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## The influence of the Greek novel on the *Life and Miracles of Saint Thecla*

**Abstract:** The *Life and Miracles of Saint Thecla*, a 5<sup>th</sup>-century hagiographical work, feature many elements recalling the ancient novel. Even if the first part of the text, the *Life*, must be considered a novel itself due to its dependence on the model of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, some novelistic motifs – especially the use of descriptions, digressions and first-person narrations – appear throughout the whole text. In addition, we also examine the textual evidence of the influence of the ancient novel on this hagiographical text through the analysis of some lexical details which suggest the reading of the ancient novels. The hagiographer uses these elements to rewrite in some cases the original scene of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* or to evoke in other scenes the universe of the ancient novel in order to delight his readers.

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## Introduction

The *Acts of Paul and Thecla* (*APTh*) have often been compared to the Greek erotic novel, a genre which arose between the 1st and 2nd centuries.<sup>1</sup> It is clear that many narrative elements in the *APTh* closely resemble those found in the latter texts, from the central plot of the story (with Paul and Thecla portrayed as a sort of erotic couple)<sup>2</sup> to a host of smaller lexical details.<sup>3</sup> These similarities, which

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1 C. RUIZ MONTERO, The rise of the Greek novel, in G. Schmeling (ed.), *The novel in the ancient world*. Leiden / New York / Köln 1996, 29–85; E. BOWIE, The chronology of the earlier Greek novels since B.E. Perry: revisions and precisions. *Ancient Narrative* 2 (2002) 47–63; C. RUIZ MONTERO, La novela griega. Madrid 2006, 25–28.

2 C. GARCÍA GUAL, Audacias femeninas. Madrid 1991, 67; C. MIRALLES, Novela, aretalogía, hagiografía. *Synthesis* 3 (1996) 11–12.; W. HANSEN, Anthology of ancient Greek popular literature. Indiana 1998, 50–54.

may also be found in the other texts comprising the main core of the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* (AAA), namely, the *Acts of Andrew*, the *Acts of John*, the *Acts of Paul*, the *Acts of Peter* and the *Acts of Thomas*, have led scholars to refer to these writings as “novels”.<sup>4</sup> Thus, Pervo considers them historical novels’, and Hägg uses the term ‘novels of the Apostles.’

The similarities between the *APTh* and the Greek novels must indeed be admitted, as must the undoubtedly novelistic style of the texts comprising the main core of the AAA. It is, however, also true that the relationship between Paul and Thecla is not a love story, but one of extreme devotion, perhaps expressible in terms of πάθος. However, given these precedents, it would not be surprising to find some novelistic motifs in the *Life and Miracles of Saint Thecla* (LM), a 5<sup>th</sup> century hagiographical text divided into two main parts, in which an anonymous author from the Isaurian city of Seleucia<sup>5</sup> rewrites the *APTh* and subsequently narrates 46 miracles of the saint whose temple was established in his city.<sup>6</sup>

The author follows the emerging trend in the hagiographical tradition of the time, distinguishing between the life and the miracles of a saint, as had Sulpicius Severus in his *Life of Saint Martin*,<sup>7</sup> in which the two parts concern the origins of the saint and his actuality.

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3 On lexical and other linguistic evidence for the relationship between the *APTh*: J. A. ARTÉS, *Estudios sobre la lengua de los Hechos Apócrifos de Pedro y Pablo*. Murcia 1999; V. MANGOGNA, *Annotazioni sulla lingua degli Atti di Paolo e Tecla*. *Koinonia* 26–27 (2002–2003) 179–203.

4 Many scholars have underlined the similarities between the AAA and the Greek novel from the beginning of the 20th century to the present: E. VON DOBSCHUTZ, *Der Roman in der alt-christlichen Literatur*. *Deutsche Rundschau* 111 (1902) 87–106; R. SÖDER, *Die apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und die romanhafte Literatur der Antike*. Stuttgart 1932; T. HÄGG, *The novel in antiquity*. Berkeley / Los Angeles 1983, 160–161; M. SIMONETTI / A. PRINZIVALLI, *Letteratura cristiana antica. Profilo storico, antologia di testi e due saggi inediti in appendice*. Asti 2003, 132–133; R. PERVO, *The ancient novel becomes Christian*, in Schmeling, *Novel* (as footnote 1 above) 685–712; J. W. BARRIER, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*. Tübingen 2009, 7–21.

5 G. DAGRON, *L’auteur des ‘Actes’ et des ‘Miracles’ de Sainte Thècle*. *Analecta Bollandiana* 92 (1974) 5–11; S. EFTHYMIADIS / V. DÉROCHE, *Greek hagiography in late antiquity (fourth–seventh centuries)*, in S. Efthymiadis (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*. Volume I: Periods and places. Farnham / Burlington 2011, 67–68.

6 We have only one complete edition of that work: G. DAGRON, *Vie et Miracles de Sainte Thècle*. Bruxelles 1978, p. 251 note 5. [In collaboration with M. Dupré La Tour]. An English translation of the *Miracles* was recently published, accompanied by the Greek text following Dagron’s edition: A. M. TALBOT / S. F. JOHNSON, *Miracle tales from Byzantium*. *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library*, 12. Cambridge, Mass. / London 2012, 1–201.

7 E. GIANNARELLI / M. SPINELLI, *Sulpicio Severo. Vita di Martino*. Milano 1995, 112–113.

The first part of the work, the *Life*, is a μετάφρασις of the *APTh*,<sup>8</sup> a rewriting of the original work which develops some parts of the story and reduces others. This type of progymnastic exercise was becoming increasingly popular among writers in the rhetorical schools of the time, and was used to reformulate and rewrite stories based not only on mythological and epic material, as can be seen in Aelia Eudoxia's Homeric *Centos*,<sup>9</sup> but also on biblical topics,<sup>10</sup> as in the paraphrase of the *Gospel of John* by Nonnus of Panopolis.<sup>11</sup> The anonymous author of the *Life* rewrites the *APTh* maintaining the same plot of the story, even though many passages are enlarged and most of the discourses rebuilt. The only part of the original text omitted by the 5<sup>th</sup>-century hagiographer is the beginning of the story with the description of Paul, which is evoked while Onesiphorus and his family awaited Paul on the road from Lystra. Furthermore, the end of the story changes as well. The author of the *Life* echoes a different version of the legend defending that Thecla did not die, but entered the ground alive.

Despite this respect for the original story, it is quite odd to find literal quotations from the *APTh*. In fact, we have only revealed five passages – four of them contained in the speeches of Thecla and the other in one of the interventions of Alexander – in which we can observe how the author of the *Life* respects the literalness of the original text. The first quotation appears in the scene in which Thecla asks Paul the seal of Christ in *Life* 14, reproducing *in extenso* chapters 25 and 26 of the *APTh*. The hagiographer maintains exactly the same words used by Thecla in *APTh* (Μόνον δός μοι τήν ἐν Χριστῷ σφραγίδα), and even repeats the request twice.

“ἀλλὰ γὰρ οὐδὲν τούτων πείσομαι, φησὶν ἡ Θέκλα πάλιν, ὁ γὰρ ἐπὶ τῆς πυρᾶς μοι βοηθήσας Θεὸς βοηθήσει πάντως καὶ πρὸς ἑτέρους κινδύνους, κἂν πολυπλοκώτερα τούτων ῥάψῃ κατ’ ἡμῶν ὁ πολέμιος μηχανήματα. **μόνον δός μοι καὶ αὐτός, ὃ διδάσκαλε, τὴν ἐν Χριστῷ σφραγίδα**· τούτῳ γὰρ ὀπλισθεῖσα τῷ ὄπλῳ οὐδὲν ὑποπτήξω, οὐδὲν ἔτι δειλιάσω, ὑπεράνω παντὸς ὀφθήσομαι κινδύνου, ὑπεράνω παντὸς ὀφθήσομαι πειρασμοῦ καὶ δαίμονος· **μόνον δός μοι τὴν ἐν Χριστῷ σφραγίδα**” (*Vita* 14, 26–33).

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8 S.F. JOHNSON, *The Life and miracles of Thecla. A literary study*. Cambridge 2006, 67–112. In English, we normally use the term *paraphrase* for either παράφρασις or μετάφρασις, Zucker remarks that these concepts can be used synonyms of a sort, indicating a “modalité de l’écriture au second degré”: A. ZUCKER, Qu’est-ce qu’une *paraphrasis*? L’enfance grecque de la paraphrase. *Rursus* 6 (2011) (<http://rursus.revues.org/476#quotation>), 19 – last consultation 25/02/2014.

9 B.P. SOWERS, *Eudocia: the making of a Homeric Christian*. Dissertation, Cincinnati 2008.

10 M. ROBERTS, *Biblical epic and rhetorical paraphrases in late antiquity*. Liverpool 1985.

11 A. VILLARRUBIA, La Paráfrasis a Juan de Nono de Panópolis. Consideraciones literarias. *Habis* 38 (2007) 287–304.

The second passage mentioned above reflects a dramatic scene of the story: the attempt of Alexander to embrace Thecla in Antiochia. In *APTh* 26, 7–8 the young woman shouts: μὴ βιάσῃ τὴν ξένην, μὴ βιάσῃ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ δούλην, which is roughly respected by the author of the *Life*, who preserves the anaphora with the prohibitive construction introduced by μὴ. The only change is the subjunctive middle βιάσῃ instead of the imperative middle βιάζου (*Vita* 15, 54–55: μὴ βιάζου τοίνυν τὴν ξένην, μὴ βιάζου τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ δούλην).

