

*My Flesh is Meat Indeed: Theophagy and  
Christology in John 6:51c–58*

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July 2013

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## Abstract

This project argues that John 6:51c–58 makes christological rather than eucharistic claims. While scholars have often viewed the “Bread of Life Discourse” as a later addition of eucharistic theology to John’s supposedly anti-sacramental gospel, I propose that the narrative of consumption in this pericope functions to make Jesus “equal to God.” The moment when Jesus exhorts those around him to eat his flesh and drink his blood is when Jesus identifies himself with the God who put him on earth to die a sacrificial death. The series of statements in John 6:51c–58 brings about the identification of Jesus with God because of shared cultural expectations in the ancient Mediterranean world about the nature of heroic sacrifice: sacrifice, and the accompanying sacrificial meal, establish the identification of a hero with a deity when the hero and deity have an antagonistic relationship in narrative. John’s Jesus emphasizes his submission to the will of God, who from the start of the gospel is described as having put Jesus on earth to die. Indeed, Jesus’ death is alluded to throughout John. While the pattern of antagonism in narrative and association in cult has previously been demonstrated in Homeric literature and historical cult practice in the work of Gregory Nagy, I trace the development of this trope through the Greek romances, where antagonism, death, and meal collide in narrative. The romantic heroines are associated with divinities, are sacrificed, and are consumed. In other words, where antagonism and association as tropes occur in distinct realms in Homer’s time, by the Common Era, association and antagonism both occur at the level of narrative, juxtaposing divinely beautiful heroines with their horrific human sacrifices. The novels are therefore a lens through which to view John 6:51c–58. In light of *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, *An Ephesian Tale*, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, and *An Ethiopian Story*, it becomes apparent that John, not through direct literary dependence but through participation in the literary milieu of the ancient Mediterranean, manipulates this trope of association and antagonism, and in doing so, establishes Jesus as God in John 6:51c–58, where sacrifice, consumption, and divinity likewise intersect.

## Résumé

Ce projet soutient que Jean 6:51c–58 contient les affirmations christologiques plutôt que eucharistiques. Bien que les chercheurs aient souvent vu le « Discours du Pain de Vie » comme un ajout tardif de la théologie eucharistique à l’évangile soi-disant anti-sacramentel de Jean, je propose que le récit de la consommation dans cette péricope fasse de Jésus « l’égal de Dieu ». Alors que Jésus exhorte ceux qui l’entourent à consommer sa chair et boire son sang, il s’identifie au dieu qui l’a mis sur terre pour mourir en sacrifice. La série d’énoncés dans Jean 6:51c–58 entraîne l’identification de Jésus avec Dieu en raison des attentes culturelles communes du monde méditerranéen antique entourant le sacrifice héroïque. Dans le contexte d’une relation narrative antagoniste, le sacrifice et le repas sacrificiel servent à identifier un héros avec un dieu. Le Jésus de Jean met en relief sa

soumission à la volonté de Dieu, qui, depuis le début de l'Évangile est décrit comme ayant mis Jésus sur la terre pour mourir. En fait, la mort de Jésus est évoquée tout au long de Jean. Bien que Gregory Nagy ait déjà démontré le modèle d'antagonisme dans la littérature homérique et dans les pratiques de culte de l'époque, je suis l'évolution de ce trope à travers les romans grecs, où l'antagonisme, la mort et les repas se rejoignent dans le récit. Les héroïnes romantiques sont associées aux divinités, sont sacrifiées, et sont consommées. Si l'antagonisme et l'association sont des tropes très distincts à l'époque d'Homer, rendu à l'Ère Commune, ils se trouvent au niveau de la narrative où des héroïnes d'une beauté divine sont juxtaposées avec l'horreur de leurs sacrifices humaines. Les romans sont donc une lentille à travers laquelle on peut voir Jean 6:51c–58. À la lumière de *Chéréas et Callirhoé*, les *Éphésiaques*, *Leucippé et Clitophon*, et les *Éthiopiennes*, on constate que Jean, et non par la dépendance littéraire directe, mais plutôt en faisant dans le milieu littéraire de la Méditerranée antique, manipule ce trope d'association et d'antagonisme, et de cette manière établit Jésus comme Dieu dans Jean 6:51c–58, où le sacrifice, la consommation, et la divinité se croisent de même.

## Acknowledgements

The wealth of friends, family, and colleagues I am lucky to have had supporting me throughout my degree deserve my utmost thanks. I am grateful for friends who distracted me when I needed to get out of my head, who understood when I turned into a hermit for weeks at a time, and who listened to me, especially Emily Deimert, Andréa Schnell, Shayna Sheinfeld, and Lucy Gofton. Likewise, my parents, sisters, and grandparents gave me the emotional support I needed to accomplish my goals. I could not have done this without them, so I thank them for always being on my side, for always encouraging me along the way, and for their patience.

My conversations with colleagues at the Faculty of Religious Studies helped me open my eyes to new points of view, to sharpen my arguments, and to learn how to express them with grace. In particular, I would recognize both the members of the 2011 trip to Rome and the members of the graduate student softball team for being my steadfast friends as well as colleagues.

I could not have completed this dissertation without the careful eyes and the warm friendship of my Writing Group. Sara Parks and Shayna Sheinfeld have read this work almost as many times as I have and were invaluable to me, not only in pointing out flaws in logic or spelling, but also in being my constant cheerleaders and bosom friends. Of course, the mistakes that remain in this dissertation are wholly mine. I also owe thanks to Sara Parks and to Andréa Schnell for helping me with the French translation of my abstract.

The administrative staff at the Faculty of Religious Studies have countless times smoothed the path for me, whether through cheerful conversation or helping me figure out the copy machines or advising me on how to navigate the bureaucratic waters of McGill. Deborah McSorely, Francesca Maniaci, Luvana Di Francesco, Peggy Roger, Samieun Khan, and Shelly-Ann Soares: thank you.

I am especially grateful for my advisor, Ellen Aitken, who has been a font of support and wisdom throughout the dissertation-writing process. Her encouragement, criticism, and expertise have been incredibly valuable, not only with the production of my dissertation but also with advice on my career in academia. Words cannot express my gratitude for her mentorship.

To my husband Mike goes the final expression of gratitude, for being by my side for the whole of my degree. Mike celebrated my victories and helped me recover from my missteps. I thank him for his patience and his love, which he could not help but give. I could not have accomplished this without his support and companionship. I should also thank Button for always making sure I had my priorities in order.

*Dedicated to my loving grandparents, Joan and Ed Neale.*



## Introduction



καὶ ὁ ἄρτος δὲ ὃν ἐγὼ δώσω ἡ σὰρξ μου ἐστὶν ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ζωῆς. Ἐμάχοντο οὖν πρὸς ἀλλήλους οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι λέγοντες, Πῶς δύναται οὗτος ἡμῖν δοῦναι τὴν σάρκα [αὐτοῦ] φαγεῖν; εἶπεν οὖν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐὰν μὴ φάγητε τὴν σάρκα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ πίνητε αὐτοῦ τὸ αἶμα, οὐκ ἔχετε ζωὴν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς. ὁ τρώγων μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ πίνων μου τὸ αἶμα ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον, κἀγὼ ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ· ἡ γὰρ σὰρξ μου ἀληθὴς ἐστὶν βρώσις, καὶ τὸ αἶμά μου ἀληθὴς ἐστὶν πόσις. ὁ τρώγων μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ πίνων μου τὸ αἶμα ἐν ἐμοὶ μένει κἀγὼ ἐν αὐτῷ. καθὼς ἀπέστειλén με ὁ ζῶν πατήρ κἀγὼ ζῶ διὰ τὸν πατέρα, καὶ ὁ τρώγων με κάκεινος ζήσει δι' ἐμέ. οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς, οὐ καθὼς ἔφαγον οἱ πατέρες καὶ ἀπέθανον· ὁ τρώγων τοῦτον τὸν ἄρτον ζήσει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

“And the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.” οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.”<sup>1</sup>

## Aim

The aim of the present study is to argue that Jesus’ divinity is made explicit in John 6:51c–58 and thereby to present this scene as christological rather than eucharistic. I propose that this pericope makes claims about Jesus’ divinity because of the ways in which the Gospel of John participates in the literary world of the ancient Mediterranean: the author’s use of genres and his characteristic manipulation of common tropes makes finding affinities between John and other Hellenistic literature useful for understanding the multivalency of John’s gospel. In particular, I show how John’s gospel makes use of the established trope of the relationship between extraordinary mortal and antagonistic deity, which is most readily seen in the Homeric epics but is also preserved in the Greek romance

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, Greek text from the New Testament comes from the *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Nestle-Aland, 27th ed.; English is from the Revised Standard Version.

novels<sup>2</sup> from around John's era—that is, from the first to the fourth centuries C.E.<sup>3</sup>

This project emerges from previous debates about the nature of John 6:51c–58 and its relationship to the rest of the gospel. As I discuss in detail in chapter one, scholars such as Bultmann have isolated the pericope as a late addition which attempts to interject sacramentalism into what is frequently considered an anti-sacramental text; that is, Bultmann and others who agree with him see the scene as promoting the institution of the eucharist in a text which carefully omits any reference to such a rite. As such, Bultmann does not consider this section original to John. On the other hand, a christological interpretation of the section has recently been advanced. This view interprets John 6:51c–58 in light of the tension throughout the gospel between the divinity and humanity of Jesus, an approach which I embrace. As I argue in sections 1.3–5, John 6 participates in John's use elsewhere of physical, bodily signs to point to Jesus' divinity. In alluding to Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross, John 6:51c–58 continues the gospel's preoccupation with Jesus' divinity and does not address issues of community practice or sacrament. While an inclusion of the institution

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<sup>2</sup> The four romances I will be examining in this project are Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Xenophon of Ephesus' *An Ephesian Tale*, Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, and Heliodorus' *An Ethiopian Story*. Editions used will be as follows, unless otherwise indicated: Chariton, *Callirhoe* (G. P. Goold, trans.; Loeb Classical Library; London: W. Heinemann, 1932); Xenophon of Ephesus, *Anthia and Habrocomes* (Jeffrey Henderson, trans.; Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009); *Achilles Tatius* (S. Gaselee, trans., Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1921); Heliodorus, *Les Éthiopiennes (Théagène et Chariclée)* (R. M. Rattenbury, et al., eds. and trans.; Paris: Société d'édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1935) for Greek text; and Heliodorus, *An Ethiopian Story* (J. R. Morgan, trans.), pages 349–588 in *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (Bryan P. Reardon, ed.; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008) for the English, as there is currently no Loeb edition of Heliodorus' tale.

<sup>3</sup> For convenience, I will refer to the author of the fourth gospel by the name John, as is customary. On John's authorship, please see, among others, Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1990), 244–272.

of the eucharist would indeed seem strange in the context of the greater gospel, interpreting this scene christologically fits John's larger narrative concerns. In short, it is important not to succumb to a synoptic point of view. The use of bread, flesh, and blood in John might seem to be used in the way that Mark, Matthew, and Luke use that combination, that is, with reference to the eucharist or Last Supper, but in the context of John's gospel, the combination has a different significance. I suggest that, given (1) John's overarching concern with Jesus' divine identity and his use of Jesus' physical body as a sign to that end and (2) the consistency in grammar, vocabulary, and style that this section shares with the rest of John, a christological interpretation of this scene resolves both its meaning and the question of Johannine unity. Where I diverge from previous christological interpretations of John 6 is in my use of Hellenistic literature to elucidate John's meaning. This literature—and in particular the novels, whose preoccupation with right identity is parallel with John's concerns in this area—preserves notions of divinity, sacrifice, and consumption as they occur in the Greco-Roman cultural milieu. As such, reading these novels alongside John provides the context within which Jesus' statement in John 6:51c–58 can be understood to have christological significance.

In the classical literature, the relationship between hero and deity is clearly antagonistic, with the deity responsible for the hero's hardships and ultimately for his death. However, as Gregory Nagy has shown, what is recorded as an antagonistic relationship in the narrative translates into a relationship of

association in the cult practice.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the death of the hero, recounted as the will of a god, is the cause for the establishment or *aition* of a cult which identifies that hero with the god in question.<sup>5</sup> The romance novels of the Hellenistic era, while of a different genre from the epics, preserve this relationship between god, hero, and cult, but do so exclusively within the narrative.

I argue that in the romance novels of the early Common Era, both the identification of the hero/ine with the divinity and the associative cultic action occur at the literary level: the romances recount the antagonism between the heroines and the divine and at the same time mark the heroines as divine. That the heroines face death is the will of the gods, and their *agôn* is manifested as a cultic event so that the cult *aition* is conflated with the cult rites. The heroines experience many hardships and blame the gods for them; in three of the novels, these hardships reach their apex in the apparent or near sacrifice of the protagonists. I demonstrate that the choice of language in the texts creates a level of anticipation in the audience that effectively realizes the sacrifices even when, at the last moment, they are avoided. Further, these linguistic choices imply the possibility of the cultic meal of the heroine which is an important aspect of the heroic cult that establishes the divine identification. In other words, the near consumption of the sacrifice of the heroine in the novels corresponds to the culmination of the antagonism between heroine and deity and, at the same time,

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<sup>4</sup> Gregory Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Following Nagy, I use *aition* to mean the narrative event that spurs the establishment of a cult. It is important to acknowledge that this definition includes the understanding that myth and cult do not have a linear relationship, with myth creating cult. Rather, tradition and ritual evolve together; one is not derivative of the other (Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 279 n.2).

establishes her identification with that deity.

These romance novels preserve a Greco-Roman understanding of the ways in which extraordinary human beings become or are divine. In other words, the novels participate in the cultural expectations about heroes and their relationship to the divine. This understanding is one which I contend John's gospel develops to its own advantage. Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus' divinity is demonstrated both explicitly in direct statements and implicitly through Jesus' signs. John has a clear preoccupation with Jesus' divine identity. Jesus' arrival on the earth, which is necessarily tinged with mortality, is the will of God; thus Jesus' salvific death is God's ultimate aim, a death to which all his acts point.<sup>6</sup> Jesus is a character who occupies dual ontological categories simultaneously; he is at once mortal and divine. This conflation of identities is emphasized in John 6, where Jesus both gives bread and is that bread. Jesus' statement that his followers must "eat the flesh of the Son of Man," which is the bread which he gives (δίδωμι + ὑπέρ) them, must be understood as a statement of identity. Like the heroines of the romances, Jesus is ultimately a sacrifice who does not die, but whose flesh is nevertheless consumed. In the moment of that consumption, occurring at the level of narrative, John fully articulates Jesus' divinity in his identification with God.

## Method

I expand the study of John 6:51c–58 by bringing it into dialogue with its immediate historical context, namely, the Greco-Roman world and the Johannine

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<sup>6</sup> It is perhaps significant that in the end, like the heroines of the novels, Jesus also survives his sacrifice.

literary tradition. On the one hand, I read John 6:51c–58 as a component of a unified Gospel of John; on the other hand, I read it as a participant in the wider historical world. First, I approach John 6:51c–58 as part of a literary whole. I understand this scene to be an integral part of John’s gospel rather than an addition by a later hand attempting to insert sacramental rites. As I argue in chapter one, this section of John shares linguistic and theological affinities with the rest of the gospel despite attempts to demonstrate otherwise. I reject claims that this section is theologically incompatible with John’s supposed anti-sacramental approach, and I agree with scholars who observe this pericope’s linguistic continuity with the sections which surround it.<sup>7</sup> Further, I accept that John has been read and understood as it currently stands without much difficulty for as long as we have a manuscript tradition for it; in other words the text-critical trajectory of John 6:51c–58 gives us no reason to doubt its authenticity. Thus I follow C. K. Barrett’s argument for Johannine unity: “*someone* published it substantially as it is now stands; and I continue to make the assumption that he knew his business, and that it is the first duty of a commentator to bring out this person’s meaning.”<sup>8</sup> In fact, my present argument regarding John 6:51c–58 renders explanations involving Johannine interpolations moot.

Second, by approaching John 6:51c–58 in this way, I am necessarily

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<sup>7</sup> More recently the tide has turned and an increasing number of contributions to the debate conclude that this section of John should not be viewed as an addition; e.g. Tom Thatcher, *The Riddles of Jesus in John: A Study in Tradition and Folklore* (Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 53; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 284 n. 40; Maarten J. J. Menken, “John 6,51c–58: Eucharist or Christology?” in *Critical Readings of John 6* (R. Alan Culpepper, ed.; Biblical Interpretation Series 22; Leiden: Brill, 1997), esp. 191–202. See below, 1.3 and 1.4, for a full discussion of this debate.

<sup>8</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (London: SPCK, 1978), 22.



engaging with it as a text which exists in history and in culture. John is therefore also part of a larger whole which constitutes the diverse corpus of Hellenistic literature. Other scholars have already established that John presents many of the literary tropes used by Hellenistic authors. Jo Ann Brant and Jennifer Berenson Maclean, for instance, have both written about John's characterization of Jesus as a heroic figure.<sup>9</sup> Lawrence Wills has outlined the ways in which the Gospel of John and the *Life of Aesop* share similar literary patterns.<sup>10</sup> Most recently, Kasper Bro Larsen has argued that John makes use of a type scene common in classical literature, *anagnorisis*, or the recognition scene.<sup>11</sup> Harold Attridge's 2002 article demonstrated how John manipulates common tropes of Hellenistic literature in order to point to his own particular theological aims.<sup>12</sup> As such, my argument about John 6:51c–58 both emerges from and innovates on current approaches in Johannine scholarship. In developing this holistic approach to this section of John, and using previous Johannine scholarship alongside innovative methods for integrating Greco-Roman literary culture to its study, I offer a new solution for this troubling passage, a solution which reflects both the integrity of the gospel and its necessary participation in the ancient Mediterranean world in which it was created.

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<sup>9</sup> Jennifer Berenson Maclean, "Jesus as Cult Hero in the Fourth Gospel," in *Philostratus's Heroikos: Religion and Cultural Identity in the Third Century C.E.* (Ellen Bradshaw Aitken and Jennifer K. Berenson Maclean, eds.; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 195–218; Jo-Ann A. Brant, "Divine Birth and Apparent Parents: The Plot of the Fourth Gospel," in *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative* (Ronald Hock, et al., eds.; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 199–218.

<sup>10</sup> Lawrence M. Wills, *The Quest of the Historical Gospel: Mark, John, and the Origins of the Gospel Genre* (New York: Routledge, 1997), esp. 23–50.

<sup>11</sup> Kasper Bro Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger: Recognition Scenes and the Gospel of John* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Harold Attridge, "Genre Bending in the Fourth Gospel," *JBL* 121.1 (2002): 3–21, esp. 14.

As a text produced in the Greco-Roman world, John necessarily shares certain literary tropes and devices with other texts produced in that world. Genres are complex to define, since any genre “is never fully identical with itself, nor are texts fully identical with their genres.”<sup>13</sup> John is comparable to the genre of the novel in certain specific ways. First, chronologically, John and the novels together preserve cultural expectations of the first few centuries of the Common Era. John dates from around 90 to 100 C.E. The earliest of the novels, Chariton’s *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, dates from the early first century C.E.<sup>14</sup> *An Ephesian Tale* is likely from the second century C.E. The earliest novels also preserve the expectations of a certain geographical range—that of the Hellenistic world. Chariton’s name carries the epithet, “of Aphrodisias,” locating him in present-day Turkey in a city named for Aphrodite, located about 100 kilometres from the coast. John, whether composed in Syria,<sup>15</sup> in Ephesus,<sup>16</sup> or elsewhere, is a text that was produced in the Greco-Roman world, probably in a metropolitan centre, coming into contact with the variety of narratives available to those inhabiting the historical ancient Mediterranean. That is, while the specific provenance of John’s gospel is not relevant to this project, the fact that it was written in a milieu that was also producing the ancient romances allows for a natural comparison of these texts with the gospel.

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas O. Beebee, *The Ideology of Genre: A Comparative Study of Generic Instability* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 19.

<sup>14</sup> B. P. Reardon, “General Introduction,” in *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (B. P. Reardon, ed.; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 17. For alternate dating, see my discussion below in 2.1.

<sup>15</sup> E.g. Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament: History and Literature of Early Christianity* (vol 2; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000).

<sup>16</sup> E.g. Raymond Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979).

As most of the novels were likely composed after the Gospel of John, it should be clear that I am not arguing for a direct (or even indirect) literary dependence. Rather, I am making the suggestion that the romances preserve a way of thinking about how divinity is conferred on extraordinary humans, a way of thinking that seems, from its prevalence dating back to the Homeric texts and continuing in popularity in the novels, to have survived and thrived through the time period in which John was writing. We can use the novels as a window through which to view the *Weltanschauung* which to some extent shaped John's approach to identifying divinity in Jesus.

## **Main Themes**

### *Rituals in Ink*

In arguing that John 6:51c–58 does *not* preserve a Johannine eucharist, I remove Jesus' statement about eating and drinking his flesh and blood from the world of historical Christian ritual activity and locate it firmly in the narrative world. Just as with the Greek romances, whose cannibalistic sacrifices do not reflect any historical ritual ever really practiced, John 6:51c–58 represents a ritual that only exists in text. As I demonstrate in chapter three, tropes of human sacrifice and cannibalism are used to paint a description of a barbaric Other and do not reflect actual ritual practice of any known group, past or present. Thus, in the novels, as in other texts which describe such rites, the meaning that is produced by a 'ritual in ink'<sup>17</sup> exists not because the ritual parallels a familiar one

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<sup>17</sup> Jörg Rüpke, introduction to *Rituals in Ink: A Conference on Religion and Literary Production in Ancient Rome Held at Stanford University in February 2002*, (Alessandro

that took place in the ‘real’ historical world, but because the ritual in ink creates meaning by interacting with existing notions of what it means to sacrifice and to consume.

It is to this category that John 6:51c–58 belongs; John describes a rite which takes place only in the literary realm, but which nonetheless transmits meaning. The narrativity of the ritual is two-fold in John, since it is twice removed from the historical world: once because it is embedded in a narrative of Jesus’ life and teaching, and twice because within that narrative it is embedded in the speech of the character of Jesus. Thus two narrative levels exist in this passage: a sub-narrative describing Jesus on the shore, discussing the bread of life, and a meta-narrative, which consists of Jesus’ statements about the bread of life. Jesus’ words effect a ritual even when that ritual does not ever actually take place either (a) in the sub-narrative (i.e., Jesus’ flesh is never narratively consumed) or (b) in historical reality (i.e. this eating of Jesus’ flesh, metaphorical or otherwise, is not a reference to any actual ritual).

The narrative world produces significant and real meaning even when its events or rituals are not matched by those that take place in the real world.

If performed rituals matter in society, literary rituals must matter in texts. Rituals in ink matter. Ancient texts do not constitute a hermetically sealed realm. Texts participate in the wider society in which they were created. In that space texts have a performative dimension regardless of the mimetic or fictitious character of their embedded rituals.<sup>18</sup>

The narrative realm creates its own realities: the actions depicted in texts interrupt the ‘real’ world, the historical world, and collide with the symbols and truths of that world, producing new meanings in it. This force exists without historical

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Barchiesi, Jörg Rüpke, Susan A Stephens, eds; Stuttgart: Steiner, 2004), vii–viii.

<sup>18</sup> Rüpke, “Introduction,” vii–viii.

correlation, as in the case with the sacrificial *Scheintod*<sup>19</sup> the heroines of the novels undergo. This phenomenon, the trope of rituals that exist only in the narrative realm, is also reflected in John 6:51c–58; the flesh and blood do not point to a Johannine eucharistic practice but to Jesus’ identification with God, something that is only solidified through this consumption of his sacrificed flesh.

### *Contemporaneity*

Contemporaneity, or *die Gleichzeitigkeit*, as Bultmann terms it in the original German version of his *Gospel of John*, describes the peculiar quality of Johannine time. John has no future: everything that occurs takes place in the present moment. Bultmann describes how eschatology in John’s gospel “is taking place even now in the life and destiny of Jesus.”<sup>20</sup> That is, Jesus coming to the earth, his death, his returning to the father—all these events take place in the same moment; everything is imminent. Regarding John 6:51c–58, this concept allows us to talk about the collision of several aspects of Jesus’ characterization. His identity as the Word made flesh occurs at this moment; Jesus’ death on the cross occurs at this moment. “*Past and future are bound to each other*. That the hour of death is the hour of glorifying God rests on the fact that the entire work of Jesus serves the revelation.”<sup>21</sup> Every moment in the Johannine narrative can be said to occur at the same time—that is, contemporaneously. The moment when Jesus

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<sup>19</sup> *Scheintod* or ‘apparent death’ is a widely used element of suspense in the Greek romances whereby the heroine is shown to die or appear to die in order to confuse the identity of the female protagonist and, in so doing, develop the plot.

<sup>20</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (G. R. Beasley-Murray, trans.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 128.

<sup>21</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 429. Italics in original.

exhorts his audience to consume his flesh and drink his blood therefore collides with the overall Johannine narrative, pointing at the same time to Jesus' divinity and his mortality in the moment of his sacrificial death. These moments, colliding in John 6:51c–58, illuminate the significance of Jesus' anthropophagic words. In instigating this narrative rite of consuming his sacrificed flesh, Jesus points to all the moments of his a-temporal existence and death. That is, the meaning of John 6:51c–58 refracts into multiple concurrent moments of Johannine theology; this pericope, then, is the culmination of John's statements about Jesus' divinity and death. It is in this light that we can see Jesus' statements about consuming his sacrificed body as the signifier of his divine identity.

### *Simultaneity*

Whereas contemporaneity is a chronological term designating the intersection of two or more elements in a temporal landscape, I propose simultaneity as an ontological term that points to the intersection of multiple identities within the same being. In the Greek romance novels the protagonists are characterized by their divinity. Like those who view Jesus' signs in John, the spectators in the novels recognize the heroines as goddesses by certain external indicators. In the novels, this divinity is manifested using certain accepted tropes of epiphany, taken from the literature of the classical world and especially Homer. The nature of the relationship between mortals and divine beings in the ancient world gives way to an understanding of the heroines where, like Jesus, they are simultaneously human beings and divinities. In the ancient world, the perception

of a human being as divine—the belief that the individual is a manifestation of a divinity—is enough to make that person phenomenologically divine. Thus, when the narrative devices used in the novels describe the heroines as having radiant beauty, as being larger-than-life, and as worthy of worship by those who come across them on their travels, this suggests that the narrative is making claims about the divinity of those protagonists.

This phenomenon is clearly at play in the discussions of Jesus’ divine and mortal ontology in John’s gospel; the debate surrounding the precedence of the flesh over the glory or the glory over the flesh, which I outline in chapter one, reflects Jesus’ characterization as simultaneously divine and human. John’s insistence that Jesus is *both* fleshly (John 1:14) and divine (1:1) indicates the author’s concern with Jesus’ identity as *both simultaneously*. Jesus’ fleshly signs, his healing with spit (9:5–7a) for example, all point towards his identity as “equal to God” (5:18); all his physical signs point to his divine identity, revealed finally in that most physical of signs, his own crucified body (8:28). Thus, Jesus’ physicality implies not to the pre-eminence of flesh over glory, but the simultaneity of the two in his being. Viewing Jesus’ simultaneously divine and mortal ontology in light of the romance novels allows us to examine the significance of this simultaneity. This sliding scale of mortality creates space for the coexisting of divinity and humanity in a single character. It also suggests a further comparison which is significant for understanding the intersection of tropes of divinity and consumption in John: the category of the hero.

### *Cannibalism and Anthropophagy*

Cannibalism and anthropophagy are often used interchangeably to refer to the consumption of human flesh by other humans. Both cannibalism and anthropophagy as culturally-sanctioned behaviours are fictional;<sup>22</sup> while incidents of desperation have from time to time in the history of humanity produced situations in which the eating of human meat was necessary (under siege conditions, for example), William Arens<sup>23</sup> has convinced many anthropologists that the absence of *any* evidence for *any* population practicing cannibalism or anthropophagy means that we must seriously question its historical reality. Rather, Arens suggests, and I agree, that cannibalism instead serves as a demarcator of social boundaries between right/insider and wrong/outsider. That is, accusations of cannibalism abound, but rather than reflect real-world practices, they indicate boundary-making anxieties and identify the group accused of the practice as Other, a group outside of right society.

As such, the human sacrifices described in the romance novels do not preserve actual rituals practiced by actual groups; rather, they reflect the social expectations about right and wrong ritual behaviour, the latter exemplified by the characters of bandits and barbarians. As I propose in chapter three, the terminology used to depict the human sacrifices in the romances leaves open the thrilling possibility of a cannibalistic banquet as part of the rite, given the structure of Greek sacrifice and banqueting practices. The entirely narrative

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<sup>22</sup> For a more meaty discussion of what is at stake with these two terms, see section 3.6, especially note 151.

<sup>23</sup> William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth: Anthropology and Anthropophagy* (New York: Oxford, 1979).



existence of cannibalism coincides with the strictly narrative location of the sacrifices that take place in the course of the novels, and likewise with the wholly narrative quality of Jesus' exhortation to theophagy/anthropophagy. That is, we can understand Jesus' theophagic statement in the context of these narrative tropes: how cannibalism functions as a narrative; how divine and mortal identities can exist simultaneously in narrative; and how John's narrative condenses time into a single, contemporaneous moment that takes place at all times and at no time.

## **Outline**

The first chapter of this dissertation, "The Word Was Made Flesh," engages John's preoccupation with Jesus' divine identity by examining the christological elements both throughout the gospel (1.2) and particularly in John 6 (1.3). This chapter also challenges the theological assumptions that have often led to the interpretation of John 6:51c–58 as a eucharistic scene (1.4) and as such, discusses the issue of sacramentality in this gospel (1.5). The chapter concludes with an overview of the character of Jesus in John as a hero of the Hellenistic type (1.7) and introduces Greco-Roman concepts of divinity and mortality (1.6).

In the second chapter, "Second Only to Artemis," I introduce the four main Hellenistic romance novels relevant to this project, including a history of scholarship of the novels as literature (2.2) and as a genre (2.3). Synopses of these novels can be found in the appendices. Key to my discussion of John 6:51c–58 as christological is this chapter's discussion of how the romantic heroines are

described as goddesses (2.4 and 2.5) and likewise, their association with the classical heroes of the epics (2.6). These sections explain the translation of the association between hero and divinity noted by Nagy into a purely narrative context; whereas in Nagy's Homeric examination, such association occurs only at the historical level, leaving the antagonism to the literature, in the romances the association with the divine is written into the fabric of the plot.

"Her Viscera Leapt Out," chapter three, details the second half of the association formula: the antagonistic relationship between the heroines of the romances and their gods, a relationship which ultimately leads to the apparent-death (*Scheintod*) of the protagonist. I first give an overview of Nagy's conclusions about this phenomenon (3.2) and then outline Greek sacrificial procedure and terminology (3.3 and 3.4) and the function of human sacrifice and cannibalism in the Greek cultural imagination (3.5 and 3.6). These latter sections describe human sacrifice and cannibalism in the cultural imagination, and not in history, since, following William Arens<sup>24</sup> and others, I put forward that these tropes exist only in the literary realm and were never practiced in history. Having established cannibalism's cultural function, I then turn to how this trope works in the Greek novels (3.7) and argue that the act of sacrifice and implied anthropophagy represents the ultimate conferral of divinity on the heroines, whose deaths simultaneously occur and are avoided (3.8).

The last chapter, "My Flesh is Meat Indeed," applies the conclusions made in the previous chapters to John 6:51c–58. After a summary of these conclusions (4.1), this chapter outlines how John participates in the antagonism trope (4.2)

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<sup>24</sup> Arens, *Man-Eating Myth*.

making use of Lawrence Wills's comparisons between this gospel and the *Life of Aesop* as well as internal evidence from the gospel itself. Next, the relationship between Jesus' death and God's glory is developed using Bultmann's concept of contemporaneity (4.3);<sup>25</sup> here I make the argument that the temporal convergence of Jesus' death and his anthropophagic statements point clearly to his divine identity, an argument which reaches its completion after an analysis of how cannibalism has been used both against and by Christians as an identity marker (4.4). This discussion also illustrates another way in which John plays with what Attridge calls "genre-bending,"<sup>26</sup> the altering of traditional modes of expression in order to express new ideas. Finally, I conclude the chapter with an analysis of how the sacrificial meals of hero cults ultimately articulate Jesus' divinity through his shocking call to consume his flesh (4.5), making special reference to the verbs used in John 6:51c–58 as pointing to sacrificial language and away from a eucharistic context. As Dennis Smith shows in his discussion of the cult banquet,<sup>27</sup> the meal is often inseparable from the act of sacrifice, a cultural trope than John manipulates, I argue, in order to identify Jesus with God.

A concluding chapter follows which relates my findings to the work of two scholars: first, Kasper Bro Larsen's 2008 work on recognition scenes, and, second, Wayne Meeks's 1967 monograph, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and Johannine Christology*. The latter supports my conclusions, albeit from a different vantage point: John 6 utilizes key references to the Exodus traditions,

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<sup>25</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 198.

<sup>26</sup> Attridge, "Genre Bending," 14.

<sup>27</sup> Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 67–86.

references which Meeks argues construct Jesus' christology in John. Given that John 6:51c–58 utilizes motifs from Exodus, Meeks' conclusions bolster my proposal that this pericope contributes to the gospel's identification of Jesus as divine. Larsen's study uses the Homeric trope of the recognition scene to describe what he calls the "hybrid" identity of Jesus as both God and mortal.<sup>28</sup> Using similar methods to the present study, Larsen's work views John as participating in the literary world of the ancient Mediterranean. Our parallel approaches lead us to similar conclusions about Jesus' divine nature: that, contrary to the previous century's debates, Jesus' divinity cannot be fully described by either of the terms σάρξ or δόξα.<sup>29</sup>

This project therefore furthers the study of John's gospel through its multiple points of contact with current trajectories of Johannine scholarship. First, the methods used in this study represent a new way of approaching John. The synoptic gospels have long been compared with Hellenistic literature of the age while John has only recently begun to be approached from this perspective. The novels in particular have seldom been looked to as a source for understanding the Johannine world-view, and even less frequently as lenses with which to view John's christology. As such, this study broadens contemporary examinations of John's Jesus in light of the Greco-Roman hero by establishing literary parallels to Jesus as a character in the pattern of the hero.

Second, the conclusions I present provide new insight into the function

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<sup>28</sup> Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 219.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. below, section 1.2.

of eating and consumption in John in general and in John 6:51c–58 in particular. It has been difficult to create distance between this scene’s references to flesh and blood and the references to flesh and blood in the synoptic gospels in the context of the institution of the eucharist. By removing this pericope from a synoptic reading and locating it as participating in a narrative trope common in the ancient novels, this study shifts the conversation around this scene away from concerns of sacramental theology and towards a subject more in tune with the gospel’s clearly stated christological concerns.

Finally, in locating the type of eating presented in John 6:51c–58 in the context of the cult *aition*, I articulate not only the need for a category of narrativized rituals that do not reflect historically practiced rites (e.g. cannibalistic sacrifices) but also function of this narrative ritualized eating in John. That is, in making the connection between Nagy’s work on antagonism and symbiosis in the epics, the evolution of that pattern in the romances, and the internalization of that trope in John, I propose that the significance of Jesus’ statement in John 6:51c–58 is not a demonstration of historical community ritual practice but is instead the causal mechanism by which Jesus’ divine identity is realized. These conclusions offer new ways of understanding the function of rituals in an entirely narrative setting, and in particular ritualized eating in narrative.

## Chapter 1

“The Word Was Made Flesh”  
(John 1:14)

## 1.1 Introduction

The tension throughout the Gospel of John between the divinity and humanity of Jesus is of paramount importance for the interpretation of John 6:51c–58 because the historical debate in scholarship about this pericope revolves around its interpretation as *either* a christological or eucharistic text.<sup>1</sup> As such, to anticipate my argument, the emphasis elsewhere in this gospel, and especially in the prologue, on the relationship between Jesus’ divine and human characteristics lays the groundwork for a christological interpretation of John 6:51c–58 despite its eucharistic echoes. In John, the Word is *both* flesh (1:14) and God (1:1); John’s primary concern is in demonstrating the relationship between Jesus and the divine.<sup>2</sup> John 6:51c–58 has frequently been viewed as a eucharistic scene, inserted by a later redactor to sacramentalize a gospel long viewed as anti-sacramental at its core.<sup>3</sup> Several scholars, whose arguments will be discussed below, have argued that since John 6:51c–58 appears to them to be a eucharistic scene, it must therefore be the product of a later period in which sacramentality had become important; they argue that John’s gospel rarely has interest in sacramentality other than at this point and that the section is therefore the product of the so-called Ecclesiastical Redactor. This represents a circular argument in which a portion of John is assumed to be about a later practice (the eucharist), resulting in a redactional argument regarding its authorship. Alternate theories have refuted this

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<sup>1</sup> These terms are inherently problematic when applied to John’s gospel; please see discussion below.

<sup>2</sup> Raymond E. Brown, “Does the New Testament Call Jesus God?” *Theological Studies* 26.4 (1965): 556 n.52.

<sup>3</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John* (Francis J. Moloney, ed.; New York: Doubleday, 2003), 229–230.

assumption and its repercussions by arguing for a christological reading of John 6:51c–58, and this alternative view is helpful to my argument. These theories have nonetheless neglected the relevance of Greco-Roman literature to John's creation of Jesus' identity *vis-à-vis* the divine. One of the ways this relationship can be viewed is through the lens of the Greco-Roman category of the hero. John's representation of Jesus shares many characteristics with the Hellenistic hero. I argue that this scene, in which Jesus encourages his followers to eat his flesh and drink his blood, is better viewed in the context of John's concern with Jesus' identity. Other heroes in the classical world become associated with gods and goddesses through ritual sacrifice; the literary representation of this phenomenon is found in the Hellenistic romance novels from around the time of John's composition.<sup>4</sup> I suggest, therefore, that John 6:51c–58 is a section in which the gospel writer concretizes the identification between Jesus and God.

The context of John 6:51c–58 is Jesus' lecture on the beach of the Sea of Galilee/Tiberias (6:22ff), across the water from where he feeds the five thousand in the beginning of the chapter. Jesus has also recently performed the miracle of walking on the water (6:16–21). When the crowd confronts Jesus about his miracles, he answers with a lecture on the bread of life (6:25ff). Here, Jesus describes himself as the bread of life, which is superior to both the manna eaten in the wilderness in Ex. 16 and to that bread miraculously reproduced by Jesus the

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<sup>4</sup> *Leucippe and Clitophon* by Achilles Tatius (2<sup>nd</sup> C C.E.), *Chaereas and Callirhoe* by Chariton (1<sup>st</sup> C C.E.), *The Ephesian Tale* by Xenophon of Ephesus (2<sup>nd</sup> C C.E.), and *An Ethiopian Story* by Heliodorus of Emesa (3<sup>rd</sup> C C.E.) will be discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation.



previous day in 6:1–14. When οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι<sup>5</sup> protest that Jesus cannot possibly be from heaven as he claims, since his parents are both decidedly mortal (6:41–42), Jesus reiterates his credentials as a heavenly person sent by God and confirms his identity as the previously-mentioned bread from heaven (6:44–51b). Then Jesus makes a truly shocking claim: “the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh” (51c). That is, Jesus insists that *he* is the bread of life, and that this bread is his flesh; it is imperative for those who wish to live forever to eat this bread—that is, to eat Jesus’ own flesh. This statement is not accepted enthusiastically; again, οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι protest, saying, “how can this man give us his flesh to eat?” (6:52). Jesus is forced to clarify. But when he does, the commandment is even stronger: while in 6:51b the listener is told that those who eat will live forever—a positive statement—in 6:53, Jesus turns the commandment into a negative one and states that those who do not eat the flesh and blood of the Son of Man have *no life in them to begin with*. The negative statement’s weight shocks even his disciples: “many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, ‘This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?’ ” (6:60); “after this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him” (6:66). The context of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι questioning Jesus’ heavenly identity in 6:41–42 supports the interpretation of 6:51c–58 as christological.

In this chapter, I will strengthen the argument for this understanding of the passage by first discussing the state of the research concerning Jesus’ divine

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<sup>5</sup> I have opted to leave this term in Greek to avoid the complicated issue of how to translate it since it can either be Judeans or Jews in almost all instances in the New Testament. For a discussion of these terms see Shaye D. Cohen, “Ioudaios, Iudaeus, Judaeus, Jew,” in *The Beginnings of Jewishness* (Shaye D. Cohen, ed.; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 69–106.

identity in John. I conclude that John overlays divine and human identities in the person of Jesus by emphasizing Jesus' body and identity through the signs that he performs. Second, I will outline the scholarship dealing specifically with the christology of John 6:51c–58. I argue here that a christological interpretation dovetails with John's continued use of Jesus' body as a sign and further, that a christological interpretation obviates the need to explain away this passage as late and redactional. Third, I will engage with Bultmann's argument concerning the so-called Ecclesiastical Redactor and suggest that there is in fact no need for such an explanation given (1) the interpretation of this section as christological in meaning and (2) the continuity in language use, especially with regard to the terms σάρξ and τρώγειν, terms to which some scholars have pointed as evidence for 6:51c–58 as a later addition. Fourth, I will discuss the problem of sacramentality in John. I will particularly address the problems of John 6's interpretation as eucharistic, especially given the absence of a Last Supper institution in John. I argue that John 6:51c–58 reappropriates the sacrificial language of consuming flesh and drinking blood in order to make claims about Jesus' divine identity. The chapter will conclude with a final proposal to view Jesus using the lens of the Hellenistic hero, and in particular, the heroes and heroines found in the romance novels that circulated at the time of John's composition.

## **1.2 Johannine Christology: State of the Question**

The simultaneously human and divine category of Jesus' identity is the

subject of one of the most divisive debates in the field of Johannine studies, a debate which naturally relates most closely to this project. Generally, scholars have tended to align themselves either with a more divine reading of Jesus or a more human one. There has been little in the way of chronological consensus; the debate has numbers on either side throughout the history of scholarship. Two examples illustrate what is at stake in this debate. For instance, Paul N. Anderson, in his discussion of John's christology, notes that John O'Grady and Jerome Neyrey argued for the emphasis of the flesh on the one side and of the glory on the other, despite their work being published within a few years of one another.<sup>6</sup> As is typical, each author presents flesh and glory as opposing entities, one of which is more emphasized by John. O'Grady, in his work "The Human Jesus in the Fourth Gospel," argues that Jesus' corporeal identity is the more significant aspect of Johannine christology.<sup>7</sup> He notes that in John, unlike in Matthew and Luke, no supernatural infancy narrative points to an extraordinary birth or conception;<sup>8</sup> John's Jesus also shows emotion at the death of his friend Lazarus (11:35) and thirst and weariness along his travels, behaviours which O'Grady believes emphasize Jesus' humanity.<sup>9</sup> Further, O'Grady argues that the prologue indicates Jesus' *complete* shift from the Glorified Word to the fleshly Jesus, noting further that after the transformation, the title Logos is not used again to

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<sup>6</sup> Paul N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), 24; John F. O'Grady, "The Human Jesus in the Fourth Gospel," *Biblical Theological Bulletin* 14.2, (1984): 63–66; Jerome H. Neyrey, " 'My Lord and My God': The Divinity of Jesus in John's Gospel," *SBL Seminar Papers, 1986* (SBLSP 25; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1986), 152–171.

