal Acts." *Journal of Early Christian Studies*. Baltimore, Md., etc: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Perkins, J. (1995). *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*. Taylor & Francis Group.

Whitmarsh, Tim. (2005). *The Second Sophistic*. Greece & Rome. New surveys in the classics, 0017-3835; no. 35. Oxford: Oxford University Press, published for the Classical Association.