The third quotation from the *APTh* is placed on the lips of Alexander when he asks to bring the young woman in order to start her execution. The author of *Life* uses the same words appearing in *APTh* 30, 2–3, with the insertion of the verb φησί:

Ὁ ἡγεμῶν γάρ, φησί, κάθηται, καὶ ὁ ὄχλος θορυβεῖ· δός, ἀπαγάγω τὴν θηριομάχον (*Vita* 18, 5–6)

The fourth scene in which the hagiographer of the 5<sup>th</sup> century tries to literally reproduce the words of Thecla is another important passage of the text: the scene of the prayer before her self-baptism. In *Life* 20, 31–32 Thecla observes the pool before plunging and says: ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου, Κύριε, ὑστέρα ἡμέρα βαπτίζομαι, a preaching formula exploited from the *APTh* and only altered by the adding of the vocative form Κύριε (*Ath* 34, 4–5: ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ὑστέρα ἡμέρα βαπτίζομαι).

Finally, the last section of the text in which we have found a textual similarity with the *APTh* is the discourse of Thecla before the governor and after having been freed. The author of *Life* claims to use the same words as Thecla (αὐτοῖς τοῖς τῆς μάρτυρος χρήσασθαι ῥήμασιν), by literally quoting the end of her speech in *APTh* 37. A simple comparison will be enough to see how he reproduces the same passage with few changes.

οὗτος γὰρ μόνος σωτηρίας ὁδὸς καὶ ζωῆς ἀθανάτου ὑπόστασις ἐστίν· χεμαζομένοις γὰρ γίνεται καταφυγή, θλιβομένοις ἄνεσις, ἀπηλπισμένοις σκέπη, καὶ ἀπαξᾶπλῶς ὅς ἐάν μὴ πιστεύσῃ εἰς αὐτόν, οὐ ζήσεται ἀλλὰ ἀποθανεῖται εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας (*Ath* 37, 5–8).

οὗτος γάρ, φησί, μόνος σωτηρίας ὁρος ἐστίν, καὶ ζωῆς ἀθανάτου ὑπόστασις, ἔτι γε μὴν καὶ χεμαζομένων προσφύγιον καὶ θλιβομένων ἄνεσις καὶ ἀπελπισμένων σκέπη· καὶ ἀπαξ ἀπλῶς δέ, φησί, ὅς ἂν μὴ πιστεύσῃ εἰς αὐτόν, οὐ ζήσεται, ἀλλ' ἀποθανεῖται εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας (*Vita* 22, 69–73).

Thus, the few passages preserving the original text of the *APTh* indicate an important task of rewriting. Our author transforms the whole story narrated in the *APTh* in order to adapt it to a new audience. From this point of view, if the

*APTh* been traditionally considered as a novel, the *Life* ought to be considered as a novel as well, or rather as a kind of ‘remastered novel’.

Otherwise, although the term *Life* is traditionally used to describe this text concerning Thecla, in the manuscripts we find the Greek word πράξεις, which is also the term used in the ancient *AAA*. In our opinion, we cannot deny the presence of some biographical elements in the *Life of Thecla*, but we might not relate this work to the biographical genre, but to the *AAA*, or even to the novel. Furthermore, the hagiographer in the general prologue of the text uses the terms ιστορία, διήγησις and σύγγραμμα.

ιστορία μὲν τὸ πονηθὲν ἡμῖν τοῦτο σύγγραμμα καὶ παλαιῶν ἔργων διήγησις, τῶν ὑπὸ τῆς μακαρίας Θέκλας τῆς ἀποστόλου καὶ μάρτυρος πραχθέντων, ἐξ ἑτέρας μὲν καὶ παλαιότερας ιστορίας ἐκληφθεῖσα, κατ’ ἴχνος δὲ αὐτῆς ἐκείνης συντεθεῖσα (*Vita* prol. 1–4).

The very first word of the text is ιστορία, and its use does not seem accidental or fortuitous, once we consider the historiographic echoes that appear some lines later, in reference to the Greek historians Herodotus and Thucydides.<sup>12</sup> The second of these, διήγησις, standardly appears in byzantine hagiography to name the text,<sup>13</sup> and the third, σύγγραμμα, was one of the most widespread terms used at the time to describe narratives. In fact, the three terms usually appear in the novels, along with other descriptive terms such as πάθος, ὑπόθεσις, δρᾶμα, μῦθος or τύχη.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, at the end of his prologue, the author uses the expression τῆς παρθενικῆς ιστορίας, perhaps an allusion to the ιστορία ἔρωτος used by Longus’ *Daphnis and Chloe* (I 1, 2); the use of this term could also suggest the influence of Proclus of Constantinople, who considers his homily *Laudatio Mariae* (1, 4) a παρθενικὴ πανήγυρις. However, these terms are used only in a programmatic way. In fact, when the hagiographer talks about the first part of his work, he uses the terms βίος and πράξεις (*Mir.* prol. 56) or simply πράξεις (*Mir.* ep. 6). He uses θαύματα to describe the second part of the work.

The second part, the *Miracles*, is one of the first collections of miracles of Christian saints written in Greek.<sup>15</sup> Such tales were already popular in Ancient

<sup>12</sup> JOHNSON, *Life* (as footnote 8 above) 18–21.

<sup>13</sup> C. RAPP, *Storytelling as spiritual communication in early Greek hagiography: the use of diegesis*. *J ECS* 6 (1998) 431–448, *ibid.* 433 defines this term as follows: “διήγησις (Latin: narratio) is thus a brief account. But in the Christian literature of Late Antiquity, διήγησις refers specifically to an anecdote or story that is of edifying character.”

<sup>14</sup> RUIZ MONTERO, *Rise* (as footnote 1 above) 35–36.

<sup>15</sup> H. DELEHAYE, *Les recueils antiques de miracles des saints*. *Analecta Bollandiana* 43 (1925) 5–85.

Greece (in the very different religious context of the time),<sup>16</sup> as can be seen by studying the lives of the ancient poets,<sup>17</sup> the miracles of Empedokles<sup>18</sup> and, above all, Aeriſtides' *Ἱστοὶ Λόγοι*. The *Miracles* attempts to show the powerful δύναμις of Thecla and, like other collections of the time,<sup>19</sup> features the ritualistic practice of the *incubatio*, in which a person afflicted by disease spends a night in the sanctuary awaiting the saint, who will visit them in a dream and prescribe a cure. This practice, related to Asclepius, was loaned to Hellenistic religion<sup>20</sup> and adapted to Christian saints such as Thecla, Kosmas and Damian, Artemios, as well as Cyrus and John.

Despite the traditional association of these miracle collections with the Asclepian *ιάματα*, Johnson, with whom we agree, attempted to relate the θαύματα of Thecla to the ancient genre of paradoxography.<sup>21</sup> In our opinion, even if byzantine miracle collections may take inspiration from Greek paradoxographical tradition, the θαύματα, as a literary genre, will change and have its own features and will develop its own rhetoric and generic conventions,<sup>22</sup> always with a pious or edifying intention.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, it is certainly difficult to classify a text into a generic category, especially this kind of hagiographical works, where a mixture of many literary trends and folkloristic elements appears.

Even so, this difficulty to place a text into a determined literary category occurs in both *Life* and *Miracles*. Thus, despite the generic differences between the *Life* and the *Miracles*, many novelistic elements can be seen in both, not only

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**16** W. COTTER, *Miracles in Greco-Roman antiquity: a sourcebook for the study of New Testament miracle stories*. London 1999.

**17** C. HUNZINGER, *Miracles et merveilles dans les vies des poètes anciens*, in S. Dubel / S. Rabau, *Fiction d'auteur? Le discours biographique sur l'auteur de l'Antiquité à nos jours*. Paris 2001, 47–61.

**18** C. MAUDUIT, *Les miracles d'Empédocle ou La naissance d'un thaumaturge*. *Bulletin de l'association Guillaume Budé* 4 (1998) 289–309.

**19** N. FERNÁNDEZ MARCOS, *Los Thaumata de Sofronio*. Contribución al estudio de la incubatio cristiana. Madrid 1975; M. LÓPEZ-SALVÁ, *El sueño incubatorio en el cristianismo oriental*. *Cuadernos de Filología Clásica* 10 (1976) 147–188; G. SFAMENI GASPARRO, *Sogni, visioni e culti terapeutici nel Cristianesimo dei primi secoli: Ciro e Giovanni a Menouthis e Tecla a Seleucia*. *Hormos* 9 (2007) 321–343.

**20** L. DEUBNER, *De incubatione*. Stuttgart 1900.

**21** JOHNSON, *Life* (as footnote 8 above) 172–220.

**22** S. EFTHYMIADIS, *Collections of miracles (fifth–fifteenth centuries)*, in S. Efthymiadis, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*. Volume II: Genres and contexts. Farnham / Burlington 2014, 103–142.