<sup>7</sup> O'Grady, "Human Jesus," 63–66.

<sup>8</sup> O'Grady, "Human Jesus," 63; O'Grady assumes that the virgin birth stories were known by the author of John and deliberately excluded.

<sup>9</sup> O'Grady, "Human Jesus," 63.

describe Jesus in John: “The choice of the verb “became” announces a change in the mode of being of the Logos: before he was in the glory of God; now he has taken on the lowliness of human existence.”<sup>10</sup>

Neyrey, on the other hand, centres his argument on John 6:63—“it is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless”—and concludes that John’s Jesus gives more importance to the glorified Christ than the fleshly Jesus.<sup>11</sup> Neyrey starts his argument by examining John 5:18, where Jesus is accused of blasphemy by οἱ ἰουδαῖοι in that he claims to be “equal to God.” “διὰ τοῦτο οὖν μᾶλλον ἐζήτουν αὐτὸν οἱ ἰουδαῖοι ἀποκτεῖναι, ὅτι οὐ μόνον ἔλυσεν τὸ σάββατον, ἀλλὰ καὶ πατέρα ἰδιον ἔλεγεν τὸν θεὸν ἴσον ἑαυτὸν ποιῶν τῷ θεῷ” (5:18). This accusation, according to Neyrey, presents a problem for Jesus, for while he *is* equal to God (ἴσον...τῷ θεῷ), it is not Jesus who has made (ἑαυτὸν ποιῶν) this himself, but God.<sup>12</sup> In other words, Jesus *is* equal to God, but because God made him so. Having established Jesus’ identification with God, Neyrey then argues that John emphasizes Jesus’ alien relationship to the world—that Jesus is “not of this world.”<sup>13</sup> In 6:63 Neyrey finds the definitive statement of Jesus’ identity and ties it to the cosmological reality that there is a dichotomy between heaven and earth.<sup>14</sup> Thus, Jesus is actually one part of the many sets of earthly-versus-spiritual dichotomies that Neyrey points out in John (e.g. 3:6, 6:63, 7:24, 8:15, 3:12, etc.): the spiritual part identified with God rather than with humanity.

While neither Neyrey nor O’Grady denies outright the importance of the

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<sup>10</sup> O’Grady, “Human Jesus,” 64.

<sup>11</sup> Neyrey, “My Lord,” 152-171.

<sup>12</sup> Neyrey, “My Lord,” 154-156.

<sup>13</sup> Neyrey, “My Lord,” 165-166.

<sup>14</sup> Neyrey, “My Lord,” 164.

other element of Jesus' being, each presents reasoned arguments as to why one aspect of Jesus' identity is more significant than the other. As such, this debate is but one representative of the overarching trend in scholarship when discussing the christology of John's gospel; in dichotomizing flesh and glory, Jesus' complex identity as *both* God and human can become something of an afterthought. A second example of what is at stake in this debate is the well-known discussion between Bultmann and Käsemann; for these scholars, the christological perspective of the entire gospel rests on each of their perceived emphases of John 1:14—"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father." For Bultmann, John's use of the word σάρξ indicates the human sphere *as opposed to* the divine one represented by πνεῦμα.<sup>15</sup> Bultmann takes 1:14a as the starting point for John's christology. The emphasis on the flesh, for Bultmann, indicates John's original concern for a fleshly Jesus; other christological conclusions reflect a later source.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, it is the fact that Jesus as Redeemer exists in the sphere of human fleshliness that indicates for Bultmann the main theme of the gospel: "that the Revealer is a man."<sup>17</sup> According to Bultmann, not only is the glory of God *in* the fleshly person of Jesus as the incarnate Word, but understanding this is the key to approaching God in John's Gospel; no other action will bring a person to God.<sup>18</sup>

Like Bultmann, Käsemann argues that John 1:14 is the crux of the

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<sup>15</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 62.

<sup>16</sup> Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (Kendrick Grobel, trans.; 2 vols.; New York: Scribner, 1955), 2:3-14

<sup>17</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 62n4.

<sup>18</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 64.

gospel's christology. However, where Bultmann focuses on 1:14a and the corporeality of Jesus, Käsemann emphasizes 14c, the glory of Christ, as the most significant theological point of this verse. Käsemann believes that in his christology, John reflects a docetizing tendency within early Christianity which concerned itself with the divine aspects of God and Jesus.<sup>19</sup> Käsemann takes the argument for Jesus as glorified Christ farther than Neyrey does, however; Käsemann goes so far as to deny the significance of corporeal aspect of John's christology all together:<sup>20</sup>

We must maintain emphatically that, according to the Fourth Evangelist [...] he who has become flesh does not cease to exist as a heavenly being; that he undergoes no "transformation"; and that John [...] did not feel the activity of the Word in his fleshly state to be a humiliation. [...] It is not without reason that two millennia have loved the Fourth Gospel because it portrayed Jesus as the God who walked the earth.

Even more, Käsemann argues that "there is no trace in John of a truly human Jesus, persecuted by the world and exposed to suffering and death."<sup>21</sup> The glory of Christ is the key element of God's foray into the world. It is this glory that allows Jesus perfectly to follow the will of the father, and this glory that is Jesus' primary attribute even when the Word lives in the world: *there is no transformation of the Word into flesh* for Käsemann.<sup>22</sup> For Käsemann, then, Jesus' glory is the most important aspect that Jesus brings to the earth. That the Word has become *human* is not important; that the Word in its glory has come to earth *is*. However, this perspective, to deny the humanity of Jesus as a human being on

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<sup>19</sup> Anderson, *Christological Unity*, 24; Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17* (London: SCM Press, 1968).

<sup>20</sup> Anderson, *Christological Unity*, 24; Ernst Käsemann, "The Structure and Purpose of the Prologue to John's Gospel" in *New Testament Questions of Today* (idem, ed.; London: SCM Press, 1969), 160.

<sup>21</sup> Günther Bornkamm, "Towards the Interpretation of John's Gospel" in *The Interpretation of John* (John Ashton, ed.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 99.

<sup>22</sup> Käsemann, *Testament of Jesus*, 12.

earth, has been criticized for its denial of the power of the crucifixion and for its representation instead of a docetic, pre-Johannine perspective, both of which go against both John's christology and soteriology.<sup>23</sup> Käsemann himself states that "there is no longer any room for a theology of the cross."<sup>24</sup> This contradicts Jesus' exaltation on the cross to which John 3:11–15 alludes, using as reference, like John 6:51c–58, a familiar scene from Exodus:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen; but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

Käsemann, in fact, argues that John's gospel represents a "naïvely docetic" tendency within early Christianity, and *not* the anti-docetic response that many scholars apply to the gospel.<sup>25</sup>

Another point at which Käsemann and Bultmann are at odds is the exegesis of the term ἐγένετο in John 1:14. The exegesis of this verb is hardly straightforward, despite its appearance as a simple verb. C. K. Barrett provides a helpful overview of the various problems:

It cannot mean 'became', since the Word continues to be the subject of further statements [...] The meaning 'was born' [...] would be tolerable were it not that γεννηθῆναι has just been used in this sense, and a change of verb would be harsh. Perhaps ἐγένετο is used in the same sense as in v. 6: the Word came on the (human) scene—as flesh, man. It is part of the paradox of this statement that the same word should be used of the eternal word as of the Baptist.<sup>26</sup>

Bultmann argues that its use in 1:14 indicates that Jesus' revealership, the descent of the Logos, occurs at this point, and not later at Jesus' baptism, where the text

<sup>23</sup> Käsemann, *Testament of Jesus*, 26; cf. Bornkamm, "Towards," 111.

<sup>24</sup> Käsemann, *Testament of Jesus*, 51.

<sup>25</sup> Käsemann, *Testament of Jesus*, 45; Bornkamm, "Towards," 102.

<sup>26</sup> Barrett, *John*, 165.

speaks rather of the descent of the πνεῦμα and not the λόγος.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, Bultmann denies the physical transformation of the Logos into flesh, viewable through anything other than faith alone.<sup>28</sup> Rather, part of the “offence” of the incarnation is that the glory is *not* physically visible in Jesus except through a “peculiar *hiddenness*.”<sup>29</sup> Käsemann has written a detailed response to Bultmann’s thesis. Where Bultmann sees a distinct shift in John at verse 14, Käsemann observes no such break; rather, he views ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο as a reflection or reiteration of ἐν τῷ κοσμῷ ἦν in 10a.<sup>30</sup> Haenchen observes that the gospel writer himself is vague about what is going on in 1:14 with ἐγένετο: “there is no hint of a virgin birth. Evidently how the Logos became flesh did not concern the author (or the Evangelist).”<sup>31</sup> Käsemann notices this lack of interest, too, and concludes therefore that ἐγένετο must not be a main feature of John’s theology, *contra* Bultmann. Rather, the phrase, in Käsemann’s estimation, is simply John’s way of reinforcing that “‘coming from above’ rather than the becoming flesh is probably the decisive thing for this gospel.”<sup>32</sup> This interpretation in turn supports Käsemann’s argument that “and we beheld his glory” is the key phrase with which to interpret John’s gospel, again *contra* Bultmann.

These scholarly debates represented by O’Grady and Neyrey, Bultmann and Käsemann, show the poles of this christological argument, with each scholar

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<sup>27</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 62, esp n. 4.

<sup>28</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 62.4.

<sup>29</sup> Bultmann, *John* 63.

<sup>30</sup> Käsemann, “Structure,” 154–155.

<sup>31</sup> Haenchen, Ernst, and Robert W. Funk. *A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 119. Haenchen here differentiates between the author of the hymnic portion of John 1:1-18 and the evangelist who made his own contributions to its wording and theology.

<sup>32</sup> Käsemann, “Structure,” 155.



emphatically arguing that it is *either* the flesh *or* the glory that rests at the core of John's christological message. The contention surrounding this debate between the supporters of the flesh and the supporters of the glory speaks, in my opinion, to the importance of both the divine and the mortal in John's christology. John's insistence that Jesus is *both* fleshly (1:14) and divine (1:1) indicates the author's concern with Jesus' identity as *both simultaneously*. Marianne Meye Thompson puts forward an argument which represents a shift in how the debate is formed.<sup>33</sup> Her response to Bultmann and Käsemann's christological debate rests on the interpretation of the word σάρξ in John 1:14.<sup>34</sup> Thompson looks to other locations of Johannine use of this term in an attempt to come to a definition of σάρξ by context. For her, σάρξ is, as it is for Barrett and Brown, and to some extent Käsemann<sup>35</sup> as well, the opposition of the realm of humanity to that of God. In 1:14 this is demonstrated by the use of the term in contradistinction to λόγος.<sup>36</sup> The close juxtaposition of "the Word was with God" and "the Word became flesh" highlights the contrast between the godly and the fleshly spheres for John. 14c, then, represents the ability of witnesses to testify about the glory, rather than, as it is for Käsemann, the pinnacle of Johannine christology.<sup>37</sup> For Thompson,

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<sup>33</sup> Marianne Meye Thompson, *The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

<sup>34</sup> Jaime Clark-Soules makes the argument that John uses the term σάρξ in different ways depending on the context, which is a significant contribution to this debate. She views the body of Jesus as a unification of the body and spirit, something which Jesus uniquely accomplishes on earth ("I Will Raise [Whom?] Up on the Last Day—Anthropology as a Feature of Johannine Eschatology" in *New Currents Through John: A Global Perspective* (Francisco Lozada Jr. and Tom Thatcher, eds.; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 37–38); see my complete discussion of this below in section 1.4).

<sup>35</sup> For Käsemann, the definition is a bit different; he argues that when "the Word became flesh" this indicates the coming into the *kosmos* of the *logos*, rather than the humanification of God ("Structure" 158); Barrett, *John* 164–165; Brown, *John* 1:12.

<sup>36</sup> Thompson, *Humanity*, 40.

<sup>37</sup> Thompson, *Humanity*, 42.

then, Jesus' incarnation as described in the prologue emphasizes both aspects of Jesus' identity in order to exacerbate the offence of the incarnation; this offence exists (John 6:60, 61) *because* Jesus embodies both the human and the divine.

While Thompson's argument about 1:14 diffuses the problems with dichotomizing flesh and glory to a certain degree, as I will show in the following section, it is Anderson's discussion of John's christology as a dialectical relationship between the flesh and the glory that is perhaps the most helpful here because it elaborates on the issue of how the seemingly disparate identities coexist in one being.<sup>38</sup> He argues, and I agree, that John 1:14 is indeed key to understanding the christology of this gospel. However, unlike Bultmann or Käsemann, Anderson argues that 1:14's reference to both the flesh and the glory

is a representative encapsulation of the dialectical portrayal of Jesus which runs throughout the entire Gospel. Therefore, any attempt to remove one of the poles which create the tension does violence to the central fibre of John's christology overall [...] John 1:14a and c are held together by 1:14b 'and *dwelt* among us', which suggests that John's high and low presentation of Jesus is not founded primarily on a theoretical construct, but on *experiential* ones.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, throughout the gospel, John takes care to emphasize that people experience both Jesus' corporeal and divine attributes in their encounters with him. In John 3:13–16, the author reiterates that Jesus is unique in his simultaneous earthly and heavenly natures: he is the one who has come down from heaven and whose body will be lifted up on the cross. In this early example, Jesus highlights that his identification with God depends on the lifting up on the cross of his physical body, implying that his glorification is implicated in his physical being; this concept is solidified in John 8:28 when Jesus again claims that "When you

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<sup>38</sup> Anderson, *Christological Unity*, 137-166.

<sup>39</sup> Anderson, *Christological Unity*, 162-163.

have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he.”

This correlation between the physical presence of Jesus’ flesh and the belief in the truth that Jesus is God is found throughout John’s gospel, and especially in Jesus’ healing acts. Whereas other gospels require faith prior to the miracle, such as Mark 5:34 (where a woman is healed without any physical action on Jesus’ part), 6:5–6 (where Jesus is unable to perform miracles because of the lack of faith in the local population), and 9:24 (where Jesus requires the belief of an ill child’s father before he is willing (able?) to perform a cure), in John, faith emerges out of actions; John’s emphasis of Jesus’ physical body through both Jesus’ statements and in particular his signs *causes belief* in the glory of God-as-Jesus. Embedded in a healing narrative and nestled among verses which speak of Jesus as the light in the world, John 9:5–7a highlights Jesus’ physical body by featuring his saliva: “ ‘As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world.’ Having said this, he spat on the ground, made a paste with the spittle, put this over the eyes of the blind man, and said to him, ‘Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam.’” Likewise, 10:33 concretizes the relationship between Jesus’ divinity and his physical acts of healing when Jesus is accused of claiming to be divine—here the accusation is directly linked to Jesus’ healing works in verse 32:

οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι fetched stones to stone him, so Jesus said to them, ‘I have shown you many good works from my Father; for which of these are you stoning me?’  
οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι answered him, ‘We are stoning you, not for doing a good work, but for blasphemy; though you are only a man, you claim to be God’ (10:31-33).

Here, οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι react to Jesus’ physical works in the physical world and conclude that through them, Jesus is indicating his identification as God.

The very corporeal actions that Jesus does, his signs, whether feeding

people with bread, healing the wounded with mud made from his own spit, or urging the consumption of his own flesh and blood, concretize the dialectical relationship between the Word and the flesh. The incarnation of the Word in the flesh of humanity means that the divine aspects of God and the corporeal ones of Jesus are in fact inseparable; through Jesus' physical acts his divinity is recognized. As many scholars, especially those mentioned above, have already pointed out, this dialectical relationship between the Word and the flesh is most obvious in the prologue, where the purpose and message of the gospel is set forth—namely, to identify Jesus with God—but is exhibited throughout the gospel. That the Word and God are equivalent and that the Word then became a real human being with flesh and blood are implicated so early in John's text indicate the paramount importance of a fleshly *and* divine Jesus for John's christology.

However, of all the passages in John which exemplify this concern, John 6:51c–58 is perhaps both the most significant and obscure in meaning. Insofar as the signs Jesus performs in John point consistently to Jesus' divine identity, the feeding miracle on the beach provides a context for the Bread of Life discourse in 6:51c–58 that suggests a christological interpretation. Helmut Koester argues that Jesus' signs in John underscore both the people's belief in Jesus and also Jesus' own dissatisfaction with the work these signs do in promoting belief.<sup>40</sup> In every case, the miracles performed by Jesus allow for Jesus' identity to become apparent (9:16–17, 28–33, 35–38; 10:33, 37; e.g.). Even (or perhaps especially) to

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<sup>40</sup> Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament: History and Literature of Early Christianity* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 2:190.

Jesus' opponents, Jesus' emphasis on his physical nature in his healing miracles points, somewhat paradoxically, to the (dangerous) truth about Jesus' divinity. In fact, John's author appears to take pains to point out that faith is the direct result of witnessing Jesus' miracles, even as early as the Wedding at Cana: "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him" (2:11). Not only did Jesus' miracle of the wine reveal his divine glory, it also caused belief to grow in those who followed him.

Likewise in 2:24, Jesus' miracles cause belief among the population of Jerusalem; here, however, it is Jesus who refuses to trust in the people. This contradiction is apparent throughout the gospel because for Jesus and his Johannine creator, belief because of miracles misses the point. The signs point away from themselves and to a man whose body is itself a sign (John 3:11–15). Thus, given John's preoccupation with Jesus' dual nature, it seems best to approach John 6:51c–58 as a text about Jesus' identity following the pattern of the other signs.

### 1.3 John 6 and Christology

Given the importance of Jesus' signs to Jesus' divine identification, John 6, and particularly John 6:51c–58, tell us much about the Gospel of John's ideas about Jesus' identity. John 6 participates in the pattern of John's use of signs to promote belief; for Vernon Ruland, "this entire chapter is [...] a *semeion*, an exfoliating revelation, an ever-more-dazzling theophany"<sup>41</sup> which reaches its climax in 6:51c–58. For Ruland, Jesus' body is a "sacrament" in that his very

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<sup>41</sup> Vernon S. J. Ruland, "Sign and Sacrament: John's Bread of Life Discourse (Chapter 6)" *Interpretation* 18.4 (1964), 459.

existence is the expression of God's divine glory in the person of Jesus; eating Jesus as sacrament, according to Ruland, "makes his incarnate presence operative."<sup>42</sup> Ruland further argues that just as the Word is incarnate in Jesus, so too is Jesus "incarnate" in the Bread of life; he therefore interprets the scene as primarily soteriological-eucharistic. For Ruland, all of Jesus' actions are sacramental since Jesus himself is a future sacrament. The consumption of Jesus' flesh in 6:51c–58, for Ruland, *is* the eucharistic consumption of the bread which Jesus *is*—the scene is an allusion to the eucharist which complements Johannine sacramental theology.

Bultmann's view of John's christology is formulated without the inclusion of 6:51c–58, unsurprisingly. He defines "the Johannine view of *sarx* as the human and the worldly sphere, which is transitory, illusory, inauthentic, helpless, futile and corrupting—the nothingness of man's [sic] whole existence."<sup>43</sup> The fact that Bultmann's definition of John's concept of the flesh omits 6:51c–58, where, I argue, flesh and divinity are so intermingled as to challenge Bultmann's definition, is problematic. Marianne Meye Thompson includes these verses in her definition of σάρξ but examines them out of order, since their integrity is in dispute. Nevertheless, she contests Bultmann's dismissal of the feasibility of reading these verses in the context of the flesh/glory debate and further contests his interpretation of the scene's meaning in general. Pointing out that it is unnecessary for Bultmann to assume that the verses refer to the eucharist

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<sup>42</sup> Ruland, "Sign and Sacrament," 460.

<sup>43</sup> Thompson, *Humanity*, 34, who quotes herein Bultmann, *John*, 141.

exclusively, Thompson joins other scholars<sup>44</sup> in pointing out that 6:51c may well refer to Jesus' very fleshly death on the cross.<sup>45</sup> She argues that, while Bultmann interprets the phrase "I shall give" in 6:51 as a reference to the Lord's Supper, it should actually be interpreted to refer to the gift that is Jesus' death on the cross.<sup>46</sup> Thompson supports this conclusion by pointing out the similarities between 6:51 and passages elsewhere in the gospel where Jesus speaks about his death, noticing that in these instances, Jesus emphasizes his own willingness to give up his life; verse 51 participates in this mode of discussion and should therefore be understood, according to Thompson, in that context.<sup>47</sup> Helpfully, Thompson also observes that 6:51–58 elucidates several points made earlier in chapter 6, making both their inclusion in an "original" John more palatable and their interpretation as christological more sound. In terms of the observation that this section clarifies statements made earlier in John, Thompson suggests that 6:27, "do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you," and 6:33, "the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world," collaborate with 6:51 to explain Jesus' precise meaning about his purpose on earth.<sup>48</sup> That is, in light of Jesus' typical way of talking about his death and in light of the earlier statements made

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<sup>44</sup> E.g. James D. G. Dunn, "John 6: A Eucharistic Discourse?" *NTS* 17 (1971): 330, 335–336; Edwyn Clement Hoskyns and Francis Noel Davey, *The Fourth Gospel* (London: Faber & Faber, 1947), 297; Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (London: Oliphants, 1972), 267; Rudolph Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (2 vols.; New York: Crossroad, 1982), 2:55, and D. Moody Smith Jr., *The Composition and Order of the Fourth Gospel: Bultmann's Literary Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 145.

<sup>45</sup> Thompson, *Humanity*, 45.

<sup>46</sup> Thompson, *Humanity*, 45; this allusion will have significance for my conclusions in chapter 4, where I will draw connections between Jesus' death and the type of heroic cult *aition*.

<sup>47</sup> Thompson, *Humanity*, 46.

<sup>48</sup> Thompson, *Humanity*, 46.

about eternal life, Thompson argues that John 6:51–58 should be read as a christological and soteriological statement that Jesus’ death on the cross “bestows eternal life.”<sup>49</sup>

Where I disagree with Thompson is in her contention that this statement has nothing to do with the eating of Jesus’ flesh.<sup>50</sup> In my view, the eating of Jesus’ flesh can still be read as a significant symbol in John 6 quite apart from the fact that it brings up remembrance of the eucharist both to modern scholars and ancient interpreters. The key to its meaning, I argue, lies in the Hellenistic literature prolific during John’s time, and here I especially refer to the Hellenistic romance novels; in taking a step back from the debate somewhat internal to John (glory versus flesh), variant meanings become apparent. Nevertheless, Thompson’s arguments regarding John 6:51c–58’s christological implications are useful.

Paul Anderson, as I mentioned above, also supports a christological interpretation of John 6:51c–58. According to Anderson, the Bread of Life discourse is marked by an apparent discontinuity in plot in order to alert the reader about the importance of the christological statement to follow.<sup>51</sup> Bultmann has observed that Jesus’ response in verse 26, a statement regarding the food which endures for eternal life, does not logically follow verse 25, where the people ask Jesus when he arrived. He has likewise noted the rough transition between verses 28f and 30ff; Anderson responds to Bultmann’s observations by pointing out the continued use of irony by the author of John to highlight the

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<sup>49</sup> Thompson, *Humanity*, 46.

<sup>50</sup> Thompson, *Humanity*, 47.

<sup>51</sup> Anderson, *Christological Unity*, 93–94.



“misunderstanding motif” common throughout John’s gospel as an invitation to belief in Jesus.<sup>52</sup> Thus, what Bultmann considers inconsistencies to be attributed to a redactor, Anderson interprets as a way for the author to jar the readers’ attention to the important question of Jesus’ divinity. Paul Duke’s monograph, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel*, notes that in John it is often the unanswered questions that direct the reader to “ponder and leap to new dimensions of meaning.”<sup>53</sup> Anderson argues that this section of John 6 is one of these instances: one which points to the levels of meaning couched in 6:51c–58. This discussion will become particularly helpful in the next section, when we examine the Ecclesiastical Redactor.

Bultmann, unlike Anderson and Duke, sees the incongruities in John’s gospel as evidence for the hand of the Ecclesiastical Redactor. He also argues that John 6:51c–58 is an interpolation given its contrast to the evangelist’s view on salvation. Whereas in most of John, he argues, belief in Jesus is enough for salvation, in these verses the consumption of flesh is a requirement, which must point to the eucharist.<sup>54</sup>

These verses refer without any doubt to the sacramental meal of the Eucharist, where the flesh and blood of the “Son of Man” are consumed, with the result that this food gives “eternal life”, in the sense that the participants in the meal can be assured of the future resurrection. [...] This not only strikes one as strange in relation to the Evangelist’s thought in general, and specifically to his eschatology, but it also stands in contradiction to what has been said just before. [...] Thus, we must inevitably conclude that vv. 51b–58 have been added by an ecclesiastical editor.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Anderson, *Christological Unity*, 96; cf Bultmann, *John*, 219–225.

<sup>53</sup> Paul Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 91.

<sup>54</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 218–29; see also Edmund J. Siedlecki, *A Patristic Synthesis of John VI, 54–55* (PhD diss., Saint Mary of the Lake Seminary 1956); Alan Richardson, *The Gospel According to Saint John: Introduction and Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1959), among many others.

<sup>55</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 218–219.

For Bultmann, then, not only is this section not an original part of John's gospel, but it also has little to do with Jesus' identity, with christology. However, in viewing these verses in a context other than the eucharist, I propose that it is possible to find another interpretation—one which has more to do with John's christology. Given the surprising lack of eucharistic discussion where one might expect it, the Last Supper of chapter 13, it seems odd that a redactor would choose this location to interpolate sacramental theology into the Gospel of John. Instead, it seems to fit nicely with Jesus' continued use, throughout John, of his body as a sign pointing to his true identity. This insight not only sidesteps the tricky issue of the redactor, but also resolves Bultmann's and others' perceived contradictions in John's theology.

In sum, then, I suggest that these verses, John 6:51c–58, taken as a christological statement that unites the Word with the flesh, are key to understanding John's message about Jesus' identity. If we accept that these few verses are actually integral to the message about Jesus that the final hand responsible for this gospel sought to advocate, regardless of their origin, then they should be taken into account seriously when evaluating John's christological views; it behooves scholars not to omit verses simply because they are theologically confounding to our traditional understandings of an ancient author's theological standpoint. A christological approach to this section evades the problems of a unified or fragmented John and provides space for thinking about the significance of the christological statement and its meaning. While many scholars have attempted to resolve the apparent dichotomy between christology

and soteriology-through-eucharist by rendering either one or the other void, I seek to reconcile the clearly christological statements implied and stated in John 6:51c–58 with the language of eating used therein, which has real significance for the interpretation of this passage. As I have suggested throughout and will continue to suggest, a way to resolve these two “opposing” tropes is found in the cultural expectations of the Hellenistic world as preserved in its literature.

#### 1.4 John 6 and the Ecclesiastical Redactor

Before proceeding with the details of what such a christological interpretation of John 6:51c–58 would entail, the issue of the composition of this section should be addressed. When approaching John 6:51c–58, we have seen that scholars have normally taken one of two paths: either they argue that this portion of John represents an attempt to bring in sacramental theology to a text largely devoid of it, or that it does not.<sup>56</sup> In my view, the debate can be best illustrated

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<sup>56</sup> See Herbert Klos, *Die Sakramente im Johannesevangelium* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1970), 11–44 for a thorough overview of the various opinions to that date. More recently, see Menken, “Eucharist or Christology?” 183n3 for an excellent overview of the parameters of the debate on this subject. Menken includes Jürgen Becker, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1979), 199, 219–221; Kikuo Matsunaga, “Is John’s Gospel Anti-Sacramental? — A New Solution in Light of the Evangelist’s Milieu” *NTS* 27 (1980–81): 516–524; Michel Gourgues, “Section christologique et section eucharistique en Jean VI. Une proposition,” *RB* 88 (1981): 513–515; Simon Légasse, “Le pain de la vie,” *BLE* 83 (1982): 243–261; John Dominic Crossan, “It is Written: A Structuralist Analysis of John 6,” *Semeia* 26 (1983): 3–21; J. Gnllka, *Johannesevangelium* (Die neue Echter Bibel; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1983), 53–54; Urban C. von Wahlde, “Wiederaufnahme as a Marker of Redaction in Jn 6:51–58,” *Biblica* 64 (1983): 542–549; Stanislas Dockx, “Jean 6:51b–58” in *Chronologies néotestamentaires et Vie de l’Église primitive: Recherches exégétiques* (idem., ed.; Leuven: Peeters, 1984), 267–270; Ludger Schenke, “Die literarische Vorgeschichte von Joh 6:26–58,” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 29 (1985): 68–89; H. Weder, “Die Menschwerdung Gottes: Überlegungen zur Auslegungsproblematik des Johannesevangeliums am Beispiel von Joh 6,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 82 (1985): 325–360; David G. Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon: An Investigation into the Relationship of Authorship and Authority In the Jewish and Earliest Christian Literature* (WUNT 39; Tübingen 1986), 110–114; Christof Burchard, “The Importance of Joseph and Aseneth for the Study of the New Testament: A General Survey and a Fresh Look at the Lord’s Supper,” *NTS* 33 (1987): 102–134; Udo Schnelle, *Antidoketische Christologie im*

through discussions around the interpretation of two key terms used in this section: σάρξ and τρώγειν. John's Jesus uses bread imagery in these verses and states that he himself is this bread of life. The identification of John 6:51c–58 with the eucharist arises out of the traditional association of this bread language with the Synoptic Gospels' treatment of the Last Supper discourse. Likewise, although John's Jesus does not mention wine, the fact that he urges his audience to drink his blood finds parallels with the language used in Matthew 26:26–29, Mark 14:22–24, and Luke 22:19–20. Rather, John's discussion of the bread is specifically with reference to the manna which falls from the sky in Exodus. Thus, the meanings of the Greek words for 'flesh' and 'eat' have been used variously to argue both sides of the Ecclesiastical Redactor problem.

Many scholars argue that while the verses preceding 51c discuss bread in a metaphorical sense, after 51c the tone shifts, and the eating of bread is no longer metaphorical, suggesting to some scholars that another hand is responsible.<sup>57</sup>

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*Johannesevangelium: Eine Untersuchung zur Stellung des vierten Evangeliums in der johanneischen Schule* (FRLANT 144; Göttingen 1987), 214–228; P. Stuhlmacher, "Das neutestamentliche Zeugnis vom Herrenmahl," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 84 (1987): 1–35; Lothar Wehr, *Arznei der Unsterblichkeit: Die Eucharistie bei Ignatius von Antiochien und im Johannesevangelium* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1987), 182–277; Joachim Kügler, *Der Jünger, den Jesus liebte: Literarische, theologische und historische Untersuchungen zu einer Schlüsselgestalt johanneischer Theologie und Geschichte. Mit einem Exkurs über die Brotrede in Joh 6* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1988), 180–232; C. H. Cosgrove, "The Place Where Jesus is: Allusions to Baptism and the Eucharist in the Fourth Gospel," *NTS* 35 (1989): 522–539; Peter Dschulnigg, "Überlegungen zum Hintergrund der Mahlformel in JosAs. Ein Versuch," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der ältern Kirche* 80 (1989): 272–275; Jean-Marie Sevrin, "L'écriture du IV<sup>e</sup> évangile comme phénomène de réception: L'exemple de Jn 6," *The New Testament in Early Christianity* (J.-M. Sevrin and Barbara Aland, eds.; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989), 69–83; Philippe Roulet and Ulrich Ruegg, "Étude de Jean 6: la narration et l'histoire de la rédaction" in *La communauté johannique et son histoire: La trajectoire de l'évangile de Jean aux deux premiers siècles* (J.-D. Kaestli et al., eds.; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1990), 231–247; Johannes Beutler, "Zur Struktur von Johannes 6," *Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt* 16 (1991): 89–104; to this list we must of course add Bultmann, *John*; Thatcher, *Riddles of Jesus*, 284, and others referred to throughout in the present study.

<sup>57</sup> Menken, "Eucharist or Christology?" 183n1; Smith, *Composition*, 141, 216; Bultmann argues this shift happens in 5:51b; Bultmann, *John*, 218.

Bultmann is a main proponent of this view:

These verses [6:51c-58] refer without any doubt to the sacramental meal of the Eucharist, where the flesh and blood of the “Son of Man” are consumed, with the result that this food gives “eternal life”, in the sense that the participants in the meal can be assured of the future resurrection. Thus the Lord’s Supper is here seen as the *pharmakon athanasias* or *tēs zōēs*. This not only strikes one as strange in relation to the Evangelist’s thought in general, and specifically to his eschatology, but it also stands in contradiction to what has been said just before. [...] Thus, we must inevitably conclude that vv. 51b–58 have been added by an ecclesiastical editor.<sup>58</sup>

For Bultmann, the association of eucharistic language with Jesus’ discussion of salvation in 6:51c–58 marks the crux of the problem for this portion’s originality to the Gospel. Bultmann views these verses as a demonstration of an “instrumentalistic view of the eucharist, which opposes diametrically the evangelist’s belief that faith in Jesus Christ alone is, in and of itself, efficacious.”<sup>59</sup> That is, for Bultmann, the idea that a person must perform an actual ritual activity in order to achieve what the rest of John posits can be done simply through faith contradicts the fundamental message of the text as found in the prologue; thus, John 6:51c–58, having to do with the eucharist, must be an interpolation. Bultmann’s view is that the theological opposition between this passage and the rest of John is so strong that it overrides even literary similarity as a factor in deciding its originality.<sup>60</sup> Bultmann notes that the (supposed) redactor of this section does use the style and language not only of John as a whole but specifically of the preceding section about the Bread from Heaven. He further admits that “from a stylistic point of view the sentence could have been written by the Evangelist, who also liked commenting on terms by a clause introduced by

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<sup>58</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 218-219.

<sup>59</sup> Anderson, *Christological Unity*, 110.

<sup>60</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 234, esp. n 4, where Bultmann argues that the redactor imitated the style of the evangelist.

καὶ.<sup>61</sup> Bultmann argues that, because it disagrees with his interpretation of 1:14a that the only way to God is through faith in the incarnated Word in Jesus, 51c marks the beginning of the interpolator's interpretation of what has come before: an explanation of the bread already mentioned, which is, according to 51c, in fact Jesus' flesh.<sup>62</sup> Bultmann takes this reference to flesh as a foreshadowing of Jesus' death on behalf of the world.<sup>63</sup> This is no longer metaphorical bread: this is real flesh to be eaten *as an institution*, argues Bultmann, and it is for this reason that οἱ ἰουδαῖοι are disgusted in 6:52.<sup>64</sup> Without discussion, Bultmann assumes that this eating of flesh should be understood in the context of the institution of the eucharist and not in any other gastronomic context. As a result, Bultmann determines that this section, John 6:51c–58, is the product of a hand other than that of the evangelist. In fact, Bultmann makes a circular argument. As Anderson rightly points out,

the tenability of the interpolation hypothesis assumes: a) that Bultmann's analysis of the evangelist's christology is correct; b) that his analysis of the sacramentalistic christology of 6:51ff. is correct; and c) that the christological views of 6:51c–58 *cannot* have been embraced by the author of 6:26–51b.<sup>65</sup>

Once more, the interpretation of the word σὰρξ is at the core of the solution. One side of this source-critical debate rests on John's choice of vocabulary throughout John 6:51c–58. As discussed above, Bultmann argues that for John, σὰρξ always designates the human realm whereas πνεῦμα, in opposition, consistently designates the divine realm. For Bultmann, then, σὰρξ represents the lowliness of the human condition when compared to the divine and

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<sup>61</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 234n.3.

<sup>62</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 234.

<sup>63</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 235.

<sup>64</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 235.

<sup>65</sup> Anderson, *Christological Unity*, 111.

emphasizes, especially in John 1:14, Jesus' humanity.<sup>66</sup> "The δόξα is not to be seen *alongside* the σάρξ, nor *through* the σάρξ as through an open window; it is to be seen in the σάρξ and nowhere else. [...] The revelation is present in a peculiar hiddenness."<sup>67</sup> Bultmann's view is that the divine aspect of Jesus is intentionally completely effaced by flesh.<sup>68</sup> This understanding of the term supports Bultmann's view that John 6:51c–58 is an addition, since the term σάρξ is used to refer to the eating of Jesus' body in a eucharistic context; the term does not fit into the dualistic pattern Bultmann constructs out of his interpretation of 1:14, which opposes σάρξ as human weakness to the divine πνεῦμα. Thus, in 6:51c–58, when the writer speaks of σάρξ as something heavenly, Jesus' own body, Bultmann finds this is incongruous: Bultmann's John would not refer to Jesus body as σάρξ. While linguistically Bultmann and Käsemann are in agreement that σάρξ is in opposition to πνεῦμα, Käsemann, however, interprets its use in John 1:14 to indicate that the divine aspect of glory *must* be visible in the person of Jesus, since God is now present on earth and that God in fact uses flesh *as a means* to communicate with creation; the Word could never completely *become* flesh.<sup>69</sup> Käsemann nonetheless agrees with Bultmann at least in the sense that 6:51c–58 must be a later sacramental addition.<sup>70</sup>

More recently, Jaime Clark-Soles has discussed the different uses of σάρξ and σῶμα in John, specifically with a view to determine John's eschatological

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<sup>66</sup> This term is the most important theologically as far as Bultmann is concerned, so much so that he does not discuss the term σῶμα in *John*.

<sup>67</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 63 (emphasis original).

<sup>68</sup> Bultmann, *Theology*, 2.42.

<sup>69</sup> Käsemann, "Structure," 159, 161; the debate surrounding the term ἐγένετο can be found below.

<sup>70</sup> Käsemann, *Testament of Jesus*, 32–33.

aim.<sup>71</sup> In her philological study, Clark-Soles determines that, *contra* Bultmann, σάρξ is not used to denote only human weakness, but also human *bodies*. All humans, including Jesus, have both σάρξ and αἷμα; when not used in reference to Jesus—that is, when used to describe ordinary humans—σάρξ is usually used in opposition to the spiritual, to πνεῦμα, which is a term used exclusively to describe Jesus.<sup>72</sup> However, when σάρξ *is* used of Jesus,<sup>73</sup> Clark-Soles argues that Jesus, in these instances, unites the material with the spiritual in order to create a bridge to the spiritual from the material—from the σάρξ to the πνεῦμα. That is,

*sarx* alone ends in death, just as bread alone, the kind that Moses gives (6:49), ends in death, and water alone, the kind that Jacob’s well gives (4:13), ends in death. Jesus transforms the mundane into the spiritual by his participation in the mundane. Just as the water from Jacob’s well is not necessarily negative in and of itself, the *sarx* just *is*, before Jesus transforms it by participating in it.<sup>74</sup>

Clark-Soles’s interpretation of this term is very helpful as it does away with the dichotomous, and problematic, interpretation of σάρξ wrought by both Bultmann and Käsemann. Because it prioritizes John 1:14, it also accounts for the term’s use in 6:51c–58: the invitation to consume this divine flesh creates new meaning for John, new meaning that identifies Jesus with God. This interpretation also allows for a variety of valid meanings of the term, rendering its “problematic” use in John 6:51c–58 moot as a marker of its redaction. In other words, Jesus’ use of σάρξ in 6:51c–58 refers to Jesus’ own human body in a way that emphasizes Jesus’ participation in the world in a way that transforms that world. I argue that this fleshy participation in chapter 6 is precisely what marks Jesus as divine.

Since Bultmann’s proposal, other scholars have responded with their own

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<sup>71</sup> Clark-Soles, “I Will Raise.”

<sup>72</sup> Clark-Soles, “I Will Raise,” 38.

<sup>73</sup> John 1:14a is an example outside of the disputed 6:51c–58 where such a usage occurs.

<sup>74</sup> Clark-Soles, “I Will Raise,” 37–38.



solutions to the Johannine problem represented in chapter 6. Kümmel acknowledges the theological discrepancy in the Johannine material but argues that the difficulties cannot be attributed either to the shuffling of various disparate passages or to the insertion of later sacramental material, as suggested by Bultmann.<sup>75</sup> Specifically, Kümmel rejects the argument that John 6:51b–58<sup>76</sup> is an insertion by a later redactor; he argues instead for its originality to the Gospel despite its sacramental content because, among other reasons, of its linguistic affinities to the rest of John.<sup>77</sup> Kümmel defends John’s integrity against several common charges: that it engages futuristic eschatology (Kümmel points out definitively Johannine passages where such theology occurs<sup>78</sup>); that traces of an anti-Docetic redactor can be seen in certain passages<sup>79</sup> (which he counters by citing Ockham’s Razor); and that in particular, John 6:51b–58 is the product of a redactor simply because of its theology.<sup>80</sup> Since the argument against the inclusion of this section in the “original” John is based on its theological content rather than on its linguistic differences, Kümmel argues, based on Ruckstuhl’s study, that it is wrong to argue for its existence at the hand of a redactor simply because it disagrees with scholarly expectations of Johannine interests.

Ruckstuhl’s study criticises Bultmann’s “weak” methodology and argues that there

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<sup>75</sup> Kümmel, *New Testament*, 206–207.

<sup>76</sup> Kümmel, to some extent in good company, divides the section here, at 6:51b rather than at 6:51c.

<sup>77</sup> Kümmel, *New Testament*, 209–210; Eugen Ruckstuhl, *Die literarische Einheit des Johannesevangeliums: der gegenwärtige Stand der einschlägigen Forschungen*. (Freiburg/Schweiz: Paulusverlag, 1951), 169ff, 220ff..

<sup>78</sup> John 3:5; 10:9; 12:32; 14:3; 17:24; Kümmel, *New Testament*, 209.

<sup>79</sup> i.e. 1:14–18; 5:28f; our own 6:51b–58, etc. cf Georg Richter, “Zur Formgeschichte und literarischen Einheit von Joh 6, 31–58” in *Studien zum Johannesevangelium* (Georg Richter and Josef Hainz, eds.; Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1977), 88–199.

<sup>80</sup> Kümmel, *New Testament*, 209–210.

are no stylistic inconsistencies that would lead one to believe that the section is from another hand than John's.<sup>81</sup> Ruckstuhl further argues that even theologically, there is no real barrier to John 6:51c–58 being considered indigenous to the text, given that the Bread of Life discourse given just previously could itself be considered an allusion to the Eucharist.<sup>82</sup> However generous Ruckstuhl is in giving this section of John a fair evaluation based on theology and linguistics, he, too, falls into the anachronistic trap of attempting to wedge John's understanding of Jesus and eating into categories that only appeared on the scene much later; in the end, Ruckstuhl resorts to finding sacramentality in places for which it ought not to be sought.

James Dunn proposes another, more intriguing, solution to the problem some scholars, like Bultmann, find with the source-criticism of John 6:51c–58. He suggests that, rather than assume that the section is the product of a later redactor, it is possible that the evangelist uses eucharistic language to emphasize the metaphorical nature of the ritual. In other words, Dunn proposes that the sheer unbelievability of Jesus' command in 6:51c–58 points to John's emphatic rejection of actual ritual being a necessary component of true life.<sup>83</sup> Dunn first argues that the tone and style, and even the vocabulary of this section are not incongruous with the rest of John, as others have argued.<sup>84</sup> Thus, given that the section is at most a later addition by the same author,<sup>85</sup> and therefore part and

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<sup>81</sup> Ruckstuhl, *Literarische Einheit*, 169.

<sup>82</sup> Ruckstuhl, *Literarische Einheit*, 170–171.

<sup>83</sup> Dunn, "John 6," 335.

<sup>84</sup> Dunn, "John 6," 329; Eduard Lohse, "Wort und Sakrament im Johannesevangelium," *NTS* 7 (1960–1961): 120. Arguing for linguistic coherence: Ruckstuhl, *Literarische Einheit*, 220–271; G. Richter, "Zur Formgeschichte," 35–39.

<sup>85</sup> Dunn, "John 6," 330.

parcel of the intended message of the gospel, Dunn naturally suggests that it should be viewed in light of its context in John, and therefore associates this section of John in particular—with its gory references to flesh and blood—but also the gospel as a whole to the overarching theme of Jesus' death on the cross and resultant exaltation. For Dunn, John's whole point concerning this section of the gospel is to highlight the act of Jesus' death as salvific because of Jesus' existence in the σάρξ:

It is the whole point and scandal of the incarnation for John that the Logos left the sphere of τὰ ἄνω and entered so completely the sphere of τὰ κάτω. He really became man [sic.]—σάρξ. It is this essential Gospel truth which John underlines so forcefully in vv. 51c–56.<sup>86</sup>

Thus, for Dunn, and I agree, John 6:51c–58 represents a core statement in the christological view of the gospel writer. Dunn's conclusions in this regard further lead him to evaluate critically the section's eucharistic overtones which are so frequently debated. For Dunn, John does indeed refer to the eucharist, not in such a way as to

stress the necessity of the Lord's Supper and its celebration, but rather [...] he uses eucharistic terminology with a metaphorical sense, namely, to describe not the effect of the sacrament as such, but the union of the ascended Jesus with his believing followers through the Spirit.<sup>87</sup>

Although I diverge from Dunn in his conclusion about the end purpose of this passage in some aspects, I agree with Dunn's argument that any potential allusion to eucharistic language and the practice of the Lord's Supper in John 6:51c–58 functions not as an apology for the practice as a means to salvation, but rather as a siphon to direct attention to the true method of salvation, which is Jesus' existence

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<sup>86</sup> Dunn, "John 6," 331.

<sup>87</sup> Dunn, "John 6," 331.

as *both* a god *and* a human being and therefore his death on the cross.<sup>88</sup>

While Dunn's argument may be correct in locating this scene in a christological context pointing to Jesus' eventual salvific death, I would argue that this section of John also functions in another way which is not incompatible with the above. The cross-hairs of Dunn's argument are trained specifically on the question of the sacrament and its relation to other Christian texts, comparing language, form, and content to Ignatius, Paul, and the Synoptic Gospels; in this sense, his argument is sound. However, Dunn has neglected to explore how the context of the Greco-Roman literary culture affects such a reading of John 6:51c–58; in exploring this rich source for understanding early Christian literature, I propose another option for John 6:51c–58 which participates in the christological hypotheses already mentioned but also contributes an additional argument: it is in fact the consumption of Jesus' flesh and blood in narrative that makes this christological statement possible; this will be demonstrated through a comparison with the motifs of epiphany and anthropophagy in the Greco-Roman novels.

Dunn also plays a part in the debate surrounding the interpretation of the second contentious term, τρώγειν. In this case, Dunn suggests that John here uses shocking phrases and vocabulary to emphasize the physicality of Jesus and his inevitable death:

The substitution of σάρξ for ἄρτος and of τρώγειν (to chew) for φάγειν (if the latter substitution is significant theologically) is best understood as a deliberate attempt to exclude docetism by heavily, if somewhat crudely, underscore the reality of the incarnation in all its offensiveness.<sup>89</sup>

The debate surrounding the wording of John 6:51c–58, especially with reference

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<sup>88</sup> Dunn, "John 6," 337.

<sup>89</sup> Dunn, "John 6," 336.

to the supposed Ecclesiastical Redactor and his role in the creation of John as we now have it, shows that Dunn's statement cannot be accepted without some unpacking. Certainly, the choice to use τρώγειν in vv. 54ff instead of φάγειν stands out. Many scholars<sup>90</sup> agree with Dunn that the former is a marked verb, connoting more graphic eating than the un-marked φάγειν/ἐσθίω. Vernon Ruland writes, "the graphic verb *trōgein*, recurring emphatically four times within four verses, means literally to 'crunch' his flesh."<sup>91</sup> Schnackenburg argues that the term is used to set apart the symbolic eating of the Bread of Life discourse prior to that after 51c; for him, symbolic eating is identifiable by the use of the ordinary verb while "real sacramental eating" is emphasized using the less common verb.<sup>92</sup> Bultmann, while acknowledging that "it is possible that in colloquial usage τρώγειν took on the meaning of 'eat' = 'devour', which it has in modern Greek,"<sup>93</sup> suggests that this use of the "stronger" verb enhances the shock value of Jesus' statement, again contrasting the spiritual eating of the previous passage with the actual, real eating of this passage. For Bultmann, this distinction supports his interpretation of this passage as emphatically eucharistic, since according to him, the use of this verb serves the purpose of illustrating that "the sacrament alone is real, true nourishment."<sup>94</sup>

While the above scholars differentiate between the normative and marked eating verbs, others attempt to limit the significance of τρώγειν. According to C.

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<sup>90</sup> H. Schürmann, "Joh 6:51c: Ein Schlüssel zur grossen johanneischen Brotrede," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 2 (1958): 253–254; J. J. O'Rourke, "Two Notes on St. John's Gospel," *CBQ* 25 (1963): 124–128; Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:92; L. Goppelt, "τρώγω," *TWNT*, 8:236–237.

<sup>91</sup> Ruland, "Sign and Sacrament," 450.

<sup>92</sup> Schnackenburg, *John*, 62; O'Rourke, "Two Notes," also takes this approach, as does Goppelt, "τρώγω."

<sup>93</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 236n.3.

<sup>94</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 236.

Spicq's 1980 study, the verb started out, in Classical use, as a verb which did connote the munching and chewing that animals performed on raw vegetation, and then developed into use as a verb for the eating or snacking on vegetables and fruit. By the Hellenistic period, the verb could also be used to denote the eating of the prize portion of the meal, or of the consumption of a special treat item which may have been specially prepared. He concludes:

il semble qu'à l'époque hellénistique, τρώγειν, φαγεῖν, et ἐσθίειν, soient interchangeables, mais ils ne sont pas pour autant synonymes. Si leur signification fondamentale de 'mange' au sens le plus commun est fondamentale, la fluidité sémantique de permet d'attribuer à ce verbe des nuances propres, d'abord celle de 'croquer', puis celle de manger bonnes choses, un dessert, enfin celle d'avaler et de se gorger.<sup>95</sup>

As such, it is possible that John uses the verb not to emphasize the type of eating, real or spiritual, but to emphasize the hierarchy of significance of the kinds of bread on offer: the manna is the least important; the bread offered in the feeding just previously is slightly more significant theologically, given that it is a sign; but the consumption of Jesus' body is the icing on top of the theological cake, so to speak. However, although Spicq's conclusion offers more nuanced understanding of τρώγειν and certainly reflects the overall usage of the verb in literature of the time, his conclusion nonetheless does not take into account John's pattern of use with verbs of eating.

C. K. Barrett, for one, sees no reason to assume that John meant anything other than normal eating in the verb. He notes that in previous verses, John has

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<sup>95</sup> C. Spicq, "τρώγειν, φαγεῖν, et ἐσθίειν dans le Nouveau Testament," *NTS* 26 (1980): 418. "It seems that during the Hellenistic period, τρώγειν, φαγεῖν, and ἐσθίειν were interchangeable, but at the same time not completely synonyms. If their core meaning of "eat" in the most common sense is fundamental, semantic fluidity allows the proper nuances to be attributed to these verbs, among them "crunch", and the eating of choice things, a dessert, then also also to gulp and to gorge." (Translation mine.)

used the aorist of φάγειν, which is also the aorist of τρώγειν. Now that he needs a present participle, John elects to use τρώγειν instead of ἐσθίειν. In fact, Barrett notes, John *never* uses ἐσθίειν—and even uses τρώγειν in 13:18 instead of ἐσθίειν when quoting Ps 41:10—suggesting that perhaps this verb choice is not so loaded after all.<sup>96</sup> Menken also takes this tack: he argues that, given that John avoids ἐσθίειν in favour of τρώγειν throughout the gospel, it seems that in John’s vernacular, the latter simply serves as the present tense for φάγειν. Menken, however, admits that elsewhere in the Hellenistic corpus, it is entirely possible that τρώγειν does have stronger connotations than ἐσθίειν; it is simply that in the case of John’s gospel, the difference between the verbs is irrelevant.<sup>97</sup> For Menken, and I agree, the fact that John also uses the verb when quoting Psalms confirms this conclusion.

This is not to disagree with Dunn’s proposal that John 6:51c–58 is careful to present Jesus as a physical being whose flesh could be consumed; the ordinary verb accomplishes this just as well as a specialized one, against Bultmann, Schnakenburg, and Ruland. On the contrary, John’s message here unites the corporeal, edible Jesus with the heavenly version lauded by the Docetics John supposedly writes against. Again, it is the integration of these two identities which is demonstrated by Jesus’ exhortation to eat his flesh and drink his blood. John does not, therefore, throw the divine baby out with the Docetic bathwater; the evangelist takes care to maintain Jesus’ divinity at the same time as he emphasizes his corporeality. The question, however, is if such wording does, as

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<sup>96</sup> Barrett, *John*, 299.

<sup>97</sup> Menken, “Eucharist or Christology?” 196.

Dunn argues, represent a marked incident of this kind of emphasis, an argument that I view as both unlikely and unnecessary, given the context of John 6:51c–58.

The variety of uses in the case of σάρξ and the pattern of John’s use of the verb τρώγειν resolves the issue against the necessity of a redactor, in my opinion. But another point to the question of John’s unity—one which is practical for this project—is brought up by C. K. Barrett: Barrett recommends that the gospel be read as a complete text, as it has in fact been for centuries, regardless of its compositional origins:

“if the gospel makes sense as it stands it can generally be assumed that this is the sense it was intended to make. [...] *Someone* published it substantially as it now stands; and I continue to make the assumption that he knew his business, and that it is the first duty of a commentator to bring out this person’s meaning.”<sup>98</sup>

That is, the various shifting of passages, paragraphs, sentences, and words in previous manifestations of the Gospel(s) of John is not of major importance given that the text as it stands has largely been accepted and read as-is, including John 6:51c–58, from a very early stage. (In fact, for John 6:51c–58 to be the product of a redactor, the addition must have occurred at a time before the manuscripts on which we base our manuscript tradition were written at all.<sup>99</sup>) Dodd and Brown, for two, agree.<sup>100</sup> For the purposes of this project, accepting John 6:51c–58 as part of John’s cohesive whole not only makes sense, but allows us to put to the side the problems of text-critical analysis that have plagued the history of scholarship

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<sup>98</sup> Barrett, *John*, 22; in footnote 2 he quotes Bultmann (*John*, 17): “*It goes without saying that the exegesis must expound the complete text*, and the critical analysis is the servant of this exposition. The case is only otherwise where glosses of a secondary redaction occur.”

<sup>99</sup> Kümmel, *New Testament*, 209.

<sup>100</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 290; Brown, *John*, 63–64.



in this area.<sup>101</sup>

To develop the conclusion that the text should be accepted in its present state, it might be more fruitful to take the long-standing disagreements between scholars and examine what lies behind the lack of consensus in this aspect of Johannine scholarship. That is, I posit that the dichotomy created by scholars between eucharist and christology in John 6:51c–58 points not to a problem of the textual history of John, but rather of our pigeon-holing it to fit our expectations about the text. At this point, it is important to note the problems inherent in the scholarly use of “christology” and “eucharist” to describe a text which dates to the late first or early second century. While the practice of a shared meal or an understanding about Jesus’ identity *vis-à-vis* God certainly existed by that time in the development of early Christianity, the established terminology of the dogmatic concepts comes later; established ritual patterns and established formulaic sayings may also be later developments. Thus, the date of composition for John implicates the difficulty in putting labels to the gospel’s theology. In the previous century it was widely held that John’s “sacramentalism” was far too well developed to be the product of the first century. Further, since it was assumed that the gospel and the Johannine epistles were authored by the same person, and since the letters broach the topic of church leadership and structure, they must be late; so too, then, must John.<sup>102</sup> Both the above assumptions have since dropped in

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<sup>101</sup> Further, we must also consider the possibility that if the section was added by the hand of a redactor, that the redactor did so with a view to emphasizing John’s existing christological focus. Ruckstuhl’s argument in *Literarische Einheit* that there exists linguistic continuity between John 6:51c–58 and the rest of the gospel is convincing, but of course others may need further evidence. In any case, it is entirely possible for a piece to be the product of multiple hands and nevertheless share in the theological continuity.

<sup>102</sup> Brown, *John*, 207.

prominence, largely, in both cases, due to a problem in anachronistic interpretation. “There is nothing in the theology of John that would clearly rule out final composition in the first century.”<sup>103</sup> At any rate, there is no question that John’s gospel dates to before the calcification of Christian doctrine, or at least before its iteration in some or another “official” creedal form such as the Nicene Creed of the fourth century; that is, it is safe to date John to a time in which ideas about what it meant to believe in Jesus, who Jesus was/is, and how followers of this movement ought to manifest these various understandings were all still in flux. Likewise, it is unclear whether it is possible even to speak of a coherent eucharistic theology at this stage in the development of Christianity. Although Gregory Dix’s 1945 thesis<sup>104</sup> argued that the Last Supper’s model of the eucharist became firmly established very early on in Christian communities, today this theory has been abandoned by the majority of those who research early Christian meal practices.<sup>105</sup> Thus, to discuss with any certainty John’s “christological message,” or to look for a concrete theology of the eucharist, is to some extent to put the cart before the horse.<sup>106</sup>

Thus, in examining the text in its present form—a form in which it has

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<sup>103</sup> Brown, *John*, 207.

<sup>104</sup> Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Dacre Press, 1945).

<sup>105</sup> See, for example, Paul F. Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins* (Oxford: University Press, 2004); Smith, *Symposium*; Andrew McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists: Food and Drink in Early Christian Ritual Meals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1999.)

<sup>106</sup> On another note, so, too, is to expect any overarching coherent doctrine from John’s implications about Jesus’ identity or the meaning of ritual eating in the early “Christian” community; we should not rule out that the author of John, or the multiple hands involved in the finished product, not only composed internally contradicting statements, but that the author(s) and communities may have been perfectly comfortable with such contradictions. Our methodological categories are our own and we should not mistake them for accurate representations of the theological thinking of early Christian communities. On this point see James Robinson, “Introduction: The Dismantling and Reassembling of the Categories of New Testament Scholarship” in *Trajectories Through Early Christianity* (Robinson and Koester, eds.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 1–70.

been embraced for many centuries—we are afforded the opportunity to challenge *our* notions of Johannine theology; this challenge promises to lead to theological and historical conclusions more respectful of the received gospel’s meaning for both the final hand responsible for the gospel as we have it and its early readers. That is to say, John 6:51c–58 is best understood outside of the debates of christology or eucharist, redaction or cohesion; rather, the discomfort this section exhibits when pressed into the moulds of these categories must force a change in our approach to its interpretation. As a received text as it stands, John’s rich theological meaning appears to have been read unproblematically by many Christian groups; the meaning of John 6:51c–58, then, is best uncovered by respecting its function *in situ*. Indeed, I maintain that, when read in light of its historical context and in appreciating John’s reception as a “complete” text, the eating of Jesus’ flesh has everything to do with Jesus’ identity as God rather than the institution of a eucharist *per se*. That is, John 6:51c–58 is not the product of a redactor seeking to “sacramentalize” the gospel by including several verses about the eucharist, but instead represents the penultimate demonstration, continuous with those made previously in the gospel, of Jesus’ true identity as God.

### **1.5 Sacramental Theology In John’s Gospel**

Having examined Johannine christology and its eating terminology, and having concluded that the Ecclesiastical Redactor is unnecessary here, it is now appropriate to tackle, at last, the question of John’s sacramentality. I argue that John 6:51c–58 re-forms the significance of consuming Jesus’ body in order to

point to Jesus' identity as God. This hypothesis articulates an answer to the question of the meaning of this section in a way that, on the one hand, acknowledges the eucharistic overtones of this peculiar section of the gospel, and on the other hand, rejects the necessity of explaining away John's sacramentality. I preface my argument about the meaning of this scene with a discussion of the considerable debate about its scholarly interpretation *vis à vis* the Christian sacraments. John 6:51c–58's interpretation is contested because, on the one hand, some scholars hear echoes of the eucharistic formula found in other New Testament texts, and on the other hand, John's gospel has a reputation for being anti-sacramental. The question of sacraments in John is a subject that must be treated differently than that of the sacraments in the Synoptics.<sup>107</sup> Sacrament as a term should be defined, although doing so in itself is not without problems. In the broadest terms, a sacrament is "a physical and outward sign of a spiritual and

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<sup>107</sup> Discussions of the sacraments (or lack thereof) in John's gospel include the following: Bultmann, *Theology*, 2:70–92 (Cf 1.133–152); Bultmann, *John*; R. Wade Paschal, Jr., "Sacramental Symbolism and Physical Imagery in the Gospel of John" *Tyndale Bulletin* 32 (1981): 151–176; E. Schweizer, *Ego Eimi* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1965, 1939); Dodd, *Interpretatio*; Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (London: SCM, 1953), 38–119 (this text is perhaps overzealous in its identification of sacraments in John's text); P Niewalda, *Sakramentssymbolik im Johannesevangelium?* (Limburg: Lahn, 1958); Raymond E. Brown, "The Johannine Sacramentary" in *New Testament Essays* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1965), 51–76; Francis J. Moloney, "When is John Talking About Sacraments?" *Australian Biblical Review* 30 (1982): 10–33; S. M. Schneiders, "History and Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel" in *L'Évangile de Jean. Sources, rédaction, théologie* (Martinus de Jonge, ed.; Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium XLIV; Gembloux: Duculot, 1977), 371–376; Sandra M. Schneiders, "Symbolism and the Sacramental Principle in the Fourth Gospel" in *Segni e Sacramenti nel Vangelo di Giovanni* (P.-R. Tragan, ed.; Studia Anselmiana 66; Sacramentum 3; Rome: Editrice Anselmiana, 1977), 221–235; Ruland, "Sign and Sacrament," 450–462; Raymond E. Brown, "The Eucharist and Baptism in St. John," *Proceedings of the Society of Catholic College Teachers of Sacred Doctrine*, 8 (1962): 14–37; Cyril Vollert, "The Eucharist: Quests for Insights from Scripture," *Theological Studies* 21 (1960): 404–443; E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (P. Barrett, trans.; London: Sheed & Ward, 1963); Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments* (W. J. O'Hara, trans.; New York: Herder & Herder, 1963); Barnabas Lindars, "Word and Sacrament in the Fourth Gospel," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 29.1 (1976): 49–63; Dunn, "John 6," 328–338.

inward reality.”<sup>108</sup> Bultmann’s longer definition states that

the concept “sacrament” rests upon the assumption that under certain conditions supranatural powers can be bound to natural objects of the world and to spoken words as their vehicles and mediators [...] a sacrament can be etherealized into a symbol; then a psychological effect results instead of a miraculous one.<sup>109</sup>

Both the above definitions hinge on relating the spiritual to the physical. As Anderson argues, by his definition John’s gospel is certainly full of physical manifestations of the divine truth—full of sacramentality, in short.<sup>110</sup> Jesus’ extremely physical miracles are widely argued to be demonstrations or signs of Jesus’ divine identity. Here Bultmann appears to agree, although he nonetheless supports the idea of Johannine anti-sacramentality: “it is clear that in earliest Christianity the sacrament was by no means a symbol, but a miracle-working rite.”<sup>111</sup> These “miracle-working rites” for Bultmann, though, are things such as the eucharist and baptism, both found in 1 Corinthians.<sup>112</sup> Seeing an opposition between the simple miracle-working rites in most of John and what he views as a symbolic sacrament in John 6:51c–58, Bultmann divides the gospel into sections according to his theological analysis.

Concerning the *institutional* sacraments, that is, the seven sacraments still held by the Catholic Church to this day or the two (baptism and eucharist) held by reformed churches, John’s Jesus is largely, and oddly, silent.<sup>113</sup> John 6:51c–58’s language of the blood and the flesh being consumed by Jesus’ followers certainly conjures up images of the Last Supper to anyone familiar with later Christian

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<sup>108</sup> Anderson, *Christological Unity*, 113.

<sup>109</sup> Bultmann, *Theology*, 135.

<sup>110</sup> Anderson, *Christological Unity*, 113.

<sup>111</sup> Bultmann, *Theology*, 135–136.

<sup>112</sup> Bultmann, *Theology*, 135–136.

<sup>113</sup> See Moloney, “Sacraments,” 10–33 for a thorough overview of various sacramental acts identified by scholars in John.

imagery and sacramental theology. Many scholars have argued that John's gospel simply decided to include the institution of the eucharist at John 6:51c–58 rather than including it at the Last Supper as the other evangelists do.<sup>114</sup> Especially given that in John 6 Jesus has been talking about manna in the lead up to this exhortation to consume his flesh and blood, this is not an unreasonable conclusion to draw. That is, because John 6:51c–58 appears to our eyes to use the language of the eucharist found in the synoptics, and presumably, in practice in the early church, scholars have disagreed as to whether (a) this passage refers to the eucharist and (b) whether this passage represents a later addition by a secondary editor more concerned with sacramentality. Many scholars have indeed interpreted the scene as John's version of the command to participate in this ritual, which in the other canonical gospels occurs at the occasion of the Last Supper. However, in this light, John 6:51c–58 appears out of character for John, since traditionally, the author of John is viewed as anti-sacramental; thus the section must be the product of a later editor, the Ecclesiastical Redactor, as I have outlined above in section 1.4. As I made clear in that discussion, if we remove the idea of the eucharist from our discussion of John 6:51c–58 the idea of a redactor is unnecessary and the problem of Johannine sacramentality becomes less of a problem.

Recently, an increasing number of scholars have come out against the interpretation of this scene as eucharistic, whether interpolated or not. They argue that since John ignores the sacraments, including any reference to Jesus' baptism, and includes only this ambiguous and disputed reference to the institution of the

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<sup>114</sup> See the list in Menken, "Eucharist or Christology?" 183.3.

eucharist (John's Last Supper instead involves foot-washing [13:4–16]), the section must refer to some non-sacramental aspect of Johannine theology. Paul Anderson argues that John 6:51c–58 is primarily a christological section which uses eucharistic imagery in order to appeal to a broader audience.<sup>115</sup> This interpretation is bolstered by the use of the word σάρξ which is used most memorably in 1:14, where the Word is described as having become flesh; this verse uses the same vocabulary as the flesh which Jesus' followers must eat.<sup>116</sup> Indeed, John 1:14 and John 6:51c–58 are the only two sections in John which use the word σάρξ with reference to Jesus himself.<sup>117</sup> For Anderson, the point of consuming Jesus' σάρξ is to share with Christ in his suffering, death, and resurrection: it is this inference that the disciples find so hard to swallow in John 6:60.<sup>118</sup> In another work, Anderson elaborates on his argument that the crux of John 6:51c–58 is christology: “despite the mention of ‘eating’, and Jesus’ ‘flesh’, given for the life of the world, the reference is clearly to *Jesus’ death on the cross*, not primarily the eucharist.”<sup>119</sup> Thus, christological interpretations of this section have become more common in recent years.

In fact, given John's established predilection for genre-bending,<sup>120</sup> I would suggest that it is entirely possible that the author is intentionally referencing ritual dining practices embraced by members of the early Christian community (i.e.

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<sup>115</sup> Paul N. Anderson, “The *Sitz im Leben* of the Johannine Bread of Life Discourse and its Evolving Context,” in *Critical Readings of John 6* (R. Alan Culpepper, ed.; Biblical Interpretation Series 22; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 6.

<sup>116</sup> Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John: Text and Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 182–183.

<sup>117</sup> Thompson, *Humanity*, 44; Richter, “Zur Formgeschichte,” 88–119.

<sup>118</sup> Anderson, “*Sitz im Leben*,” 6.

<sup>119</sup> Anderson, *Christological Unity*, 207. [Emphasis original.]

<sup>120</sup> Attridge, “Genre Bending,” 3–21, esp. 14.

“eucharist,” *agape* meal, etc.) in order to re-appropriate and reformulate the meaning of such ritual eating—a possibility made even more likely due to the conspicuous absence of the institution of the ritual meal in John 13. Dunn, in fact, comes close to making this assertion when he argues that

“if eucharistic language is used in vv. 53 ff., it is not that John wishes thereby to stress the necessity of the Lord’s Supper and its celebration, but rather that he uses eucharistic terminology with a metaphorical sense, namely, to describe not the effect of the sacrament as such, but the union of the ascended Jesus with his believing followers through the Spirit.”<sup>121</sup>

Dunn then settles on interpreting the scene as metaphorical;<sup>122</sup> I rather prefer to conclude that John reformulates eating language with specific view to the ritual work such language does in both narrative and community, as I propose here. Speaking to the importance of language in the creation of symbolic meaning in rituals, Udo Schnelle writes,

Dies [sc. the creation of signs in the world] vollzieht sich zu einem erheblichen Teil durch Symbole und Rituale, deren lebensweltliche Funktion darin besteht, eine Brücke “von einem Wirklichkeitsbereich zum anderen” zu schlagen.<sup>123</sup>

In John, this bridge is the call to consume Jesus’ body, and the realities are heaven and earth; that is, the act of consuming Jesus (or even the narrative description of such) creates a collision between humanity and divinity. It is, in fact, the expression of a christology which has been apparent in John throughout the gospel but which comes to a head in 6:51c–58.

I argue that Jesus’ identity as both a human and a god is concretized in

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<sup>121</sup> Dunn, “John 6,” 334.

<sup>122</sup> Dunn, “John 6,” 335.

<sup>123</sup> “This is accomplished to a considerable extent by symbols and rituals, whose ‘life-worldly’ function is to build a bridge “from one reality to another.” (My translation.) Udo Schnelle, “Das Johannesevangelium als Neue Sinnbildung” in *Theology and Christology in the Fourth Gospel: Essays by the Members of the SNTS Johannine Writings Seminar* (G. Van Belle, J.G. van der Watt, and P. Maritz, eds.; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005), 307; in this excerpt, Schnelle quotes from Alfred Schütz and Thomas Luckmann *The Structures of the Life-World* (Richard M. Zaner and H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., trans.; Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 95.



John 6:51c–58; while other scholars understand the christological statement in this passage as solely referencing or foreshadowing the crucifixion, I propose that Jesus’ identity formation in this section is better understood in light of the heroic tradition found in Homeric literature and its descendants. This approach privileges the events in John 6:51c–58—namely, the command to consume a body which has been killed (or will be killed) at the hands of a god—in a way that wholly metaphorical understandings of this scene avoid. As I will demonstrate, it is not *just* Jesus’ death that is implied in this section but also, if we take the text at its word, his consumption. In this way, I argue that the heroes of the romance novels offer the best parallel with which to understand this section of John.

## 1.6 Jesus, Heroes, and the Mortal/Immortal Divide

It is clear that John’s christological statements, in John 6:51c–58 specifically but also throughout the gospel, are concerned with the identification of Jesus as the Son of God. John, more than any other gospel, or indeed, more than the three canonical gospels combined, uses the epithet “Father” when Jesus addresses God.<sup>124</sup> Jesus himself is called “the Son” no fewer than 27 times.<sup>125</sup> Although this title is frequently used alone, in some instances, the term “Son of God” is used, often in formulaic utterances (1:34, 49; 20:31). Nevertheless, in all the instances where Jesus is called the Son, the concept is correlated with the idea of God as Father, and indeed as the divine father of Jesus.<sup>126</sup> In fact, in John, it is

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<sup>124</sup> Jarl Fossum, “Son of God,” *ABD* 6.136.

<sup>125</sup> Fossum, *ABD* 6.136.

<sup>126</sup> Fossum, *ABD* 6.136.

only Jesus who addresses God as father and only he is called God's son.<sup>127</sup> Thus, for John, Jesus' relationship to God is unique; he is God's son and God is his father.

I propose that one useful way of understanding these overlapping identities of human and god occupied by Jesus is found in the Greco-Roman tradition of the hero.<sup>128</sup> While the term "son of God" has a history in the wisdom and apocalyptic texts of early Judaism,<sup>129</sup> the phrase is also used to describe the semi-divine beings of the Greek and Roman world. Early on, Dionysus and Heracles were both described as sons of God, both having Zeus as their biological father. Closer to John's time period, Apollonius of Tyana, the miracle worker and son of Zeus was called by this epithet.<sup>130</sup> Rulers in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds were also given this title, not just as an honourific, but to signify their direct descent from a god. The Ptolemaic rulers embraced this trend, but it is with Augustus that we find the best example. Augustus, itself a term used to refer to Heracles, adopted the title *divi filius*, not only referring to his lineage tracing back to Apollo, but also to his status as the heir of the slain and deified Julius Caesar.<sup>131</sup> Horace described the Emperor Augustus as Mercury himself, sent by Jupiter for

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<sup>127</sup> The only times when this is not the case are first, when οἱ ἰουδαῖοι claim that they are in fact God's children in 8:41, a claim disputed by Jesus in the next verse, and in 20:17 when Jesus says God is the father also of his followers; this latter case occurs post-resurrection and is therefore interpreted as the eschatological transference of God's life-giving qualities to the Christian community (Marianne Meye Thompson, "The Living Father" *Semeia* 85 [1999], 19–31).

<sup>128</sup> Wills, *Quest*, 43–50 provides information on how historical early Christian communities might have imaged Jesus in the pattern of the hero.

<sup>129</sup> E.g. 4 *Ezra*; 1 *Enoch* 105.2; *Joseph and Aseneth* 6.3, 5; 13.13; 3 *Enoch* 48[C]:7; Ezek. Trag. *Exagoge*, 100.

<sup>130</sup> Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 1.6.

<sup>131</sup> Fossum, *ABD* 6:133; see the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* for an example.

the good of the human race.<sup>132</sup> Wills points out that

in the Hellenistic and Roman periods [...] a larger number of figures from the *recent* past attain a heroic cult status, whether that includes those who were sometimes considered to have one divine parent (Alexander the Great, Augustus, or Apollonius of Tyana), or mortals who have no divine parentage, especially philosophers and kings (such as Empedocles, Lysander, or Cleomenes of Sparta). It is important to note that these figures are not simply the subjects of learned discussion, but received actual cult veneration.<sup>133</sup>

Thus, the father-son relationship shared by Jesus and God in John shares features with the heroic relationship to gods in the Hellenistic world-view.

Jennifer Berenson Maclean, to give one example, points out the affinities that John's Jesus has with the hero Proteselaïos in the text of *Heroikos*. Although Berenson Maclean uses textual evidence in her examination, her real interest is the potential for the existence of a cult to Jesus in the form of the Greco-Roman hero cult, of which *Heroikos* and Proteselaïos are representatives.<sup>134</sup> John's Jesus makes an excellent candidate for this type of evaluation because of the focus in John on right ritual practices, despite not explicitly including the institution of the eucharist or baptism.<sup>135</sup> That is, the gospel is preoccupied with correct cultic behaviour (e.g. 4:20–24) even *without* clear reference to these typically Christian ritual acts. If cultic actions are those which define or maintain community, John's Jesus is very interested in issues of cult, even though his approach differs from those of the other evangelists.<sup>136</sup> Jesus' discussion in John 4:20–24 on the right type of προσκυνητής, where προσκυνέω and related terms are used ten times in the space of four verses, speaks to the idea that Jesus' mission creates true

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<sup>132</sup> Horace, *Ode* 1.2.41–45.

<sup>133</sup> Wills, *Quest*, 33.

<sup>134</sup> Berenson Maclean, "Jesus as Cult Hero," 195–218.

<sup>135</sup> Berenson Maclean, "Jesus as Cult Hero," 201.

<sup>136</sup> Berenson Maclean, "Jesus as Cult Hero," 201.

worshippers of God, not just true *believers*.<sup>137</sup>

In addition, Berenson Maclean points out the generic compatibility found by other scholars such as Lawrence Wills<sup>138</sup> between the biography of the poet-hero and the Gospel of John in particular.<sup>139</sup> Wills's study argues that the novelistic pattern of the poet-hero's life and death, including the poet's antagonistic relationship with both the city and a deity, makes it appropriate for comparison with John's structure.<sup>140</sup> Specifically, Wills suggests that *the Life of Aesop* fits the same pattern as Mark and John; for instance, all three begin at the adulthood of the main character rather than with his birth and all three involve, close to the outset, an experience from heaven.<sup>141</sup> Jesus' ambivalent relationship with the Temple and οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι also makes John's comparison to *Life of Aesop* appropriate.<sup>142</sup>

Nagy's work on the hero now becomes very relevant to the discussion: "by losing his identification with a person or group and by identifying himself with a god who takes his life in the process, the hero effects a purification by transferring impurity."<sup>143</sup> The expiatory understanding of Jesus' death is apparent in early Christian works such as 1 Cor 15:3, Rom 3:25, 1 Cor 5:7, and Mark 10:45. For Wills, this further locates the early Christian understanding of Jesus in the context of the Greco-Roman hero, though he cautions that the paradigm of the hero is more variable than a single genre could contain. Gunnel Ekroth concurs

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<sup>137</sup> Berenson Maclean, "Jesus as Cult Hero," 202.

<sup>138</sup> Wills, *Quest*, 23–50.

<sup>139</sup> Berenson Maclean, "Jesus as Cult Hero," 199.

<sup>140</sup> Wills, *Quest*, 23–50.

<sup>141</sup> *Life of Aesop* 6–7; Mark 1:10; John 1:32, 51; Wills, *Quest*, 29–30.

<sup>142</sup> Wills, *Quest*, 28.

<sup>143</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Aecheans*, 307.

with this point, saying, “a characteristic of heroes and hero cults is their heterogeneity.”<sup>144</sup> Rather, for all three of the texts Wills examines, the paradigm of the hero is narrated in a way that establishes the cult even if not all the elements are present in any given text and with the reservation that there is no single paradigm that encompasses all of early Christianity’s understanding of Jesus’ life and death.<sup>145</sup>

Returning now to Jennifer Berenson Maclean’s work, it is important to note that she is not attempting in her study to assert something about the actual identity of an historical Jesus, and neither is this project. Her study examines whether ancient Christians might have drawn on the trope of the hero as a way of locating Jesus’ identity as a remarkable human being, and it seems likely, given Wills’s study, that this is the case.<sup>146</sup> It is clearly fruitful, given both Wills’s and Berenson Maclean’s findings, to examine the problem of Jesus’ relationship to the divine by placing depictions of him alongside those of the antique heroes. Likewise, the Greek romances present the trope of the hero and heroine, following the tradition of the Homeric epics and other tales of heroes, and developing it. Although the existence of hero *cults* around characters in the novels is not attested as far as I am aware, the descriptions of the protagonists and their plights are intentionally mimetic of the trope of the hero in earlier literature: the abandonment at birth, the overcoming of adversity, and the brushes with death.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Gunnel Ekroth, “Heroes and Hero Cults” in *A Companion to Greek Religion* (Daniel Ogden, ed.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 100.

<sup>145</sup> Wills, *Quest*, 50.

<sup>146</sup> Berenson Maclean, “Jesus as Cult Hero,” 195.

<sup>147</sup> Unlike the heroes of the epics, however, the heroes of the novels are ordinary (though elite) folk without extraordinary abilities or talents (Bryan P. Reardon, “The Greek Novel” *Phoenix* 23.3 (1969): 292).

Chariton's *Callirhoe*, for example, directly quotes lines from the *Iliad*<sup>148</sup> and the *Odyssey*<sup>149</sup> and thereby provokes comparison in the audience between its characters and those of the epics.<sup>150</sup> This, according to John Morgan, "casts Chaereas as a new Achilles, so that his anger and jealousy, which power the early stages of the plot, become a re-writing of the wrath of Achilles."<sup>151</sup> Likewise, Callirhoe is both compared to and contrasted with Homeric heroines. She is no Helen, but she does bear resemblance to Penelope as a faithful wife who is able to join her husband only after harrowing adventures. In fact, Morgan points out that at the appearance of Callirhoe in the courtroom in Babylon (5.5.9), Chariton takes the association so far as to include references to the *Odyssey* (18.213) concerning the reaction of Penelope's suiters to her reappearance.<sup>152</sup> Further, Heliodorus' *Ethiopian Story* makes even more explicit the connection between the heroes of the novel and those of Homer's epics. Aside from the very structure of the work, which calls to mind that of the *Odyssey*, multiple characters in the novels become associated with Odysseus through their actions.<sup>153</sup> Especially relevant is the heroine of Heliodorus' work, Chariclea, who is patterned after the hero Odysseus because of her journey home, her ten-year exile in Delphi, and her escape by sea

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<sup>148</sup> *Iliad* 1.317 (Chariton 6.2.4); 3.146 (5.5.9); 4.1 (5.4.6); 13.131 (7.4.3); 18.22-24 (1.4.6); 19.302 (25.12; 8.5.12); 21.114 (3.6.4); 22.82-83 (3.5.6); 22.304-5 (7.2.4); 22.289-90 (5.10.9); 23.66-67 (2.9.6); 23.71 (4.1.3); 24.10-11 (6.1.8).

<sup>149</sup> *Odyssey* 1.366 (5.5.9); 4.703 (1.1.14); 6.102 (6.4.6); 15.21 (4.4.5); 17.37 (4.7.5); 17.485, 487 (2.3.7); 18.213 (5.5.9); 23.296 (8.1.17); 24.83 (4.1.5).

<sup>150</sup> Ronald F. Hock. "The Educational Curriculum in Chariton's *Callirhoe*" in *Ancient Fiction: The Matrix of Early Christian and Jewish Narrative* (Jo-Ann Brant et al., eds.; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 22; John Morgan and Stephen Harrison, "Intertextuality" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel* (Tim Whitmarsh, ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 219.

<sup>151</sup> Morgan and Harrison, "Intertextuality," 220.

<sup>152</sup> Morgan and Harrison, "Intertextuality," 220 n.3.

<sup>153</sup> Morgan and Harrison, "Intertextuality," 224.

and resulting shipwreck.<sup>154</sup> Heliodorus also references Penelope in his characterization of Chariclea's chastity, just as Chariton did when writing *Callirhoe*. Again, Heliodorus makes this connection explicit by the author with a visit from a Homeric character in 5.22.3: in an apparition, Odysseus appears to Kalasiris and sends greetings from his wife to Chariclea, "since she esteems chastity above all things."<sup>155</sup> Thus, the authors of the romance novels were not only conscious of the epics and their heroes, as was their society as a whole,<sup>156</sup> but also molded their heroes after those of Homer in order to bring out in the characters of the romantic heroes the latent connotations buried within the cultural understanding of the epic heroes.

### **1.7 The Greco-Roman Novels and Johannine Christology**

The characterization of both Jesus and the heroines of the novels as heroes in the tradition of the epics clearly participates in the expectations around, on the one hand, individuals capable of great works, and on the other hand, the literary development of the hero or heroine as characters. There are, however, further commonalities in the novels and in John besides the shared characterization with heroes, and one important device shared by the authors is the trope of mistaken identity. For John's Gospel, the identification of Jesus as God is paramount, and this importance is stressed through the anxiety about who Jesus is in relation to God. For the heroines of the novels, this is also the case. The heroes and heroines of the romance novels are, at the outset of the plot, cast down

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<sup>154</sup> Morgan and Harrison, "Intertextuality," 224-225.

<sup>155</sup> Morgan and Harrison, "Intertextuality," 225.

<sup>156</sup> See Hock, "Educational Curriculum," 15-36.

from their elite positions in society, and continually thereafter they take on lowly identities as slaves and prisoners. The quest to return to their original place in society, which is naturally also beside their beloveds, is what drives the plot of the romance. This quest of the reinstatement of right identity is obviously a key theme for John as well.

Jo-Ann Brant, in her 1998 essay, “Divine Birth and Apparent Parents: The Plot of the Fourth Gospel,” points out the importance of the Greek novels for understanding John’s christology.<sup>157</sup> In the romance novels, the main protagonists are often distanced from their biological/legitimate parents by circumstance or fate, their true identities unknown. Likewise, Brant points out Jesus’ parental abandonment (by God, on earth) and his subsequent reunion with the Father mirror that found in the novels.<sup>158</sup> There also appear to be similarities between the antagonistic relationships between the heroes and their parents, and between Jesus and his earthly parent(s). Jesus, like the heroes, is abandoned by his high-status (divine) father. Brant points out that in John’s gospel, Jesus continually distances himself from his mother, Mary (e.g. The Wedding at Cana, John 2:4a) while performing acts which make those around him question his parentage (6:42; 7:3–9; 8:48).<sup>159</sup> However, though Brant draws important parallels regarding the novels and their identity concerns, she fails to account for the fact that really, John places far less emphasis on Jesus’ earthly family than do the Synoptics. As we have seen above, it is the divine Father-Son relationship that is paramount for John. That is, for John, Jesus’ identity crisis is not one of social status, but one of divine status;

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<sup>157</sup> Brant, “Divine Birth,” 199–218.

<sup>158</sup> Brant, “Divine Birth,” 202.

<sup>159</sup> Brant, “Divine Birth,” 205–207.



conveniently, the novels, too, seem concerned with this issue.

As illustrated above, Jesus' signs and wonders all give clues to his true identity. For Brant, these miracles induce people to behave in various ways: "some rush to judgment while others remain cautious (7:25–31; 40–44: 10:19–21)."<sup>160</sup> In this way, Jesus' signs fuel the resolution of his identity crisis. Likewise, Brant argues, the appearance and beauty of the heroines provokes constant and varying responses from those who encounter Callirhoe and her fellow protagonists:<sup>161</sup> they try to molest, release, or harm these girls when their elite status is revealed. However, I would argue that it is more significant that these heroines' interactions with those around them often provoke reverence: those who encounter them see the distinct possibility that these girls are actually goddesses, recognizable by their beauty and appearance just as Jesus becomes recognizable as god through his actions. Thus, while for Brant the key element of the identity crises in the novels and in John is the parentage problem, I would argue that given the constant identification of the heroines with goddesses, the real implications for Jesus' signs are that they point not simply to his divine parentage, but to his own divinity.