**23** V. DÉROCHE, *Pourquoi écrivait-on des recueils de miracles? L'exemple des Miracles de Saint Artémios*, in C. Jolivet-Lévy / M. Kaplan / J.P. Sodini, *Les saints et leur sanctuaire à Byzance*. Textes, images et monuments. Paris 1993, 95–116.

in the motifs inherited from the original plot of the *APTh* – which would be considered obvious because of the novelistic nature of this text –, but also in some innovative novelistic features incorporated by the author. The hagiographer seems to have belonged to the rhetoric school of Seleukeia, given his special interest in literature and letters, and his good relationships with grammarians and rhetoricians (*Mir.* 38, 39, 40, 41).<sup>24</sup> In fact, our author has been integrated by some scholars into the so-called *Third Sophistic*, in which Late Antique writers would have continued to work on the same models offered by the *Second Sophistic*, incorporating classical texts into a Christian context with great freedom.<sup>25</sup> Despite the controversy that the concept *Third Sophistic* may originate, we cannot deny the common linguistic and literary elements shared by the writers of the *Second Sophistic* and the author of the *LM*. The use of atticisms, the recovery of some ancient linguistic features (i.e. the dual), and the great interest in Classical antiquity,<sup>26</sup> clearly shows the hagiographer great concern for language and his relationship with previous pagan authors such as the rhetoricians or the novelists of the Imperial Age.<sup>27</sup>

## 2. Novelistic motifs in the Life and Miracles

In terms of its literary adscription, the *LM*, though composed by two different hagiographical texts, was envisaged as a whole in two parts. From this point of view, this work must be placed in the context of the novelisation of texts which

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**24** R. A. KASTER, The son(s) of Alypius. Vie et miracles de Sainte Thècle II. 38. *Analecta Bollandiana* 101 (1983) 301–303; R. A. KASTER, Guardians of language. The grammarian and society in late antiquity. Berkeley / Los Angeles 1997, 431.

**25** J. SCHAMP, Sophistes à l'ambon. Esquisses pour la Troisième Sophistique comme paysage littéraire, in E. Amato (ed.), *Approches de la Troisième Sophistique. Hommages à Jacques Schamp*. Bruxelles 2006, 286–338.

**26** DAGRON, Vie (as footnote 6 above) 152–162 underlined the great influence of the Homeric language and indicated the influence of other Classical authors such as Plato, Herodotus or Eurypides. For the analysis of the language of the miracles: M. LÓPEZ-SALVÁ, Los thaumata de Basilio de seleuceidia. *Cuadernos de filología clásica* 3 (1972), 217–319, esp. 239–245. For both *Life* and *Miracles*: Á. NARRO, Homo Christianus, Graeca oratione. Christianisme et rhétorique classique dans la langue de la Vie et miracles de Sainte Thècle, in L. M. Ciolfi / J. Devoge, *Vies Rencontres annuelles des doctorants en études byzantines* 2013. Venezia 2015, 68–79.

**27** Some new literary echoes were recently revealed: Á. NARRO, Nouvelles réminiscences littéraires décelées dans la Vie et les Miracles de S. Thècle (BHG 1717–1718). *Analecta Bollandiana* 130 (2003) 303–305.

takes place in Byzantine literature<sup>28</sup> and may represent one of the first examples of this trend. Many elements in both *Life* and *Miracles* could be interpreted as novelistic. But, following Messis, it is always important to distinguish prudently what must be indeed considered as an influence of the novel and what might be regarded nevertheless as a thematic similarity or affinity.<sup>29</sup> In Messis' approach two main elements, among many other thematic motifs, are stressed in order to determine the direct influence of the techniques of the novel on hagiography: the use of digressions and the first-person narrations.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, descriptions are also considered a novelistic motif inherited by Byzantine hagiography in this study.

Whereas in the *Life* many elements recall the literary techniques featured by the novel on the account of the presence of this kind of motifs in the text on which is based, namely the *APTh*, in *Miracles* the thematic similarities with the novel would be *a priori* less important. Nonetheless, in both texts the intrusion of moral-scientific digressions, the use of first-person narrations and of *ekphraseis* occurs very often.

In first place, digressions appear regularly in both *Life* and *Miracles*. Besides the examples that we shall examine later, in *Life* we could refer to the digression about how hunger and thirst affect young people and children rather than suffering and pain (*Life* 13, 16–18) or the broad reflection of the hagiographer – later converted into an apologetical manifest – about the nature of the miracles of the saints and the comparison of the wonders operated by Moses, Peter and Paul with the evilness of the pagan antiheroes Apollonius of Tyana, Julian the Emperor, the magician Ostanos or Simon the Sorcerer (*Life* 22, 6–52).

In the second place, other typical motif of the novel is the description (ἔκφρασις),<sup>31</sup> which appears moreover in Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon* and Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*.<sup>32</sup> *Ekphraseis* occur in both *Life* and *Miracles* and, as it happens in novel, are a key to understand the programmatic goal of the work.

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**28** M. MULLETT, Novelisation in Byzantium: narrative after revival of fiction, in J. Burke et al., Byzantine narrative. Papers in Honour of Roger Scott. Melbourne 2006, 1–28; E. BOURBOUHAKIS / I. NILSSON, Byzantine narrative: the form of storytelling in Byzantium, in L. James, Companion to Byzantium. Chichester 2010, 263–274.

**29** C. MESSIS, Fiction and/or novelisation in Byzantine hagiography, in Efthymiadis, Companion II (as footnote 22 above) 313–341.

**30** Ibid. 315–316; 328–332.

**31** A. HOLZMEISTER, Ekphrasis in the ancient novel, in E. P. Cueva / S. N. Byrne, A Companion to the ancient novel. West Sussex 2014, 411–424.

**32** S. BARTSCH, Decoding the ancient novel. The reader and the role of description in Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius. Oxford 1989; T. WHITMARSH, Written on the body: ecphrasis, perception and deception in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*. *Ramus* 31 (2002) 111–125.

In *Life*, besides the descriptions of the trials of Thecla, which can be interpreted as a description of a spectacle, it is very important the long ἔκφρασις concerning the city of Seleukeia appearing towards the end of the text.<sup>33</sup> In the *Miracles*, the description of a golden girdle that a thief had stolen from a wedding celebration or the passage of the festivity of the saint can serve as examples of ἔκφρασις of artworks and spectacles, as it happens in the novel.<sup>34</sup> Other special case is the description of the stone interpreted as a sign sent by the saint in *Miracle* 38, in which it is used other motif with a great importance in the novel, the recognition (ἀναγνώρισις).<sup>35</sup>

In third place, first-person narrations are also very common in the LM. The novelistic nature of the *Life of Thecla* provokes the wide presence of this kind of passages, especially in the speeches of the characters. Actually, we could consider the *Life* as a succession of chained first-person narrations, regularly introduced by a little section in which the hagiographer announces the words of a certain character or replaces the story. These first-person narrations sometimes could be related to the ἠθοποιία,<sup>36</sup> as it happens, for example, in Paul's discourses in *Life* 2, 6 and 9 and Thamyris' accusation against the apostle in *Life* 6, and follows in most cases a classical structure, even by echoing the attic orators with the reference to the impossibility of knowing from where to start the speech (*Life* 4,7: ἀπορῶ μὲν ὄθεν ἀρξαίμην τῆς πρὸς σέ διαλέξεως), a topic that can be found in Andocides (*Alc.* 10, 2: καίτοι ἀπορῶ γε διὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἀμαρτημάτων πόθεν ἄρξωμαι) or Aeschines (*Fals. Leg.* 7, 5: ἀπορῶ δ' ὀπόθεν χρὴ πρῶτον ἄρξασθαι).

On the other hand, in *Miracles* first-person narrations are less usual than in *Life*, but in some miracles concerning the hagiographer the first-person is recovered (*Mir.* 12, 31 and 41). Anyway, a collection of miracles, conceived as a historical testimony of the wonders operated by the saint, requires the objectivity

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**33** Á. NARRO, The Portrait of Seleukeia in the Miracles of Saint Thekla, in A. De Francisco Heredero; / D. Hernández de la Fuente / S. Torres Prieto (eds.), *New perspectives on late antiquity in the eastern Roman empire*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne 2014, 66–67.

**34** BARTSCH, Decoding (as footnote 32 above) 109–143, 146–148.

**35** S. MONTIGLIO, *Love and providence: recognition in the ancient novel*. Oxford / New York 2013.

**36** The literary ethopoeia (ἠθοποιία) consisted of creating a discourse for a character based on his moral virtues and vices, in short on his character (ἦθος). It was a rhetorical exercises (προγυμνάσματα) very well attested among late antique literature: E. AMATO / J. SCHAMP, ἠθοποιία. La représentation de caractères entre fiction scolaire et réalité vivante à l'époque impériale et tardive. Salerno 2005.

and veracity, even if programmatic,<sup>37</sup> of a third-person narrator, which may explain the general absence of this sort of passages.