The identification of the heroines with goddesses in the romances is a useful tool here for exploring this connection. In *An Ephesian Tale*, both the main characters, but especially Anthia, are mistaken for divine beings. Scarcely do we begin the novel when we hear that Anthia was often mistaken by crowds as Artemis, the patron deity of Ephesus: "Often as they saw her in the sacred

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<sup>160</sup> Brant, "Divine Birth," 206.

<sup>161</sup> Brant, "Divine Birth," 206.

enclosure the Ephesians would worship her as Artemis.” Likewise, although to a lesser degree, her beloved, Habrocomes, is also taken for a god and worshipped by the Ephesians.<sup>162</sup> When the pair is captured by pirates at the hands of a vengeful Eros, the “barbarians who had not previously set eyes on such radiance thought they were gods.”<sup>163</sup> When we are first introduced to Chariclea in *An Ethiopian Story*, she is depicted as not one, but two goddesses:

On a rock sat a girl, a creature of such indescribably beauty that one might have taken her for a goddess [...] On her head she wore a crown of laurel; from her shoulders hung a quiver; her left arm leant on the bow [...] Some said she must be a god—the goddess Artemis, or the Isis they worship in those parts.<sup>164</sup>

Chariclea is Artemis because of her weapons, a quiver of arrows and a bow; she is Isis because of her posture while tending to her wounded beloved, Theagenes.<sup>165</sup> Later, we discover that Chariclea was recognized as having divine appearance even at birth; Charikles, her adopted father states that when he took Chariclea up as an abandoned infant, he noticed that “there was something special, something godlike, about the light in the baby’s eyes, so piercing yet so enchanting was the gaze she turned on me as I examined her.”<sup>166</sup> Many times throughout the story,

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<sup>162</sup> *Ephesian* 1.1; Reardon, *Collected*, 128-129.

<sup>163</sup> *Ephesian* 2.2; Reardon, *Collected*, 139; The pair in this novel is reunited thanks to Isis, the local goddess in Memphis. Unlike other novels, the main characters in *An Ephesian Tale* worship local deities rather than the goddess whose hand originally put them on their dangerous path. Regardless, the heroes of the tale are repeatedly mistaken for gods and goddesses by those they encounter. Even novels where divine mistaken identity is not a prominent feature include some or other reference to the heroine as divine. Achilles Tatius’ *Leucippe and Clitophon* again provides examples in which the main characters are mistaken for gods. In fact, Leucippe is only recognized by Clitophon because of her likeness to Artemis. (*Leucippe* 7.15; Reardon, *Collected*, 268.) *Daphnis and Chloe* are both pretty and attractive, but it is the name of Chloe that gives rise to her identification with a goddess: “Chloe, in Greek, means “the first green shoot of plants in spring” [and is] an epithet of Demeter, protectress of young plants.” (*Daphnis*, 1.8; Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, in *Collected*, (Christopher Gill, trans.; Reardon ed.), 291n.6.

<sup>164</sup> *Ethiopian* 1.2; Reardon, *Collected*, 354-355.

<sup>165</sup> Heliodorus, *An Ethiopian Story*, in *Collected* (J. R. Morgan, trans.; Reardon, ed.), 355n.3.

<sup>166</sup> *Ethiopian* 2.31; Reardon, *Collected*, 404.

Charicleia's beauty, and particularly the radiance of her eyes, is described.<sup>167</sup> This trope is used frequently in Homer's epics and elsewhere as a means of identifying the presence of gods, as I will demonstrate in chapter two.

The strongest association between a heroine and a deity, however, is found in Chariton's *Callirhoe*, where the titular heroine is many times described as having beauty and appearance of a goddess. In the first instance, a general description is given of her beauty and its likeness to that of Aphrodite, the patron deity of Chariton's home-town. In the second, later on in the first chapter, Callirhoe is again mistaken for a goddess, but this time it is Artemis.

When she saw it was the man she loved, Callirhoe, like the flame in a lamp that is on the point of going out and has oil poured into it, at once grew bright again and bigger and stronger. When she appeared in public the whole crowd was struck with wonder, as when Artemis appears to hunters in lonely places; many of those present actually went down on their knees in worship.<sup>168</sup>

Here, the resemblance to Artemis is so striking that some who have come to witness the wedding between Chaereas and Callirhoe actually believe they are in the presence of the goddess, and they worship Callirhoe as Artemis. Again in 1.14, after Callirhoe has been kidnapped by the tomb robbers and is about to be sold as a slave, she is mistaken for a goddess. In 1.14 it is Aphrodite: "Leonas and all the people in the room were awestruck at the sudden apparition—some of them thought they had seen a goddess, for people did say that Aphrodite manifested herself in the fields."<sup>169</sup> Once again, those who see Callirhoe mistake her for the deity because of her radiant appearance and great beauty. Leonas, her purchaser, is reminded (ironically) that it is impossible for the girl he has

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<sup>167</sup> Also 8.2, 8.9, 10.9 e.g.

<sup>168</sup> *Callirhoe* 1.1; Reardon, *Collected*, 23-24.

<sup>169</sup> Reardon, *Collected*, 36.

purchased to be both a slave and beautiful; after all, his master Dionysius says, “the poets say beautiful people are the children of gods.”<sup>170</sup> Callirhoe’s identification with Aphrodite is further enhanced with the mention by the other servants of the appearance of Aphrodite in the area, and the insistence that when Callirhoe goes to pray at Aphrodite’s shrine, she will think she is looking at a picture of herself.<sup>171</sup> When she does go to the shrine, her master, Dionysius, happens upon her and believes he is in the presence of Aphrodite rather than his own slave girl. He prostrates himself and prays to Callirhoe as if she were the goddess herself.<sup>172</sup> Dionysius has to be told by his slave Leonas that the woman he is addressing is not in fact a goddess, and at first he does not believe Callirhoe to be mortal, scolding his servant for addressing the goddess with impiety. When we come to Callirhoe’s marriage to Dionysius, again, the crowd mistakes her for their goddess, Aphrodite.<sup>173</sup>

However, as with the classical heroes of the epics, the gods in the novels are not always looking out for the best interests of the protagonists. In these novels, the deities for whom the girls are mistaken are also responsible for the strife that gives rise to the plot of the novels. In *Callirhoe*, Aphrodite acts as the deity responsible both for the couple’s happiness and their distresses; Callirhoe’s frequent mis-identification as the goddess cements the mortal Callirhoe and the immortal Aphrodite together, both because of Callirhoe’s radiant features and the strife she experiences at the hands of the goddess. Callirhoe, when pressed to visit

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<sup>170</sup> *Callirhoe* 2.1; Reardon *Collected*, 38.

<sup>171</sup> *Callirhoe* 2.2; Reardon *Collected*, 39.

<sup>172</sup> *Callirhoe* 2.3; Reardon *Collected*, 40.

<sup>173</sup> *Callirhoe* 3.2; Reardon, *Collected* 53.

Aphrodite's shrine, is conscious of the animosity between her and Aphrodite. She exclaims, "Even here it is the goddess Aphrodite who is the cause of all my troubles! But I will go; I have a lot I want to reproach her for."<sup>174</sup> Callirhoe holds the goddess responsible for her fate; first her love for Chaereas when she appeared in the festival to the goddess (1.1), and as a result, for her fate throughout the tale.

The uneasy relationship that Jesus has with his real, heavenly, father is therefore not just a reflection of the parent-child anxiety that pervades the novels; it is rather more indicative of the god-hero antagonism and association spoken of by Gregory Nagy and Jennifer Larsen. First Nagy, and then Larsen, building off his arguments, argue that "antagonism between a hero and god in myth corresponds to the ritual requirements of symbiosis between hero and god in cult."<sup>175</sup> For the heroines of the romance novels, their association with the goddesses is apparent throughout their troubles, but at the same time the goddesses are, in fact, responsible for the plight of the star-crossed lovers. The elite origins of the parents of Callirhoe and the other heroines are uncertain after they leave the comforts of their homelands; *their* identity is uncertain. Perhaps they are low-born slaves, run away from their masters, but on the other hand, the novels raise the distinct possibility that the heroines are actually Artemis, or Isis, or Aphrodite. In classical heroine cults, virgin heroines are often associated with Artemis simply by virtue of being virgins at the time of their deaths;<sup>176</sup> in novels,

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<sup>174</sup> *Callirhoe* 2.2; Reardon, *Collected*, 40.

<sup>175</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 121; Jennifer Larson, *Greek Heroine Cults* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 116.

<sup>176</sup> Larson, *Greek Heroine Cults*, 117.

the heroines are mistaken for the patron deities responsible for the fates of the protagonists.<sup>177</sup> That is, they are directly associated with the main deities of the plot in the same way that the male heroes in the epics are.

Likewise, Jesus' identity with regard to his high-status father, who left him to be raised on earth rather than in heaven, is not certain. His signs and wonders point to his identification *with* god the father (7:3); they do not merely identify his genealogical origins, as Brant suggests. The identification of Jesus with the divine is further developed at Jesus' trial. In 19:7 Jesus is accused of claiming to be the son of God based on his performance of necromancy on Lazarus in John 11:47–48. That the very reason for his death is that he does his father's will not only conforms to the novels' preoccupation with parent-child antagonism,<sup>178</sup> but further, suggests an even closer relationship between Jesus and his heavenly father in the light of the divine-mortal antagonism present in the romances. While Charikleia is almost sacrificed by her father in *An Ethiopian Story* (10:16ff), and is saved through eventual obedience to her father's will, Jesus *is* crucified in the end, and through his death displays *not only* his obedience to his father but also, as I will show, his own divinity. In fact, according to Nagy, the moment of a hero's death represents the closest interconnection between the hero and the god who is his ritual antagonist. When Achilles confronts the god Apollo in Book XX of the *Iliad*, an act which foreshadows the hero's death, he is described by the *Iliad* as "*daimoni isos*" or "equal to a daimon."<sup>179</sup> Jesus himself,

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<sup>177</sup> In this aspect, the novels follow a pattern more typical of male heroes' associations with gods than the type for the classical female heroine.

<sup>178</sup> Brant, "Divine Birth," 208.

<sup>179</sup> *Iliad* 20.447; Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 143-144.

in John 3:14–15, points to his death as the ultimate sign that proves his divinity; and even further, in 5:18, John places the phrase “ἰσον [...] τῷ θεῷ” in the mouths of Jesus’ accusers, who eventually bring him to the trial which leads to his death. As such, it seems not only appropriate, but also necessary to contextualize Jesus’ statements regarding his identity in the heroic literature and cults of the Greco-Roman world. For John 6:51c–58, this will provide a new understanding of what it means to consume Jesus’ flesh which takes into account the antagonism (and its resolution) between Jesus, οἱ ἰουδαῖοι, and God. The romance novels and their renewal of the heroic genre provide an appropriate lens with which to view John’s Jesus and it is to these texts that we now turn.

## Chapter 2

“Second Only To Artemis”  
(*Leucippe and Clitophon* 7.15)



## 2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I illustrated how the Gospel of John is preoccupied with the identity of Jesus as simultaneously human and divine and I argued that this divine identity is established in John 6:51c–58. It is clear that John is particularly concerned with Jesus’ divinity; the prologue in particular sets the tone for the rest of the gospel. But discussions of his identity even preface John 6:51c–58: in 6:42, the crowd questions his identity by referring to his earthly parents. This preoccupation suggests that the Bread of Life pericope be understood as referring to Jesus’ identity as divine. I make this suggestion in opposition to interpretations that view the scene as reflecting a Johannine eucharistic practice. The terminology of eating, though unusual compared to the synoptic gospels, cannot be seen as out of line with the rest of John’s vocabulary, nor, indeed, with normal Hellenistic Greek usage for his time. This passage is not a redactor’s attempt at inserting a reference to the eucharist; rather, this pericope references the consumption of a deity in order to point towards Jesus’ divinity, that is, his association with God. Given this scene’s reference to Jesus’ expiatory death in the context of these statements about consumption, I argue that the hero traditions of the Greco-Roman world provide illumination for its meaning. These traditions are preserved, around John’s time, in the Greek romances, which also reflect anxiety about establishing the divine identities of their protagonists.

This chapter will focus on the representation of the main characters, the heroes and particularly the heroines, of the Greek romance novels of the early centuries of the Common Era in order to examine the ways in which heroines (and

sometimes heroes) are depicted using imagery that associates them with the gods. The use of this imagery provokes ordinary characters in the novels to assume the heroines are deities, such as Artemis and Aphrodite. I will argue that this “mistaken” identity occurs so commonly as a trope in these novels because of the similar association between heroes and gods in classical literature. This identification becomes all the more significant when the heroine is later put through many trials, often including her ritual sacrifice and consumption by those practicing non-normative/foreign modes of ritual. I argue that the imagery used to describe the heroines and heroes in the novels associates them with a goddess or god in a way that is particularly significant when the character becomes a sacrificial victim, something that will be discussed in the third chapter, and in a way that becomes particularly significant to the interpretation of Jesus’ command to eat his flesh and drink his blood in John 6:51c–58, which will be discussed in chapter four.

The Greek romances which receive the most regular scholarly attention are those written by Chariton, Xenophon of Ephesus, Achilles Tatius, Longus, and Heliodorus. These range in date from as early as the first century C.E. to the third century; others of the genre date both earlier (*Ninus* is dated to as early as the first century B.C.E.) and towards the end of that range (the *Alexander Romance* or *Apollonius King of Tyre*, both third century C.E.).<sup>1</sup> However, there is much debate concerning the dating of these texts, and often “the margin of doubt varies from a couple of decades to a century or more.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Reardon, *Collected*, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Reardon, *Collected*, 5.

*Chaereas and Callirhoe*, composed by Chariton of Aphrodisias, is called by Reardon the first “extant work of Greek prose fiction” despite the fact that the fragmentary *Ninus* probably predates it.<sup>3</sup> The text itself is usually dated to sometime in the first century C.E. based on Chariton’s lack of atticism (fashionable after the late first century),<sup>4</sup> but there are some who, like Papanikolaou<sup>5</sup> and Hägg,<sup>6</sup> claim that the author’s Greek places him more firmly a century earlier. The story itself is set in the fourth century B.C.E. in Miletus but contains several anachronistic elements better suited to a date in the common era.<sup>7</sup> In this way, *Chaereas and Callirhoe* is in good company with other novels of this genre in that it participates in the historiographical works that enjoyed well-established popularity at this time.<sup>8</sup> According to Reardon, this technique also may have been used to provoke interest in the audience, much as our present-day novels are often set in an historic or imagined past.<sup>9</sup>

Likewise, the reader’s interest would have been held by Chariton’s frequent reliance upon quotations and allusions from Homer and Xenophon of Athens; Ronald F. Hock’s essay, “The Educational Curriculum in Chariton’s *Callirhoe*” indicates that readers of Chariton, despite it being considered low-brow literature, would not only have been educated in the classical texts but

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<sup>3</sup> Reardon, *Collected*, 17; cf. Gerald N. Sandy, trans., “Ninus” in Reardon, *Collected*, 803.

<sup>4</sup> Reardon, *Collected*, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Antonios D. Papanikolaou, *Chariton-Studien Untersuchungen zur Sprache und Chronologie der griechischen Romane* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1973).

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Hägg, *The Novel in Antiquity*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 6.

<sup>7</sup> For example, the author notes an Athenian expedition against Sicily in 415–413 but reflects the siege of Tyre by Alexander the Great in 332; Reardon, *Collected*, 18.

<sup>8</sup> Reardon, *Collected*, 18; Heliodorus’ *Ethiopica* is another—though later—example.

<sup>9</sup> Reardon, *Collected*, 18.

would also have caught the many references to them in Chariton's work.<sup>10</sup> This is particularly significant for the problem of ancient literacy, first, and the demographic of the readership of the ancient novel, second. That women were thought to be the main consumers of this genre is widely assumed; this fact must be reconciled with the large number of Homeric references in Chariton and other authors' works. Further, it appears that Chariton takes as fact that women could write and receive letters throughout his text, such as when Callirhoe writes a letter to Dionysius (8.4.5) and when she promises to correspond with Queen Statira (8.4.8). According to Hock, "such compositional skills are possible with a secondary education, the stage, Cribiore says, when aristocratic young women ended their education."<sup>11</sup> Thus, it appears that aristocratic women at least would have been familiar with the works of Homer and others, having received instruction in these texts in the primary and secondary education they received, making such a readership possible. However, it is also the case, since Homer made up such a large part of the Hellenistic curriculum, that, as Shakespeare is today often quoted by those who neither have read the Bard nor know the quotation's origin, an ordinary population in the Hellenistic world might be capable of hearing references and echoes to Homer without having received formal instruction in the texts. To this Hock responds that in fact the act of literacy itself is produced through careful study of "the divine poet" and his

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<sup>10</sup> Hock, "Educational Curriculum," 15–36.

<sup>11</sup> Hock, "Educational Curriculum," 23. See Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 74–101 for a detailed discussion of women's education.

texts.<sup>12</sup> Chariton's reliance on (in particular) Homeric texts in describing his characters and in giving them voice indicates a conscious mimesis of, or even homage to, those texts; it is therefore no surprise that the heroines in the romances are painted in terms of the heroines of the previous era.

While other novels are well preserved, often in multiple manuscripts due to the resurgence in popularity of the novel in the Byzantine age and in the Renaissance, Chariton's story is preserved in only one complete manuscript from the thirteenth century.<sup>13</sup> The text is also preserved in fragments found in Egypt which date to the second century C.E., the large number of which supports *Chaereas and Callirhoe's* popularity in the ancient world, or at least in Egypt. The fact that this—the earliest full novel—is preserved only “by the skin of [its] teeth” in one manuscript illustrates the lowly status the romantic genre bore at the time of its original distribution,<sup>14</sup> a fact which finds its most well-known proof in a quotation specifically about Chariton by Philostratus in one of his third-century letters to dead persons: “To Chariton: You think that the Greeks will remember your words when you are dead; but those who are nobodies when they exist, what will they be when they exist not?”<sup>15</sup> For a synopsis of the plot of this novel, see

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<sup>12</sup> Hock, “Educational Curriculum,” 20.

<sup>13</sup> Reardon, *Collected*, 19.

<sup>14</sup> Reardon, *Collected*, 19.

<sup>15</sup> Philostratus, *Ep.* 66; quoted in Stefan Tilg, *Chariton of Aphrodisias and the Invention of the Greek Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 79; on the reference of this passage to Chariton see B. E. Perry, *The Ancient Romances: A Literary-Historical Account of their Origins* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 98–99; Bryan P. Reardon, *The Form of Greek Romance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 46–47; Ewen L. Bowie, “Philostratus: Writer of Fiction,” in *Greek Fiction: The Greek Novel in Context* (J. R. Morgan and Richard Stoneman, eds.; London: Routledge, 1994), 181–182; Ewen L. Bowie, “The Readership of the Greek Novels in the Ancient World,” in *The Search for the Ancient Novel* (J. Tatum, ed.; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 444–445; Ewen L. Bowie, “The Ancient Readers of the Greek Novels,” in *The Novel in the Ancient World* (Gareth Schmelling, ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 102.

## Appendix A.

*An Ephesian Tale* probably dates from the second century C.E. The novel was composed by one Xenophon of Ephesus, an author who also wrote a history of Ephesus. His fictional work, *An Ephesian Tale*, was originally ten chapters as opposed to the five that are extant and so it appears that what we have preserved is an epitome rather than the entire work.<sup>16</sup> Xenophon drew from a number of sources for his tale, including Euripides' *Electra* and even Chariton's novel.<sup>17</sup> In common with the latter are the two major elements: tomb robbery (Chariton 1.7–10, Xenophon 3.8) and the fact that both couples are married before the adventure begins.<sup>18</sup> As such, Xenophon's work has been called clichéd; however, Anderson argues that it would be better to treat the romance as a folktale rather than as a piece of literature, since this allows for a more nuanced understanding of some of the literary characteristics of the novel.<sup>19</sup> The fact that the tale appears to have been abridged may explain the religious inconsistencies it displays, along with some of the other "faults" scholars have found with the plot and characterization. Anderson, however, takes a different approach. Regardless of the degree of shortening to which the text was subjected, he argues that the differing affiliations to various gods and goddesses (Helios, Isis) is rather the result of Xenophon's interest in local deities; while other novels' heroes retain loyalty to one goddess throughout the narrative, Xenophon's characters worship the deity of the location in which they happen to be. For Anderson, this is representative of what probably

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<sup>16</sup> Xenophon of Ephesus, *An Ephesian Tale* (Graham Anderson, trans.,) in Reardon, *Collected*, 125.

<sup>17</sup> Anderson, *An Ephesian Tale*, 125–126.

<sup>18</sup> Anderson, *An Ephesian Tale*, 126.

<sup>19</sup> Anderson, *An Ephesian Tale*, 126.

was the normal case of events in the ancient world—the syncretism and the lack of concern for exclusive religious loyalty represent “a vivid picture of contemporary popular religious attitudes.”<sup>20</sup> Like Chariton’s *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, *An Ephesian Tale* is extant in only one manuscript, the same one in which we find Chariton’s work. However, unlike Chariton, Xenophon’s language is atticized to some degree, so that his prose at times seems pedantic in the same way that affected English prose sounds to modern ears. For a synopsis of the plot of this novel, see Appendix B.

*Leucippe and Clitophon*, by Achilles Tatius, was most likely written in the third quarter of the second century C. E.<sup>21</sup> The novel is extant in several manuscripts dating from the second to fourth centuries, a fact which indicates that *Leucippe and Clitophon* was one of the more popular Greek novels, at least in Egypt,<sup>22</sup> where Achilles Tatius is said to have lived and written.<sup>23</sup> The text is entertainingly written, with many allusions to classical works, alliteration, puns, and other word play; its writing style perhaps explains what appears to have been its positive reception in the ancient world. For a synopsis of the plot of this novel, see Appendix C.

*An Ethiopian Story*, by Heliodorus, is the longest of the extant Greek novels from this time, reaching (in Reardon’s edition)<sup>24</sup> a mammoth 235 pages where Chariton has 102, Xenophon 42, and Achilles Tatius’ work 109. In addition to

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<sup>20</sup> Anderson, “An Ephesian Tale,” 126–127.

<sup>21</sup> Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* (John J. Winkler, trans.) in Reardon, *Collected*, 170; Tim Whitmarsh, *Narrative and Identity in the Ancient Greek Novel: Returning Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 261.

<sup>22</sup> Winkler, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, 170.

<sup>23</sup> According to the *Souda*; Winkler, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, 170.

<sup>24</sup> Reardon, *Collected*.

sheer length, Heliodorus' work is more complex than the other romances in its structure and execution. At its opening, we are thrust into a tale which has already begun:

The smile of daybreak was just beginning to brighten the sky, the sunlight to catch the hilltops, when a group of men in brigand gear peered over the mountain that overlooks the place where the Nile flows into the sea at the mouth that men call the Heracleotic. They stood there for a moment, scanning the expanse of sea beneath them: first they gazed out over the ocean, but as there was nothing sailing there that held out hope of spoil and plunder, their eyes were drawn to the beach nearby. This is what they saw: a merchant ship was riding there, moored by her stern, empty of crew but laden with freight. [...] But the beach!—a mass of newly slain bodies, some of them quite dead, others half-alive and still twitching, testimony that the fighting had only just ended.<sup>25</sup>

This approach to the structure of the novel creates a yearning in the reader to uncover the meaning behind the events he or she has just heard described; in other romances, the adventures undertaken by the heroine and hero can sometimes develop into endless loops of misadventure. Here, Heliodorus avoids this problem by inverting the structure so that the tale must resume mid-adventure, but also must be traced back in time to find the events origins. In terms of date, there is no consensus, although most scholars date the text to the fourth century “on the basis of perceived borrowings from the emperor Julian;”<sup>26</sup> however, others date the text to the third and even second centuries.<sup>27</sup> For a synopsis, see Appendix D.

## 2.2 History of Scholarship on the Hellenistic Romance

A survey of previous scholarship both serves highlight the appropriateness of my analysis in the context of the study of the ancient novel at the same time as

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<sup>25</sup> Heliodorus, *An Ethiopian Story* (J. R. Morgan, trans.) in Reardon, *Collected*, 1.1.

<sup>26</sup> Whitmarsh, *Narrative and Identity*, 262.

<sup>27</sup> Simon Swain, *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World AD 50–250* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 423–424.



it points out the lacunae which led me to my current explorations. Previous work on the romance novels is not as extensive as it is for texts which were, for a long time, perceived as more respectable; it certainly is not the behemoth that is Johannine scholarship. This history of scholarship, however, is useful in tracing the development of the field; currently, there is a strong foundation of literary, socio-historical, narrative, and even religio-historical criticism for the Greek romances. On the one hand, similarities between the novels and other Greco-Roman literature, including histories, epics, and plays, elucidate the tropes I identify; on the other hand, certain previous conclusions about the religious themes in the romances require discussion in order to clarify what my study does not do. On this foundation, and making use of many of the tools others have laid before me, I build my argument.

The term “novel,” and likewise, “romance,” are certainly terms which originate out of literary criticism from modern times; however they are now applied by scholars of ancient literature to describe certain Greek (and Latin) narratives that depict the love and adventure tales written by the authors listed above.<sup>28</sup> The novel represents a rather late invention in Greek literature,<sup>29</sup> although Greek fiction as a whole goes back at least to Homer. The novels came to scholarly attention most memorably in the work of Erwin Rohde in 1876, in his book, *Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer* (*The Greek Romance and its Precursors*). Since then, the field has developed significantly and multiple works

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<sup>28</sup> Ronald F. Hock, “The Greek Novel” in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament* (David Aune, ed.; SBL Sources for Biblical Study 21; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 125.

<sup>29</sup> Simon Swain, “A Century and More of the Greek Novel,” in *Oxford Readings in the Greek Novel* (*idem* ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3.

are published every year, each of them making reference, still, to Rohde's opus. Rohde's understanding of the novel was shaped by his belief that it was the product of a post-Socratic, individualistic world in decline.<sup>30</sup> In some ways, he reads the social-historical situation as a sort of foreshadowing of the socio-historical situation which produced the modern novel centuries later.<sup>31</sup> In other respects he calls attention to what he viewed as the influence of the Second Sophistic movement on the novels, especially in their characterization of the male protagonists.<sup>32</sup> His dependence on this idea forced him to locate the novels in a later historical period than is currently accepted; he named *An Ethiopian Story* as the earliest novel at the second century C.E. and placed the others even later. As research in the field developed and *Ninus* was determined to have been written at the latest by the first century C.E. (and probably earlier), this position became untenable and was abandoned.<sup>33</sup> However, the pull of the Second Sophistic as a replacement for the "base Asianism" that nineteenth-century scholars often viewed as a perversion of the Greek culture of the Hellenistic period remained strong.<sup>34</sup> The discussion of the role of Atticization, the intentional "purification" of the Greek language in an attempt to return to a classicized style, became a hallmark of debates around the novels. This view often accompanies the idea that Atticization served to revive the degenerate Hellenistic literary culture, as the Romans of the late Republican period viewed it. However, current scholarship

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<sup>30</sup> Swain, "Greek Novel," 15.

<sup>31</sup> Swain, "Greek Novel," 15; Swain notes the heavy use of Wagner in Rohde's work and therefore the influence of German romanticism on his work.

<sup>32</sup> Swain, "Greek Novel," 16; Erwin Rohde, *Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1914; repr., Kérenyi, ed., 1960), 549.

<sup>33</sup> Swain, "Greek Novel," 17.

<sup>34</sup> Swain, "Greek Novel," 17.

favours approaching Greek literature of this period on its own terms and therefore has come to problematize the notion that Atticization reflects a reforming tendency as far as the Greeks were concerned.<sup>35</sup> That is, Greek literature is a reflection of the dynamism of Hellenistic culture, which preserves also the religious tensions and assumptions of the time. This is important to bear in mind for our study of John 6:51c–58 because it reminds us that literature is the product of a culture of ideas and that John was part of that world.

Much of the dating of the novels comes directly from the level of Atticization identified in the text. Wilcken, writing after Rohde but nonetheless paying his respects to the more senior scholar, argued that *Ninus*, for example, could have been Ptolemaic, but that its Atticism points to a more likely date of the first century B.C.E.<sup>36</sup> “Wilcken’s dating [of *Ninus*] encouraged a rebellion against Rohde’s totalizing masterpiece and may be said to have shaped all major scholarship till fairly recent times.”<sup>37</sup> Although Rohde had never denied the possibility that the novels as a genre may have existed prior to his late dating, an earlier date allowed for more light to be shed on the novels and related texts, such as satirical imitations of that form. Wilcken’s dating also paved the way for other scholars to publish their dissenting opinions, which became increasingly direct after Rohde’s early death in 1898.<sup>38</sup>

Rohde was concerned with uncovering the connection between the rise of the novel as a genre and what he viewed as the decline of the classical world in the

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<sup>35</sup> Swain, “Greek Novel,” 17.

<sup>36</sup> U. Wilcken, “Ein neuen griechischer Roman,” *Hermes* 28 (1893): 161–193, esp. 191–193.

<sup>37</sup> Swain, “Greek Novel,” 18.

<sup>38</sup> Swain, “Greek Novel,” 19.

form of the Hellenistic and Roman periods. His insights into the individualization of Hellenistic Greeks and the increase in erotic poetry and novels were a hallmark of his research.<sup>39</sup> However, Rohde's innovations in looking at the novels from a socio-historical perspective were not embraced by the scholarly community at large until later. Perry's *The Ancient Romances* (1967) also supports the idea that a rise in individualism was at the root of the rise of the novel, a form which he viewed as a more accessible genre compared with the epic.<sup>40</sup> But immediately after Rohde's publication, other, literary rather than socio-historical, approaches were offered.

First, in 1896, Eduard Schwartz suggested that the genre of the novel arose out of the historiography of the Hellenistic period. Schwartz, like Rohde, proposed that the novel emerged only after the second century C.E., and he therefore saw its development as the bastardization of historiography with 'orientalized' rhetoric and poetry.<sup>41</sup> Schwartz identified the erotic poetry localized around Alexandria as a major influence of the romantic aspects of the novel but minimized the significance of the travel narratives that are a major aspect of the romantic genre. The identification of historiography as an influential force on the creation of the genre is important and was overlooked by Rohde.<sup>42</sup> The fact that many of the novels, as discussed above, allude to historical elements and events makes historiography a likely candidate for generic influence.

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<sup>39</sup> Rohde, *Der griechische Roman*, 127–128.

<sup>40</sup> Swain, "Greek Novel," 19.

<sup>41</sup> Schwartz, *Fünf Vorträge über den griechischen Roman*, (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1896). Schwartz explains the problem of Ninus by understanding it as the first example of such a decline from historiography.

<sup>42</sup> Swain, "Greek Novel," 20.

Second, Otmar Schissel von Fleschenberg made a connection between the longer romantic novels and collections of shorter stories that he argued showed the novelists how to frame their plots.<sup>43</sup> He argued that Aristides' *Milesiaka* was an example of the type of tale which would have provided a context for the longer novels; indeed, even the title of this work is reminiscent of the titles employed by the Hellenistic novels proper.<sup>44</sup> This approach was later taken up in 1965 by Fritz Wehrli; he argued that these novellas, because they occurred both within the romances and in Petronius and Apuleius, showed the early relationship between the collected short tales and the novels.<sup>45</sup>

Third, following Schwartz, Bruno Lavagnini published "Le origini del romanzo greco" (1922) in which he argued that the novels' romantic bent emerged from the individualistic desire to read about one's self and therefore about love.<sup>46</sup> This conclusion certainly owes something to Rohde's socio-historical interpretation of the origins of the novels. To this approach, Lavagnini adds the relationship to Alexandrian poetry suggested by Schwartz and further suggests that, since the poetry's audience was largely elite, the resulting stories were expanded and enlarged to appeal to a broader audience unfamiliar with the rhetorical and literary forms with which well-educated individuals were familiar.<sup>47</sup> Lavagnini's proposal therefore provides a link to the Hellenistic poetry

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<sup>43</sup> Otmar Schissel von Fleschenberg, *Entwicklungsgeschichte des griechischen Romanes im Altertum* (Halle a.S.: Niemeyer, 1913); for opposing views, see Rohde, *Der griechische Roman*, 606–608, 612–613.

<sup>44</sup> Swain, "Greek Novel," 20.

<sup>45</sup> Fritz Wehrli, "Einheit und Vorgeschichte der griechisch-römischen Romanliteratur," *Museum Helveticum* 22 (1965): 133–154.

<sup>46</sup> Swain, "Greek Novel," 21; Bruno Lavagnini, *Le origini del romanzo greco*, (Mariotti: Pisa, 1921).

<sup>47</sup> Swain, "Greek Novel," 21.

and the Second Sophistic movement by way of the novels.<sup>48</sup> At the same time, his theory allows for *Ninus*'s dating and generic categorization to stand unproblematically in the context of the emergence of the romance genre. As a result, Lavagnini's work was well received by his colleagues; his theories were reiterated in 1962 by Giuseppe Giangrande's survey of the history of the novel.<sup>49</sup>

While thus far in the history of the scholarly treatment of the novel there had been more-or-less continuity in ideas and approaches, from literary to socio-historical to a combination of the two, in 1927, Karl Kerényi presented a new approach to the field based on the religious meaning of the novels rather than their historical or literary origins. This is worth exploring, since although Kerényi does focus on the religious aspects of the novels, I disagree with his methods and therefore also with his conclusions. A proponent of the history of religions school, Kerényi was interested in exploring the religious developments of the Hellenistic era and later; he viewed the increase in mystery and private religions as evidence of a crisis of faith in the old religious systems which further pointed to a desire for individual salvation rather than for public or state protection.<sup>50</sup> Kerényi reduced the novels to reiterations of the Isis and Osiris myth. He argued that the religious aspects of the novels were clues to their date and origin, tracing the stories back to that Egyptian myth.<sup>51</sup> Naturally, chief among his examples was the

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<sup>48</sup> Swain, "Greek Novel," 21.

<sup>49</sup> Giuseppe Giangrande, "On the Origins of the Greek Romance," *Erano* 60 (1962): 132–151.

<sup>50</sup> Swain, "Greek Novel," 22; Kerényi, *Die Griechische-Orientalische Romanliteratur in religionsgeschichtlicher Beleuchtung* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1927). The linear evolution from state to personal salvific religion "naturally" culminated in the Christian religion.

<sup>51</sup> See A. D. Nock's review in *Gnomon* 4.9 (1928): 485–492 for an evaluation of Kerényi's contributions; see also D. S. Robertson's comments in *The Classical Review* 42.6 (1928): 230–232, where he describes Kerényi's book as "immensely learned and very interesting"

*Metamorphoses* of Apuleius and its base-text, *Lucius or the Ass*. Reinhold Merkelbach's work elaborated on Kerényi's proposal by arguing that the romances functioned as sacred texts for the mystery religions. For him, *Metamorphoses* was not a novel in its own right but a cipher for the Isiaic mysteries.<sup>52</sup> The other novels were metaphors for the initiations of other mystery cults according to Merkelbach, who aligned various details in the texts with specific rites in each cult. Neither of these theories, Kerényi's nor Merkelbach's, is widely accepted, and today the trend of viewing the novels as evidence of social, literary, or religious decline is dying out.

Ben Perry's seminal work on the ancient novels, *The Ancient Romances: A Literary-Historical Account of their Origins*, rejected to some extent the previous models proposed for the origins of the romance novels. He disagreed that the genre emerged gradually out of existing historiography or poetry, but at the same time recognized the influences of earlier texts, and especially Xenophon's *Cyropedia*. His famous statement about the creation of the first novel "on a Tuesday afternoon in July" indicates that he privileges the creation of a work in a specific socio-historical context while acknowledging the role of the author and his/her innovation.<sup>53</sup> He dates its origin extremely early—the late second century B.C.E., in fact—and proposes that *Ninus* was not the first of its kind. According to Perry, the novel functioned as entertainment for the average individual in a world where people were relocating all over a vast empire; as such, it would have appealed to readers in cosmopolitan areas who either came

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but "seriously marred by the author's lack of balance and common sense."

<sup>52</sup> Swain, "Greek Novel," 23.

<sup>53</sup> Perry, *Ancient Romances*, 175.

into regular contact with foreigners or were foreigners themselves—in short, people alienated in a world constantly looking to a past golden age. Perry likened the novel to the “latter-day epic” and called it “the natural medium for a reading public.”<sup>54</sup> Although Perry’s work remains influential in the field, very few people agree with his placement of the origins of the novel at such an early date. As discussed above, Chariton’s work, largely accepted as the earliest completely preserved example of the genre, is most commonly dated to the end of the first century C.E. and *Ninus* slightly earlier. From other evidence, this period of time shows itself to be a time in which Greek culture was not in the least one of disenchanted or disenfranchised foreigners, nor one only remembering a long-gone glorious past; rather, and especially with the Second Sophistic in mind, it was a culture bursting with cultural creativity and confidence, which is likewise reflected in the romantic genre.<sup>55</sup>

As a result of this, and more recently, scholars have begun to focus on the literary innovation and intelligence of the novels rather than on their origins in the degeneration of a once-complex society. The shift in approach is the result of a better understanding of Greek society under Roman domination and the literature produced by Greeks in that time.<sup>56</sup> Some of the recent studies in the field have exposed the high degree of literary allusion and the elevated rhetorical techniques used by the novels, techniques which must have developed out of the Hellenistic educational system; the presence of these aspects of the novels suggests that, far from being the degenerate literature they were thought to be in the previous

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<sup>54</sup> Perry, *Ancient Romances*, 29, 72, 79.

<sup>55</sup> Swain, “Greek Novel,” 25.

<sup>56</sup> Swain, “Greek Novel,” 26.



century's scholarship, the novels may have been read by an educated, perhaps even elite, demographic. On the other hand, well-educated, intelligent, elite individuals frequently read unsophisticated literature.<sup>57</sup> In any case, an attempt to define the readership more clearly has therefore become an important part of the field, although this is not a significant aspect for this study.<sup>58</sup> Related to this task are the ramifications of the prominence of the female subject in the novels. Brigitte Egger's work in this field has shown that the position of the women in the romances is not necessarily an indicator of their respect in the social setting of the Hellenistic world.<sup>59</sup> The readership question as a whole has re-opened the problem of dating, since the division between "presophistic" and "sophistic" novels is no longer tenable.<sup>60</sup>

In sum, then, the novels represent an innovative genre which reflects the religious dynamism and culture of the ancient world while at the same time continuing the literary traditions which preceded them; they are not the "bibles" of mystery cults, nor do they represent the decline of a civilization or its literature. Rather, the romances ought to be studied as texts which preserve clues about the cultural and religious world of the ancient Mediterranean.

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<sup>57</sup> A modern example might be Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series.

<sup>58</sup> S. Bartsch, *Decoding the Ancient Novel: The Reader and the Role of Description in Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Swain, "Greek Novel," 27; Bowie, "Readership," 435–459; Bowie, "Ancient Readers," 87–106; Susan A. Stephens, "Who Read Ancient Novels?" in *The Search for the Ancient Novel* (J. Tatum, ed.; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 405–418.

<sup>59</sup> Brigitte Egger, "Zu den Frauenrollen im griechischen Roman. Die Frau als Heldin und Leserin," *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel 1* (1988): 33–66; repr. "The Role of Women in the Greek Novel: Woman as Heroine and Reader" in *Oxford Readings in the Greek Novel* (Simon Swain, ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 108–135.

<sup>60</sup> Swain, "Greek Novel," 28; cf. Perry, *Ancient Romances*, 98; Tomas Hägg, "The Parthenope Romance Decapitated?" *Symbolae Osloenses* 59 (1983): 61–92; Hägg, "Orality, Literacy, and the 'Readership' of the Early Greek Novel," in *Contexts of the Pre-Novel Narrative: The European Tradition* (R. Eriksen, ed.; New York: Mouton du Gruyter, 1994), 47–81; also Bowie, "Ancient Readers," 95–100.

### 2.3 The Novel in its Context

In order to compare the use of imagery in Hellenistic literature and its antecedents and the ways in which this imagery reflects the religious views of the ancient world, a certain number of caveats should be outlined at the outset. First, of course, is the obvious problem of genre. Reardon outlines aspects of the novel which are considered elemental to the genre:

Most of them offer a mixture of love and adventure; it would seem that as the form increased in sophistication, the proportion of adventure declined, and the theme of love was treated less simplistically than in the earliest stages. Hero and heroine are always young, wellborn, and handsome; their marriage is disrupted or temporarily prevented by separation, travel in distant parts, and a series of misfortunes, usually spectacular. Virginity or chastity, at least in the female, is of crucial importance, and fidelity to one's partner, together often with trust in the gods, will ultimately guarantee a happy ending.<sup>61</sup>

What unites these texts beyond these components is their fictionality. The Homeric treatment of the Trojan War, however it might differ from actual historical events, is at least rooted therein.<sup>62</sup> The novels, on the other hand, do not pretend to be historically rooted even when they reference historical events. Of course, the boundary between the two genres, history and fiction, is notoriously blurred. Historiography enjoyed popularity in the Hellenistic age, and so it is no wonder that, just as Herodotus' works included fantastical elements, fictional works, such as Lucian's *True Stories*, reflect the genre of historiography, and others, such as our canon of romances, attempt to insert historical realism into their plots. Some histories, such as the *Cyropaedia*, or *Education of Cyrus* by Xenophon of Athens has novelistic elements<sup>63</sup> that indicate the division is not so

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<sup>61</sup> Reardon, *Collected*, 2.

<sup>62</sup> Reardon, *Collected*, 1.

<sup>63</sup> Reardon, *Collected*, 3.

clearly defined for the ancients as it is to present society. Rather, ancient writers, such as Celsus, seemed to have trouble distinguishing between fiction and history, as Celsus' discomfort with the Gospels illustrates.<sup>64</sup> That Celsus approached the Gospels as records of historical fact that, because of their fantastic content, required disputing (in the form of a fictional conversation, no less) indicates the uneasiness Celsus felt in determining the genre of the works in question. No less can one see the difficulty Origen faces refuting Celsus on his charges that the Gospels are fiction since Origen himself admits that history and historical documents include fictitious events: "we are embarrassed by the fictitious stories which for some unknown reasons are bound up with the opinion, which everyone believes, that there really was a war in Troy between the Greeks and the Trojans."<sup>65</sup> That is, how can a person evaluate what is history (a genre one assumes is factual at its core) and fiction (a genre one assumes is false at its core) when the genres seem so hopelessly mixed up? On the other side of that coin—that fictions themselves contain historical facts—Bowersock reminds us that

in reading fiction we must be able to accept the historical context, even though we know it is not real. It must fall within the boundaries of the possible and represent what for the reader would be credible. That is why Sextus Empiricus described fictions (πλάσματα) as describing things that resemble what really happens. Julian obviously understood this too when he denounced πλάσματα that were created in the form of history.<sup>66</sup>

That is, just as historical texts seem to have been 'infiltrated' by half-truths, wishful thinking, and legendary tales, so too have fictional works something to say about the historical reality which produced them, whether explicitly or

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<sup>64</sup> G. W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 4–6.

<sup>65</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I.42 (Chadwick).

<sup>66</sup> Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 51. For Sextus Empiricus' descriptions, see *Adversus Math.* I.263–269.

implicitly.

Beyond these considerations, there is also the question of where the genre of the romance ends and another begins: should the Jewish novels<sup>67</sup> (e.g. *Joseph and Aseneth*), travel narratives, and utopian literature be treated as belonging to this type of creative literature or as distinct from it? To some extent, each instance of the novel genre represents a divergence from an imagined “pure” form, so that any purist definition relegates to the fringe most of the examples of the Hellenistic romance. A generous definition, such as Reardon’s above, is more useful for the discussion of the genre and of the innovations made by each of its representatives.

Second, there remains the question of the relationship between the genre of epic and that of romance. The novels were not composed in verse, as were Homer’s works; this is significant, especially given the above discussion, since, as Reardon points out, “in early antiquity verse is always the medium for what we call creative literature. Prose is used for other purposes, such as the collection and analysis of information in the field of history or philosophy, not for imaginative purposes.” In the Hellenistic period, this shifts, and prose begins to be used for “imaginative purposes;” thus, while the epic and the Hellenistic romance differ in syntax, each made use of the accepted vernacular of its time in writing fiction. As such, while the novels are not direct equivalents of the epics of the previous era, the similarities between the romances and the epics outweigh any potential

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<sup>67</sup> On the Jewish Novels, see in particular Lawrence Wills, *The Jewish Novel in the Ancient World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), whose bibliography is excellent; on early Christian narrative fiction, see especially Ronald F. Hock et al, eds., *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative* (Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998); Jo-Ann A. Brant et al., eds., *Ancient Fiction: The Matrix of Early Christian and Jewish Narrative* (Atlanta: SBL, 2005); and Judith Perkins, *Roman Imperial Identities in the Early Christian Era* (Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies; New York: Routledge, 2009.)

problems of genre or language. In fact, the novels themselves are conscious that they share much with the Greek literature of the past. Chariton's work, for instance, quotes directly from the *Iliad*<sup>68</sup> twelve times and the *Odyssey* nine.<sup>69</sup> Other themes, such as the sacrificial virgin, are also resurrected from older literature and given new life in the romances; this latter topic will be covered extensively in the next chapter.

## 2.4 Epiphanies in the Romance Novels

The religious meaning of the Hellenistic romance novels has been a subject of debate since they were first studied. Undoubtedly, there are multiple religious aspects to these tales, the two most significant to this study being the responsibility of god/desses for the fates of the protagonists and the representation of the protagonists as these same deities. This representation has rarely been discussed outright in the secondary literature, although it is certainly alluded to in passing. Those who have approached the texts with the aim of uncovering some religious meaning have seldom found their conclusions accepted by the majority of scholars. It is therefore necessary to state explicitly what I am *not* attempting to do in this section of the chapter. In arguing that the protagonists of the romance novels are represented as deities, I am not arguing, as Merkelbach and Kerényi

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<sup>68</sup> *Iliad* 1.317 (=Chariton 6.2.4); 3.146 (= 5.5.9); 4.1 (= 5.4.6); 13.131 (= 7.4.3); 18.22–24 (=1.4.6); 19.302 (=2.5.12); 21.114 (= 3.6.4); 22.82–83 (= 3.5.6); 22.304–305 (=7.2.4); 22.389–90 (= 5.10.9); 23.66–67 (= 2.9.6); 23.71 (= 4.1.3); 24.10 (= 6.1.8). Hock, "Educational Curriculum," 22.

<sup>69</sup> *Odyssey* 1.366 (=5.5.9); 4.703 (= 1.1.14); 6.102–104 (= 6.4.6); 15.21 (= 4.4.5); 17.37 (=4.7.5); 17.485, 487 (=2.3.7); 18.213 (=5.5.9); 23.296 (= 8.1.17); 24.83 (=4.1.5); Hock, "Educational Curriculum," 22.

have argued,<sup>70</sup> that the novels and their characters reflect the novels' use as sacred texts in the mystery cults of the Hellenistic and Roman periods. I do not suggest that the religious aspects of the novels are somehow representative of actual religious practice among their readership or that they contain secret messages understandable only to the initiated. Instead, I argue that the epiphanies in the romance novels reflect the means of divine identification found in Homer's epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and that because of this reflection, the romance novels' depiction of the heroines as goddesses reflects the Hellenistic understanding of the very porous boundaries between hero and god. That is, the heroines in the romance novels are depicted as goddesses because as heroes in the tradition of the Homeric epic, heroes and gods become associated with one another in a way that blurs the categories between human and divine.

To this end, I outline here in brief the previous arguments regarding the religious elements of the novels, if only to illustrate further what is not on the table here. As discussed above, Kerényi proposed in 1927 that the romances were metaphorical retellings of the foundation myths of certain mystery cults, and especially of the Isis cult, with its tale of the death and resurrection of Osiris and Isis' wandering quest to find him and be reunited. Merkelbach took this proposal further and argued that the romances were in fact the sacred texts of the mystery cults and were composed for that very purpose by the cult personnel. Merkelbach

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<sup>70</sup> Kerényi, *Die Griechische-Orientalische Romanliteratur*; See also Reinhold Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike*, (Munich: Beck, 1962); Reinhold Merkelbach, *Die Hirten des Dionysos: Die Dionysos-Mysterien in der römischen Kaiserzeit und der bukolische Roman des Longus* (Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1988); and Roger Beck, who discusses the problems with Merkelbach's and Kerényi's conclusions in "Mystery Religions, Aretalogy and the Ancient Novel" in *The Novel in the Ancient World* (Gareth Schmeling, ed.; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 131–150.

categorized the novels according to their referent mystery cults: the Isis cult was hidden in Apuleius' tale of *Cupid and Psyche*, *Metamorphoses*, and *Leucippe and Clitophon*. *Daphnis and Chloe*, he decided, was the product of the cult of Dionysus, and the cult of the sun god was responsible for *An Ethiopian Story*. He also found reference to the cult of Mithras in the *Babyloniaca* of Iamblichus.<sup>71</sup>

The connection between the mystery cults and the novels occurs at several loci. First, the individual 'salvation'<sup>72</sup> and initiation that made the mystery religions so attractive are features which find analogy in the plots of the romances. Initiation in a mystery religion alters the relationship between the human individual and the god, a theme which is also prominent in the novels.<sup>73</sup> Further, at least one novel, *Metamorphoses*, depicts an actual initiation into a mystery religion—that of Isis. As Beck states, however, "given its provenance [...] it would be illogical to deploy it in order to demonstrate resonances between life and art without being absolutely sure that it has a foot in each camp rather than both feet planted firmly in the latter."<sup>74</sup> Thus, forging direct connections on the basis of this text alone is unwise. Rather, it is in the similar tropes at the heart of the novels on the one hand and the concerns of the mysteries on the other that we find a connection. It is unlikely, however, that the connection is a direct one; instead I see the novels as reflections of a world concerned with this type of personal relationship with a deity, just as the novels are reflections of all sorts of

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<sup>71</sup> Merkelbach, *Mithras* (Königstein: Hain, 1984), 252–259.

<sup>72</sup> The term salvation is perhaps misleading given its connotations in Christianity for a post-mortem respite from suffering; rather, for the mystery religions (and indeed, religion in general in the Greco-Roman period) this term is better understood as referring to material and physical well-being in the here-and-now.

<sup>73</sup> Beck, "Mystery Religions," 133.

<sup>74</sup> Beck, "Mystery Religions," 134.

other types of idealized relationships.

Second, the novels also find points of contact with the genres of aretalogy and the biographies of holy men.<sup>75</sup> The aretalogies were not considered part of a literary genre by the ancients; it is only modern scholars who have compiled the texts and categorized them as a genre.<sup>76</sup> However, the “scattered primary remains”<sup>77</sup> of inscriptions and the like display certain regular features such as the persecution of an individual associated with a cult, his rescue by the god of the cult, and the punishment of the persecutors. This type of inscription praises the deity for his or her action in the real world and is based on real events.<sup>78</sup> In this way, some scholars find affinities with the novels, which as Beck says, can be viewed as “aretalogies writ large, narratives about the gods’ more permanent favourites, ideal types rather than individuals, moving in a world like but not quite identical with the contemporary.”<sup>79</sup> The novels, to be sure, display many of the same characteristic elements that the inscribed aretalogies do: the terrible, unjust plight of the protagonist, the protagonist’s eventual rescue by the god, and the reinstatement of the just order of the world.<sup>80</sup> Again, *Metamorphoses* is the most explicit in its proximity to the aretalogy, both in content and form. Likewise, Xenophon’s *Ephesian Tale* actually claims to have emerged from a vow made and inscribed by Anthia and Habrocomes at the temple of Artemis at Ephesus.<sup>81</sup>

However, while affinities can be seen here in form and in explicit reference, this

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<sup>75</sup> Beck, “Mystery Religions,” 137.

<sup>76</sup> Beck, “Mystery Religions,” 137.

<sup>77</sup> Beck, “Mystery Religions,” 138.

<sup>78</sup> Beck, “Mystery Religions,” 138.

<sup>79</sup> Beck, “Mystery Religions,” 138.

<sup>80</sup> For example, Habrocomes’ rescue by Helios from death in Egypt (4.2) and Charicleia’s rescue from the flames (8.9.11–16).

<sup>81</sup> 5.15.2



is not enough to argue for the novels' primary composition as religious texts for the cults of the gods in question. Rather, again, they represent reflections of religious expectations and modes of behaviour and belief because they emerge from a religious society.

The biographies of the holy man (θεῖος ἄνθρωπος)<sup>82</sup> are the final point of comparison. These biographies are set, like the novels, in the real world, but their main characters are not fictional, or at least we are meant to assume that they are real or historical, regardless of how fanciful the biographies seem.<sup>83</sup> Like the aretalogies, their main characters claim a special relationship to the divine; it is this point which also connects them to the mystery religions and to the novels. The holy man's relationship with the divine gives him special powers and presents him with special problems, sometimes persecution, especially at the hands of those who do not understand his privileged position. As such, the *Life of Aesop* will also prove to be an important point of comparison for this study.

Both Kerényi and Merkelbach therefore represent an "extreme case on the

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<sup>82</sup> For more on the "divine" or "holy man," which was first discussed as θεῖος ἄνθρωπος rather than ἄνθρωπος, see Graham Anderson, *Sage, Saint, and Sophist: Holy Men and Their Associates in the Early Roman Empire* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Hans Dieter Betz, "Gottmensch" II, *RAC* 12 (1983): 234–312; Ludwig Bieler, *Theios Anēr: Das Bild des 'Göttlichen Menschen' in Spätantike und Fröhen Christentum*, vols. 1–2, (Vienna: Höfels, 1935); Barry Blackburn, *Theios Anēr and the Markan Miracle Traditions: A Critique of the Theios Anēr Concept as an Interpretive Background of the Miracle Traditions Used by Mark* (WUNT 2.40; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991); Gail P. Corrington, *The 'Divine Man': His Origin and Function in Hellenistic Popular Religion*, (New York: P. Lang, 1986); David Lenz Tiede, *The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker* (SBL Dissertation Series 1; Missoula, Mont.: Society of Biblical Literature for the Seminar on the Gospels, 1972); David S. du Toit, *THEIOS ANTHROPOS: Zur Verwendung von θεῖος ἄνθρωπος und sinnverwandten Ausdrücken in der Literatur der Kaiserzeit* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck: 1997); Jaap-Jan Flinterman, "'The ancestor of my wisdom': Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism in *Life of Apollonius*," in *Philostratus* (E. Bowie and J. Elsner, eds.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 155–175.

<sup>83</sup> Beck, "Mystery Religions," 140–141.

role of religion in the novel.’<sup>84</sup> Their proposals that the romance novels were either produced by the mystery cults or have direct (secret) information about them misses the point that for the world in which the ancient novels were produced, religious experiences were considered part and parcel with living in the world. Such a limited understanding of the novels, their production, and their intent conflicts with so many widely held conclusions about the genre and literary composition of the texts.<sup>85</sup> That the aretalogies and the biographies discussed above have commonalities with the novels illustrates the common societal understanding of religious experience: that it occurred in the world; that gods intervened in the lives of their devotees; and that particular individuals may have held favoured positions with the gods. This common understanding in no way forces the conclusion that the novels, which also reflect such an understanding of the human-divine relationship, were specifically the product of mystery religions.<sup>86</sup> Certainly, there are novels whose form and content is more explicitly religious, or as Burkert says, “most diligently [exploit] a religious dimension.”<sup>87</sup> But this religious aspect does not automatically connect the text to a specific cult. In the case of Heliodorus’ *Aethiopica*, which Merkelbach attributes to the cult of

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<sup>84</sup> Beck, “Mystery Religions,” 132.

<sup>85</sup> Beck, “Mystery Religions,” 132; cf. Perry, *Ancient Romances*, who argues convincingly that the novels are the products of independent authors who nevertheless included religious themes in their work for the simple reason that religion featured prominently in the social context of the ancient world.

<sup>86</sup> Another problem underlying the association between mystery cults and the novels is the assumption that private or mystery religions offered individualized or personalized relationships with the gods, the sort which were not available with the public cults. This dichotomy between private/personal and public/impersonal has been challenged in the last few decades; as a result, it is unreasonable to assume that an ancient practitioner of religion would have felt a gap in personal religious experience which could only be filled with the mystery religions.

<sup>87</sup> Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 67.

the sun god, the text does ally itself with various aspects of a sun god: the colophon proclaims that the author is of a clan of the Descendants of the Sun; it concludes with the hero and heroine becoming the priest and priestess of the cult of the Sun and the Moon, the goddesses which they were supposed by others to be all along.<sup>88</sup> Beck observes that throughout the novel, there is a progression towards the ideal religious affiliation, from Greek to Egyptian, to Ethiopian, supervised by the priest Kalasiris who acts as a mentor to our heroes.<sup>89</sup> At first blush, then, this seems like a prime example of the type of text-cult relationship suggested by Merkelbach. The problem, however, is that there were no solar mysteries; there was no cult to which this text could be tied.<sup>90</sup> If Merkelbach's theory were correct, it would stand to reason that this, the most explicitly religious novel, would have the clearest ties to an actual cult.<sup>91</sup> Beck's summary of the general critique of Merkelbach's proposal is worth reprinting here:

If they [sc. the novels] are allegories, they will have a certain quality of strangeness and illogicality in detail which indicates that while the narrative appears to be telling a story it is actually signalling something altogether different. [...] Oddities of incident are certainly to be encountered here and there in the novels, but the consensus of scholarship since *Roman und Mysterium* has been that in general the narratives are coherent and comprehensible on their own terms qua stories. As R. Turcan wisely sensed, Merkelbach's reductionism of detail finally subverts the theory's credibility: "...en voulant tout et trop expliquer, on risque de tout fausser."<sup>92</sup>

In sum, although I recognize that the Hellenistic romances certainly

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<sup>88</sup> Beck, "Mystery Religions," 144.

<sup>89</sup> Beck, "Mystery Religions," 145.

<sup>90</sup> Beck, "Mystery Religions," 145; cf. R. Turcan, "Le Roman Initiatique: à Propos d'un Livre Récent," *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 163 (1963): 195–198. There is neither any connection between Heliodorus' novel and the Mithras cult.

<sup>91</sup> Beck, "Mystery Religions," 145 suggests an alternative: that the *Aethiopia* specifically (and not the novels in general) reflects the use of the metaphors of the mystery cults, especially in its use of the language of initiation to describe marriage. Thus, this novel is a manifestation of the same cultural experiences that also produced the mystery religion phenomenon, but is not a direct product of one cult.

<sup>92</sup> Beck, "Mystery Religions," 148–149; Turcan, "Le Roman Initiatique," 176.

contain numerous religious aspects, and although my project enthusiastically and regularly engages with those religious facets, I reject Merkelbach's and Kerényi's hypotheses regarding their relationship to actual religious practice. The religious elements, while they reflect real *attitudes*, do not preserve actual cult *practices*. The literary realm is significant in its own right; the religious aspects contained in the novels not only represent what are probably the ordinary world-view of the society in which the novels were composed, but in a related fashion also reflect the projection of the expectations around the relationship between human beings and the divine in the ancient world. As Versnel puts it, "the result was that ancient man [sic] could never be sure whether the person he was talking with was not actually a god in disguise."<sup>93</sup> That is, the close similarities between the descriptions of the heroes and the gods in the romances are intentionally crafted to blur the line between human and god in ways understandable to their audience.

The use of the trope of the divine epiphany<sup>94</sup> in the ancient romance novels is the key event for this project. Epiphanies in ancient literature are common.<sup>95</sup> In classical literature, the appearance of a divine being, god or hero,

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<sup>93</sup> H. S. Versnel, "What did Ancient Man See When he Saw a God? Some Reflections on Graeco-Roman Antiquity" in *Effigies Dei: Essays on the History of Religions* (Dirk van der Plas, ed.; Leiden: Brill 1987), 46; Versnel's 'bibliographic note' at the end of this article is very useful.

<sup>94</sup> F. Pfister, "Epiphanie", *RE Supplement 4* [1924]: 277) divides epiphanies into three categories: visual revelations of gods to fully conscious mortals; dream visions; and miracles that prove a god's presence.

<sup>95</sup> Scholarship on epiphanies, however, is not. Up until recently, not much has been written on the subject: F. Pfister, "Epiphanie", *RE Supplement 4* (1924): 277–323; E. Pax, *Epiphaneia: Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Beitrag zur biblischen Theologie*, (Münchener theologische Studien 1.10; Munich: K. Zink, 1955); Dieter Lührmann, "Epiphaneia: Zur Bedeutungsgeschichte eines griechischen Wortes" in *Tradition und Glaube. Das frühe Christentum in seiner Umwelt* (G. Jeremias et al., eds.; Göttingen, 1975), 185–199; Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1986), 102–167; Versnel, "What Did Ancient Man See," 42–55; H. Cancik, "Epiphanie/Advent" in *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe* (Cancik et al., eds.; 2 vols.; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1998), 2.290–296; Fritz Graf, "Epiphany," *New Pauly Online* (Brill, Accessed 30 Jan 2012); A. Stephens, "Telling

often initiates the founding of a cult to the deity on the spot where he or she was seen.<sup>96</sup> Deities might appear in battle to aid one side or appear in dreams with messages for the dreamer, an event which also occurs in the romances. The point of this section on epiphanic representations of the heroines of the romances is to illustrate how the novels use descriptive terms for goddesses in order to blur the line between the goddess and the heroine. The lack of clear definition between human and divine beings in the novels is a reflection of the attitudes towards divine identity in the ancient world—more of a sliding scale than a defined categorization; the novels exploit this understanding of the divine-human relationship in order to suggest that the heroines' divinity is co-existent with their humanity. In this way, the heroines are fashioned after the heroes of the epics in the era before them.

Despite the prevalence of the trope both in ancient Greek literature and in the romances of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, Tomas Hägg's 2002 publication on the use of epiphanic tropes in the romance novels<sup>97</sup> remains the only modern treatment of this device in the novels, apart from Kerényi's and Merckelbach's largely problematic contributions. Hägg's study outlines the use of

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Presences: Narrating Divine Epiphany in Homer and Beyond," PhD Diss, University of Cambridge, 2002; D. Turkeltaub, "The Gods' Radiance Manifest: An Examination of the Narrative Pattern Underlying the Homeric Divine Epiphany Scenes," PhD diss., Cornell University, 2003; G. Petridou and Verity Platt, eds., *Epiphany: Envisioning the Divine in the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming); Danuta Shanzer, ed., *Divine Epiphanies in the Ancient World*. (Illinois Classical Studies 29; Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2004); and of course Verity Platt, *Facing the Gods: Epiphany and Representation in Graeco-Roman Art, Literature and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>96</sup> Graf, "Epiphany".

<sup>97</sup> Tomas Hägg, "Epiphany in the Greek Novels: The Emplotment of a Metaphor," *Eranos* 100 (2002): 51–61; repr., "Epiphany in the Greek Novels: The Emplotment of a Metaphor" in Tomas Hägg, *Parthenope: Selected Studies in Ancient Greek Fiction (1969–2004)* (Lars Boje Mortensen and Tormod Eide, eds.; Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2004), 141–155.

epiphanies in the novels, but especially focuses on their function in Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*. He evaluates several possible explanations for its use and concludes that the trope functions to drive the plot: Callirhoe's identification as Aphrodite in all cases, he argues, provokes action in other characters and creates the necessary plot points which make up the narrative.<sup>98</sup> He, like others, objects to Kerényi's conclusion that the manifestations of the protagonists as deities are representations of ancient mystery cults, hidden in the metaphor of a romance novel, and he instead proposes, albeit briefly, that the trope represents a development of the Homeric theme of the hero as divine.<sup>99</sup> It is clear that Chariton's *Callirhoe* makes a direct link with Homer when referring to his characters, given the prolific use of direct quotations from Homer when describing Callirhoe. Hägg observes two examples: first, in 4.7.5 when Callirhoe is announced to the Persian court as a woman as beautiful as Artemis or "Aphrodite the Golden" (Cf. *Odyssey* 17.37; 19.54, both in reference to Penelope); and second in 6.4.6, when the King of Persia likens his beloved Callirhoe to Artemis the archer (*Odyssey* 6.102–104, this time in reference to Nausikaa).<sup>100</sup> Hägg observes that in most cases in Homer, the heroine, Penelope for instance, is merely likened in her beauty to the goddess, not actually mistaken for one; there are only a few instances where this is the case for the epic poetry.<sup>101</sup> In contrast, the mistaking of the romantic heroines for goddesses occurs frequently. The extraordinary beauty of the heroines (the aspect on which Hägg

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<sup>98</sup> Hägg, "Emplotment," 143.

<sup>99</sup> Hägg, "Emplotment," 153–155.

<sup>100</sup> Hägg, "Emplotment," 154.

<sup>101</sup> Hägg, "Emplotment," 154; the few instances include *Od.* 6.149ff where Odysseus first addresses Nausikaa and wonders whether she is Artemis or a mortal.

focuses) is not the only way in which the romantic protagonists are taken to be divine; they are also mistaken because of their shining and radiant appearance.

That gods and goddesses can be recognized by their shining faces and radiant, ethereal light is taken for granted by ancient authors (and often also by modern scholars). Eva Parsinou's work, *The Light of the Gods*, surveys the use of light to identify gods in Archaic and Classical Greek cult and its artistic representation. Although she does not approach literature in her study, her introduction touches on the point that "Greek literature is suffused with bright images of the divine."<sup>102</sup> Parsinou therefore takes the imagery used to identify gods in literature and examines its manifestation in cults and in art, where lit torches predominate. She identifies the use of light and fire in various rites in Greek religion as emanating primarily from this association between light/fire and the divine realm.<sup>103</sup> In Homer, human beings experience the epiphanies of gods and goddesses as manifestations of light and brightness, among other descriptive terms.<sup>104</sup> "Shining brightness [in the works of Homer] often heralded a divine arrival."<sup>105</sup> Indeed, Heubeck, in his commentary on the *Odyssey*, notes that the source of light attributed to Athena's lamp in 19.36–40 is actually emanating from the goddess herself, something he understands as "characteristic of a divine presence."<sup>106</sup> Whether this manifestation was in the lighting of lamps, in a bright

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<sup>102</sup> Eva Parisinou, *The Light of the Gods: The Role of Light in Archaic and Classical Greek Cult*, (London: Duckworth, 2000), 1.

<sup>103</sup> Parsinou, *Light of the Gods*, 1.

<sup>104</sup> B. C. Dietrich, "Divine Epiphanies in Homer," *Numen* 30.1 (1983): 54-55; Dietrich also notes that gods are described as birds, as larger humans, as mist, and like the fall of night.

<sup>105</sup> Dietrich, "Divine Epiphanies," 67.

<sup>106</sup> Alfred Heubeck *et al.*, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* (3 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, 2002), 3.76; Cedric H. Whitman, in his book *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 121–122 understands the light

light from seemingly no source at all, or from the eyes, face, or hair<sup>107</sup> of a god in human form, it is clear that this trope is commonly used as a marker of divine presence in ancient literature. Athena and Aphrodite both are recognized by the fire in their eyes.<sup>108</sup> Fritz Graf writes that it is simply standard that deities appear surrounded by light,<sup>109</sup> and Burchard agrees that light is a “must” for heavenly appearances.<sup>110</sup> Finally, Richardson, in his commentary on the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, concurs that “divine radiance is [...] a common epiphany feature.”<sup>111</sup> Since the time of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, then, epiphanies were not only possible events (especially in literature) but were described using Homeric tropes

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brought by the gods to be representative of victory. For him, divine light is a harbinger of success, since it symbolizes the support of the gods.

<sup>107</sup> The radiance of the face and hair is also found in the Hebrew Bible in Exodus 34:29, where Moses’ face shines after being in God’s presence, although the verb’s meaning here is famously contested. Seth Sanders attributes this to the ancient Babylonian astrological understanding of the stars as deities: “visualization of divine radiance was a daily activity for the astronomer” (“Old Light on Moses’ Shining Face,” *Vetus Testamentum* 52.3 (2002), 403. In the New Testament, the Transfiguration of Jesus in Matt 17:1–9/Mk 9:2–8/Lk 9:28–36 is another example of this; whether the authors built on biblical or hellenistic understandings of the manifestation of divine presence is perhaps not a fruitful discussion to have, since biblical understandings of radiance clearly align with hellenistic ones in this instance. For more on early Christian epiphanic imaginings, see Margaret Mitchell, “Epiphanic Evolutions in Earliest Christianities,” *Illinois Classical Studies* 29 (Divine Epiphanies in the Ancient World; 2004): 183–204.

<sup>108</sup> Dietrich, “Divine Epiphanies,” 67; *Iliad* I.104; 21.415.

<sup>109</sup> Fritz Graf, “Epiphany”; Cf. Callimachus *Fragments*, 1.21–28; Ovid, *Fasti*, 1.93–101.

<sup>110</sup> Christof Burchard, “Joseph and Aseneth” in *OTP* (James H. Charlesworth, ed.; 2 vols.; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 2.14.2f.

<sup>111</sup> *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (N. J. Richardson, ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 208. Richardson lists several examples of this common feature: “In Homer, Athena is like a star (*Il.* 4.75ff.), the gods’ eyes shine (3.397, 13.3, etc.; cf Hes. *Sc.* 72), and Athena’s lamp makes the house appear as if on fire, so that Odysseus and Telemachus recognize her presence (*Od.* 19.33ff.).” Richardson suggests the following further examples: *Odyssey* 18.353ff; *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 275 ff. and 278ff.; *The Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, 440ff.; *The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, 86ff. and 174f.; Hesiod, *Scutum*, 70ff., Bacchylides 17.103ff., Euripides, *Bacchae*, 1083, Theocritus, *Idyllia*, 24.38ff.; Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 4.1701ff. and 3.126; and in Latin Virgil, *Aeneid*, 2.589f., 2.616, 3.151, 4.358, and 8.608f.; and Ovid, *Fasti*, 1.94. Again, the New Testament also offers parallels: Lk 24:4, Matt 28:3, Mk 16:5. Cf. Pfister, “Epiphanie,” 315f.; Albrecht Dieterich, *Nekyia: Beiträge zur Erklärung der neuentdeckten Petrusapokalypse* (Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1969), 38ff.; Ludolf Stephani, *Nimbus und Strahlenkranz in den Werken der alten Kunst*, (St. Petersburg: Buchdruckerei der K. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1859).



such as the radiance and beauty of a not-so-ordinary human being.<sup>112</sup>

Daniel Turkeltaub's 2003 dissertation creates categories for the epiphany<sup>113</sup> scenes found in the Homeric corpus, which he defines as any poetry attributed to Homer, regardless of compositional history or tradition; he includes the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Homeric Hymns*.<sup>114</sup> These categories are not based around linguistic similarities, since the variety of terms used in describing epiphanies is too great to allow for strict comparison; rather he suggests that each epiphany has a "thematic kernel" that remains the same, but the structure and language of the appearance in literature might not.<sup>115</sup> He outlines several themes which arise in Homeric epiphany scenes, such as Disguise (of the god), Hint of Divinity (in which the mortal is given a clue as to the divinity of his/her guest), False Biography (the made-up back-story used by a god to "pass" as a mortal), Ironic Treatment (of a god by a mortal), and the Epiphanic Moment itself, among others.<sup>116</sup> Turkeltaub's categorization of the various aspects of the literary epiphany in the Homeric texts can also be applied to the romances and their depictions of the heroines.

First, in preparing to appear to a human being, Turkeltaub observes that

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<sup>112</sup> Dietrich, "Divine Epiphanies," 70–71. See, for instance, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 275–280; *The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, 172–175; Hesiod, *Scutum*, 7–8; Hesiod, *Theogony*, 9; Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, 115; Euripides, *Hippolytus*, 1391. In Latin poetry, see Virgil, *Aeneid*, 1.403; Ovid, *Fasti* 5.375.

<sup>113</sup> Turkeltaub, *Radiance Manifest*, 11 notes that while the term 'epiphany' is post-Homeric, occurring first in Plato and Isocrates, that the experience of the divine on earth is clearly present before that; further, it is not until the Hellenistic period where the word comes to be applied to divine appearances.

<sup>114</sup> Turkeltaub, *Radiance Manifest*, 7.

<sup>115</sup> Turkeltaub, *Radiance Manifest*, 6.

<sup>116</sup> Turkeltaub, *Radiance Manifest*, 51–78.

the god or goddess first disguises him- or herself.<sup>117</sup> In the *Hymn to Aphrodite*, the goddess first beautifies herself and then hides her true form, taking on the appearance of a young woman trying to find a husband. It is clear that the heroines in the romance novels also appear to other characters in disguise: due to their misadventures, their true identities have been lost—they are taken for slaves in various places of the romance novels,<sup>118</sup> and frequently even their own lovers do not recognize them when they come across each other.<sup>119</sup> Further, and perhaps most telling, the heroines themselves make no attempt to reveal their original names, status, or places of origin to those they encounter, even though they are often begged to do so. In *Aetheopica*, for instance, Charikleia is in possession of the jewelled necklace and embroidered belt (2.31) that would identify her as the daughter and heir of the Ethiopian king and queen, yet even at the end of the tale, she appears reluctant to reveal this information (8.11), even withstanding fire rather than show her birth tokens. This deliberate concealment of the heroines' real selves amounts to a tactic which is comparable to the more explicit disguising of the goddesses in the Homeric literature. As such, the heroines of the romance novels can be considered disguised in their identity, both divine and human, just as the goddesses in Turkeltaub's discussion of Homer undertake to conceal their true identity from those they visit.

Second, the heroines reveal hints of their divinity.<sup>120</sup> In short, their disguise does not prevent people from guessing that they are divine and behaving

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<sup>117</sup> Turkeltaub, *Radiance Manifest*, 21–22.

<sup>118</sup> E.g. *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 1.12ff; 4.2; *Leucippe and Clitophon* 5. 17–19; etc.

<sup>119</sup> E.g. *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 8.1; *Leucippe and Clitophon* 4.17, 5.17–19; *An Ethiopian Story* 7.7; etc.

<sup>120</sup> Turkeltaub, *Radiance Manifest*, 22–23.

in ways that reflects their assumption; everywhere around the heroines of the romance novels, individuals and crowds bow down in worship when they catch a glimpse of Callirhoe or Anthia, for example. Turkeltaub's discussion of the trope of the Divine Hint outlines how, for example, the goddess Aphrodite displays recognizably divine features despite being disguised. In this case, Aphrodite reveals hints of her true identity as a goddess through her brilliant clothing and jewellery;<sup>121</sup> although both clothing and jewellery are described using these terms simply to denote their fine quality, Turkeltaub argues that in this context they serve as a marker of her divinity as well.<sup>122</sup> She is identifiable by her great beauty and her stature, both further well-established markers of divine beings.<sup>123</sup> Likewise, whether the heroines of the romances are at home or abroad, disguised as the ordinary but beautiful daughters of elite parents, those who view them are struck by their great beauty and their radiant appearance; as in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, in the novels, too, the transparency of the disguise lends to the Divine Hint.<sup>124</sup> This Divine Hint goes a long way to supporting the application of Turkeltaub's categories to the novels, and as such, to supporting the interpretation of the heroines as goddesses in disguise. The trope of the divine hint will be explored in detail below.

Third, Turkeltaub identifies the Ironic Treatment of the gods by the mortals they encounter as an identifying feature of their identity.<sup>125</sup> He writes that mortals behave in two ways towards the disguised gods or goddesses, each of

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<sup>121</sup> *The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, 85.

<sup>122</sup> Turkeltaub, *Radiance Manifest*, 58, esp. n. 101.

<sup>123</sup> Richardson, *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 208.

<sup>124</sup> Turkeltaub, *Radiance Manifest*, 60.

<sup>125</sup> Turkeltaub, *Radiance Manifest*, 26.

which is ironic in its own way. In the first type, mortals behave inappropriately towards goddesses or gods because they misidentify them as mortals, and often lowly or low-status mortals. In this situation, the deity is treated with disrespect; the irony is that the mortal's behaviour highlights his or her ignorance of the truth of the matter. In the second type, mortals behave with great respect and deference to the god or goddess, but not because the mortal recognizes the deity for what he or she truly is; the mortal's respectful behaviour is unrelated to the god's divine status and is therefore ironic in its appropriateness. In the Homeric literature the dramatic irony is pushed to an extreme level by this treatment, but still the mortal does not recognize the god as such, even though at times incomprehension seems impossible.<sup>126</sup> With the characters of the novels, the clearest example of ironic behaviour is the selling of the heroines into slavery, a regular occurrence in the plots of the romances. However, I would suggest that the acts of worship that people perform when faced with the hints of divinity displayed by the heroines also count as ironic; frequently, their behaviour is seen as foolish by others, even though it is really appropriate if the heroines are goddesses in disguise. A good example of this is Dionysius's experience in Aphrodite's temple in *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 2.3.6; Dionysius has already bowed down and begun to pray to the apparition but his steward Leonas corrects him and reminds him that the woman he believes to be a goddess is actually his slave; Dionysius retorts that Leonas is a blasphemer for not seeing that Callirhoe is a goddess.

For this study, a final relevant point made by Turkeltaub is that the goddesses in disguise often have false biographies prepared in order to enhance

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<sup>126</sup> Turkeltaub, *Radiance Manifest*, 26.

their disguise.<sup>127</sup> His example of Aphrodite is useful here: Aphrodite creates a story that she, a virgin, was brought from a strange land against her will in order to get married; she tells her would-be lover that if she could only marry him, she could be free from her undesirable fate.<sup>128</sup> Turkeltaub presents this as one example among many of this type. The narrative pattern of a young girl brought to a strange land against her will and the danger of an unwanted marriage should be ringing bells; the romances follow this same pattern, a pattern common in the literature of Greek mythology, too.<sup>129</sup> But at the same time, at least some of those ringing bells may be sounding the alarm: surely the plot of the romance novels is not presented as a false biography, but as a literarily real one? I would suggest that the audience's knowledge of these biographies as literarily true does not negate the fact that for the characters, the biographies of the protagonists are sometimes deliberately concealed, as in *Chaereas and Callirhoe*; Callirhoe is given the opportunity to tell Dionysius her family origins and be returned to them, and yet is reluctant to disclose her true identity and must be pressed to do so (2.5). Leucippe, even when questioned, gives a false name (Lakaina) and place of birth (Thessaly) (5.17). The biographies of the heroines, while known to the audience, are concealed from the people they meet on their travels. But on the other side of this, the Divine Hints, the Ironic Treatment, and the Disguise tropes borrowed from the Homeric tradition, and put to use in the novels, may render the "true" literary biography of the heroines false; in providing a plausible back story for the protagonists in this way, one which is shared with the readers but not with the

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<sup>127</sup> Turkeltaub, *Radiance Manifest*, 25–26.

<sup>128</sup> *The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, 110–135; Turkeltaub, *Radiance Manifest*, 60.

<sup>129</sup> Turkeltaub, *Radiance Manifest*, 61 esp. n. 112.

bulk of the characters the protagonists meet, the novels cause us to doubt whether the biographies are in fact true. Thus, the novels participate in this trope in two ways: the heroines conceal their biographies, thereby causing confusion about their social identity; and the prominent use of the other epiphanic tropes cause doubt in the veracity of the biography that is revealed to the readership. As I will show below, this is not simply the *mistaking* of the heroines as divinities by other characters; rather, because of the dynamics of Hellenistic religion and the cultural understanding of the relationships between gods and mortals, the heroines are literarily depicted as the goddesses themselves. The perception of a human being as a goddess—the belief that the individual is a manifestation of a divinity—is enough to make that person the goddess phenomenologically.

### **Excursus: Three Verbs Commonly Used to Denote Divine Presence**

There are three verbs which are prevalent in the romance novels and elsewhere in the literature of the Greek world, including the Homeric corpus, which indicate the presence of a god. These are προσκυνέω, λάμπω, and \*φαίνω. While the particular uses of these terms by the novels will be dealt with *in situ*, it bears outlining here the general range of use covered by these terms and their application to epiphanic episodes in literature. προσκυνέω generally denotes the worship or obeisance of gods or their images. It is often translated as “worship.”<sup>130</sup> Although it can also be used to mean the reverence of sacred places,<sup>131</sup> usually it implies reverence of divine beings. In this sense, it is also

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<sup>130</sup> “προσκυνέω,” *LSJ* 1518.

<sup>131</sup> E.g. Sophocles, *Electra*, 1374: “οὐκ ἂν μακρῶν ἔθ’ ἡμῖν οὐδὲν ἂν λόγων, Πυλάδη,

used to describe the action taken by those whom the Romans considered “foreign” when in the presence of kings or other superiors. When barbarians bow down before their rulers, Greek language often uses προσκυνέω to describe their behaviour.<sup>132</sup> Rather than denote a different use of this piece of vocabulary, this double meaning rather implies a different attitude towards the relationship between gods and human beings. Whereas the Romans considered it inappropriate explicitly to worship a living human being, loopholes notwithstanding, other populations did not find it so. “It is recognized today that ruler cult did not derive from “oriental” concepts imported into Greek culture, but was a genuine development of Greek ideas about the presence of the divine in extraordinary persons.”<sup>133</sup> The example of Alexander the Great is useful here. At first, Alexander merely presented himself in the image of the hero Herakles; but his identification by the Egyptian priest at Ammon as the son of the god (identified with Zeus) pushed the issue of divine identity further. Although Alexander did not

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τόδ' εἴη τοῦργον, ἀλλ' ὅσον τάχος χωρεῖν ἔσω, πατρῶα **προσκύσανθ'** ἔδη θεῶν, ὅσοι περ πρόπυλα ναίουσιν τάδε.” / “Pylades, in no way does our task call any longer for many words, but rather demands that we enter the house immediately, after first **adoring** the shrines of my father's gods, the keepers of these gates.”

<sup>132</sup> E.g. Herodotus, 8.118: “πλέοντα δέ μιν ἄνεμον Στρυμονίην ὑπολαβεῖν μέγαν καὶ κυματίν. καὶ δὴ μᾶλλον γὰρ τι χειμαίνεσθαι γεμούσης τῆς νεός, ὥστε ἐπὶ τοῦ καταστρώματος ἐπεόντων συχνῶν Περσέων τῶν σὺν Ζέρξῃ κομιζομένων, ἐνθαῦτα ἐς δεῖμα πεσόντα τὸν βασιλέα εἰρέσθαι βῶσαντα τὸν κυβερνήτην εἴ τις ἐστὶ σφι σωτηρίη, καὶ τὸν εἶπαι ‘δέσποτα, οὐκ ἔστι οὐδεμία, εἰ μὴ τούτων ἀπαλλαγὴ τις γένηται τῶν πολλῶν ἐπιβατέων.’ καὶ Ζέρξην λέγεται ἀκούσαντα ταῦτα εἰπεῖν ‘ἄνδρες Πέρσαι, νῦν τις διαδεξάτω ὑμέων βασιλέος κηδόμενος: ἐν ὑμῖν γὰρ οἴκε εἶναι ἐμοὶ ἡ σωτηρίη.’ τὸν μὲν ταῦτα λέγειν, τοὺς δὲ **προσκυνέοντας** ἐκπηδᾶν ἐς τὴν θάλασσαν.” / “In the course of this voyage he was caught by a strong wind called the Strymonian, which lifted up the waves. This storm bearing the harder upon him by reason of the heavy load of the ship (for the Persians of his company who were on the deck were so many), the king grew afraid and cried to the ship's pilot asking him if there were any way of deliverance. To this the man said, “Sire, there is none, if we do not rid ourselves of these many who are on board.” Hearing that, it is said, Xerxes said to the Persians, “Now it is for you to prove your concern for your king, for it seems that my deliverance rests with you.” At this they **bowed** and leapt into the sea.”

<sup>133</sup> Koester, *Introduction*, 1.11.

introduce formal ruler worship as an institution,<sup>134</sup> Plutarch reports incidents of *proskynesis* at Bactra.<sup>135</sup> Koester sets aside the Bactra event, since “this was simply an eastern court ceremony, not an act of divine worship,” despite the verbs used in Plutarch’s account.<sup>136</sup> While I would agree that one reported event hardly constitutes grounds for the institutionalization of ruler worship by Alexander, I would suggest that the eastern court ceremony is not to be dismissed as an event of *proskynesis* denoting divinity. Rather, the fact that προσκυνέω is used to describe the obeisance performed to kings *confirms* their divine status.<sup>137</sup>

λάμπω, our second term, generally means to give off light or to shine.<sup>138</sup> It is used to describe the gleam of armour, a person’s eyes, or the sun, for example. A person might be described as having a glowing face<sup>139</sup> or shining with glory.<sup>140</sup> Although Liddell and Scott’s lexicon does not mention this use, this term also appears in the descriptions of goddesses and the protagonists of the romances in the Homeric corpus and the novels respectively.<sup>141</sup> In fact, as Turkeltaub’s research suggests, terminology related to shining or radiance is strongly associated with epiphanic encounters in Homeric literature and I argue that the same is true for the novels.

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<sup>134</sup> Koester, *Introduction*, 1.36.

<sup>135</sup> Plutarch, *Alexander* 54; cf. Arrian *Anabasis* IV.10.5–12.5, who notes that Alexander agrees not to push the subject of institutional *proskynesis*.