Concerning the whole text, Johnson suggests that the author of the *LM* was familiar with the ancient Greek novel, and provides five brief examples in support of the suggestion: the playful romance between Paul and Thecla, the use of invented speeches within a historical narrative, the use of recapitulation, the theme of the education or training of lovers and, finally, the foreshadowing of events to come.<sup>38</sup> Johnson is right as regards the underlying relationship between the *LM* and the ancient Greek novel, although, if we analyze the language used by the hagiographer with care, the links can be shown to be even closer than he suggests. In fact, in our opinion, the hagiographer might even be considered a regular reader of these tales.

Scholars have traditionally asserted that the readers of these ancient novels were well-educated with an important cultural knowledge,<sup>39</sup> capable of understanding the linguistic details and the quotations of classical texts that appeared in the novels<sup>40</sup> (although other scholars propose a more heterogeneous group of readers).<sup>41</sup> In addition, it must be remembered that novels and *AAA* were, at the time, probably read by the same people.<sup>42</sup> It might be difficult to accept this assertion of the writers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, but it becomes a reality in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and later, when the Christian faith was able to attract the well-edu-

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**37** RAPP, Storytelling (as footnote 13 above).

**38** S.F. JOHNSON, Late antique narrative fiction: apocryphal acts and the Greek novel in the fifth-century *Life and Miracles of Thekla*, in S.F. Johnson (ed.), *Greek literature in late antiquity: dynamism, didacticism, classicism*. Aldershot 2006, 199–203.

**39** E. BOWIE, The readership of Greek novels in the ancient world, in J. Tatum (ed.), *The search for the ancient novel*. Baltimore 1994, 435–460; S. STEPHENS, Who read ancient novels?, *ibid.* 405–418. R. HUNTER, Ancient readers, in T. Whitmarsh (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel*. Cambridge 2008, 261–271; T. WHITMARSH, *Class*, *ibid.* 72–87.

**40** T. HÄGG, Orality, literacy, and the “readership” of the early Greek novel, in R. Eriksen (ed.), *Contexts of pre-novel narrative. The European tradition*. Berlin 1994, 53–56. See also: Ruiz Montero, *Novela* (as footnote 1 above) 33–36.

**41** E. BOWIE, The ancient readers of the Greek novel”, in Schmeling, *Novel* (as footnote 1 above) 92–96.

**42** R. COOPER, *The virgin and the bride: idealized womanhood in late antiquity*. Cambridge, MA / London 1996, 23; J.N. BREMMER, The five major apocryphal acts: authors, place, time and readership, in J.N. Bremmer (ed.) *The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*. Leuven 2001, 159–170.

cated aristocrats from the time of Constantine,<sup>43</sup> as we see in the case of the author of the *Life* and *Miracles*.

In effect, the author rewrites the *APTh* (an apocryphal text belonging to the core of the *AAA*) using some novelistic elements, as Johnson suggests, but, at the same time (1) he rewrites an important passage of the original text on the basis of a similar scene featured in one of these erotic novels, (2) he locates the origins of the romantic passion as in several novels, (3) he mentions a specific epithet which is used in Pseudo-Callisthenes' *Alexander Romance* throughout the Greek literary tradition and (4) he features many novelistic motifs together in *Mir.* 33.

1) The first scene in which the influence of the Greek novel on the text can be observed is the first martyrdom of Thecla. In this case, the author clearly rewrites the episode in which Thecla is condemned to be burned, in the *APTh* (22), on the basis of the Chariclea's ordeal in Heliodorus's novel. In order to see the differences between the original scene in the *APTh* and the *Life*, and to better appreciate the changes and innovations in the text, it is necessary to analyze the three passages.

First of all, in the *APTh* 22 we have a typical martyrdom scene, in which many elements emphasize the drama of the situation and the wickedness of the pagan authorities. To attain this goal, the author of the apocryphal text features some young men and women (the social group who were most sensitive to Thecla's situation) bringing wood to light the bonfire, and a miraculous denouement of the martyrdom through divine intervention, which also appears in some other passages of the *Acts of Paul* (*Pap. Hamb.* 5). These are retold in a manner influenced by *Revelations* 11, 19, where the elements σεισμός and χάλαζα are interpreted as an apocalyptic sign.<sup>44</sup>

οἱ δὲ παῖδες καὶ αἱ παρθέναι ἤνεγκαν ξύλα καὶ χόρτον ἵνα Θέκλα κατακῆ. ὡς δὲ εἰσῆχθη γυμνῆ, ἐδάκρυσεν ὁ ἡγεμῶν καὶ ἐθαύμασεν τὴν ἐν αὐτῇ δύναμιν. ἔστρωσαν δὲ τὰ ξύλα καὶ ἐκέλευσαν αὐτὴν οἱ δῆμιοι ἐπιβῆναι τῇ πυρᾷ· ἡ δὲ τὸν τύπον τοῦ σταυροῦ ποιησαμένη ἐπέβη τῶν ξύλων· οἱ δὲ ὑφῆψαν. καὶ μεγάλου πυρὸς λάμψαντος οὐχ ἤψατο αὐτῆς τὸ πῦρ· ὁ γὰρ θεὸς σπλαγχνισθεὶς ἤχον ὑπόγειον ἐποίησεν, καὶ νεφέλη ἄνωθεν ἐπεσκίασεν ὕδατος

<sup>43</sup> A. MOMIGLIANO, Christianity and the decline of the Roman empire, in A. Momigliano (ed.), Paganism and Christianity in the fourth century. Oxford 1963, 1–16; R. M. GRANT, Early Christianity and society. New York 1977.

<sup>44</sup> Á. NARRO, Apoc. 11, 19 y su influencia en las escenas martiriales de los Hechos de Pablo, in J. Redondo / R. Torné (eds.) Apocalipsi, catàlisi i mil·lenarisme a les literatures antigues i la seua recepció. Amsterdam 2014, 81–95.

πλήρης και χαλάζης, και ἔξεχύθη πᾶν τὸ κύτος, ὡς πολλοὺς κινδυνεῦσαι και ἀποθανεῖν, και τὸ πῦρ σβεσθῆναι τὴν δὲ Θέκλαν σωθῆναι. (*APTh* 22)

In the *Life*, the hagiographer features Thecla before the governor as it happens in *APTh* 21. In this chapter before the first trial of Thecla we can already observe the influence of the novels throughout the lexical choices of the hagiographer. As we shall see, one of the evidences leading us to relate the *LM* with the novels is precisely the consideration of the sight as the channel from which love penetrates into the soul of someone.<sup>45</sup> This statement about the origin of the romantic passion, shared by both novelists and our author, determines the great importance of the terms evoking the vision in the *LM*, especially in the scenes in which love or passion deserve a special attention. Thecla, before being condemned to the pyre, is brought before the governor Cestilius. In this scene, our author relates how she dazzles the eyes of the spectators contemplating her, even if it was a long time that she was not paying any attention to her beauty.

It is a recurrent topic of the novels, though in this case, we have to admit that it already appeared in the original text:

ὡς δὲ ἦκε και ὤφθη, θαύματος μὲν ἅμα πάντας ἐπλήρωσε και θάμβους, και γὰρ ὀφθειῖσα μόνον ἅμα πάντας τῷ κάλλει κατήστραψε—και ταῦτα ἐν ἡμελημένῳ λοιπὸν σώματι—, ἔλεου δὲ και δακρῶν τὸν δικαστὴν, κοινή δὲ πάντας τοὺς ὀρώντας ἐκπλήξεως και δέους, ἐπὶ τῷ οὕτως ἐπηρμένῳ και γαύρῳ και βλοσυρῷ φρονήματι και βλέμματι. (*Life of Thecla* 11, 3–9)

In this passage, we can observe the wide range of words from the lexical field of the sight that we have highlighted such as the verb ὀράω (repeated three times) or the substantive βλέμμα. Even if this detail may recall the novels, the keyword to understand the first clue of the influence of the novels on the rewriting of the first martyrdom of Thecla is the use of the verb καταστράπτω. This verb, meaning “strike with lightning, dazzle”<sup>46</sup> has already appeared in *Life* 1, 51 to describe the reaction of Thecla concerning Paul’s voice. In our opinion it could be a double-sense verb because of the *signa amoris* manifested by Thecla and because this verb is also used in novels to express the reaction of the one who has fallen in love in front of the beloved person.

Thus, it is used by Chariton in his *Chaereas and Calirrhoe* when Dyonisos remains amazed, keeps silent and finally speaks with some troubles the first

45 J. GARZÓN, El amor en la novela griega. *Memorias de Historia Antigua* 13–14 (1992–1993) 43–76.

46 LIDDELL/SCOTT s.v. καταστράπτω.

time he sees Calchirroe (II 5, 4: καταπλαγείς οὖν ὁ Διονύσιος ἄφωνος ἦν. οὔσης δὲ ἐπὶ πλεῖστον σιωπῆς ὅψέ ποτε καὶ μόλις ἐφθέγγατο) and by Achilles Tatius to describe the first time that Clitophon sees Leucippe (I 4, 2: ἐν ἀριστερᾷ παρθένος ἐκφαίνεται μοι καὶ καταστράπτει μου τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς τῷ προσώπῳ), but is Heliodorus the novelist who features this verb more often. In I 21, 3, it is Chariclea who dazzles Thyamis because of her beauty. It also appears in a similar context in VII 10, 3 and in X 9, 3, a passage deserving further attention.

Heliodorus narrates how Chariclea dazzles the eyes of those contemplating her, as Thecla in the passage described above, precisely in a scene when he was telling the ordeal of Theagenes, an element which strongly links both texts. In addition, many elements such as the trial, the fire, the divine protection of the heroine or the astonishment of the spectators are shared by both Heliodorus' novel and the *Life* :

“πλησίον ὁ ἀγών” εἰποῦσα “καὶ νῦν ταλαντεύει τὰ καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἢ μοῖρα” μηδὲ κελεύσαι τοὺς ἐπιτεταγμένους ἀναμείνασα ἐνέδου τε τὸν ἐκ Δελφῶν ἱερὸν χιτῶνα, ἐκ πηριδίου τινὸς ὃ ἐπεφέρετο προκομίσασα, χρυσοῦφῃ τε ὄντα καὶ ἀκτίσι κατάπαστον, τήν τε κόμην ἀνεῖσα καὶ οἷον κάτοχος φανεῖσα προσέδραμέ τε καὶ ἐφήλατο τῇ ἐσχάρῃ καὶ εἰστήκει πολὺν χρόνον ἀπαθῆς, τῷ τε κάλλει τότε πλέον ἐκλάμποντι καταστράπτουσα, περίοπτος ἐφ’ ὑψηλοῦ πᾶσι γεγενημένη, καὶ πρὸς τοῦ σχήματος τῆς στολῆς ἀγάλματι θεοῦ πλέον ἢ θνητῆ γυναικὶ προσεικαζομένη. (Hld. X 9, 3)

Returning to the *Life*, our author describes the beginning of the martyrdom of Thecla highlighting her silence before the governor because, in the hagiographer's opinion, Thecla considered that speaking in public was against feminine decency.

ἀλλ’ ὁ μὲν ἀνθύπατος πράως οὕτως καὶ προσηνῶς μεταθεῖναι τῆς προθέσεως τὴν κόρην ἐσπούδαζεν, ἡ δὲ Θέκλα προῆκε μὲν οὐδ’ ὄλωσ φωνήν, οὔτε γυναικικῆς εὐκοσμίας, οὔτε παρθενικῆς αἰδοῦς ἄξιον κρίνουσα δημοσιεύειν ὄλωσ φωνήν, καὶ προτιθένα γλώτταν παρθενικὴν πανδήμῳ θεάτρῳ. (*Life of Thecla* 12, 1–5)

This idea was commonly diffused in ancient literature and it can be detected in many classical authors such as Sophocles, Euripides or Aristotle and also in Christian authors as we can read in 1Cor. 14, 34–35. However, it is interesting to indicate that a very similar statement, even if expressed in different terms, appeared in a speech of Chariclea in I 21, 3, right after the scene in which we had already indicated the presence of the verb καταστράπτω.

Then, the hagiographer introduces the scene of the appearance of Christ converted in the apostle Paul, (narrated in the previous chapter of the *APT*), and writes a new dialogue for Thecla, who asks Paul to rest and invokes Christ in

order to put out the fire. In this case, the author foreshadows what will happen next, a literary technique also used in the Greek novel, as Johnson suggests:<sup>47</sup>

πάντων τοιγαροῦν πανταχόθεν ξύλα συμφορησάντων, καὶ τῆς φλογὸς εἰς εὐτόν αἰθέρα κορυφωθείσης, ἐπιβῆναι κελεύεται τῇ οὕτως ἐκφλογωθείσῃ πυρᾷ. ἐν ὀρμῇ δὲ καὶ αὐτῆς τῆς κόρης τοῦ πράγατος οὔσης, καὶ πρὸς τὸ πῦρ ὀρώσης, καὶ ἄττουσης μὲν λοιπὸν μετὰ περιχαρείας καὶ γεγανυμένης ψυχῆς, ὀρθῶ δὲ καὶ φαιδρῶ καὶ ἀκινεῖ τῷ βλέμματι, παραδείκνυσιν ἑαυτὸν ὁ Χριστὸς ἐν τῇ τοῦ Παύλου μορφῇ, τὴν προθυμίαν αὐτῆς ἐπιθαρρύνων, τὴν εὐτονίαν ἐπιθήγων, τὴν φύσιν ἐπισφίγγων, ὡς καὶ τὴν παρθένον ἰδοῦσαν – καὶ γὰρ ἀληθῶς αὐτὸν ᾤετο εἶναι τὸν Παῦλον, ἀλλ’ οὐ τὸν Χριστὸν – ὑπομειδιάσαι, καὶ πρὸς ἑαυτὴν εἰπεῖν· “ἴδου, περισκοπεῖ καὶ φυλάττει με Παῦλος, μήπως ἄρα ὀλιγωρήσασα καὶ ὀκλάσασα, καὶ πρὸς τὸ πῦρ ἀποδειλιάσασα, ἀποστήσωμαι τῆς καλῆς καὶ μακαρίας ὁμολογίας, ἀλλ’ οὐ μὴ τοῦ ὑπὸ σοῦ μοι τοῦ Παύλου εὐαγγελισθέντα Χριστὸν, οὐ μὴ προδῶ τὴν εὐσεβείαν, οὐδὲ μὴ τὴν σὴν κατασχύνω διδασκαλίαν. Μόνον στήθι μικρόν, ὃ διδάσκαλε, καὶ ἐπικάλεσαί μοι τὸν Χριστὸν, ἵνα καὶ τῇ αὔρα τοῦ Πνεύματος διαρριπίσῃ καὶ δροσίσῃ τοῦτο τὸ πῦρ, κάμου τὴν ἀσθένειαν τῆς φύσεως ὑποστήρισῃ τῇ παρ’ αὐτοῦ βοηθείᾳ. (*Life of Thecla* 12, 33–51)

The scene continues with the description of the fire of the pyre, which hides the body of Thecla, concealing it from the eyes of the lewd spectators, who are considered ἀκόλαστοι. This term has a great importance in the *LM* and in novels and its presence suggests, in our opinion, the connection between them and the sharing of similar conceptions regarding love and passion. In *Life* 14, 17 Paul warns Thecla about the intemperance (ἀκολασία) of some people who might cause them problems due the wondering beauty of the young woman. Later, in *Life* 15, 24 and 15, 40 this term is related to Alexander, the Syrian prince who will try to harass Thecla. In the first passage the narrator describes Alexander’s way of life with such a term. In the second, Thecla blames on Alexander’s sexual assault using again this term, which closes one of the four claims of the young woman starting by the interjection ὦ. In addition, his assault against Thecla is considered by the hagiographer an intemperate action (*Life* 15, 76: τῆς ἀκολάστου πράξεως). In *Life* 19, 7 the adjective is linked to the chorus of women wanting Thecla to be devoured by the beasts (ὄσον ἀσελγὲς καὶ ἀκόλαστον ἦν). Finally, in *Miracles*, this term is also used to qualify the sight of the immoderate man who has asked Thecla to make love to a beautiful woman whom he has seen during the celebration of her festivity in Seleukia (*Mir* 33, 60: ἀκολάστου τε βλέμματος). His penalty was death.

In novel, Achilles Tatius uses both the substantive (ἀκολασία) and the adjective (ἀκόλατος) to talk about adulterers in VIII 8, 10 and VIII 10, 5 or to indicate the immoderate behavior of Callisthenes in II 13, 1–2 or Themistocles,

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47 JOHNSON, Fiction (as footnote 38 above) 201–202.

when he was younger. On the other hand, Heliodorus uses a substantiated form of ἀκόλαστον concerning Arsace in VIII 15, 4. Previously, in III 16, 3 he has distinguished two different types of magic arts. The first one, described in negative terms, is considered ἀκόλαστον. Lastly, in Chariton's novel this term appears right aside ἀσελγής (5, 7, 2: εἰ δέ γε καὶ ἀκόλαστος καὶ ἀσελγής ἐτύγχανον, ἐποίησεν ἄν με βελτίω τὸ παρὰ σοῦ τοσαύτας πόλεις πεπιστεῦσθαι) in the discourse of Quereas defending himself from Mithridates' accusations. This doublet, appearing also in *Life* 19, 7, is mentioned twice in Iulius Pollux' *Onomasticon*, in the first place in a long list of negative terms (4, 14), and then, even coordinated by καί, while he suggests the use of this sort of terms to talk about an immoderate behavior with sexual connotations.

Coming back to the first martyrdom of Thecla, the immoderate spectators (ἀκόλαστοι) are later punished, not only for having promoted her martyrdom, but also for having attempting to see her undressed body.<sup>48</sup> Thecla protects herself by making the sign of the cross with her hand as well as with her whole body, having stretched her arms to the sky.