<sup>136</sup> Koester, *Introduction*, 1.36.

<sup>137</sup> For a further discussion of *proskynesis*, see Josef Kiel Wiesehöfer, “Proskynesis,” *Brill’s New Pauly*. (Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider, eds.; Brill Online, 2012. Accessed 05 April 2012); for specific discussion of Alexander the Great’s introduction of the practice, see E. J. Bickerman, “À propos d’un passage de Chares de Mytilène,” in *La Parola del Passato* 18 (1963): 241–255 and Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 271–273.

<sup>138</sup> “λάμπω,” *LSJ* 1028.

<sup>139</sup> Aristophanes, *Equites*, 550.

<sup>140</sup> *LSJ* 1028; Theocritus, *Idyllia*, 25.141.

<sup>141</sup> *Iliad* 15.608, 16.71, 19.366, e.g.



Finally, \*-φαίνω is a family of terms—including φαίνω, ἐκφαίνω, and ἐπιφαίνω—that contains a variety of meanings. φαίνω alone has two main usages, both of which pertain to the bringing of light. The first is to cause to appear in the physical sense, or to bring to light.<sup>142</sup> In this sense, it can imply simple showing, but it can also refer to the physical shining of light on an object, as it does in the *Odyssey* 7.102. Both the sun and the moon are said to shine, and Jupiter, a planet that shines brightly in the night sky, is called ὁ φαίνων.<sup>143</sup> The second category of use is less physical and more cognitive; it suggests the coming to light of something or the appearance of it.<sup>144</sup> But it can also simply mean, similar to the previous usage, the shining or rising of heavenly bodies or the light that comes with dawn or day.<sup>145</sup> As such, its related terms, ἐκφαίνω and ἐπιφαίνω, show similar usages. ἐκφαίνω also means to bring (something) to light or reveal something.<sup>146</sup> In particular, this verb is used to describe the appearance of persons. While usually denoting an ordinary revelation of a person's presence, it can also mean, especially in the passive voice, to shine out.<sup>147</sup> ἐπιφαίνω is a word which appears later in Greek literature; it became common during the Hellenistic period and after. Its general meaning is to display, or in the passive, to come into view.<sup>148</sup> It is used frequently of dreams and visions, and especially of a divine manifestation.<sup>149</sup> As in the other verbs in this family, it can also imply the

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<sup>142</sup> “φαίνω,” *LSJ*, 1912.

<sup>143</sup> *LSJ*, 1912; Aristotle, *De Mundo*, 392a.23.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. *Iliad*, 1.198.

<sup>145</sup> *LSJ*, 1912; cf. *Iliad*, 8.561; 1.200; 8.556; 1.477; etc.

<sup>146</sup> “ἐκφαίνω,” *LSJ*, 524.

<sup>147</sup> *LSJ*, 524; cf. *Iliad* 19.17.

<sup>148</sup> “ἐπιφαίνω,” *LSJ* 669.

<sup>149</sup> *LSJ* 669; cf. Herodotus, 2.91, 3.27; *Sylloge Inscriptionem Graecarum* 557.5; Titus

shining of light and also dawn.<sup>150</sup> The related noun, ἐπιφάνεια, likewise refers to the appearance of a person or thing in terms of its coming to light, or to the coming of dawn.<sup>151</sup> In particular, this noun has close associations with divine manifestations.<sup>152</sup>

## 2.5 Instances of Epiphany in the Romances

In each of the romance novels, the main characters, but most often the female ones, are described using language that equally describes a goddess and/or they are worshipped as goddesses by other characters. Often, those who do the worshipping are ordinary people or even “barbarians,” but occasionally elite characters are so struck by the heroines that they, too, understand the women to be goddesses. In all of these most frequent manifestations of the epiphany motif (and beauty and radiance especially), *Chaereas and Callirhoe* is the novel in which epiphanies of this sort most often occur. Using Turkeltaub’s categories of the Disguise, the Hint of Divinity, the False Biography, and the Ironic Treatment, this next section will analyse first *Chaereas and Callirhoe*’s use of the epiphanic tropes to point to Callirhoe’s divinity, and also other instances in other novels where such tropes are used. In applying Turkeltaub’s categories to the romance novels’ descriptions of the heroines, I show that the heroines are described as divine beings created in the images both of the heroes of Homeric literature and of the epiphanic forms of Hellenistic goddesses.

For convenience, below is a chart of the passages discussed in this section.

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<sup>150</sup> *LSJ* 669; cf. Polybius. 5.5.6; LXX Deut. 33:2.

<sup>151</sup> “ἐπιφάνεια,” *LSJ* 669.

<sup>152</sup> *LSJ* 669; cf. Dionysius Halicarnassus, 2.68; Plutarch, *Themistocles*, 30.

| Source                                  | English  | Greek   |
|---|--|---|
| <i>Chaereas and Callirhoe</i> 1.1       | Her beauty was more than human, it was <b>divine</b> , and it was not the beauty of a Nereid of a mountain nymph at that, but of the maiden Aphrodite herself.   | Ἦν γὰρ τὸ κάλλος οὐκ ἀνθρώπινον ἀλλὰ <b>θεῖον</b> , οὐδὲ Νηρηΐδος ἢ Νύμφης τῶν ὀρειῶν ἀλλ' αὐτῆς Ἀφροδίτης [παρθένου].  |
| <i>Chaereas and Callirhoe</i> 1.1.15–16 | Then Chaereas ran forward and kissed her; recognizing the man she loved, Callirhoe, like a dying lamp <sup>153</sup> once it is replenished with oil, <b>flamed</b> into life again and became taller and stronger. When she came out into the open, all were astounded, as when Artemis appears to hunters in lonely places. Many of the onlookers even <b>knelt</b> in homage.     | ὁ μὲν οὖν Χαιρέας προσδραμών αὐτὴν κατεφίλει, Καλλιρόη δὲ γνωρίσασα τὸν ἐρώμενον, ὥσπερ τι λύχνου φῶς ἤδη σβεννύμενον ἐπιχυθέντος ἐλαίου πάλιν <b>ἀνέλαμψε</b> καὶ μείζων ἐγένετο καὶ κρείττων. ἐπεὶ δὲ προῆλθεν εἰς τὸ δημόσιον, θάμβος ὅλον τὸ πλῆθος κατέλαβεν, ὥσπερ ἀρτέμιδος ἐν ἐρημίᾳ κυνηγέταις ἐπιστάσης· πολλοὶ δὲ τῶν παρόντων καὶ <b>προσεκύνησαν</b> . |
| <i>Chaereas and Callirhoe</i> 1.14.1    | Leonas and all in the room were struck with amazement at the sudden apparition, as if they had <b>set eyes on a goddess</b> , for rumor had it that Aphrodite could be seen in the fields.   | ὁ δὲ Λεωνᾶς καὶ πάντες οἱ ἔνδον ἐπιστάσης αἰφνίδιον κατεπλάγνυσαν, οἷα δὴ δοκοῦντες <b>θεᾶν ἑωρακέναι</b> · καὶ γὰρ ἦν τις λόγος ἐν τοῖς ἀγροῖς Ἀφροδίτην ἐπιφαίνεσθαι.   |
| <i>Chaereas and Callirhoe</i> 2.1.5     | Although Dionysius was pleased to hear of the girl's beauty, for he was a great admirer of women, he was not pleased to hear she was a slave [...] “Leonas,” he said, “it is impossible for a person not free-born to be beautiful. Have you not learned from the poets that beautiful people are the <b>children of gods</b> , and all the more likely children of the nobly born?” | ὁ δὲ διονύσιος τὸ μὲν κάλλος ἡδέως ἤκουσε τῆς γυναικός (ἦν γὰρ φιλογύννης ἀληθῶς), τὴν δὲ δουλείαν ἀηδῶς· [...] “ὦ Λεωνᾶ, κάλὸν εἶναι σῶμα μὴ πεφυκὸς ἐλεύθερον. Οὐκ ἀκούεις τῶν ποιητῶν ὅτι <b>θεῶν παῖδες</b> εἰσιν οἱ καλοί, πολὺ δὲ πρότερον ἀνθρώπων εὐγενῶν;”   |
| <i>Chaereas and Callirhoe</i> 2.2.2     | After she had gone in [to the bath] they rubbed her with oil and wiped it off carefully, and marveled at her all the more when undressed, for, whereas when she was dressed they admired her face as <b>divine</b> , they had no thoughts for her face when they saw her hidden beauty. Her skin <b>gleamed</b> white, <b>shining</b> just like a <b>shimmering</b> surface.         | Εἰσελθοῦσαν δὲ ἤλειψάν τε καὶ ἀπέσμηξαν ἐπιμελῶς καὶ μᾶλλον ἀποδυσασμένης κατεπλάγησαν· ὥστε ἐνδεδυμένης αὐτῆς θαυμάζουσαι τὸ πρόσωπον ὡς <b>θεῖον</b> , <ἀ>πρόσωπον ἔδοξαν <τᾶνδον> ἰδοῦσαι· ὁ χρῶς γὰρ λευκὸς <b>ἔστιλπεν</b> εὐθὺς <b>μαρμαρυγῇ</b> τινι ὁμοιον <b>ἀπολάμπων</b> .   |

<sup>153</sup> This lamp reference is also reminiscent of the lamp of Athena in *Od.* 19.33ff.

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| <i>Chaereas and Callirhoe</i><br>2.3.6  | At the sight of her [Callirhoe] Dionysius cried, “Aphrodite, be gracious to me, and may your presence bless me!” As he was in the act of <b>kneeling</b> , Leonas caught him and said, “Sir, this is the slave just bought. Do not be disturbed. And you, woman, come to meet your master.” [...] But Dionysius struck Leonas and said, “You blasphemer, do you talk to gods as you would to men [sic]? Have you the nerve to call her a bought slave? No wonder you were unable to find the man who sold her. Have you not even heard what Homer teaches us? ‘ <b>Oft in the guise of strangers from distant lands / the gods watch human insolence and righteousness.</b> ’” <sup>154</sup> | θεασάμενος οὖν ὁ Διονύσιος δὲ ἀνεβόησεν ἰλέως εἴης, ὦ Ἀφροδίτη, καὶ ἐπ’ ἀγαθῷ μοι φανείης.” <b>καταπίπτοντα</b> δὲ αὐτὸν ἤδη Λεωνᾶς ὑπέλαβε καὶ “αὕτη” φησὶν “ἐστίν, ὦ δέσποτα, ἡ νεώνητος· μηδὲν ταραχθῆς. καὶ σὺ δέ, ὦ γύναι, πρόσελθε τῷ κυρίῳ.” [...] ὁ δὲ Διονύσιος πλήξας τὸν Λεωνᾶν “ἀσεβέστατε” εἶπεν, “ὥς ἀνθρώποις διαλέγῃ τοῖς θεοῖς; ταύτην λέγεις ἀργυρώνητον; δικαίως οὖν οὐχ εὖρες τὸν πιπράσκοντα. Οὐκ ἤκουσας οὐδὲ Ὅμηρου διδάσκοντος ἡμᾶς <b>καὶ τε θεοὶ ξείνοισιν ἐοικότες ἄλλοδαποῖσιν Ἀνθρώπων ὕβριν τε καὶ εὐνομίην ἐφορῶσι;</b> ” |
| <i>Chaereas and Callirohe</i><br>3.2.14 | As she made her way from the shrine to the sea, the boatmen were overwhelmed with awe on seeing her, as though Aphrodite herself were coming to embark, and with one accord they hastened to <b>kneel in homage</b> .   | Βαδίζουσιν δὲ αὐτὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ τεμένους ἐπὶ τὴν θάλασσαν ἰδόντες οἱ ναῦται δείματι κατεσχέθησαν, ὥς τῆς Ἀφροδίτης αὐτῆς ἐρχομένης ἵνα ἐμβῇ, καὶ ὥρμησαν ἀθρόοι <b>προσκυνήσαι</b> .   |
| <i>Chaereas and Calliroe</i> 3.9.1      | The old woman came in answer and said, “My child, why are you crying amid such blessings? Why, even strangers are paying you homage now as a goddess. The other day two fine young men sailed by here, and one of them nearly expired at the sight of your statue, so like an <b>epiphany</b> [of the goddess] has Aphrodite made you.  | ἡ δὲ πρεσβῦτις ὑπακούσασα “τί κλάεις” εἶπεν, “ὦ παιδίον, ἐν ἀγαθοῖς τηλικούτοις; ἤδη γὰρ καὶ σὺ ὥς θεὰν οἱ ξένοι προσκυνοῦσι. Πρῶν ἤλθον ἐνθάδε δύο νεανίσκοι καλὶ παραπλέοντες· ὁ δὲ ἕτερος αὐτῶν θεασάμενός σου τὴν εἰκόνα, μικροῦ δεῖν ἐξέπνευσεν. Οὕτως <b>ἐπιφανῇ</b> σε ἡ Ἀφροδίτη πεποίηκεν.”   |
| <i>Chaereas and Calliroe</i> 5.3.9      | Callirhoe’s face <b>shone</b> with radiance which <b>dazzled</b> the eyes of all, just as when on a dark night a blinding <b>flash</b> is seen. Struck with amazement, the Persians knelt in homage.  | <b>ἐξέλαμψε</b> δὲ τὸ Καλλιρόης πρόσωπον, καὶ <b>μαρμαρυγῇ</b> κατέσχε τὰς ἀπάντων ὄψεις, ὥσπερ ἐν νυκτὶ βαθεῖα πολλοῦ <b>φωτὸς</b> αἰφνίδιον φανέντος· ἐκπλαγέντες δὲ οἱ βάρβαροι <b>προσεκύνησαν</b> .   |
| <i>An Ephesian Tale</i> 1.2.2ff         | A local festival for Artemis was underway, and from the city to her shrine, a distance of   | Ἦγετο δὲ τῆς Ἀρτέμιδος ἐπιχώριος ἐορτή· ἔδει δὲ πομπεύειν ἀπὸ τῆς πόλεως ἐπὶ   |

<sup>154</sup> Dionysius here quotes from the *Odyssey* 17.485, 487.

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|  | <p>seven stades, all the local girls had to march sumptuously adorned, as did all the ephebes who were the same age as Habrocomes; he was about sixteen and already enrolled among the ephebes, and he headed the procession. [...]</p> <p>The procession marched along in file, first the sacred objects, torches, baskets, and incense, followed by horses, dogs, and hunting equipment, some of it martial, most of it peaceful &lt;...&gt; each of the girls was adorned as for a lover. Heading the line of girls was Anthia, daughter of Magamedes and Euippe, locals. Anthia's beauty was marvelous and far surpassed the other girls. She was fourteen, her body was blooming with shapeliness, and the adornment of her dress enhanced her grace. Her hair was blonde, mostly loose, only little of it braided, and moving as the breezes took it. Her eyes were vivacious, bright like a beauty's but forbidding like a chaste girl's; her clothing was a belted purple tunic, knee-length and falling loose over the arms, and <b>over it a fawnskin with a quiver attached, arrows &lt;...&gt;, javelins in hand, dogs following behind. Often when seeing her at the shrine, the Ephesians worshiped her as Artemis, so also at the sight of her on this occasion the crowd cheered; the opinions of the spectators were various, some in their astonishment declaring that she was the goddess herself, others that she was someone else fashioned by the goddess, but all of them prayed, bowed down, and congratulated her parents, and the universal cry among all the spectators was "Anthia the beautiful!"</b></p> | <p>τὸ ἱερόν, στάδιοι δέ εἰσιν ἑπτὰ, πάσας τὰς ἐπιχωρίους παρθένους κεκοσμημένας πολυτελῶς καὶ τοὺς ἐφήβους, ὅσοι τὴν αὐτὴν ἡλικίαν εἶχον τῷ Ἀβροκόμῃ· ἦν δὲ αὐτὸς περὶ τὰ ἑξκαίδεκα ἔτη καὶ τῶν ἐφήβων προσήπτετο καὶ ἐν τῇ πομπῇ τὰ πρῶτα ἐφέρετο. [...]</p> <p>Παρήεσαν δὲ κατὰ στίχον οἱ πομπεύοντες, πρῶτα μὲν τὰ ἱερὰ καὶ δᾶδες καὶ κανᾶ καὶ θυμιάματα, ἐπὶ τούτοις ἵπποι καὶ κύνες καὶ σκεύη κυνηγετικά, ὧν τὰ μὲν πολεμικά, τὰ δὲ πλεῖστα εἰρηνικά. &lt;...&gt; ἐκάστη δὲ αὐτῶν οὕτως ὡς πρὸς ἐραστὴν ἐκεκόσμητο. ἦρχε δὲ τῆς τῶν παρθένων τάξεως Ἀνθία, θυγάτηρ Μεγαμήδους καὶ Εὐίππης, ἐγχωρίων. Ἦν δὲ τὸ κάλλος τῆς Ἀνθίας οἷον θαυμάσαι καὶ πολὺ τὰς ἄλλας ὑπερεβάλετο παρθένους. ἔτη μὲν ὡς τεσσαρεσκαίδεκα ἐγεγόνει, ἦνθαι δὲ αὐτῆς τὸ σῶμα ἐπ' εὐμορφίᾳ, καὶ ὁ τοῦ σχήματος κόσμος πολὺς εἰς ὥραν συνεβάλετο· κόμη ξανθή, ἢ πολλὴ καθειμένη, ὀλίγη πεπλεγμένη, πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀνέμων φορὰν κινουμένη· ὀφθαλμοὶ γοργοί, φαιδροὶ μὲν ὡς καλῆς, φοβεροὶ δὲ ὡς σώφρονος· ἐσθὴς χιτῶν ἀλουργῆς, ζωστὸς εἰς γόνυ, μέχρι βραχιόνων καθειμένος, <b>νεβρὶς περικειμένη, ὅπλα γωρυτὸς ἀνημμένος, τόξα &lt;...&gt;, ἄκοντες φερόμενοι, κύνες ἐπόμενοι. πολλὰκὶς αὐτὴν ἐπὶ τοῦ τεμένων ἰδόντες ἐφέσιοι προσεκύνησαν ὡς Ἄρτεμιν, καὶ τότε οὖν ὀφθείσης ἀνεβόησε τὸ πλῆθος, καὶ ἦσαν ποικίλαι παρὰ τῶν θεωμένων φωναί, τῶν μὲν ὑπ' ἐκπλήξεως τὴν θεὸν εἶναι λεγόντων, τῶν δὲ ἄλλην τινὰ ὑπὸ τῆς θεοῦ πε[ρι]ποιημένην, προσηύχοντο δὲ πάντες καὶ προσεκύνουν</b> καὶ τοὺς γονεῖς αὐτῆς ἐμακάριζον, ἦν δὲ διαβόητος τοῖς θεωμένοις ἅπασιν Ἀνθία ἡ καλή.</p> |
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|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| <i>An Ephesian Tale</i> 1.12.1–2  | The ship put in to Rhodes and the crew disembarked; Habrocomes left the ship too, holding Anthia by the hand. All the Rhodians gathered round, amazed at the youngsters' beauty, and not one of those who saw them passed by in silence: some called them a <b>divine manifestation</b> , others <b>worshipped</b> and <b>bowed</b> before them [...] They were accorded public prayers, and the Rhodians offered many a sacrifice and celebrated their visit like a festival.   | Κατήγετο δὲ ἡ ναῦς εἰς Ῥόδον καὶ ἐξέβαινον οἱ ναῦται, ἐξῆι δὲ καὶ ὁ ἀβροκόμης ἔχων μετὰ χεῖρα τὴν Ἀνθίαν· συνήεσαν δὲ πάντες οἱ Ῥόδιοι τὸ κάλλος τῶν παίδων καταπεπληγότες καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις τῶν ἰδόντων παρήλθε σιωπῶν, ἀλλ' οἱ μὲν ἔλεγον <b>ἐπιδημίαν ἐκ τῶν θεῶν</b> , οἱ δὲ <b>προσεκύνουν</b> καὶ <b>προσεπιτνοῦντο</b> . [...] ἐπεύχονται δὲ αὐτοῖς δημοσίᾳ δαὶ θυσίας τε θύουσι πολλὰς καὶ ἑορτὴν ἄγουσι τὴν ἐπιδημίαν αὐτῶν.  |
| <i>Leucippe and Clitophon</i> 1.4 | And as I gazed at her [a richly dressed older woman], I suddenly saw a maiden [lit. a maiden <b>suddenly appeared</b> to me] on her left, who <b>blinded</b> my eyes, as with a stroke of <b>lightning</b> , by the beauty of her face. She was like that picture of Europa on the bull which I saw but just now: an eye at once piercing and voluptuous; golden hair in golden curls; black eyebrows—jet black; pale cheeks, the pallor shading in the centre into a ruddy hue, like that stain wherewith the Lydian women tint ivory; and a mouth that was a rose—a rose-bud just beginning to uncurl its petals. [...] I admired her tall form, I was stupefied by her beauty. <sup>155</sup> | ὥς δὲ ἐπέτεινα τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐπ' αὐτήν, ἐν ἀριστερᾷ παρθένος <b>ἐκφαίνεται</b> μοι, καὶ <b>καταστράπτει</b> μου τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῷ προσώπῳ. Τοιαύτην εἶδον ἐγὼ ποτε ἐπὶ ταύρῳ γεγραμμένην Εὐρώπην· ὄμμα γοργὸν ἐήδονη· κόμη ξανθή, τὸ ξανθὸν οὖλον· ὄφρ' ὤς μέλαινα, τὸ μέλαν ἄκρατον· λευκὴ παρειά, τὸ λευκὸν εἰς μέσον ἐφοινίσσετο καὶ ἐμιμείτο πορφύραν οἷαν εἰς τὸν ἐλέφαντα Λυδία βάπτει γυνή· τὸ στόμα ρόδων ἄνθος ἦν, ὅταν ἄρχηται τὸ ρόδον ἀνοίγειν τῶν φύλλων τὰ χεῖλη. [...] ἐπῆνουν τὸ μέγεθος, ἐξεπεπλήγμην τὸ κάλλος. |
| <i>An Ethiopian Story</i> 1.2.1–2 | On a rock sat a girl, a creature of such indescribable beauty that one might have taken her for a goddess. Despite her great distress at her plight, she had an air of courage and nobility. <b>On her head she wore a crown of laurel; from her shoulders hung a quiver; her left arm leant on the bow</b> , the hand hanging relaxed at the wrist. She rested the elbow of her other arm on her right thigh, cradling her cheek  | Κόρη καθῆστο ἐπὶ πέτρας, ἀμήχανόν τι κάλλος καὶ θεὸς εἶναι ἀναπείθουσα, τοῖς μὲν παροῦσι πεπριαλοῦσα φρονήματος δὲ εὐγενοῦς ἔτι πνέουσα. <b>Δάφνη τὴν κεφαλὴν ἔστεπτο καὶ φαρέτρην τῶν ὤμων ἐξῆπτο καὶ τῷ λαιῷ βραχίονι τὸ τόξον ὑπεστήρικτο</b> · ἡ λοιπὴ δὲ χεὶρ ἀφροντίστως ἀπηώρητο. Μηρῷ δὲ τῷ δεξιῷ τὸν ἀγκῶνα θατέρας χειρὸς ἐφεδράζουσα καὶ τοῖς δακτύλοις τὴν παρειάν   |

<sup>155</sup> Height is another indicator of divinity found in Homeric texts.

|                                  |  |   |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
|                                  | in her fingers. Her head was bowed, and she gazed steadily at a young man lying at her feet. He was terribly wounded and seemed to be barely conscious, coming round from the verge of death as if from a deep sleep.  | ἐπιπτρέψασα, κάτω νεύουσα καὶ τινα προκείμενον ἔφηβον περισκοπούσα τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀνεῖχεν.   |
| <i>An Ethiopian Story 1.2.6</i>  | Some said she must be a <b>god</b> —the <b>goddess Artemis</b> , or the <b>Isis</b> they worship in those parts; others said she was a priestess possessed by one of the gods and that she was responsible for the carnage before them. That is what they thought, but they did not yet know the truth.  | Οἱ μὲν γὰρ <b>θεόν</b> τινα ἔλεγον, καὶ <b>θεὸν Ἄρτεμιν</b> ἢ τὴν ἐγχώριον <b>Ἴσιν</b> , οἱ δὲ ἰέρειαν ὑπὸ τοῦ θεῶν ἐκμενηνῆσαν καὶ τὸν ὀρώμενον πολὺν φόνον ἐργασάμενην. Καὶ οἱ μὲν ταῦτα ἐγίνωσκον, τὰ ὄντα δὲ οὐπω ἐγίνωσκον·  |
| <i>An Ethiopian Story 2.23.1</i> | “...particularly Pythian Apollo, and also to Theagenes and Charicleia, the noble and fair, for they count as <b>gods</b> in my book.”  | ...αὐτῷ γε ἀπόλλωνι πυθίῳ προσέτι θεαγένει καὶ χαρικλείᾳ τοῖς καλοῖς τε καὶ ἀγαθοῖς, ἐπειδὴ καὶ τούτους εἰς <b>θεοὺς</b> ἀναγράφω.  |
| <i>An Ethiopian Story 2.31.1</i> | “...there was something special, something <b>godlike</b> , about the <b>light</b> in the baby’s eyes, so piercing yet so enchanting was [her] gaze.   | καὶ ἄλλως καὶ τὸ παιδίον αὐτόθεν μέγα τι καὶ <b>θεῖον</b> τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν <b>ἐξέλαμπεν</b> , οὕτω μοι περισκοποῦντι γοργόν τε καὶ ἐπαγωγὸν ἐνεῖδε.   |
| <i>An Ethiopian Story 5.10.2</i> | There was a vast difference between [Thisbe and the captured woman], a difference as great as that between man and <b>god</b> . Her beauty was beyond compare and beyond his power to describe in words.   | Οὐ γὰρ μικρὸν εἶναι τὸ διάφορον ἀλλ’ ὅσον ἂν τι γένοιτο <b>θεοῦ</b> πρὸς ἄνθρωπον, οὕτως οὐκ εἶναι τοῦ κάλλους ὑπερβολὴν οὐδὲ θύτῳ δυνατόν εἶναι τῷ λόγῳ φράζειν.   |
| <i>An Ethiopian Story 8.9.13</i> | Charikleia climbed onto the pyre and positioned herself at the very heart of the fire. There she stood for some time without taking any hurt. The flames flowed around her rather than licking against her; they caused her no harm but drew back wherever she moved towards them, serving merely to encircle her in splendor and present a <b>vision</b> of her standing in <b>radiant</b> beauty in a frame of <b>light</b> , like a bride in a chamber of flame | ἐπέβη προλαβοῦσα τῆς πυρᾶς καὶ εἰς τὸ μεσαίτατον ἐνιδρυθεῖσα αὐτὴ μὲν ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἀπαθὴς εἰστήκει, περιρρέοντος αὐτὴν μᾶλλον τοῦ πυρὸς ἢ προσπελάζοντος καὶ λυμαينوμένου μὲν οὐδὲν ὑποχωροῦντος δὲ καθ’ ὃ μέρος ὀρμήσειεν ἡ Χαρίκλεια καὶ περιαυγάζεσθαι μόνον καὶ διοπτεύεσθαι παρέχοντος <b>ἐπιφαιδρυνομένην</b> ἐκ τοῦ <b>περιαυγάσματος</b> τὸ κάλλος καὶ οἷον ἐν πυρίνῳ θαλάμῳ νυμφευομένην |
| <i>An Ethiopian Story 10.9</i>   | Then, before the people supervising the test [of her virginity by standing on the gridiron] could tell her what to do, she produced, from a little   | Μηδὲ κελεῦσαι τοὺς ἐπιτεταγμένους ἀναμείνασα ἐνέδυ τε τὸν ἐκ Δελφῶν ἱερὸν κιτῶνα, ἐκ πηριδίου τινὸς ὃ ἐπεφέρετο προκομίσασα,  |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | <p>pouch that she was carrying, her Delphic robe, woven with gold thread and embroidered with rays, and put it on. She let her hair fall free, ran forward like one possessed, and sprang onto the gridiron, where she stood for some time without taking any hurt, her <b>beauty blazing with a new and dazzling radiance</b> as she stood conspicuous on her lofty pedestal; in her magnificent robe she seemed <b>more like an image of a goddess</b> than a mortal woman. A thrill of wonder ran through the crowd.</p> | <p>χρυσουφῇ τε ὄντα καὶ ἀκτίσι κατάπαστον, τήν τε κόμην ἀνείσα καὶ οἶον κάτοχος φανείσα προσέδραμέ τε καὶ ἐφήλατο τῇ ἐσχάρᾳ καὶ εἰστήκει πολὺν χρόνον ἀπθής, τῷ τε <b>κάλλει τότε πλέον ἐκλάμποντι καταστράπτουσα</b>, περίοπτος ἐφ' ὑψηλοῦ πᾶσι γεγενημένη, καὶ πρὸς τοῦ σχήματος τῆς στολῆς <b>ἀγάλματι θεοῦ πλέον ἢ θνητῇ γυναικί</b> προσεικαζομένη. Θάμβος γοῦν ἅμα πάντας κατέσχε·</p> |
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### 2.5.i *Chaereas and Callirhoe*

In numerous instances in Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Callirhoe is either compared to or assumed to be a goddess because of her great beauty. Callirhoe is a double of Aphrodite, a point which drives the plot continually forward, as Hägg shows.<sup>156</sup> Unlike other women, she is not simply beautiful, but radiantly so. The first time we hear of her beauty is in 1.1:

Ἦν γὰρ τὸ κάλλος οὐκ ἀνθρώπινον ἀλλὰ θεῖον, οὐδὲ Νηρηίδος ἢ Νύμφης τῶν ὀρειῶν ἀλλ' αὐτῆς Ἀφροδίτης [παρθένου].<sup>157</sup>

Her beauty was more than human, it was divine, and it was not the beauty of a Nereid of a mountain nymph at that, but of the maiden Aphrodite herself.<sup>158</sup>

Here we have three categories of beauty distinguished: ordinary, human beauty; semi-divine beauty; and divine beauty attributed to goddesses. This judgement on Callirhoe's beauty is confirmed at the end of the first section, where, at her wedding, she is shown to the public in her finery.

ὁ μὲν οὖν Χαίρεας προσδραμών αὐτὴν κατεφίλει, Καλλιρρόη δὲ γνωρίσασα τὸν ἐρώμενον, ὥσπερ τι λύχνου φῶς ἤδη σβεννύμενον ἐπιχυθέντος ἐλαίου

<sup>156</sup> Hägg, "Emplotment," 143.

<sup>157</sup> Chariton, *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 1.1 [Goold].

<sup>158</sup> Chariton, *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 1.1 [Reardon].



πάλιν ἀνέλαμψε καὶ μείζων ἐγένετο καὶ κρείττων. ἐπεὶ δὲ προῆλθεν εἰς τὸ δημόσιον, θάμβος ὅλον τὸ πλῆθος κατέλαβεν, ὥσπερ ἀρτέμιδος ἐν ἐρημίᾳ κυνηγέταις ἐπιστάσης· πολλοὶ δὲ τῶν παρόντων καὶ προσεκύνησαν.

Then Chaereas ran forward and kissed her; recognizing the man she loved, Callirhoe, like a dying lamp<sup>159</sup> once it is replenished with oil, flamed into life again and became taller and stronger. When she came out into the open, all were astounded, as when Artemis appears to hunters in lonely places. Many of the onlookers even knelt in homage.<sup>160</sup>

In this situation, it is not just that the crowd is comparing Callirhoe's radiant beauty to that of a goddess; rather, they actually behave as if they are in the presence of a goddess and begin to worship her, again a not uncommon occurrence in the plot of *Chaereas and Callirhoe*. The verb προσκύνεω is most commonly used to describe this act, and the verb occurs in this sense in the other novels as well. These excerpts represent the first of many Divine Hints given by the appearance of the protagonist, but further, are examples of Irony Treatment. The onlookers kneel down in homage (προσεκύνησαν). This is ironic because Callirhoe is a seems so far to be a mortal woman; but her hints of divinity point to a different ontology, one which would make worship not only appropriate but necessary. Between her description using flames, her taller and stronger appearance, and her great beauty, it is clear that these sections conform to Turkeltaub's categorization of the divine epiphany in Homeric literature; the Irony Treatment Callirhoe experiences from the crowd confirms the appropriateness of this analysis.

In a later passage from *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, after Callirhoe is sold as a slave, her luck having seemingly run out, she is again mistaken for a goddess. At first only her fellow slaves, and especially the steward of her new master, are

<sup>159</sup> This lamp reference is also reminiscent of the lamp of Athena in *Od.* 19.33ff.

<sup>160</sup> *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 1.1.15–16. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the novels are from the Loeb versions.

struck by her radiant beauty:

ὁ δὲ Λεωνᾶς καὶ πάντες οἱ ἔνδον ἐπιστάσης αἰφνίδιον κατεπλάγνυσαν, οἷα  
δὴ δοκοῦντες θεὰν ἑωρακέσθαι· καὶ γὰρ ἦν τις λόγος ἐν τοῖς ἀγροῖς  
Ἀφροδίτην ἐπιφαίνεσθαι.

Leonas and all in the room were struck with amazement at the sudden apparition,  
as if they had set eyes on a goddess, for rumor had it that Aphrodite could be  
seen in the fields.<sup>161</sup>

Here, Leonas the steward and the other servants in attendance when Callirhoe is  
presented for sale are not simply enamoured with her beauty but entertain the  
possibility that she is the goddess Aphrodite; this is not an implausible situation  
since they all know that Aphrodite is known to wander around in the fields  
surrounding the estate. Again we are witness to Turkeltaub's Hint of Divinity  
pattern. But it is not only the non-elite in *Chaereas and Callirhoe* who are  
confused about Callirhoe's true identity; in the next book Callirhoe's new master,  
Dionysius, is also unsure whether he has just accidentally purchased a goddess:

ὁ δὲ διονύσιος τὸ μὲν κάλλος ἡδέως ἤκουσε τῆς γυναικός (ἦν γὰρ  
φιλογύνης ἀληθῶς), τὴν δὲ δουλείαν ἀηδῶς· [...] "ὦ λεωνᾶ, κάλὸν εἶναι  
σῶμα μὴ πεφυκὸς ἐλεύθερον. Οὐκ ἀκούεις τῶν ποιητῶν ὅτι θεῶν παῖδές  
εἰσιν οἱ καλοί, πολὺ δὲ πρότερον ἀνθρώπων εὐγενῶν;"

Although Dionysius was pleased to hear of the girl's beauty, for he was a great  
admirer of women, he was not pleased to hear she was a slave [...] "Leonas," he  
said, "it is impossible for a person not free-born to be beautiful. Have you not  
learned from the poets that beautiful people are the children of gods, and all the  
more likely children of the nobly born?"<sup>162</sup>

Dionysius is clearly trying to explain to his steward that it is impossible for  
Callirhoe, his new slave, to be as beautiful as Leonas claims she is; he is not  
consciously making a claim to her divinity. However, the omniscient reader  
knows that Callirhoe is indeed as beautiful as Leonas claims; this, then, is another  
example of Ironic Treatment. Dionysius is unaware how true his words are since  
he has not yet experienced the Hint of Divinity which comes later. Her beauty is,

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<sup>161</sup> 1.14.1

<sup>162</sup> 2.1.5

to Dionysius as to the others, a sign that she must be the child of a god, a fact which Dionysius is forced to admit himself only a little farther on in the plot, after he meets Callirhoe and gets his Divine Hint. While the other household slaves are cleaning Callirhoe up in order to make her suitable to meet her new master, to show her off to her best advantage, another epiphanic moment takes place which foreshadows Dionysius' epiphany a short while later.

Εἰσελθοῦσαν δὲ ἤλειψάν τε καὶ ἀπέσμηξαν ἐπιμελῶς καὶ μᾶλλον  
ἀποδυσάμενης κατεπλάγησαν· ὥστε ἐνδεδυμένης αὐτῆς θαυμάζουσαι τὸ  
πρόσωπον ὡς θεῖον, <ἀ>πρόσωπον ἔδοξαν <τᾶνδον> ἰδοῦσαι· ὁ χρῶς  
γὰρ λευκὸς ἔστιλψεν εὐθὺς μαρμαρυγῇ τινι ὅμοιον ἀπολάμπων·

After she had gone in [to the bath] they rubbed her with oil and wiped it off carefully, and marveled at her all the more when undressed, for, whereas when she was dressed they admired her face as divine, they had no thoughts for her face when they saw her hidden beauty. Her skin gleamed white, shining just like a shimmering surface.<sup>163</sup>

Again in this instance, the servants marvel at her gleaming and shimmering appearance. Of course, when one is rubbed with oil, one's skin tends to glisten; but Callirhoe's appearance is more than just the shining of skin rubbed with oil. Just as in Turkeltaub's example<sup>164</sup> from the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (mentioned above) where Aphrodite's jewellery and clothing gleam and shine *both* in a mundane way to denote their high quality *and* in a way that suggests her divinity, in the case of Callirhoe's skin, a visual *double entendre* is taking place: her skin gleams because of the oil, but also because this shining signifies that she is divine. This shining appearance is a hallmark of the divine presence, as discussed above, and serves as yet another marker of Callirhoe's liminality—her existence in both the divine and human realms. Further, while the other servants view her face as divine when she is clothed, the servants view her physical beauty

<sup>163</sup> 2.2.2

<sup>164</sup> Turkeltaub, *Radiance Manifest*, 58, esp. n. 101.

while naked as even more elevated, more divine.

After her bath, the other slaves even remark on her divine appearance, telling her that she will be amazed when she visits Aphrodite's shrine and sees the close likeness for herself.<sup>165</sup> Hearing this, Callirhoe is distressed but thinks she will visit the shrine, since she blames the goddess for her troubles and wants to make that fact known to Aphrodite. It is at the shrine where she finally meets her new master, Dionysius, who, like the others, mistakes her for Aphrodite.

θεασάμενος οὖν ὁ Διονύσιος δὲ ἀνεβόησεν "ἴλεως εἴης, ὦ Ἀφροδίτη, καὶ ἐπ' ἀγαθῷ μοι φανείης." καταπίπτοντα δὲ αὐτὸν ἤδη Λεωνᾶς ὑπέλαβε καὶ "αὕτη" φησὶν "ἐστὶν, ὦ δέσποτα, ἡ νεώνητος· μηδὲν ταραχθῆς. καὶ σὺ δέ, ὦ γύναι, πρόσσελθε τῷ κυρίῳ." [...] ὁ δὲ Διονύσιος πλῆξας τὸν Λεωνᾶν "ἀσεβέστατε" εἶπεν, "ὥς ἀνθρώποις διαλέγῃ τοῖς θεοῖς; ταύτην λέγεις ἀργυρώνητον; δικαίως οὖν οὐχ εὖρες τὸν πιπράσκοντα. Οὐκ ἤκουσας οὐδὲ Ὀμήρου διδάσκοντος ἡμᾶς  
καὶ τε θεοὶ ξείνοισιν ἐοικότες ἄλλοδαποῖσιν  
Ἀνθρώπων ὕβριν τε καὶ εὐνομίην ἐφορῶσι;"

At the sight of her [Callirhoe] Dionysius cried, "Aphrodite, be gracious to me, and may your presence bless me!" As he was in the act of kneeling, Leonas caught him and said, "Sir, this is the slave just bought. Do not be disturbed. And you, woman, come to meet your master." [...] But Dionysius struck Leonas and said, "You blasphemer, do you talk to gods as you would to men [sic]? Have you the nerve to call her a bought slave? No wonder you were unable to find the man who sold her. Have you not even heard what Homer teaches us? 'Oft in the guise of strangers from distant lands / the gods watch human insolence and righteousness.'"<sup>166</sup>

Just a few chapters earlier, Dionysius was chiding Leonas for believing he had indeed purchased a beautiful slave. How prescient were his words that only the children of gods are beautiful! Here Dionysius is so convinced of her divinity that he kneels in worship. Even when his steward corrects him, Dionysius remains convinced that he is in the presence of Aphrodite herself. He justifies his belief by quoting Homer. For Dionysius, even if Leonas has purchased Callirhoe as a human slave, the possibility remains that she is really a god. It is not just that she

<sup>165</sup> 2.2.5.

<sup>166</sup> 2.3.6; Dionysius here quotes from the *Odyssey* 17.485, 487.

resembles Aphrodite physically; rather, for Dionysius, Callirhoe is both a god and a human in a mortal body.

Again Turkeltaub's categories make sense here. Where Dionysius' behaviour was Ironic previously because he did not know that his sarcastic words were in fact true, here he treats Callirhoe Ironically by kneeling down before her and praying.<sup>167</sup> His actions are the result of him catching sight of his new slave, Callirhoe, whose appearance has somehow indicated her divinity.

Shortly after this scene, Callirhoe consents, in desperation, to marry Dionysius. As she boards the boat which is to take her to her fiancé's other house, the seamen are astonished by her appearance and think that Aphrodite is about to embark on their vessel (3.2.14). Although Callirhoe's great beauty or shining radiance are not mentioned here, and so the Hint of Divinity is not explicit, the Ironic Treatment clearly takes place when the boatmen rush to worship her:

Βαδίζουσαν δὲ αὐτὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ τεμένους ἐπὶ τὴν θάλασσαν ἰδόντες οἱ ναῦται  
δείματι κατεσχέθησαν, ὡς τῆς Ἀφροδίτης αὐτῆς ἐρχομένης ἵνα ἐμβῇ, καὶ  
ὥρμησαν ἄθρόοι προσκυνήσαι·

As she made her way from the shrine to the sea, the boatmen were overwhelmed  
with awe on seeing her, as though Aphrodite herself were coming to embark,

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<sup>167</sup> Later in Chariton's work, this scene is repeated in a variation where Callirhoe herself performs the act of proskynesis. 5.9.1–2 reads τὴν δὲ Καλλιρόην εὐνοῦχοι παραλαβόντες ἡγαγον πρὸς τὴν βασιλίδαν, μηδὲν αὐτῇ προειπόντες· ὅταν γὰρ πέμψῃ βασιλεὺς, οὐκ ἀπαγγέλλεται. Θεασαμένη δὲ αἰφνίδιον ἡ Στάτειρα τῆς κλίνης ἀνέθορε δόξασα Ἀφροδίτην ἐφεστάναι, καὶ γὰρ ἐξαιρέτως ἐτίμα τὴν θεόν· ἡ δὲ προσεκύνησεν. ὁ δὲ εὐνοῦχος νοήσας τὴν ἔκπληξιν αὐτῆς “Καλλιρόην” φησὶν “ἐστὶν αὕτη· πέπομφε δὲ αὐτὴν βασιλεὺς, ἵνα παρὰ σοὶ φυλάττηται μέχρι τῆς δίκης.” / ‘The king's eunuchs took Callirhoe and brought her to the queen without prior warning, for there is no announcement when the king acts. Seeing her unexpectedly Statira started up from her couch, thinking that Aphrodite stood before her, for she held that goddess in special honor. Callirhoe in turn knelt in homage, and the eunuch, noticing the queen's amazement, said, “This is Callirhoe. The king has sent her to be in your care until the trial begins.”’ In this case, Queen Statira believes she is in the presence of a goddess when she first meets Callirhoe. However, whereas throughout the novel to this point, people in Callirhoe's presence have reacted with proskynesis, in this instance the author reverses the theme and depicts Callirhoe acting Ironically—Callirhoe, belying her appearance as a goddess, kneels before the astonished queen. In this way Chariton continues the use of epiphanic tropes in a way which is entertaining and Ironic not just in how the characters experience the plot, but in how the readers do. As such, this example, too, contributes to Callirhoe's divine identification.

and with one accord they hastened to kneel in homage.

The verb προσκυνέω is again used in this instance to describe the act of worship performed to honour gods and goddesses, which in this situation locates Callirhoe in the divine category.

*Chaereas and Callirhoe* 3.9.1 gives a prime example of Ironic Treatment, one which involves the readers of the novel since it relies on a play-on-words. Callirhoe is praying and lamenting her fate in Aphrodite's temple. At length, she calls the priestess to come in:

ἡ δὲ πρεσβυτίς ὑπακούσασα “τί κλάεις” εἶπεν, “ὦ παιδίον, ἐν ἀγαθοῖς τηλικούτοις; ἤδη γὰρ καὶ σὲ ὡς θεὰν οἱ ξένοι προσκυνοῦσι. Πρῶην ἦλθον ἐνθάδε δύο νεανίσκοι καλὶ παραπλέοντες· ὁ δὲ ἕτερος αὐτῶν θεασάμενός σου τὴν εἰκόνα, μικροῦ δεῖν ἐξέπνευσεν. Οὕτως ἐπιφανῇ σε ἡ Ἀφροδίτη πεποίηκεν.”

The old woman came in answer and said, “My child, why are you crying amid such blessings? Why, even strangers are paying you homage now as a goddess. The other day two fine young men sailed by here, and one of them nearly expired at the sight of your statue, so like a goddess on earth has Aphrodite made you.”

The key word in this excerpt is ἐπιφανῇ which of course connotes the appearance of a divinity, a nuance not well represented in the English translation. Just previously, the boatmen have taken Callirhoe to be an epiphany, and a little farther back, Dionysius himself has assumed she is an epiphanic manifestation of Aphrodite. In this context, Chariton makes the play on the word, which, as I established above, has multiple meanings, not all of which imply divine presence. Tomas Hägg suggests that “the pun is perhaps a sign that we should not take the talk about epiphany too seriously.”<sup>168</sup> Hägg suggests that the author uses the play on epiphany here to indicate that Callirhoe is *not* the manifestation of the goddess. However, given the novel's continuing use of Ironic Treatment as a means of

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<sup>168</sup> Hägg, “Emplotment,” 147.

indicating the epiphanic presence of a deity, I would argue that in this case, the author uses the pun to further the Irony Treatment trope in a nuanced way. As such, I propose that the utterance of the word by the priestess (how much more ironic that here it is the priestess!), who is aware of the behaviour of at least the young men if not Dionysius from the previous encounter at the temple, acts ironically as an indicator of Callirhoe's identification with the deity.

There are several other examples of the trope throughout the next few chapters of *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, but a final, clear example which combines both the dazzling radiance of Callirhoe's visage (Divine Hint) and her worship by other characters (Irony Treatment) is found in 5.3.9:

ἐξέλαμψε δὲ τὸ Καλλιρόης πρόσωπον, καὶ μαρμαρυγὴ κατέσχε τὰς  
ἀπάντων ὄψεις, ὥσπερ ἐν νυκτὶ βαθεῖα πολλοῦ φωτὸς αἰφνίδιον  
φανέντος· ἐκπλάγνυντες δὲ οἱ βάρβαροι προσεκύνησαν.

Callirhoe's face shone with radiance which dazzled the eyes of all, just as when  
on a dark night a blinding flash is seen. Struck with amazement, the Persians  
knelt in homage.

Callirhoe is in Persia to take part in a trial to determine whose wife she really is, but when the Persians first catch sight of her in a beauty contest arranged by the other royal women (who clearly did not properly vet their opponent), not only does she win the contest, but her shining brightness convinces the Persians that she belongs to an ontological category deserving of worship. The terms used in this passage, the shining of the face, the dazzling of the eyes, the amazement felt by the witnesses, are all typical terms used to describe epiphanies, as I have shown above.

To sum up, *Chaereas and Callirhoe* makes use of epiphanic tropes<sup>169</sup> to

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<sup>169</sup> There are other examples, less obvious than the ones I have outlined here, that associate Callirhoe with the goddess, including 5.9.1; 6.3.5; 6.4.6; and 8.6.8.

blur the boundaries between its main character, Callirhoe, and the goddess Aphrodite. These tropes, as outlined by Turkeltaub, are categories also used by Homeric literature and it is in this context that we should view the heroines of the novels, since *Chaereas and Callirhoe* is not the only work in this corpus to employ such themes.

## 2.5.ii Instances of Epiphanic Tropes in *An Ephesian Tale*

In *An Ephesian Tale*, we are introduced to Anthia dressed in the guise of Artemis during a procession.<sup>170</sup> She carries Artemis' bow and is surrounded by hunting dogs. The crowd remarks that she must be the goddess, or at least a replica placed there by the goddess herself:

Ἦγετο δὲ τῆς Ἀρτέμιδος ἐπιχώριος ἐορτή· ἔδει δὲ πομπεύειν ἀπὸ τῆς πόλεως ἐπὶ τὸ ἱερόν, στάδιοι δὲ εἰσιν ἑπτὰ, πάσας τὰς ἐπιχωρίου παρθένους κεκοσμημένας πολυτελῶς καὶ τοὺς ἐφήβους, ὅσοι τὴν αὐτὴν ἡλικίαν εἶχον τῷ Ἀβροκόμῃ· ἦν δὲ αὐτὸς περὶ τὰ ἑξκαίδεκα ἔτη καὶ τῶν ἐφήβων προσήπτετο καὶ ἐν τῇ πομπῇ τὰ πρῶτα ἐφέρετο. [...] Παρήεσαν δὲ κατὰ στίχον οἱ πομπεύοντες, πρῶτα μὲν τὰ ἱερὰ καὶ δᾶδες καὶ κανᾶ καὶ θυμιάματα, ἐπὶ τούτοις ἵπποι καὶ κύνες καὶ σκεύη κυνηγετικά, ὧν τὰ μὲν πολεμικά, τὰ δὲ πλεῖστα εἰρηνικά. <...> ἐκάστη δὲ αὐτῶν οὕτως ὡς πρὸς ἐραστὴν ἐκεκόσμητο. ἦρχε δὲ τῆς τῶν παρθένων τάξεως Ἀνθία, θυγάτηρ Μεγαμήδους καὶ Εὐίππης, ἐγχωρίων. Ἦν δὲ τὸ κάλλος τῆς Ἀνθίας οἷον θαυμάσαι καὶ πολὺ τὰς ἄλλας ὑπερεβάλετο παρθένους. ἔτη μὲν ὡς τεσσαρεσκαίδεκα ἐγεγόνει, ἦνθι δὲ αὐτῆς τὸ σῶμα ἐπ' εὐμορφίᾳ, καὶ ὁ τοῦ σχήματος κόσμος πολὺς εἰς ὥραν συνεβάλετο· κόμη ξανθή, ἢ πολλὴ καθειμένη, ὀλίγη πεπλεγμένη, πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀνέμων φορὰν κινουμένη· ὀφθαλμοὶ γοργοί, φαιδροὶ μὲν ὡς καλῆς, φοβεροὶ δὲ ὡς σώφρονος· ἐσθῆς χιτῶν ἀλουργῆς, ζωστὸς εἰς γόνυ, μέχρι βραχιόνων καθειμένος, νεβρὶς περικειμένη, ὅπλα γωρυτὸς ἀνημμένος, τόξα <...>, ἄκοντες φερόμενοι, κύνες ἐπόμενοι. πολλὰκις αὐτὴν ἐπὶ τοῦ τεμένους ἰδόντες ἐφέσιοι προσεκύνησαν ὡς Ἄρτεμιν, καὶ τότε οὖν ὀφθείσης ἀνεβόησε τὸ πλῆθος, καὶ ἦσαν ποικίλαι παρὰ τῶν θεωμένων φωναί, τῶν μὲν ὑπ' ἐκπλήξεως τὴν θεὸν εἶναι λεγόντων, τῶν δὲ ἄλλην τινὰ ὑπὸ τῆς θεοῦ πε[ρι]ποιημένην, προσηύχοντο δὲ πάντες καὶ προσεκύνουν καὶ τοὺς γονεῖς αὐτῆς ἐμακάριζον, ἦν δὲ διαβόητος τοῖς θεωμένοις ἅπασιν Ἀνθία ἡ καλή.

A local festival for Artemis was underway, and from the city to her shrine, a distance of seven stades, all the local girls had to march sumptuously adorned, as did all the ephebes who were the same age as Habrocomes; he was about sixteen and already enrolled among the ephebes, and he headed the procession. [...] The procession marched along in file, first the sacred objects, torches,

<sup>170</sup> 1.2.2ff.



baskets, and incense, followed by horses, dogs, and hunting equipment, some of it martial, most of it peaceful <...> each of the girls was adorned as for a lover. Heading the line of girls was Anthia, daughter of Magamedes and Euippe, locals. Anthia's beauty was marvelous and far surpassed the other girls. She was fourteen, her body was blooming with shapeliness, and the adornment of her dress enhanced her grace. Her hair was blonde, mostly loose, only little of it braided, and moving as the breezes took it. Her eyes were vivacious, bright like a beauty's but forbidding like a chaste girl's; her clothing was a belted purple tunic, knee-length and falling loose over the arms, and over it a fawnskin with a quiver attached, arrows <...>, javelins in hand, dogs following behind. Often when seeing her at the shrine, the Ephesians worshiped her as Artemis, so also at the sight of her on this occasion the crowd cheered; the opinions of the spectators were various, some in their astonishment declaring that she was the goddess herself, others that she was someone else fashioned by the goddess, but all of them prayed, bowed down, and congratulated her parents, and the universal cry among all the spectators was "Anthia the beautiful!"

In W. R. Connor's 1987 discussion of this scene, he puts forward that the crowd was not taken in by Anthia's costume, but rather that they admired her beauty in the *role* of the goddess, rather than as the goddess herself.<sup>171</sup> But the role of the procession in the identification of human beings with gods is significant: "within the ritual context of the festival procession, the woman is both priestess and goddess—not a substitute for Artemis, but, in phenomenological terms, Artemis herself."<sup>172</sup> The distinction between gods and humans is not as clearly defined as we would like, and especially in the case of Anthia dressing up as Artemis, the division between epiphany and performance is blurry.<sup>173</sup>

Indeed, the relationship between costumed mortal and divine epiphany is often difficult to define. The example of the epiphany of a goddess in the midst of a battle is reported by Plutarch in his *Life of Aratus*, a Hellenistic general of

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<sup>171</sup> W. R. Connor, "Festivals and Processions: Civic Ceremonial and Political Manipulation in Archaic Greece," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 107 (1987): 44.

<sup>172</sup> Verity Platt, *Facing the Gods: Epiphany and Representation in Graeco-Roman Art, Literature and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 17.

<sup>173</sup> This has been widely discussed already in the case of the Triumphs of the Roman Emperors. See Larissa Bonfante Warren, "The Roman Triumph and Etruscan Kings: The Changing Face of the Triumph," *Journal of Roman Studies* 60 (1970): 49–66, esp. nn. 73–77. Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 85–92 has a discussion of the problematics of reconstructing the supposed "memento mori" utterance. See Jarl Fossum, *ABD* 6.133 for further references.

Sicyon. The epiphany determined the outcome of the battle, which took place in 241 B.C.E. Plutarch relates how one of the captive women, known for her great beauty, was sitting in a sanctuary of Artemis nearby, as she had been ordered by her captor. The captor had taken her, put his own three-crested helmet on her head, and left her there for safekeeping while he returned to battle. She, however, ventured just outside of the sanctuary to better view the fight. From her vantage point on the hill, she seemed to those fighting to be the goddess herself, with her helmet still on her head. Those who saw her were struck by her appearance and stopped fighting, enabling victory for the other side.<sup>174</sup> While other sources outline the procedure for invoking the presence of a god or goddess to help with battle, here Plutarch describes the spontaneous visitation of a divinity. The presence of this woman in a helmet, appearing from out of the sanctuary of Artemis, is an epiphany of the goddess herself, for it accomplishes the same thing—victory:

As she looks down from the city's acropolis, the daughter of Epigethes is viewed as Artemis Soteria herself, come to rescue her loyal worshippers in a battle epiphany typical of both Homeric epic and Hellenistic military tradition [...] the daughter of Epigethes [...] possesses an ambiguous ontological status: are the Aetolians simply mistaken in viewing her as a sacred apparition (a phasma theion)? Or is Artemis actually working through her mortal avatar, generating an epiphany that may be simulated, but is no less 'real'?<sup>175</sup>

Likewise, in the case of *An Ephesian Tale*, Anthia is viewed as an apparition of Artemis, and to those who view her it is of no consequence whether the vision is 'real'; rather, Anthia, too, acquires an ontology that is simultaneously divine and human.

In 1.12.1–2, both Anthia and Habrocomes experience Ironic Treatment as

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<sup>174</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Aratus* 32.1–2.

<sup>175</sup> Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 14.

a result of their beauty—their Divine Hint. The pair is worshipped by the onlookers immediately, but they are also accorded a festival with public prayers and sacrifice:

Κατήγετο δὲ ἡ ναῦς εἰς Ῥόδον καὶ ἐξεβαινον οἱ ναῦται, ἐξήκει δὲ καὶ ὁ ἀβροκόμης ἔχων μετὰ χεῖρα τὴν Ἀνθίαν· συνήεσαν δὲ πάντες οἱ Ῥόδιοι τὸ κάλλος τῶν παίδων καταπεπληγότες καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις τῶν ἰδόντων παρήλθε σιωπῶν, ἀλλ’ οἱ μὲν ἔλεγον ἐπιδημίαν ἐκ τῶν θεῶν, οἱ δὲ προσεκύκλουν καὶ προσεπιτινοῦντο. [...] ἐπεύχονται δὲ αὐτοῖς δημοσίᾳ δαίθυσις τε θύουσι πολλὰς καὶ ἐορτὴν ἄγουσι τὴν ἐπιδημίαν αὐτῶν.

The ship put in to Rhodes and the crew disembarked; Habrocomes left the ship too, holding Anthia by the hand. All the Rhodians gathered round, amazed at the youngsters’ beauty, and not one of those who saw them passed by in silence: some called them a divine manifestation, others worshipped and bowed before them [...] They were accorded public prayers, and the Rhodians offered many a sacrifice and celebrated their visit like a festival.

Later, when the couple arrives in Tyre, their radiance suggests to the “barbarians” that they are gods (2.2.4). Both Rhodians, then, and the “barbarians” whom they meet later behave towards the couple as if they are gods; the assumption is not one that is unique to the lower classes of society, but indeed, in Rhodes, is present at all levels of society, since “not one of those who saw them” behaved in a way that understood the couple to be mortal. That is, it is not just the ignorant “barbarians” who accept Anthia and Habrocomes as deities, since the Rhodians, too, take one look at them and bow down.

### 2.5.iii Instances of Epiphanic Tropes in *Leucippe and Clitophon*

*Leucippe and Clitophon* also contains several instances where the main characters are understood as divine beings. The first Hint of Divinity occurs at 1.4, when Clitophon first catches sight of the girl who will be his lover:

ὥς δὲ ἐπέτεινα τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐπ’ αὐτήν, ἐν ἀριστερᾷ παρθένος ἐκφαίνεται μοι, καὶ καταστράπτει μου τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῷ προσώπῳ. Τοιαύτην εἶδον ἐγὼ ποτε ἐπὶ ταύρῳ γεγραμμένην Εὐρώπην· ὄμμα γοργὸν ἐῆδονῃ· κόμη ξανθή, τὸ ξανθὸν οὖλον· ὀφρὺς μέλαινα, τὸ μέλαν ἄκρατον· λευκὴ παρειά, τὸ λευκὸν εἰς μέσον ἐφοίνισσέτο καὶ ἐμμεῖτο πορφύραν οἷαν εἰς τὸν

ἐλέφαντα Λυδία βάπτει γυνή· τὸ στόμα ρόδων ἄνθος ἦν, ὅταν ἄρχηται τὸ  
 ρόδον ἀνοίγειν τῶν φύλλων τὰ χεῖλη. [...] ἐπήνουν τὸ μέγεθος,  
 ἐξεπεπλήγμην τὸ κάλλος.

In the middle of them [a group of servants accompanying visitors] walked a tall woman richly dressed; and as I gazed at her, I suddenly saw a maiden on her left, who blinded my eyes, as with a stroke of lightning, by the beauty of her face. She was like that picture of Europa on the bull which I saw but just now: an eye at once piercing and voluptuous; golden hair in golden curls; black eyebrows—jet black; pale cheeks, the pallor shading in the centre into a ruddy hue, like that stain wherewith the Lydian women tint ivory; and a mouth that was a rose—a rose-bud just beginning to uncurl its petals. [...] I admired her tall form, I was stupefied by her beauty.

A few important details are lost in translation here. First is the verb used to describe the moment when Clitophon first spies his beloved: the verb is ἐκφαίνεται from φαίνω, “appear.” While this verb, discussed more thoroughly above, is not used in the Homeric corpus to describe the appearance of gods, it becomes the standard technical term in the Hellenistic period. The most prominent forms of the word grouping are those which are preceded by ἐπί; these terms are used frequently in *Chaereas and Callirhoe* to describe the manifestations of goddesses, as Hägg notes, but rarely in the other romances.<sup>176</sup> Here, however, we have a variation on the theme. Rather than the simple “saw” in English, this verb reflects something more than mere observation.

Second, the girl in question, Leucippe, has in her name certain Hints of Divinity. When Leucippe, the shining, blazing girl with a name which implies the same, appears suddenly to Clitophon, he is dazzled by her tall and beautiful appearance. Leucippe is the feminized version of the word λευκιππος, which means “white horses.”<sup>177</sup> λευκός has the meaning of light, bright, or clear. It can

<sup>176</sup> Hägg, “Emplotment,” 147–148; he identifies *Leucippe and Clitophon* 7.12.4 and 8.18.1 as the only other examples.

<sup>177</sup> “λευκιππος,” *LSJ* 1041; λευκός + ἵππος.

also mean a white colour, especially in Homer's corpus.<sup>178</sup> When used of human being, it implies beauty and youth, but it can also have the implication of fortunate status.<sup>179</sup> As Turkeltaub has shown, great beauty and brightness of the skin are both signs of divinity; Leucippe's very name, then, confirms Clitophon's experience of her as shining, beautiful, and possibly divine. Apart from the allusions to light, shining, and brightness, which we already know imply that Hint of Divinity often described in Homeric literature and here in the romances, Leucippe is also described as tall. A tall stature is, again, a marker of divinity. When dazzling brightness is absent in narratives describing epiphanies, grand stature frequently makes the same implication.<sup>180</sup> Thus it is no surprise that Clitophon is taken aback by Leucippe's appearance; the combination of her divine beauty and stature confirms what her name implies: this shining girl could be divine.

In another example, towards the end of the novel when Leucippe and Clitophon are about to be reunited, a recognition scene<sup>181</sup> takes place which relies on Leucippe's resemblance to the goddess Artemis. When Clitophon hears that a woman has taken sanctuary in the temple of Artemis and that this woman's beauty is "second only to Artemis" (7.15), Clitophon instantly recognizes her as his beloved. Thus, although for this novel, the trope of identifying the heroine as a

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<sup>178</sup> See, for example, Homer's use of λευκώλενος (white-armed) as an epithet of Hera (*Iliad* 1.55, 195) and its use by Hesiod to describe Persephone (Hesiod, *Theogony*, 913) (λευκός, *LSJ* 1042).

<sup>179</sup> "λευκός," *LSJ* 1042.

<sup>180</sup> Dietrich, "Divine Epiphanies," 63, 71.

<sup>181</sup> For this study, Larsen's *Recognizing the Stranger* is particularly useful; its implications will be discussed in the conclusion. For recognition (*anagnorisis*) scenes in Homer, see Larsen's first chapter and Peter Gainsford, "Formal Analysis of Recognition Scenes in the *Odyssey*," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 123 (2003): 41–59.

goddess has not been as prominent as in other romances, the identification is signification for two reasons: first, Leucippe is likened to a goddess both times at key moments in the plot (at first sight and at recognition/reunification); second, her very name implies, to some degree, divinity, a fact which hovers silently in the background each time we hear her name.

#### 2.5.iv Instances of Epiphanic Tropes in *An Ethiopian Story*

The last novel we shall examine, *An Ethiopian Story*, also participates in this theme. In the opening scene, we are introduced to the main character, Charicleia, through her description as not one, but two goddesses:<sup>182</sup>

Κόρη καθήστο ἐπὶ πέτρας, ἀμήχανόν τι κάλλος καὶ θεὸς εἶναι ἀναπείθουσα, τοῖς μὲν παροῦσι πεπριαλοῦσα φρονήματος δὲ εὐγενοῦς ἔτι πνέουσα. Δάφνη τὴν κεφαλὴν ἔστεπτο καὶ φαρέτραν τῶν ὤμων ἐξῆπτο καὶ τῷ λαιῷ βραχίονι τὸ τόξον ὑπεστήρικτο· ἡ λοιπὴ δὲ χεὶρ ἀφροντίστως ἀπηώρητο. Μηρῷ δὲ τῷ δεξιῷ τὸν ἀγκῶνα θατέρας χειρὸς ἐφεδράζουσα καὶ τοῖς δακτύλοις τὴν παρεῖαν ἐπιπτρέψασα, κάτω νεύουσα καὶ τινα προκείμενον ἔφηβον περισκοποῦσα τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀνεῖχεν.

On a rock sat a girl, a creature of such indescribable beauty that one might have taken her for a goddess. Despite her great distress at her plight, she had an air of courage and nobility. On her head she wore a crown of laurel; from her shoulders hung a quiver; her left arm leant on the bow, the hand hanging relaxed at the wrist. She rested the elbow of her other arm on her right thigh, cradling her cheek in her fingers. Her head was bowed, and she gazed steadily at a young man lying at her feet. He was terribly wounded and seemed to be barely conscious, coming round from the verge of death as if from a deep sleep.

Here Charicleia is described in the image of both Artemis, since she carries a quiver of arrows, but her posture, cradling the head of her beloved, near death, suggests Isis and Osiris.<sup>183</sup> This is just what the bandits—whose view on the scene we follow as we read the first few chapters of the tale—assume when they see her:<sup>184</sup>

<sup>182</sup> 1.2.1–2

<sup>183</sup> Morgan, *An Ethiopian Story*, 355n3.

<sup>184</sup> 1.2.6

Οἱ μὲν γὰρ θεόν τινα ἔλεγον, καὶ θεὸν Ἄρτεμιν ἢ τὴν ἐγχώριον Ἴσιν, οἱ δὲ  
 ἰέρειαν ὑπὸ τοῦ θεῶν ἐκμενηνῆσαν καὶ τὸν ὀρώμενον πολὺν φόνον  
 ἐργασαμένην. Καὶ οἱ μὲν ταῦτα ἐγίνωσκον, τὰ ὄντα δὲ οὐπω ἐγίνωσκον·

Some said she must be a god—the goddess Artemis, or the Isis they worship in those parts; others said she was a priestess possessed by one of the gods and that she was responsible for the carnage before them. That is what they thought, but they did not yet know the truth.

The bandits cannot agree on Charicleia's identity but they concur that she has taken on the form, at least, of a goddess. The possession of a priestess by a god was an accepted occurrence in Greek religion. However, the line between the identity of the priestess and the identity of the goddess is not clear; as Platt suggests, such behaviour reflects "the continual slippage between presentation and representation that characterised Greek religious practice and the difficulty of distinguishing between real and mediated presence."<sup>185</sup> As I discussed above in section 2.5.ii, the manifestation of a goddess in human form was expected and the fact that the human is received or perceived as a goddess is enough to make that identity real; that the bandits explore the possibility that Charicleia is a priestess of one of these goddesses makes the identification of her as a goddess even more likely, since priestesses routinely took on the identities of the deities they served and were understood to *be* those deities in the rituals for which such a performance was required.<sup>186</sup> "Within the ritual context of the festival procession, the woman is both priestess and goddess—not a substitute for Artemis, but, in

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<sup>185</sup> Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 16.

<sup>186</sup> On the imitation of gods and goddesses by their cult personnel, see Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical* (J. Raffan, trans.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 97; Richard Hamilton, "Euripidean Priests," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 89 (1985): 55; Jeremy Tanner, *The Invention of Art History in Ancient Greece: Religion, Society and Artistic Rationalisation* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2006), 57–60; J. B. Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess: Women and Ritual in Ancient Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 104–115; and G. Petridou, "On Divine Epiphanies: Contextualizing and Conceptualizing Epiphanic Narratives in Greek Literature and Culture (7<sup>th</sup> C BC–2<sup>nd</sup> C AD)," (PhD diss., University of Exeter, 2006), 31–39; On the relationships between goddesses and their mortal impersonators, see Deborah Lyons, *Gender and Immortality: Heroines in Ancient Greek Myth and Cult* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 134–170.

phenomenological terms, Artemis herself.”<sup>187</sup> That is, the choice the bandits are entertaining here is not so much one of mutual exclusion but rather of a narrowing of a definition (the goddess) to be more precise (the priestess as the goddess). Interestingly, the statement at the end of this excerpt indicates that the bandits did not yet know the truth of her identity; the question is left unanswered.

Later, in book two, Kalasiris, although he is simply called “the old man” until he introduces himself sometime later, offers a libation to Charicleia and Theagenes. About to tell his tale of woe to Knemon, Kalasiris first suggests that they have a meal, and prefaces it with the customary libation to the gods, “particularly Pythian Apollo, and also to Theagenes and Charicleia, the noble and fair, for they count as gods in my book.”<sup>188</sup> Libations *on behalf of* a person were ordinary enough; declaring that Charicleia and Theagenes are gods, on par with the Pythian Apollo, suggests a different kind of reverence. Charicleia, especially, is considered god-like. Even when still an infant, “there was something special, something godlike, about the light in the baby’s eyes, so piercing yet so enchanting was [her] gaze.”<sup>189</sup> As a young girl of seven, her great beauty gave her caregivers the impression of heightened stature.<sup>190</sup> Both these traits, the shining eyes and the increased stature, are traits which Turkeltaub lists as Hints of

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<sup>187</sup> Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 17.

<sup>188</sup> 2.23.1; “...αὐτῷ γε ἀπόλλωνι πυθίῳ προσέτι θεαγένει καὶ χαρικλείᾳ τοῖς καλοῖς τε καὶ ἀγαθοῖς, ἐπειδὴ καὶ τούτους εἰς θεοὺς ἀναγράφω.” Another instance of Charicleia’s divine beauty and comportment is 8.2.1: “τὸ κάλλος παντοίως ἐκθειάζων καὶ τὴν ὥραν τῆς κόρης.”

<sup>189</sup> 2.31.1: “καὶ ἄλλως καὶ τὸ παιδίον αὐτόθεν μέγα τι καὶ θεῖον τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἐξέλαμπεν, οὕτω μοι περισκοποῦντι γοργόν τε καὶ ἐπαγωγὸν ἐνείδε.” In 7.7.7, the recognition scene in which Charicleia and Theagenes are finally reunited depends on the dazzling, divine brilliance of Charicleia’s eyes: “ἐνατενίσας τε καὶ ταῖς βολαῖς τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν τῆς χαρικλείας ὥσπερ ὑπ’ ἀκτίνος ἐκ νεφῶν διαττοῦσης.” / “He gazed hard at Charicleia and was dazzled by the brilliance of her eyes, as if by a shaft of sunlight shining out between the clouds.”

<sup>190</sup> 2.30.6



Divinity typically found in epiphanic scenes; it might seem only natural, then, to offer libations to Charicleia as to a goddess.

In book five, Charicleia is again compared to a goddess. She has been recaptured but is rescued by Nausikles, who is unsure at first of whom he is in possession. Clearly, however, it is not Thisbe:

Οὐ γὰρ μικρὸν εἶναι τὸ διάφορον ἀλλ' ὅσον ἂν τι γένοιτο θεοῦ πρὸς ἄνθρωπον, οὕτως οὐκ εἶναι τοῦ κάλλους ὑπερβολὴν οὐδὲ θύτῳ δυνατὸν εἶναι τῷ λόγῳ φράζειν.

There was a vast difference between [Thisbe and the captured woman], a difference as great as that between man and god. Her beauty was beyond compare and beyond his power to describe in words.<sup>191</sup>

It is because of this difference that Kalasiris and Knemon suspect that the captured woman is actually Charicleia, a suspicion that is confirmed when they finally get a good look at her. Again, her indescribable beauty sets Charicleia apart from ordinary women and marks her as divine.

Near the end of the novel, when Charicleia has been sentenced to execution in the “Persian style” (that is, on a bonfire), she again is described using tropes of divine epiphany.<sup>192</sup>

ἐπέβη προλαβοῦσα τῆς πυρᾶς καὶ εἰς τὸ μεσαίτατον ἐνιδρυθεῖσα αὐτὴ μὲν ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἀπαθὴς εἰστήκει, περιρρέοντος αὐτὴν μᾶλλον τοῦ πυρὸς ἢ προσπελάζοντος καὶ λυμαιομένου μὲν οὐδὲν ὑποχωροῦντος δὲ καθ' ὃ μέρος ὀρμήσειεν ἡ Χαρίκλεια καὶ περιαυγάζεσθαι μόνον καὶ διοπτρεύεσθαι παρέχοντος ἐπιφαιδρυνομένην ἐκ τοῦ περιαυγάσματος τὸ κάλλος καὶ οἶον ἐν πυρίνῳ θαλάμῳ νυμφευομένην.

Charicleia climbed onto the pyre and positioned herself at the very heart of the fire. There she stood for some time without taking any hurt. The flames flowed around her rather than licking against her; they caused her no harm but drew back wherever she moved towards them, serving merely to encircle her in splendor and present a vision of her standing in radiant beauty in a frame of light, like a bride in a chamber of flame.

Here, Charicleia is not explicitly called divine, but her wreath of flames suggests a radiant appearance such as one would expect at an epiphanic encounter. They

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<sup>191</sup> 5.10.2

<sup>192</sup> 8.9.13

are described as “encircl[ing] her in splendor” and giving her a “radiant beauty in a frame of light.” These are both qualities that the epiphanic forms of goddesses in the Homeric literature are given.<sup>193</sup>

One particularly illuminating example of a heroine of the novels being presented in the image of a goddess occurs in *An Ethiopian Story* 10.9, when Charicleia is about to be sacrificed as an offering to the gods.<sup>194</sup>

Μηδὲ κελεῦσαι τοὺς ἐπιτεταγμένους ἀναμείνασα ἐνέδου τε τὸν ἐκ Δελφῶν  
ἱερὸν κιτῶνα, ἐκ πηριδίου τινὸς ὃ ἐπεφέρετο προκομίσασα, χρυσοῦφῃ τε  
ὄντα καὶ ἄκτισι κατὰπαστον, τήν τε κόμην ἀνείσα καὶ οἶον κάτοχος  
φανείσα προσέδραμέ τε καὶ ἐφήλατο τῇ ἐσχάρᾳ καὶ εἰστήκει πολὺν χρόνον  
ἀπθής, τῷ τε κάλλει τότε πλέον ἐκλάμποντι καταστράπτουσα, περίοπτος  
ἐφ’ ὑψηλοῦ πᾶσι γεγενημένη, καὶ πρὸς τοῦ σχήματος τῆς στολῆς ἀγάλματι  
θεοῦ πλέον ἢ θνητῇ γυναικὶ προσεϊκαζομένη. Θάμβος γοῦν ἅμα πάντας  
κατέσχε·

Then, before the people supervising the test [of her virginity by standing on the gridiron] could tell her what to do, she produced, from a little pouch that she was carrying, her Delphic robe, woven with gold thread and embroidered with rays, and put it on. She let her hair fall free, ran forward like one possessed, and sprang onto the gridiron, where she stood for some time without taking any hurt, her beauty blazing with a new and dazzling radiance as she stood conspicuous on her lofty pedestal; in her magnificent robe she seemed more like an image of a goddess than a mortal woman. A thrill of wonder ran through the crowd.

Here, Charicleia is, in fact, revealing her “true” identity and in more than one sense. On one level, in an attempt to save both her own life and that of Theagenes, Charicleia has at last decided to display the treasured articles which would identify her real parents and her noble birth. But rather than conclude from her display that Charicleia is the mortal daughter of an elite family, far from home, it is clear to the crowd (and the narrator) that she is in fact a goddess. Thus, on another level, Charicleia’s true identity is also revealed in this same instant to be

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<sup>193</sup> For more information on the use of light and fire as indicators of divine presence in Homer, see above, section 2.4. This particular scene blends the allusions to the goddesses and the heroines; Charicleia is a goddess because of her appearance in the flames—but because she is spared from death, her experience on the pyre holds double meanings, the second of which will be discussed in chapter three. There I will demonstrate that her appearance also becomes significant when the continuing use of the trope of human sacrifice by the novels is examined in this context.

<sup>194</sup> 10.9.3–4

simultaneously divine. The words “blazing” (ἐκλάμποντι) and “dazzling” (φανεῖσα) used are emphatically mimetic of the language used in the Homeric literature that describes Hints of Divinity. Whereas the first time Charicleia was raised on a pedestal, she was surrounded by flames that create this blaze like a halo, in this instance, after showing her identification tokens, she creates her own wreath of glory. As I have shown, the descriptive terms in this section are used frequently throughout the novels and elsewhere to describe this kind of divine radiance. As Heubeck’s interpretation of Athena’s lamp in the *Odyssey* 19.36–40 shows,<sup>195</sup> and Parsinou’s work suggests, there is a strong association not just between the actual object of torches or lamps and the divine presence, but also a linguistic one.<sup>196</sup>

In this section I have outlined the most relevant portions of the Greek romance novels where the protagonists are been described as divine. This trope references the epiphanic scenes found in Homeric literature, as outlined by Turkeltaub and alluded to by others scholars. Although some would argue that these characters are merely appearing in the image of the goddess, or that those witnessing their divine appearance are duped into thinking they are divine, I have suggested that the porousness of the boundary between the mortal and divine ontological categories makes this question irrelevant. Charicleia, Callirhoe, Anthia, and Leucippe are described as goddesses; the actions of those around them confirm this identity, often ironically. The appearance of an individual in the

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<sup>195</sup> Heubeck, *et al.*, *Homer’s Odyssey*, 76; see my discussion above in section 2.4.

<sup>196</sup> It is significant, to this end, that Charicleia and Theagenes choose and make use of the symbol of the torch to recognize each other in 7.7.7, and that this is yet another instance where Charicleia’s divine spark is noted by the narrator.

image of a goddess has the effect, for practical and literary purposes, of rendering that person a manifestation of the goddess. However, the identities of these female figures are not one-dimensional; their identities are complicated by the fact that the author uses Homeric literature not only to mark them as divine, but also to compare them to the heroes and heroines of the literature of previous eras.

## 2.6 Allusions to the Heroines of Classical Literature

The romances make use of tropes and descriptors used by classical literature to link their heroines with those in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. By way of illustration, this section will examine examples of specific association between the novels' heroines and Ariadne, Penelope, and Helen. The novels' reliance on Homer and other ancient texts concretely links the main characters of the romances with characters in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. As I mentioned above, Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe* quotes directly from the *Iliad*<sup>197</sup> twelve times and the *Odyssey* nine.<sup>198</sup> These quotations do more than merely display the author's education—they also associate his characters with those of Homer. The author's use of the *Odyssey* in 1.1.14 links the main female protagonist, Callirhoe, with Penelope: the phrase, "her knees gave way and her heart as well" comes from *Odyssey* 4.703 after Penelope learns that her suitors were planning on killing

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<sup>197</sup> *Iliad* 1.317 (=Chariton 6.2.4); 3.146 (= 5.5.9); 4.1 (= 5.4.6); 13.131 (= 7.4.3); 18.22–24 (=1.4.6); 19.302 (=2.5.12); 21.114 (= 3.6.4); 22.82–83 (= 3.5.6); 22.304–305 (=7.2.4); 22.389–90 (= 5.10.9); 23.66–67 (= 2.9.6); 23.71 (= 4.1.3); 24.10 (= 6.1.8). Hock, "Educational Curriculum," 22.

<sup>198</sup> *Odyssey* 1.366 (=5.5.9); 4.703 (= 1.1.14); 6.102–104 (= 6.4.6); 15.21 (= 4.4.5); 17.37 (=4.7.5); 17.485, 487 (2.3.7); 18.213 (=5.5.9); 23.296 (= 8.1.17); 24.83 (4.1.5); Hock, "Educational Curriculum," 22.

Telemachus. This is, indeed, a stock quote for both Homer and Chariton.<sup>199</sup> Thus, when Callirhoe uses this line in response to learning that she is to marry a strange young man, the echoes of Penelope's fear rings in the readers' ears.

When Callirhoe is presumed dead after Chariton strikes her in a fit of jealousy, she is described as a "sleeping Ariadne" by those who attend her funeral. This popular theme in literature is used here by Chariton to reference the tale of how Ariadne helped Theseus against the Minotaur but was then abandoned by him on his return to Athens as she lay sleeping.<sup>200</sup> She is again compared to Ariadne, and to Leda, mother of Helen by Zeus, in 4.1.8.

Callirhoe also is likened to Helen through citations of Homer. When she is entering the courtroom in the final stages of the plot in 5.5.8–9, Chariton describes her appearance with a quote from the *Iliad* 3.146, when Helen appears on the wall. In the next line, Chariton uses a line from the *Odyssey* to compare her to Penelope and her suitors:

Εἰσῆθεν οὖν εἰς τὸ δικαστήριον, οἷαν ὁ θεῖος ποιητὴς τὴν Ἑλένην ἐπιστῆναί φησι τοῖς "ἀμφὶ Πρίαμον καὶ Πάνθοον ἡδὲ Θυμοίτην"<sup>201</sup> δημογέρουσιν· ὀφεῖσα δὲ ἄμβος ἐποίησε καὶ σιωπὴν, "πάντες δ' ἡρήσαντο παρὰ λεχέεσσι κλιθῆναι."<sup>202</sup>

Consequently, when she entered the courtroom she looked just as the divine poet describes Helen, when she appeared to them that were "about Priam and Panthous and also Thymoetes," elders of the people. The sight of her brought admiration and silence, and "they all prayed for the prize of sleeping beside her."

The important point is therefore not that Callirhoe is associated with one Homeric heroine specifically; her attributes call to mind a variety of heroines—Helen, Penelope, and Ariadne. Rather, the key element is that she is a heroine in the

<sup>199</sup> Reardon, *Collected*, 23n6; Chariton uses a similar phrase, this time with reference to Dionysius, in both 3.6.3 and 4.5.9 (cf. *Iliad* 21.114).

<sup>200</sup> *Callirhoe* 1.6; Reardon, *Collected*, 29 n18.

<sup>201</sup> *Iliad* 3.146

<sup>202</sup> *Odyssey* 1.366 = 18.213

pattern of the Homeric heroines and shares not only their attributes but also the literary characteristics that role implies, as I will show.

As Callirhoe is associated with Penelope and Helen, Chaereas is frequently likened to Achilles. When Chaereas is tricked by a wicked rival to believe that Callirhoe is unfaithful to him, he expresses his grief using words from *Iliad* 18.22–24, when Achilles hears of the death of his friend Patroclus:

ὥς φάτο· τὸν δ' ἄχεος νεφέλη ἐκάλυψε μέλαινα,  
ἀμφοτέρησι δὲ χερσὶν ἐλὼν κόνιν αἰθαλόεσσαν  
χεύατο κακὴ κεφαλῇς, χαρίεν δ' ἦσχυνε πρόσωπον.<sup>203</sup>

At these words a black cloud of grief covered him;  
With both hands he took dark dust and poured it over his head,  
Defiling his lovely countenance.

Later, in 5.2.4, Chariton again uses the trope of Achilles' grief to associate Chaereas with Achilles; again, the quotation of *Iliad* 18.22–24 makes the association accessible to the readers. Chariton compares Chaereas' grief to Achilles' in order to locate his character in a pattern familiar to his readers.

Achilles is frequently referenced in the plights of the heroes of the romances, but so, too, are other Homeric characters. Thus, in another example in *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 2.9.6, Chariton likens Chaereas to Patroclus rather than to Achilles. When Chaereas appears to Callirhoe in a vision in her sleep, Chariton uses the words of the *Iliad* 23.66f to express the vision:

ἐπέστη δὲ [αὐτῇ] εἰκὼν Χαϊρέου πάντα αὐτῷ [ὁμοία]  
μέγεθός τε καὶ ὄμματα κάλ' ἐκυῖα,  
καὶ φωνήν, καὶ τοῖα περὶ χροὶ εἵματα ἔστο.

An apparition of Chaereas stood before her, in all things  
like unto him, in stature and bright eyes,  
and voice, and wearing the same garments on his body.

In the *Iliad*, Achilles experiences the vision of his dead friend. In *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Callirhoe receives it. Chaereas can say no more than that he entrusts

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<sup>203</sup> *Callirhoe* 1.4.6.

their unborn son to her care before Callirhoe leaps up from sleep in order to embrace her husband. Limited though his message might have been, Callirhoe resolves to honour his request, as Achilles does Patroclus'.<sup>204</sup> The association of Callirhoe with Achilles and Chaereas with Patroclus happens again in Chariton's work. Several brief examples:<sup>205</sup> first, in 4.1.3, Dionysius uses the words of Patroclus' ghost from *Iliad* 23.71 to impress upon Callirhoe that just as Patroclus wants burying as soon as possible, so too Chaereas should be grieved quickly. Second, the tomb that Dionysius suggests building for Chaereas' memory is described using *Odyssey* 24.83's description of Achilles' tomb. Third, Chaereas quotes Homer in a speech he makes in 7.3.5, the readers would hear, in his altered use of the *Iliad*, his association of himself with the hero Diomedes and of his friend Polycharmus with Sthenelos.<sup>206</sup>

Fourth, Chaereas is compared to Protesilaus in 5.19:

ἐξαίφνης γοῦν ἀνεβόα [πολλάκις] “ποῖος οὗτος ἐπ’ ἐμοῦ Προτεσίλεως ἀνεβίω;

At any rate he suddenly began to shout, “What sort of Protesilaus is this who has come back from the dead to attack me?”