καὶ μετὰ τοὺς λόγους τούτους, τὸν τοῦ σταυροῦ τύπον πρότερον ἐν ἑαυτῇ ἐκτυπώσασα, ἑαυτὴν δὲ μᾶλλον καὶ ὄλην εἰς τὸν τοῦ σταυροῦ ἀπεικάσασα διὰ τῆς ἐφ' ἐκότερα ταῖν χειροῖν ἐκτάσεως, εὐθὺς ἐφήλατό τε τῇ πυρᾷ καὶ κατετόλμησε τῆς φλογὸς θαρσαλέως οὕτω καὶ ἀδιστακτικῶς, ὡς οὐκ ἄν τις ἄλλως ἐν σταθερᾷ μεσημβρία καὶ ὥρα πνίγους. ὅθεν καὶ τὸ πῦρ, τῆς ἑαυτοῦ φύσεως ἐκλαθόμενον, αἰδοῖ καὶ φόβῳ τοῦ σταυροῦ, θάλαμος μᾶλλον ἢ κάμινος ἐγένετο τῇ παρθένῳ, οὐδὲ τοῦτο τοῖς θεωμένοις παρασχόν, τὸ γυμνὴν τὴν Θέκλαν ἰδεῖν· καὶ γὰρ ὑψωθὲν καὶ περικυρτωθὲν καὶ ἀποτείχισαν πάντοθεν τοῖς ἀκολάστοις τὴν θέαν, κοιτωνίσκου μᾶλλον ἤπερ πυρὸς ἐπλήρωσε χρεῖαν. (*Life of Thecla* 12, 51–62)

This seems to tame the flames, which start to envelop her without burning her skin, instead becoming a θάλαμος, or a κοιτωνίσκος, a diminutive of κοιτών, (a term already in use by some authors in the imperial koiné).<sup>49</sup> Both terms are related to the privacy of a woman's chamber and, indeed, the first has great importance in terms of understanding the influence of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* on the rewriting of this passage.

In the ordeal of Chariclea in the eighth book of the *Aethiopica*, we find several elements in common with the passage about the first martyrdom of Thecla. Firstly, like Thecla, she is unfairly condemned to be burned. Secondly, like Thecla, she raises her arms to the sky (Hld. VIII 9, 11: τὰς χεῖρας εἰς οὐρανὸν καὶ καθ' ὃ μέρος τὴν ἀκτίνα ἔβαλλον ὁ ἥλιος ἀνατείνασα) and invokes the pro-

<sup>48</sup> S. CONSTANTINOU, *Female corporeal performances. Reading the body in Byzantine passions and lives of holy women*. Uppsala 2005, 37.

<sup>49</sup> Artem. IV 46; Alciph. IV 13.

tection of Helios, Gea and other daemons to help her through her trial (Hld. VIII 9, 12: "Ἡλιε καὶ Γῆ καὶ δαίμονες ἐπὶ γῆς τε καὶ ὑπὸ γῆν ἀνθρωπων ἀθεμίτων ἔφοροί τε καὶ τιμωροί). Thirdly, in describing Chariclea on the pyre, Heliodorus underlines her beauty, using the term θάλαμος, the key word in understanding the influence of the *Aethiopica* on the first martyrdom of Thecla in the *Life*.

καὶ εἰποῦσα, πάντων ἐκβοώντων τι πρὸς τὰ εἰρημένα καὶ ἐπέχειν τὴν τιμωρίαν εἰς δευτέραν κρίσιν τῶν μὲν εὐτρεπιζομένων τῶν δὲ καὶ ὀρμησάντων, ἐπέβη προλαβοῦσα τῆς πυρᾶς καὶ εἰς τὸ μεσαίτατον ἐνιδρυθεῖσα αὐτὴν μάλλον τοῦ πυρὸς ἢ προσπελάζοντος καὶ λυμαιομένου μὲν οὐδὲν ὑποχωροῦντος δὲ καθ' ὃ μέρος ὀρμήσειεν ἡ Χαρίκλεια καὶ περιαιυγάζεσθαι μόνον καὶ διοπτρεύεσθαι παρέχοντος ἐπιφαιδρυνομένην ἐκ τοῦ περιαιυγίσματος τὸ κάλλος καὶ οἶον ἐν πυρίνῳ θαλάμῳ νυμφευομένην. (Hld. VIII 9, 13)

In addition to what we have mentioned concerning the reworking of the first trial of Thecla on the basis of Cahriclea's ordeal, we have to add a last consideration which may reveals how aware of the connection of this scene with the novel the hagiographer was. Messis in his study discusses about the thematic affinities between the novel and hagiography:<sup>50</sup>

Another question emerges regarding the thematic affinities between the novel and hagiography, namely whether direct recourse is to the themes of the novel or whether it is mediated through the comparable stories in the Old Testament, that is whether the basic themes of the adventure are novelistic or biblical. Our authors, most of the time, try to persuade us that the latter is the case by referring explicitly to their biblical models and by comparing their heroes to those of the Old Testament. But we often suspect that it is the former option that operates here, seeing in our texts a greater affinity with the novel than with the biblical stories that the hagiographers so emphatically invoke.

Right after the description of the miracle operated by God and the mention of the word θάλαμος, the hagiographer compares it with the tale of the fiery furnace in the book of Daniel (chapter 3), where three friends of this prophet are saved by God. These young Jews from Babylon have refused to worship the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had built and challenged him assuring that, if they were thrown into the flames, they would not burn themselves thanks to the intervention of their God. Nebuchadnezzar rose to the challenge and, finally, the fire did not reach them and Babylonians checked with their own eyes the power of God.

In our opinion, this comparison is one of the cases described by Messis. Furthermore, after the scene of Thecla with the sea-lion in *Life* 19, the author also evokes this passage and the story of Daniel among the lions. Even if, in this case,

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50 MESSIS, Fiction (as footnote 29 above) 319.

the novelistic re-elaboration is not so clear, the presence of many digressions enlarging the scene indicates a process of novelisation. In both trial scenes, the hagiographer compares the miracle concerning Thecla to other similar situations which benefited heroes of Old Testament imagery. In the case of Daniel, the comparison with Thecla was quite popular in Early Christianity. They even shared a similar iconographic representation as a master or mistress of the beasts (δεσπότης / πότνια θηρῶν).<sup>51</sup>

In any case, Old Testament allusions appearing in the text, occur to establish a comparison or to work as an example of virtue or vice. Besides the two scenes from the book of Daniel in which the miracles to save Thecla are compared with the divine interventions in favor of Daniel and his three friends, the hagiographer resorts again to the comparison in the long digression above mentioned in which he opposes the goodness and the miraculous abilities of Moses, Peter and Paul against the evilness of Apollonius of Tyana, Julian the Emperor, the magician Ostanes or Simon the Sorcerer (*Life* 22, 6–52). Other cases of comparison with Old Testament motifs occur in *Life* 27, 49–53, where the ascension of Thecla to a hill near Seleucia is linked to the ascetic life of Elijah on Mount Carmel – used again in *Mir.* 44, 25–32 to compare the way of life of an Egyptian monk living in the sanctuary of Thecla – and John the Baptist in the desert, and also in *Miracles* (14, 10–15), where the woman of Hipsistios is compared to Anna, Samuel's mother, even if the hagiographer blames on the latter by considering her request as a petition proper to Jewish banality (Ἰουδαϊκῆς γὰρ ἀπειροκαλίας τὸ αἴτημα). As examples of divine punishments the hagiographer recalls some commonplaces concerning Old Testament imagery such as the plagues of Egypt (*Life* 21, 11–17) or the divine favor in exchange of virtue, in the case of Niniveh, or vice, regarding Sodoma and Gomorrha (*Mir.* 28, 61–65). Finally, concerning New Testament quotations and allusions, most of them appear in the speeches of Paul in *Life* and recalls precisely to Pauline epistles, which reinforces our hypothesis about the implementation of the techniques of the literary ethopoeia.

Thus, coming again to the link between the scene of Thecla in the pyre and the one of the ordeal of Chariclea, there are clear and convincing evidences of a connection between the two passages, which suggests that the author of the *LM* knew Heliodorus' work, and that he rewrote the first martyrdom of Thecla on the basis of the ordeal of Chariclea. Even if, some decades before, some authors

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51 W. DÉONNA, Daniel, le 'Maître des Fauves', à propos d'une lampe chrétienne du musée de Genève. *Artibus Asiae* 12/1–2 (1949) 119–140; 12/4 (1949) 347–374. Á. NARRO, Ecos de la πότνια y el δεσπότης θηρῶν en los cinco principales Hechos apócrifos de los apóstoles. *Minerva* 28 (2015) 185–220.

proposed that the *Aethiopica* had been composed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century,<sup>52</sup> it is now clear that the text must have appeared a century later,<sup>53</sup> sometime after 350 A.D. This is due to the relationship between Heliodorus' description of the siege of the city of Syene in the ninth book of the *Aethiopica* and the narration of the historical siege of Nisibis in 350, as provided by Ephrem the Syrian in his hymns against Julian.<sup>54</sup> If we date the origin of the *Aethiopica* to the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the author of the *LM* (a text which, following Dagron,<sup>55</sup> we can date to 444–476,) should undoubtedly be considered to be one of the first known readers of the work, and this should be seen as one of the first steps towards the reception of the work in byzantine literature.

2) Heliodorus is not, however, the only novelist known to the anonymous author of the *LM*. In fact, the hagiographer demonstrates a general knowledge of the universe of the erotic novel, and shares some beliefs with those novelists, such as the idea that romantic passion penetrates through the eyes in order to enter into the soul.

τὸ γὰρ τῶν ἐρώντων τοῦτο πάθος ἄρχεται μὲν, ὡς εἰπεῖν, ἐκ τῶν ὀμμάτων, κατολισθησαν δὲ εἰς αὐτὴν τὴν ψυχὴν τὸ κακόν, μεμνηνότες τὸν ἄρτι σωφρονοῦντα ποιεῖ καὶ παράφρονα  
(*Life of Thecla* 15, 14–16)

This digression of the hagiographer appears right after the scene above mentioned in which he described how the beauty of Thecla had dazzled Alexander using the verb καταστράπτω. The use of this statement in this scene confirms the reworking of this passage adopting novelistic motifs.

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52 T. SZEPESSY, Die Neudatierung des Heliodorus und die Belagerung von Nisibis, in: Actes de la XII<sup>e</sup> conférence internationale d'études classiques: Eirene, Cluj-Napoca 1972. Budapest 1975, 279–287; T. SZEPESSY, Le siège de Nisibe et la chronologie d'Héliodore. *Acta Antiqua Academiae Hungaricae* 24 (1976) 247–276.

53 M. VAN DER VALK, Remarques sur la date des Éthiopiennes d'Héliodore. *Mnemosyne* (1941) 9, 97–100; R. KEYDELL, Zur Datierung der Aethiopica Heliodors, in P. Wirth (ed.), *Polychronion*. Festschrift F. Dölger. Heidelberg 1966, 345–350; C. LACOMBRADÉ, Sur l'auteur et la date des Éthiopiennes. *REG* 83 (1970) 70–89.

54 A. COLONNA, L'assedio di Nisibis del 350 d.C. e la cronologia di Eliodoro emiseno. *Athenaeum* 38 (1950) 79–87; P. CHUVIN, Chronique des derniers païens. Paris 1990, 321–325. G.W. BOWERSOCK, Fiction as history. Nero to Julian. Berkeley / Los Angeles / London 1994, 148–155.

55 DAGRON, Vie (as footnote 6 above) 15–19.

This same belief in the eyes as a channel for love appears in all the erotic novels, except in Chariton's *Callirhoe*.<sup>56</sup> In this regard, Xenophon of Ephesus says:

διέκειτο δὲ καὶ Ἀνθία πονήρως, ὅλοις μὲν καὶ ἀναπεπταμένοις τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς τὸ Ἄβροκόμου κάλλος εἰσρέον δεχομένη, ἤδη δὲ καὶ τῶν παρθένους πρεπόντων καταφρονοῦσα (I 3, 2)

Longus goes further, presenting the following stronger argument:

πάντως γὰρ οὐδεὶς ἔρωτα ἔφυγεν ἢ φεύζεται, μέχρις ἂν κάλλος ᾗ καὶ ὀφθαλμοὶ βλέπωσιν (I 4, 2)

The third novelist, Achilles Tatius, repeats the same idea in three different passages:

κάλλος γὰρ ὀξύτερον τιτρώσκει βέλους καὶ διὰ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν καταρρεῖ· ὀφθαλμὸς γὰρ ὁδὸς ἐρωτικῶ τραύματι (I 4, 4)

ὀφθαλμοὶ γὰρ ἀλλήλοις ἀντανακλῶμενοι ἀπομάττουσιν ὡς ἐν κατόπτρῳ τῶν σωμάτων τὰ εἶδωλα· ἡ δὲ τοῦ κάλλους ἀπορροή, δι' αὐτῶν εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν καταρρέουσα, ἔχει τινὰ μίξιν ἐν ἀποστάσει (I 9, 4)

ἡ δὲ τῆς θεᾶς ἡδονὴ διὰ τῶν ὀμμάτων εἰρέουσα τοῖς στέρνοις ἐγκάθηται (V 13, 4)

Finally, Heliodorus, an author for whom the look is of great importance<sup>57</sup> also asserts that the love between two lovers begins in the eyes:

τεκμηριούτω δέ σοι τὸν λόγον εἴπερ ἄλλο τι καὶ ἢ τῶν ἐρώτων γένεσις, οἷς τὰ ὀρώμενα τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐνδίδωσι οἷον ὑπὴνεμα διὰ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν τὰ πάθη ταῖς ψυχαῖς εἰστοξεύοντα. καὶ μάλα γε εἰκότως, τῶν γὰρ ἐν ἡμῖν πόρων τε καὶ αἰσθήσεων πολυκίνητον τε καὶ θερμότατον οὔσα ἢ ὄψις δεκτικωτέρα πρὸς τὰς ἀπορροίας γίνεται, τῷ κατ' αὐτὴν ἐμπύρῳ πνεύματι τὰς μεταβάσεις ἐράτων ἐπισπωμένη (III 7, 5)

3) Thirdly, in miracle 20, the hagiographer introduces the general Bitianos, who has been helped by the saint, and considers him a Περσολέτης, a killer of Persians:

τὸν Γρηγόριον ἡμῖν ἀνηλλάξατο ἀντὶ τοῦ στρατιάρχου καὶ Περσολέτου. (*Miracles of Thecla* 20, 26–27)

<sup>56</sup> GARZÓN, Amor (as footnote 45 above) 44, 49, 52, 53, 55–56, 60–63.

<sup>57</sup> E. SUÁREZ DE LA TORRE, La princesa etíope que nació blanca: La mirada y la contemplación en las Etiópicas de Heliodoro. *Cuadernos de Filología Clásica. Estudios griegos e indoeuropeos* 14 (2004) 201–233.

In all the Greek literary tradition, this composite term is used only in the Greek version of the *Historia Alexandri Magni*, attributed to Pseudo-Callisthenes (*Recensio* α 3, 22, 12; *recensio* β 3, 22, 31; *recensio* γ 22, 41; *recensio* λ 48, 13). This text features Alexander the Great, who is called Περσολέτης and Ἴνδολέτης. Undoubtedly, the author of the *LM* must have known of this novel, demonstrating the broad range of the author's literary interests and influences.<sup>58</sup>

In our opinion, by using this epithet, the hagiographer tries to turn general Bitianos into a hero. An alert reader of novels may establish the connection immediately between both characters, as our author aims.

4) Lastly, in *Miracle* 33, where we have already pointed out the presence of the term ἀκόλαστος, the influence of the novel can be remarked again. Even if in *Miracles* novelistic motifs do not occur as usual as in the *Life*, because of the literary characteristics of this text, in some cases we can find the elements mentioned above, namely, first-person narrations, digressions and *ekphraseis*.

*Miracle* 33 is likely the best sample of how the novel may have an important impact on the hagiographer writing the *LM*. This miracle narrates the story of a man who has visited the sanctuary during the festivity of the saint and has fallen in love with a girl whom he has seen while the celebration was taking place. He asked the saint to have this girl, but at night, after a dream in which the saint seemed to grant his petition, he was attacked by a malefic spirit and died in less than three days.

Love is the main topic of this miracle, or rather, the punishment of the immoderation (ἀκολασία) provoked by the romantic passion. Thus, this thematic axis determines the presence of some novelistic elements and motifs appearing along this narration. The first evidence of the relationship with the novel is the long description of the festivity of the saint. The hagiographer has recourse to the antithesis by making a list of the people getting arriving at the sanctuary of Thecla during the celebration of the festivity of the saint:

ἦν ἡ τῆς μάρτυρος αὐτῆς ἑορτή, καὶ ἡ τελευταία τῆς ἑορτῆς ἡμέρα, ἦν δὴ καὶ ἀπόλουσιν καλεῖν ἡμῖν ἔθος, ὡς ἂν καὶ πέρας ἐχούσης λοιπὸν τῆς ἑορτῆς. ἐν ταύτῃ πᾶς τις ἐπέιγεται καὶ ἀσπὸς καὶ ξένος, καὶ ἀνὴρ καὶ γυνὴ καὶ παιδίον, καὶ ἄρχων καὶ ἀρχόμενος, καὶ στρατηγὸς καὶ στρατιώτης, καὶ δημαγωγὸς καὶ ιδιώτης, καὶ νέος καὶ πρεσβύτης, καὶ ναυτίλος καὶ γεωργός, καὶ πᾶς τις ἀπλῶς πρόθυμος συλλεγῆναι σπουδαιότερον, καὶ Θεῷ τε προσεύξασθαι, καὶ ἱκετεῦσαι τὴν παρθένον, καὶ τυχὼν τῶν θείων μυστηρίων ἀπελθεῖν ἡγιασμένος καὶ ὡσπερ τις νεοτελής ἀνακαινισθεὶς καὶ σῶμα καὶ ψυχὴν. (*Mir.* 33, 1–10)

<sup>58</sup> For other literary reminiscences in *LM*: A. NARRO, Lo scontro tra formazione classica e pensiero cristiano: la Vita e Miracoli di Santa Tecla. *Graeco-latina Brunensia* 15/2 (2013) 127–138.

This description of this pious spectacle is completed with a scene of symposium in which a group of men debates about what have they preferred from the celebration. The hagiographer uses the occasion to continue the description of the festivity of the saint and features different figures of speech such as the anaphora or the antithesis:

οὔτοι τοίνυν, τῆς ἑορτῆς καὶ συνάξεως διαλυθείσης, εἰσιτιῶντό τε μετ' ἀλλήλων καὶ ἐτέρων δὲ πλειόνων καί, οἷάπερ εἰκόσ, ἕκαστός τι τῶν κατὰ τὴν ἑορτὴν ἐθαύμαζεν· ὁ μὲν τὸ λαμπρὸν αὐτῆς καὶ φαιδρὸν, ὁ δὲ τῶν συνεληλυθότων τὸ μυρίον πλήθος, ὁ δὲ τῶν ἀρχιερέων τὸν πολὺν σύλλογον, ὁ δὲ τῶν διδασκάλων τὸ εὐμουσον, ὁ δὲ τῆς ψαλμωδίας τὸ εὐῆχον, ὁ δὲ τῆς νυκτεγερσίας τὸ διαρκές, ὁ δὲ τῆς λοιπῆς λειτουργίας τὸ τεταγμένον καὶ εὐρυθμον, ὁ δὲ τῶν εὐχομένων τὸ ἔντονον, ὁ δὲ καὶ τοῦ ὄχλου τὸν ὠθισμόν, ὁ δὲ καὶ τοῦ πνίγους τὴν ὑπερβολήν, ὁ δὲ καὶ τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς φρικτῆς μυσταγωγίας τὴν ἔνστασιν ἅμα καὶ σύστασιν τῶν ἄφρι προσιόντων, τῶν ἤδη ἀπιόντων, τῶν ἐπεισιόντων πάλιν, τῶν ὑποχωρούντων αὐθις, τῶν βοώντων, τῶν φιλονεικούντων, τῶν ἀλλήλοις ἐμπλεκόμενων καὶ μὴ εἰκόντων ἀλλήλοις διὰ τὸ πρῶτόσ τις μάλιστα βούλεσθαι μετασχεῖν τῶν ἀγιασμάτων. (*Mir.* 33, 12–25)

The harmony of the spectacle and of the debate of this group of men is suddenly broken by a certain Orentios, coming from Irenopolis. In this case the hagiographer chooses a first-person narration to describe the feelings of this man for an anonymous woman he has seen during the celebration:

“ἕκαστος μὲν, φησίν, ὑμῶν ὃ βούλεται θαυμαζέτω τῆς ἑορτῆς· ἐγὼ δὲ οἶμαι ὡς θαυμασιωτέρου πάντων καὶ ἡδίωνος ἀπολέλουκα θαύματος καὶ θεάματος· καὶ γὰρ ἔθεασάμην γυναῖον, ἀπὸ τινος τῶν κατὰ τὸν νεῶν στοῶν διακύπτων, οὕτω κάλλιστον, οὕτως εὐπρεπές ἢ καὶ ἀριπρεπές καὶ χαρίτων μεστόν, ὡς πάντα τὸν τῆς συνάξεως καιρὸν τῷ ἐκείνης θαυμασίῳ κάλλει προσεδέσθαι τε καὶ προσηλώσθαι τὰ ἐμὰ ὄμματα, ὡς καὶ τοῦτο μόνον εὐξασθῆναι με τῆ μάρτυρι, τοῦ ἐκείνης ἐπιτυχεῖν κάλλους, ἐτέρου δὲ μηδενός.” (*Mir.* 33, 27–34)

In the testimony of Orentios it is very important the presence of many elements recalling the idea that romantic passion penetrates through the eyes in order to enter into the soul. The presence of the verbal form ἔθεασάμην and the terms θεάματος and ὄμματα relate this passage with this idea, which has already appeared explicitly in the *Life* and is linked to the novel. However, this first-person narration is not the only one of this sort appearing in the miracle. Later, Orentios reveals a dream that he wrongly interpreted as a positive sign in first person. The saint was sitting on a throne and seemed to offer Orentios the woman to whom we had asked during the celebration.

About an hour later, a raging and wild spirit (δαίμων) attacks the man and tears his skin apart, which provokes his death in less than three days. Our author compares this attack with the Persian torture of flaying someone before his ex-

ecution (*Mir.* 33, 52–53: κατὰ δὲ τὸν τῶν Περσῶν νόμον δείρας αὐτὸν τῆς δορᾶς γυμνὸν ἐποίησε). This method of torture was attributed to the Persians by many different Greek authors from Herodotus' *Histories*. In Herodotus V 21, it is said that the Persian king Cambyses had ordered to flay the corrupt judge Sysamnes and to cover the armchair on which his son would seat as a new judge with his skin, so that he would not forget what had happened to his father when he gave judgement.

Even if the reference to the flaying can be considered a proverbial element in Greek literature, we have to highlight the fact that this punishment deserves a special attention in Heliodoros novel. Precisely in VIII 3, 2, Oroondates threatens to flay Eufrates and before the ordeal of Chariclea the judges debate what punishment she should receive. They were about to ordain the most cruel penalty of the Persian, as Heliodoros says (VIII 9, 9: ἐφ' οἷς οἱ δικάζοντες οὐδὲ μελλήσαντες μικροῦ μὲν ἐδέησαν ὠμοτέρῳ τε καὶ Περσικῇ τιμωρίᾳ ὑποβαλεῖν). Crespo, with whom we agree, suggested that this punishment must be flaying.<sup>59</sup> In our opinion, the hagiographer may follow the proverbial tradition from Herodotus, but it is curious that this statement about the Persian punishment appears precisely in Heliodoros, more specifically in the VIII book of the novel, in one of the cases right before the scene of the Ordeal of Chariclea. We have already showed how the hagiographer has rewritten the martyrdom of Thecla on the basis of this very important scene regarding Chariclea. If he has already used this text once, why would he not use it again by remembering this Persian penalty?

Anyhow, it exists a last key that links the miracle 33 with the novel. We have already discussed about the importance of the intemperance (ἀκολασία) in *LM* and in the novel. In this case, our author echoes the idea of the sight as the responsible of love and the intemperance of the negative examples analyzed earlier. Actually, the hagiographer asserts that Orentios was punished because of his immoderate sight (*Mir.* 33, 60–61: καὶ τίνει ταύτην δίκην ἀκολάστου τε βλέμματος).

However, despite the evident influence of the novel on the composition of this miracle, he evokes a different literary trend at the end of the narration. The hagiographer underlines the fear that this miracle may provoke and considers it “certainly worth of the style of the tragedy” (*Mir.* 33, 62–63: τραγικῆς γὰρ ἀληθῶς ὄξιον γλώττης). Finally he talks in the last lines of the miracle about the inheritance of the crime of Orentios, which affects later his descendants. Though this topic was typically performed on tragedy, in our opinion, *Miracle* 33 contains

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<sup>59</sup> E. CRESPO, Heliodoro. Las Etiópicas o Teágenes o Cariclea. Madrid, 367.

many elements related to the novel. Thus, the mixing of novelistic and tragic elements indicates the complexity of such a text, in which many literary trends can be traced.

## Final remarks

In conclusion, the passages reviewed confirm some important hypothesis about very different topics, which we can now summarize. The influence of the novel on the *LM* is noticeable, especially in the *Life*, a text more appropriated to feature novelistic motifs because it is a reworking of the *APTh*. The passages enlarged by the hagiographer in the first part of his narration imitate the style and even the language of the novel creating a new text from a story originally Christian which has, however, many elements in common with the novel. Anyway, in *Miracles* we can observe the influence of the novel by the use of some novelistic motifs as well as some terms evoking the universe of the novels.

Firstly, the linguistic evidence concerning the relationship between the novel and the *LM* shows that the author of this text was a reader of novels. He uses the same motifs as in the novel and masters the same literary techniques considered a sign of novelisation by Messis, namely the use of descriptions, digressions and first-person narrations. Furthermore, the reworking of the scene of the first martyrdom of Thecla confirms that our author must know the novels thoroughly and drew inspiration from the scene of the ordeal of Chariclea in Heliodorus' novel. In addition, he also features several keywords of the novel regarding love and romantic passion and quotes and echoes several authors from Classical literature as it happens in novels.

Secondly, the fact of considering the hagiographer as a reader of novels may confirm the idea that in Late Antiquity (perhaps beginning in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century), novels and *AAA* were read by the same readers. Cooper pointed out that both groups of texts shared a common audience,<sup>60</sup> which agrees with the hagiographer's knowledge of the previous novels.

Finally, the passages discussed above are important in demonstrating the huge literary wealth of this Christian text. Besides Classical and Hellenistic texts the hagiographer knew and used in his composition a great variety of literary trends, and among them the novel is of main importance. Thus, the traces of the novel on the *LM* indicate that the Greek novels were very widespread in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, even in Christian milieus.

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<sup>60</sup> COOPER, Virgin (as footnote 42 above) 23.