Protesilaus, the first Greek to be killed at Troy, is a significant hero at the time of composition of this novel.<sup>207</sup> Protesilaus was missed so much by his wife, Laodamia, that he was permitted to return to life for one day, after which his wife took her own life. Here Chariton uses the reference to the hero to comment on

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<sup>204</sup> There are many other instances where Chaereas is associated with other heroic characters. In 3.5.6, Chaerea's mother speaks to him using the words of Hecuba addressing Hector when she begs Hector not to enter into battle with Achilles.

<sup>205</sup> Other examples abound (e.g. *Callirhoe* 7.2.4, where Chaereas uses Hector's words in *Iliad* 22.304ff); here I have only outlined a few to illustrate the point.

<sup>206</sup> *Iliad* 9.48; Hock, “Educational Curriculum” 22.

<sup>207</sup> Philostratus' *Heroikos* was written in the third century C.E.; two shrines are confirmed places of worship for Protesilaus. Philostratus, *Heroikos* (Jennifer K. Berenson Maclean and Ellen Bradshaw Aitken, eds. and trans.; Writings from the Greco-Roman World. Vol. 1. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001.)

both the miraculous nature of Chaereas' reappearance and the quality of the love shared by *Chaereas and Callirhoe*. Finally, reference to hero and heroine in love is again found when Chaereas and Callirhoe are finally reunited at the end of their long journeys in 8.1.17:

ἐπεὶ δὲ ἄλῃς ἦν δακρύων καὶ διηγημάτων, περιπλακέντες ἀλλήλοις  
 “ἀσπάσιοι λέκτροιο παλαιοῦ θεσμὸν ἵκοντο.”

When they had had their fill of tears and tales, embracing each other, “they gladly came to the ancient rite of the bed.”

The quoted portion here comes from the *Odyssey* 23.296 and describes the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope. In comparing the two lovers to Odysseus and Penelope, Chariton makes claims about their roles in the novel. Not only are the individual characters associated with individual heroes, but the relationship the characters have to one another is also to some extent patterned after the one between Odysseus and Penelope in the *Odyssey*. Thus, the associations between heroes are not fixed but are mutable; the static aspect of this association is that the heroes of the novels are described using quotes and allusions to the Homeric heroes, so that in the minds of the readers, the two become associated.

But beyond individual quotations, Chariton sets up his readers' expectations by referencing mythological references to heroes when foreshadowing plot elements, as in 1.1.16. There the author compares the wedding of Chaereas and Chariton to that of Thetis (the Nereid and future mother of Achilles) to the mortal Peleus. In that tale, every god but Discord (Eris) was invited; Eris' revenge set into course the events that would cause the Trojan War. In *Callirhoe*, Chariton references the strife yet to come by implying that Discord was also present at *his* protagonists' nuptials; the comparison not only locates the



plot of the novel in the pattern of the Trojan War, but, further, associates the individuals involved in the epic with Chaereas and Callirhoe. “By means of these quotations Chariton compares his characters and events to those of epic, comparisons that thereby redound to the credit of the former by giving them a heroic backdrop.”<sup>208</sup> In this way, Chariton takes the established pattern in Homer and applies its situation to his own characters. The characters therefore fall into the familiar roles cast for them first by Homer and then adopted by Chariton. Certain expectations are therefore established regarding the characterization of these heroes and heroines.

*An Ethiopian Story* also contains allusions to heroes and heroines of the Homeric epics in its descriptions of the protagonists and their fates.<sup>209</sup> In one instance, we find not a quotation but an allusion to a scene from the *Iliad* (6.321ff) where Hektor leaves the battlefield to find Paris; Hektor, finding Paris readying his weapons in his bedroom, exhorts him to join the battle.<sup>210</sup> In *An Ethiopian Story* 1.27, Thyamis is polishing his helmet and sharpening his lance when Theagenes and Charicleia, led by Knemon, burst in on him and warn him to prepare for an attack. The scene is imitative of the *Iliad* and resurrects a memory of the Homeric plot taking place in the characters of *An Ethiopian Story* even if there is not a precise association of Homeric hero with romantic hero.

*An Ethiopian Story* again references Homer’s works in 2.19. After

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<sup>208</sup> Hock, “Educational Curriculum,” 22.

<sup>209</sup> In fact, this tale abounds with quotations and allusions to Homer’s corpus; here, however, there is only space to examine those which pertain to our protagonists. It is clear from the frequency of citations, however, that Heliodorus is very conscious of his lineage as a storyteller; his mimesis of Homer suggests that he is attempting that most sincere form of flattery.

<sup>210</sup> Morgan, *An Ethiopian Story*, 374 n. 28.

surviving a bandit attack, Theagenes and Charicleia head for a village with the aim of meeting up with Knemon at a later time. Theagenes and Charicleia decide to disguise themselves as beggars, but Knemon finds this idea laughable since their great beauty belies their true identities:

“χαλεπῶς μὲν” ἀπεκρίνατο ὁ θεαγένης “χαρικλείας γε ταύτης ἔνεκα τοῦ βαδίζειν μακρότερον ἀήθως ἐχούσης· ἐλεσόμεθα δ’ οὖν ὅμως εἰς πτωχοὺς καὶ τοὺς καὶ τροφὴν ἀγύρτας ἑαυτοὺς μεταπλάσαντες.” “νὴ δία” εἶπεν ὁ κνήμων· “καὶ γὰρ τῶν ὄψεων σφόδρα διεστραμμένως ἔχετε, ἡ δὲ χαρίκλεια καὶ πλέον ἄτε καὶ τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν ἀρτίως ἐκκεκομμένη· καὶ ἐμοὶ δοκεῖτε τοιοῖδε ὄντες οὐκ ἀκόλους ἀλλ’ ἄοράς τε καὶ λέβητας αἰτῆσιν.”

“It will not be easy,” answered Theagenes, “at least for Charicleia, who is not used to walking long distances. All the same we shall get there. We shall disguise ourselves as beggars, vagabonds who beg for a living.” “Of course!” said Knemon. “Your faces are hideously ugly, Charicleia’s even more so now she has just had her eye cut out!”<sup>211</sup> It seems to me that beggars like you will not ask for scraps but for swords and cauldrons.”

This scene “reverses *Odyssey* 17.222, where Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, is described by the arrogant Melanthios as ‘begging for handouts, never for swords or cauldrons’ (the kind of thing that any self-respecting member of epic society would desire as a gift of friendship.)”<sup>212</sup> In his mimetic inversion of the scene, Heliodorus associates Odysseus with his own heroes, Charicleia and Theagenes.<sup>213</sup>

Later in the chapter, when Kalasiris is recounting how Charikles came to foster Charicleia, Heliodorus uses a phrase borrowed from the *Iliad*. In *Iliad* 18.437, Achilles is described by Thetis; both Achilles and Charikleia are depicted

<sup>211</sup> Earlier, in 2.16, Charikleia has a prophetic dream that her eye is taken out by sword; Knemon’s comment is sarcastic rather than literal.

<sup>212</sup> Morgan, *An Ethiopian Story*, 391 n. 43.

<sup>213</sup> Later in this section, in 2.19, when Knemon and Thermouthis are making a separate journey, Heliodorus uses several Homer-isms. See Morgan, *An Ethiopian Story*, 392 nn 44, 45. Theagenes is also associated with Odysseus in 5.5.2 by the scar that both received in the event of hunting a boar (*Odyssey* 19.392-475; cf. Morgan, *An Ethiopian Story*, 449 n. 129: “This assimilates Theagenes to the second great epic hero, Odysseus, whose nurse, Eyrkleia, recognizes him by a scar given him by a hunted boar.”)

as having grown up quickly “like a vigorous young plant.”<sup>214</sup> Achilles is also referenced when describing Theagenes’ presence; in 3.3.5, Theagenes’ appearance in a procession, holding a spear of ash wood, recalls Achilles’ spear of the same material.<sup>215</sup> It appears that gender is not a discriminating factor in the association of the heroes and heroines of the romances with those in the Homeric corpus, since Charicleia is compared to Achilles, as described just above, and also to Herakles, such as when she appears dressed in fine clothes in a golden chariot, riding out of the temple of Artemis.<sup>216</sup> According to Morgan, this passage “echoes *Odyssey* 11.613–614, where Odysseus describes the baldric worn by the ghost of Herakles.”<sup>217</sup> Again, in using Homeric terminology familiar to his readers, Heliodorus creates an association between his main characters and the heroes his story emulates.

While the above two novels, Chariton’s *Chaereas and Callirhoe* and Heliodorus’ *An Ethiopian Story*, use explicit quotations to mark their protagonists as “modern-day” epic heroes and heroines, Xenophon’s *An Ephesian Tale* and Achilles Tatius’ *Leucippe and Clitophon* use more oblique methods to accomplish similar ends. Neither of these texts contains many explicit references to Homeric texts, and when they do occur, they are not often used to describe the main characters in the way that such quotations were used in *Chaereas and Callirhoe*

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<sup>214</sup> In Homer, ὁ δ’ **ἀνέδραμεν** ἔρνεϊ ἴσος; in Heliodorus, τάχιστα δὲ εἰς ἀκμὴν καθάπερ ἔρνος τι τῶν εὐθαλῶν **ἀνέδραμεν** (2.33.3).

<sup>215</sup> The ash-wood spear is referred to throughout the *Iliad*. Cf. Philostratus, *Heroikos*, 19.4. Theagenes is compared to Achilles, whom Theagenes claims as ancestor (cf. *Ethiopian Story* 4.5.5), at other points in the narrative such as 4.2.3 (describing Theagenes as “swift footed,” an epithet of Achilles in Homer), and 4.3.1 (cf. *Iliad* 21.203–384; Theagenes is described, as he awaits his turn at the race, as being like Achilles before his battle with the river Skamandros.)

<sup>216</sup> 3.4.2

<sup>217</sup> Morgan, *An Ethiopian Story*, 412 n. 85.

or *An Ethiopian Story*. Instead, Xenophon's and Achilles Tatius's works contain references to the heroic character and heroic actions that were culturally expected in the Greco-Roman world. Not all heroes worshipped or acknowledged in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds found descriptions of their deeds recounted in Homer's epics; thus, we should not expect that Homer should be the only text referenced by the novels in their characterization of the protagonists, nor should we expect that *texts* must be referenced in order to show this characterization.

"The Greek novelists have inherited the whole Greek tradition with its poetical and historical myths, and they draw parallels between those myths and their heroes in order to delineate the latter, but also to establish their positions vis-à-vis other actors."<sup>218</sup> For *An Ephesian Tale* and *Leucippe and Clitophon*, the characterization of the protagonists as heroes and heroines is more culturally than literarily bound. The authors do associate their protagonists with heroines through direct reference, but also, as with Leucippe and Anthia, through characterization. Larson notes that "in a heroization story specific to females, the heroine dies (often attempting to escape a rapist) and is made immortal by Artemis. Usually the heroine becomes identified with Artemis in the process."<sup>219</sup> The harrowing tales of Leucippe and Anthia mimic the ordeals of Classical heroines: their chastity is consistently challenged, they are threatened with death at every turn and they do appear to have associations with corresponding deities, such as Artemis. However, there are important differences. One of the differences is that in our romances, we arrive at a happy ending: the protagonists escape death.

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<sup>218</sup> Alain Billault, "Characterization in the Ancient Novel" in *The Novel in the Ancient World* (Gareth Schmeling, ed.; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 127.

<sup>219</sup> Jennifer Larson, *Greek Heroine Cults*, 16–17.

However, as I will show in the next chapter, the threat of death is so closely associated with the heroines that it is almost as if the sacrifice of these divinely beautiful heroines actually occurs.

## **2.7 Conclusions**

It is clear from the above survey that the heroines of the romance novels were created by their authors as characters whose identities straddle the boundary of divine and mortal in a way which was to some extent part and parcel of the Greco-Roman expectations around these categories. Their appearances as shining, beautiful, exaggerated women indicates to those around them (and to the readership) that they are divine, associated with Artemis, Isis, or Aphrodite. The epiphanies which occur throughout the narratives are not cases of mistaken identity; those who bow down and attempt to worship the heroines are not only foreigners or low-class citizens, but also elite members of society such as Dionysius. The removal of the “true” identities of the heroines at the outset of the plots, and the heroines’ reluctance to reveal their ordinary identities to those they meet, enhances the narrative reality of their divinity, not only to the characters who question their humanity, but also to the omniscient reader, who understands that gods sometimes walk the earth in human form.

Their descriptions in other cases also call to mind both the male and female heroes of Homer’s epics, especially regarding the hardships both categories of heroes undergo; the specifics of this association will be developed in the next chapter, but for the time being, I point out that the common characteristic

heroes share is their *agon*. The heroines in the novels should therefore be viewed in terms of the heroines in the classical literature, whose beauty associates them with the divine sphere and whose sacrifice is often the result of their proximity to the gods and their handling of human beings' fates. As in the Homeric corpus, the heroes' lives and deaths are tied to the gods who oversee and direct the events of the stories. However, whereas in Nagy's texts the association of heroes and gods occurs at the level of cult, in the romances this association occurs at the level of narrative; that is, the heroines and goddesses are made equivalent throughout the plot, in a variety of examples. The divine characteristics of the heroines in the romance novels associate these women not just with the *lives* and adventures of the heroes and heroines of the ancient world, but also with their *deaths*. The significance of a hero's death for establishing his or her association with a deity will be discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 3

“Her Viscera Leapt Out”  
(*Leucippe and Clitophon* 3.15)

### 3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I illustrated how, just as John's gospel is concerned with identifying its protagonist as divine, the novels also take pains to associate their heroines with the main goddesses driving the plots. The association between protagonist and god is clear, but its significance is yet to be uncovered. Jesus is killed in the course of John's narrative; in 6:51c–58, Jesus advocates the consumption of his own flesh. How can these grotesque elements be reconciled with the gospel's fixation with Jesus' divinity? To answer this question, it behooves us to return to the novels and the Greco-Roman religious world out of which they emerged. In these texts, too, the protagonists are severely tested, frequently to the point of sacrifice and near-death; it is in this context that John's concern with Jesus' physical body and its consumption in 6:51c–58 makes sense as a christological statement. Jonathan Z. Smith, writing about the ways in which sacred space defines how we understand ritual, argues that "the temple serves as a focusing lens, marking and revealing significance."<sup>1</sup> The temple functions in this way because it is a space demarcated for meaning; within its boundaries, every action is potentially a ritual. When an action takes place inside a sacred space it has a different significance than if that same action occurred in ordinary, unmarked space. I argue that the Greek romance novels act in a similar way; they are a lens with which we can view the relationship between mortal and divine. Nagy's work on the relationship between literature and cult illustrates this proposal well, since for him, the epic focuses the relationship between the hero and the deity in a way which manifests itself in their association in cult. In the

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Bare Facts of Ritual," *History of Religions* 20.1/2 (1980): 113.



novels, I argue, the lens is focused on that same relationship between the goddess and the heroine, but the cult activity, too, takes place within that boundary. In examining the antagonism that exists between the heroines and the various gods and goddesses in the novels, I aim to illustrate how the association between the heroine and the divine reaches its climax at the moment of ultimate antagonism: human sacrifice.

### 3.2 Antagonism between Heroes and Gods

Gregory Nagy's work *The Best of the Achaeans* shows how "antagonism between hero and god in myth corresponds to the ritual requirements of symbiosis between hero and god in cult."<sup>2</sup> His work focuses on Homer as a representation of a cultural system<sup>3</sup> and pays close attention to the linguistic issues in Homer and to the poetics involved in expressing meaning. His main point rests on the fact that the repetition of elements constructs a system akin to culture. He therefore approaches the texts as a system rather than as literature in order to argue "against the assumption that the Homeric text of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* [...] can be viewed synchronically as a cross-section that represents a single real composition or

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<sup>2</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 121; cf. Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 119; Walter Burkert, "Greek Tragedy and Sacrificial Ritual," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 7 (1966): 102–104; and Walter Burkert, "Apellai und Apellon," *Rheinisches Museum Für Philologie* 118.1/2 (1975): 19, where, most significantly for this study, he writes, "Achilles, fast ein Doppelgänger Apellons, steht zum Gott offenbar im gleichen Verhältnis wie Iphigenie zu Artemis, Erechtheus zu Poseidon, oder Hyakinthos zu Apollon: der Heros als umdunkeltes Spiegelbild des Gottes in der unauflöschlichen Polarität des Opfers." / "Achilles, almost a doppelgänger of Apollo, clearly stands in the same relationship to the god as Iphigenia does to Artemis, Erechtheus to Poseidon, or Hyacinth to Apollo: the hero as a mirror image of the god, in indelible polarity to the victim" (Trans. mine). Cf also Marie Delcourt, *Pyrrhos et Pyrrha: Recherches sur les valeurs du feu dans les légendes helléniques* (Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège 174; Paris: Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres, 1965), 38.

<sup>3</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, xi.

performance.”<sup>4</sup> For Nagy, and I agree, the Homeric texts (and, as we will see, the novels) develop meanings within themselves rather than historically— meanings that shift and are at times self-referential.<sup>5</sup> To that end, the relationship between the god and the hero is culturally governed: “there is no question [...] about the poet’s freedom to say accurately what he means. What he means, however, is strictly regulated by tradition.”<sup>6</sup> That is, Nagy also relates the Homeric understanding of the hero-god relationship to the establishment of hero cults in the archaic age, at the same time as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* “were attaining their ultimate form.”<sup>7</sup> The correspondence between the formulation of literature dealing with heroic definition and the rise in cults celebrating heroes contributes to Nagy’s understanding of the intersection of cult and literature as it establishes the relationship between hero and god. One particularly useful example given by Nagy is that of Pyrrhos, a cult hero of Delphi.<sup>8</sup> Pyrrhos, also known as Neoptolemus, is the son of Achilles and likewise is associated with Apollo. Pyrrhos’ cult is located at Delphi since it was believed that his bones were entombed there, directly inside the precinct of Apollo.<sup>9</sup> This association of the hero with the god stems from the myths surrounding Pyrrhos’ death, which many authors attribute to Apollo’s hand, just as Apollo also killed Pyrrhos’ father

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<sup>4</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, xv.

<sup>5</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, xvi–xvii.

<sup>6</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 10.

<sup>8</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 118–141. I choose this example rather than that of Achilles himself since, as Nagy observes, Achilles’ ritual aspects can at times be overshadowed by his association with the epic (118). Pyrrhos serves as an example of a hero/god complex recorded in poetry which has parallels with the way Achilles is represented in epic. There are also more useful parallels between Pyrrhos and the heroines of the romance novels than there are with Achilles.

<sup>9</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 120; Pindar, *Nemean Odes*, 7.34–35.

Achilles.<sup>10</sup> Nagy notes that Pindar celebrates the death of Achilles and Pyrrhos in parallel sections of his *Paean* 6, composed to honour Apollo specifically at Delphi, making the association between Achilles' death by Apollo and that of Pyrrhos all the more explicit.<sup>11</sup> Nagy includes in his work the various recorded ways in which Pyrrhos is killed. First is the myth that Pyrrhos tried to steal from Delphi and is killed by Apollo as a result.<sup>12</sup> According to Pindar, there is a disagreement between Pyrrhos and the temple attendants about the meat that was being distributed after the sacrifice. In *Paean* 6.117–120, Apollo himself is responsible for Pyrrhos' death; in *Nemean* 7.40–43, it is the temple attendants who kill him rather than the god directly. According to Nagy, the ritual here involved trading a non-meat offering for a portion of the meat sacrifice, which Pyrrhos did with his spoils from Troy (*Nemean* 7.41); being denied his portion of meat (something that was part of the ritual at Delphi,)<sup>13</sup> Pyrrhos fights to get his rightful portion and is killed in the *melée*.<sup>14</sup> As the sacrificer, Pyrrhos should be entitled to a portion, but instead he ends up becoming the sacrifice; he is killed on the offertory table with the very knife used to distribute the sacrificial meat. The climax of Apollo's anger towards Pyrrhos results in the hero's slaughter in an

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<sup>10</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 121.

<sup>11</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 121; Pindar, *Paean* 6, 78–80 (Achilles); 117–120 (Pyrrhos).

<sup>12</sup> Nagy notes that Achilles, too, is associated with plundering the Delphic temple: "In the only Iliadic mention of Delphi [(IX 404–407)...] Achilles is renouncing the prospect of plundering the riches of Apollo's sanctuary there, which have just been juxtaposed with the riches contained in the citadel of Troy (at IX 401–403)" (*Best of the Achaeans*, 122).

<sup>13</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 125. Parallels with *Life of Aesop* are also significant; that this later biographical novel, a genre which shares commonalities with the Hellenistic romances, echoes the pattern of conflict, death, and heroization of the earlier Pyrrhos creates another link in the chain which binds Greek literature and cultural expectations around the immortalization of heroes.

<sup>14</sup> In the next chapter, we will see how this event is translated into the novel genre in the example of *Life of Aesop*, a text with which Lawrence Wills (*Quest*) has drawn parallels to John.

intensely ritualized setting. Since both the myth of Pyrrhos' death and the ritual that takes place at the site involve a squabble over ritual meat, Nagy concludes that "the convergence of themes is so close that we may see in the death of Pyrrhos the official Delphic myth that integrates the ideology of the ritual."<sup>15</sup> That is, the intersection of the death of Pyrrhos in this sacrificial context *at the level of story* feeds into the contemporary ritual practiced at Delphi which honours both Apollo and Pyrrhos as associated divine beings.<sup>16</sup>

The case of Pyrrhos illustrates the antagonism between god and hero in literature and its role in the establishment of cult. The romances of the Hellenistic world also contain this antagonism—our protagonists are flung about the world at the hands of various divine forces, put in danger, and eventually brought home. There are, however, no established cults, to my knowledge, for any of our heroines. Rather, the antagonism in the narrative is reinterpreted so that the cult action occurs within the text itself: the sacrificial offering is conflated with the divine antagonism that results in the near death of the protagonist. That is, both the sacrifice and the antagonism occur at the level of story—there is a simultaneity which superimposes the two elements in the romances upon each other. This is especially the case since the heroines are often offered up as

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<sup>15</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 126.

<sup>16</sup> Nagy further links this association to Achilles in the Homeric tradition by pointing out the affinity to the theme of the sacrificial meal that the Aeacids have. "For the Achilles figure, the most overt [...] Homeric manifestation of the ritual element is the first song of Demodokos at [*Odyssey*] viii 72–82, where the hero's future death is implicitly linked with the themes of Delphi/sacrifice/quarrel—and these are the same themes that frame the death of Pyrrhos as it is presented in Pindar's *Paeon* 6 and *Nemean* 7" (*Best of the Achaeans*, 137–138). This leads Nagy to ponder whether the references to the *dais* where Achilles and Odysseus fought is actually a reference to the rituals practiced at Delphi, making *Od.* viii. 72–82 even more ritualistically inclined than previously thought and therefore even further evidence of the association created between god and hero in cult (*Best of the Achaeans*, 138).

sacrificial victims themselves. As such, the antagonism between heroine and divinity results in the sacrificial act which would, as it does in Pindar, institute a cult. *Leucippe and Clitophon*, *An Ephesian Tale*, and *An Ethiopian Story* are explicit about the responsibility each deity has in leading the protagonist to near sacrificial victimhood; *Chaereas and Callirhoe* lacks the sacrificial aspect of the antagonism but nevertheless firmly establishes the same type of relationship between Callirhoe and Aphrodite. I will review each case in turn.

Beginning with *Leucippe and Clitophon*, Leucippe's plight—her flight from her home, her shipwreck, her apparent sacrifice—is the fault of Zeus in the eyes of her lover Clitophon, the narrator of the tale. When first Clitophon is set to be married to another girl in 2.2.2–3, the wedding is prevented due to a bad omen from Zeus: his eagle swoops down and steals the wedding sacrifice (2.12.2–3). This omen is not simply about the marriage Clitophon escapes but also foreshadows Zeus's responsibility for the whole of the events that transpire as a result of the failed sacrifice. Since the wedding is called off, Clitophon takes the opportunity to pursue Leucippe more aggressively, leading to the attempted sleep-over which in turn necessitates their flight. When their ocean voyage takes a turn for the worse, Clitophon remarks that Poseidon has shown them favour by not dashing them on the rocks or drowning them (3.5.1–4) but later blames the god for saving them for an even worse fate (3.10.1–2, 6). In fact, both Zeus and Poseidon appear to be jointly responsible for the twin fates of Clitophon and Leucippe. Upon arriving in Egypt, our heroes approach a statue of Zeus in the hope of receiving an oracle about their destinies. No sooner is their request made

than they round a corner and come face-to-face with twin paintings depicting the plights of Andromeda and Prometheus.<sup>17</sup> The length and depth of the description of the paintings suggests that they are the oracular response given by the god(s): Andromeda, who was offered up to a sea monster to appease Poseidon,<sup>18</sup> is clearly a stand-in for Leucippe. Prometheus is therefore the type for Clitophon, punished by Zeus for brazen behaviour and saved only by Hercules himself. Clearly, the author sets up an antagonistic relationship between the heroes Leucippe and Clitophon and the gods responsible for their fates; while the pair praises the gods for each respite, they also recognize that their troubles come directly from the hands of the gods. Leucippe's sacrifice, especially, is connected to the gods in this way: hardly has Clitophon finished his soliloquy in 3.10 when Leucippe is whisked off to become a sacrificial victim (3.12), an event which will be dissected in detail below in 3.6. Her death as sacrificial victim is therefore the direct responsibility of the gods who control the plot. That Zeus and Poseidon are responsible for the tribulations the pair experience but Leucippe is not explicitly likened to either of those gods should not pose a problem. Leucippe's own divine identity, after all, is ambiguous; we witness only that she is understood to be a goddess by those around her.

In *An Ephesian Tale*, it is clear that Eros controls the fate that the two lovers share. Habrocomes systematically disrespects Eros' shrines, declaring himself "superior to any Eros both in physical beauty and power."<sup>19</sup> Eros then decides to retaliate against Habrocomes' disrespect: "Eros grew furious at this,

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<sup>17</sup> 3.6-8.

<sup>18</sup> Apollodorus, 2.4.3-5.

<sup>19</sup> 1.1.6.

being a competitive god and implacable against those who disdain him.”<sup>20</sup> As punishment, Eros makes Habrocomes fall hopelessly in love with Anthia at the festival of Artemis (1.3.1–2). The pair’s fate is sealed when, desperate for a cure for their children’s lovesickness, an oracle of Apollo suggests their marriage, but with a foreboding twist:

τίπτε ποθεῖτε μαθεῖν νόσους τέλος ἡδὲ καὶ ἀρχήν;  
 ἀμφοτέρους μία νόσος ἔχει, λύσις ἔνθεν ἀνυστή.  
 δεινὰ δ’ ὅρῳ τοῖσδε σσι πάθη καὶ ἀνήνυτα ἔργα·  
 ἀμφοτέροι φεύξονται ὑπεῖρ ἄλλα λυσοδιώκτοι,  
 δεσμὰ δὲ μοχθήσουσι παρ’ ἀνδράσι μιξοθαλάσσοις  
 καὶ τάφος ἀμφοτέροις θάλαμος καὶ πῦρ αἴδηλον.  
 ἀλλ’ ἔτι που μετὰ πῆματ’ ἀρείονα πότμον ἔχουσι  
 καὶ ποταμοῦ ἱεροῦ παρὰ ρεύμασιν Ἰσιδι σεμνῇ  
 σωτηρίῃ μετόπισθε παριστᾶσ’ ὄλβια δῶρα.

Why do you long to discover the end and the start of this illness?  
 Both are in the thrall to one illness, and thence must the cure be accomplished.  
 Terrible their sufferings I can foresee and toils never-ending.  
 Both will take flight o’er the sea, pursued by a frenzy of madness;  
 Chains will they bear at the hands of men who consort with the ocean,  
 And one tomb and annihilating fire will be their nuptial bower.  
 Yet in time, when their sufferings are over, a happier fate is in store,  
 And alongside the streams of the sacred river to Isis the Holy,  
 Isis the Savior, in time thereafter rich gifts shall they offer.<sup>21</sup>

While their fathers now have an answer to their question, the solution has come with some unpleasant conditions attached. Their children are apparently doomed to have a rocky first year of marriage. With the aim of softening the oracle, Anthia and Habrocomes fathers decide to send the couple away and put them on the ship which takes them on a world tour of hardship.<sup>22</sup> Again the author is explicit in holding the gods responsible for the adventures Anthia and Habrocomes are about to experience: “But fate had not forgotten, nor did the god neglect what he had decided.”<sup>23</sup> With this proclamation, the tale begins its series of adventures, which endanger both the lives and chastity of our main characters,

<sup>20</sup> 1.2.1.

<sup>21</sup> 1.6ff

<sup>22</sup> 1.10.3ff.

<sup>23</sup> 1.10.2.

including the near sacrifice of Anthia in 2.13.

In *An Ethiopian Story*, the gods' influence is less direct but nonetheless important for the plot. The Delphic oracle's statement in 2.35 declares the gods' interest in our main characters, Charicleia and Theagenes.

Τὴν χάριν ἐν πρώτοις αὐταρ κλέος ὕστατ' ἔχουσιν  
φράζεσθ', ὦ Δελφοί, τὸν τε θεᾶς γενέτην·  
οἱ νηὸν προλιπόντες ἑμὸν καὶ κῦμα τεμόντες  
ἴξοντ' ἡελίου πρὸς χθόνα κυανέην,  
τῇ περ ἀριστοβίων μέγ' ἀέθλιον ἐξάψονται  
λευκὸν ἐπὶ κροτάφων στέμμα μελαινομένων.

One who starts in grave and ends in glory, another goddess-born:  
Of these I bid you have regard, O Delphi!  
Leaving my temple here and cleaving Ocean's swelling tides,  
To the black land of the Sun will they travel,  
Where they will reap the reward of those whose lives are passed in virtue:  
A crown of white on brows of black.

This oracle binds Charicleia and Theagenes to their fates, decreed by Apollo of Delphi. The oracle makes allusions to Charicleia and Theagenes' names with clever plays-on-words (“grace” + “glory”/ *charis* + *kleos*; “goddess-born”/ *thea* + *-genes*)<sup>24</sup> that in turn suggest their divine connections. Although no one present is capable of understanding the meaning of the oracle at this point, later on, all becomes revealed. In 3.11 we learn that Kalasiris has received a visit from the gods in his dreams and he tells the readers how the deities instructed him regarding the pair:

ἦδη δὲ μεσοῦσης τῇν νυκτὸς ὁρῶ τὸν Ἀπόλλω καὶ τὴν Ἄρτεμιν ὡς ὥμην, εἴ γε ὥμην ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀληθῶς ἐώρων· καὶ ὁ μὲν τὸν Θεαγένην ἡ δὲ τὴν Χαρίκλειαν ἐνεχείριζεν· ὀνομαστί τέ με προσκαλοῦντες “ὥρα σοι” ἔλεγον “εἰς τὴν ἐνεγχοῦσαν ἐπανήκειν, οὕτω γὰρ ὁ μοιρῶν ὑπαγορεύει θεσμός· αὐτὸς τε οὖν ἔξιθι καὶ τούσδε ὑποδεξάμενος ἄγε, συνεμπόρους ἴσα τε παισὶ ποιοῦμενος, καὶ παράπεμπε ἀπὸ τῆς Αἰγυπτίων ὅποι τε καὶ ὅπως τοῖς θεοῖς φίλον.

Then, in the small hours, Apollo and Artemis appeared to me, so I imagined—if indeed I did imagine it and not see them for real. Apollo entrusted Theagenes to my care; Artemis, Charicleia. They called me by name and said: “It is time now for you to return to the land of your birth, for thus the ordinance of destiny demands. Go then and take these whom we deliver to you; make them

<sup>24</sup> Morgan, *An Ethiopian Story*, 409 n. 76.



companions of your journey; consider them as your own children. From Egypt conduct them onward wherever and however it please the gods.

Here it is even more clear that the gods Apollo and Artemis are (respectively) responsible for the fates which await Theagenes and Charicleia. The gods put the earthly well-being of the couple in the hand of Kalasiris; nevertheless, the lovers experience innumerable hardships on their travels, as directed by Apollo's earlier oracle. The immediate "reward of those whose lives are passed in virtue" appears to be Theagenes and Charicleia's suitability for human sacrifice at the end of the tale; as Theagenes bitterly whispers to Charicleia at the point of his near-sacrifice, "A life of virtue earns a fine wage in Ethiopia: sacrificial slaughter is chastity's reward!"<sup>25</sup>

Winkler observes that the twin themes of amphiboly<sup>26</sup> and divine intervention are intricately and purposefully linked throughout Heliodorus' novel.<sup>27</sup> First, Winkler shows how Heliodorus equivocates concerning the reasons behind certain events, first emphasizing one possibility and then suggesting another.<sup>28</sup> He lists three categories of examples: the first conclude that divine providence is the most likely explanation for the turn of events being described;<sup>29</sup> the second that material causes are to blame;<sup>30</sup> and the third that either explanation is possible.<sup>31</sup> Winkler's categories are useful for exploring the role of

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<sup>25</sup> 10.9; "καλὰ" λέγων ἡρέμα πρὸς τὴν Χαρίκλειαν "τὰπίχειρα παρ' Αἰθίοφι τῶν καθαρῶς βιούντων· θυσίαι καὶ σφαγαὶ τὰ ἔπαθλα τῶν σωφρονούντων."

<sup>26</sup> As Winkler uses it, the term refers to multiple interpretations of the same event, so that an event can be read *both* as a natural *and* as a supernatural occurrence.

<sup>27</sup> John J. Winkler, "The Mendacity of Kalasiris and the Narrative Strategy of Heliodorus' *Aithiopika*" in *Later Greek Literature* (John J. Winkler and Gordon Williams, eds.; Yale Classical Studies 27; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 93–158.

<sup>28</sup> Winkler, "Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*," 114–137.

<sup>29</sup> Winkler, "Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*," 122–123.

<sup>30</sup> Winkler, "Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*," 123–126.

<sup>31</sup> Winkler, "Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*," 126–129.

theodicy in the plot; what he does not point out, however, is that in the first category the examples all involve the interpretations of events concerning the main characters: Thyamis' dream (1.18); the death of Kalasiris (7.11.4); Theagenes' attempt at stopping a runaway bull (10.28.4); the outburst of Charicleia's maid during her murder trial (8.9.2); etc. In all of the examples listed by Winkler, the description of events tends to put more emphasis on the likelihood that the gods had a hand in the outcome than the other, naturalistic explanation. In Winkler's second category, where naturalistic explanations are favoured, the events revolve around characters unfavourable to the main instruments of the plot, namely Theagenes and Charicleia. In these examples, barbarians and "others" equivocate about the interpretation of events (examples include the truth about Homer's Egyptian origins in 3.14.4, the etymology of a place-name in 2.34.2, and the reasons for Thyamis' attempted murder of Charicleia in the cave in 1.30.6). Winkler concludes that "both groups of alternatives—those weighted toward the supernatural and those weighted toward the natural—are meaningful and have complementary functions in the context of a melodramatic narrative whose characteristic feature is the alternation between hope and despair."<sup>32</sup> The final meaning of these amphibolic statements is clarified when Winkler discusses the third category: scenes where neither the naturalistic nor the supernatural explanation is emphasized. In these portions of the novel, the reader is not guided towards one pole or the other; instead, Heliodorus deliberately leaves open the possibility of either (or both?) explanation.<sup>33</sup> For

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<sup>32</sup> Winkler, "Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*," 125–126.

<sup>33</sup> Winkler, "Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*," 127–128.

Winkler, this only serves to highlight the role of the divine in the resolution of the romance. This is done in a subtler manner than in other romances, which unquestioningly assign responsibility to a god.<sup>34</sup> Citing John Morgan,<sup>35</sup> who points out that this literary device is widely used by authors to imply that their history records strictly the facts, Winkler suggests that beyond simple realism, the amphibolies employed by Heliodorus have a certain directionality. That is, by providing both naturalistic and supernatural options, and especially through the viewpoint of the narrator Kalasiris (“a man above all obedient to the divine plan”)<sup>36</sup> Heliodorus has provided space for double meanings to exist, and therefore for the possibility of *divine intervention specifically* to seem more real.

While *Chaereas and Callirhoe* lacks the gruesome human sacrifice which marks the pinnacle of the divine antagonism in the other novels, it participates in the articulation of an antagonistic relationship between the goddess and the heroine. There are examples of specific accusations against Aphrodite as the author of the couple’s misfortunes. The most significant of these occurs when Callirhoe is invited to visit the shrine of Aphrodite near Dionysius’ estate; she weeps at the irony of this request, since even as a slave her resemblance to the goddess is noticed. “What a disaster!” she says, “Even here Aphrodite reigns, the cause of all my woes. But I will go [to the shrine], for I have many complaints to lay before her.”<sup>37</sup> Here Callirhoe holds the goddess responsible for her never-

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<sup>34</sup> Winkler, “Heliodoros’ *Aithiopika*,” 128.

<sup>35</sup> John J. Morgan, “A Commentary on the Ninth and Tenth Books of Heliodoros’ *Aithiopika*” (PhD diss., Oxford University, 1978), lxi–lxxix, 69, 73, 95f, 470f, 596; and *idem.*, “History, Romance and Realism in the *Aithiopika* of Heliodoros,” *Classical Antiquity* 1.2 (1982): 227–232.

<sup>36</sup> Winkler, “Heliodoros’ *Aithiopika*,” 146.

<sup>37</sup> 2.2.6; οἱμοι τῆς συμφορᾶς, καὶ ἐνταῦθα ἐστὶν Ἀφροδίτη θεὸς ἣ μοι πάντων τῶν

ending hardships. The reference is particularly fitting in this example since Callirhoe is prompted to accuse the goddess by yet another reference to her resemblance to Aphrodite. The antagonism and identification found throughout the novels is made especially explicit in this section of *Callirhoe* by Chariton's juxtaposition of the physical resemblance with the role the goddess plays in the misfortunes.

Another example from *Callirhoe* is found in 7.5.3. In this section, Callirhoe has been left on the island of Aradus for safekeeping by the king of Persia. Being the home to a famous shrine to Aphrodite, Callirhoe naturally pays her respects to the goddess, such as they are at this stage in the narrative.

Θεασαμένη δὲ Καλλιρόη τὴν Ἀφροδίτην, στᾶσα καταντικρὺ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ἐσιώπα καὶ ἔκλαιεν, ὀνεικίζουσα τῇ θεῷ τὰ δάκρυα· μόλις δὲ ὑπεφθέγγετο “ἰδοὺ καὶ Ἄραδος, μικρὰ νῆσος ἀντὶ τῆς μεγάλης Σικελίας καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐνταυθα ἐμὸς. ἀρκεῖ, δέσποινα. Μέχρι ποῦ με πολεμεῖς;”

When Callirhoe caught sight of the statue of Aphrodite, she took her stand in front of it; first she remained silent and wept, reproaching the goddess with her tears; but at length she spoke: “So now I am on Aradus, a tiny island compared with mighty Sicily, and without a friend! My Lady, this is enough! How long will you treat me as an enemy?”<sup>38</sup>

The language used here clearly points the finger at Aphrodite as the goddess responsible for Callirhoe's fate. Our heroine even goes so far as to accuse the goddess of treating her as an enemy! Clearly, even without the threat of sacrificial death, Chariton has set up the goddess and his heroine as antagonists in the romantic plot.

### 3.3 Sacrifice in Greek and Roman religion

Burkert provides a comprehensive overview of the Greek mode of

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κακῶν αἰτία. Πλὴν ἄπειμι, θέλω γὰρ αὐτὴν πολλὰ μέμψασθαι.

<sup>38</sup> 7.5.3.

sacrifice.<sup>39</sup> The sacrificial rite is marked by special acts performed by the people involved: they wash, put on fresh clothing, and weave garlands of twigs to wear. An animal<sup>40</sup> free of imperfections is selected and decorated with ribbons and gilt. The procession is made up of musicians playing flutes, someone carrying water, sometimes a person bringing an incense burner, a “blameless maiden” carrying the sacrificial basket full of barley or cakes which conceal the knife, and of course, the animal. Together they approach the altar (as elaborate as carved stone or as simple as a pile of ash) and, ideally, the animal does not refuse to be led to the location of its death.<sup>41</sup>

Once the group is established at the location of sacrifice, the basket and the water dish are carried around in a circle, demarcating the sacred area. The participants wash their hands with the water and some is also sprinkled on the animal. When the animal is sprinkled, it jerks its head; this signifies its assent to its role in the sacrifice. Next, while a prayer is intoned and a vow made, the participants take handfuls of barley from the basket and then throw the barley at the sacrificial animal. At this point, the knife is finally revealed. The sacrificer cuts off some of the animal’s hairs and throws them into the fire. A large animal like an ox is struck with an axe before its throat is slit; smaller animals are lifted over the altar to be slaughtered. In both cases, blood is splashed over the altar; in the case of the large animal, blood is collected in a basin and then poured over the top and sides. At the moment of death, the women who took part in the procession

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<sup>39</sup> Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 55–57.

<sup>40</sup> Oxen were the most highly prized sacrificial animal but sheep were the most common; goats and pigs are also represented with frequency.

<sup>41</sup> Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 56.

perform a sacrificial scream.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, the animal is skinned and butchered. The σπλάγχνα, the internal organs, are roasted on the open flame at once: “to taste the entrails immediately is the privilege and duty of the innermost circle of participants.”<sup>43</sup> Then the bones and inedible parts of the animal are consecrated to the flames. Other food offerings such as cakes are also burned. Wine is poured over everything so that the flames flare up with the alcohol. When the fire has died down again, the rest of the meat is prepared for the sacrificial meal; it is either roasted over the coals or boiled in a pot and then consumed by those present.<sup>44</sup> Of course, this “typical” sacrifice described by Burkert is susceptible to local variations of custom. The “unmovable” parts are the procession leading to the slaughter and the feast. Most notably, in ordinary Greek (and Roman) sacrifice the meat is given not to the god but to the participants; the gods receive bones and fat instead of meat thanks to Prometheus’ deception.<sup>45</sup>

The above represents the ordinary, common method of sacrifice, usually categorized as the Olympian mode of sacrifice.<sup>46</sup> This pattern of sacrifice happened both on a grand scale at public events and also at family events. Daniel Hughes observes that this kind of sacrifice is often denoted by the words θυσία and θύω.<sup>47</sup> It is worth observing that our English word sacrifice has no exact equivalent in Greek, in that there are a variety of words used to describe the

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<sup>42</sup> Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 56.

<sup>43</sup> Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 57.

<sup>44</sup> Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 57.

<sup>45</sup> Hesiod, *Theogony* 535–544.

<sup>46</sup> Daniel Hughes, *Human Sacrifice in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1991), 4.

<sup>47</sup> Hughes, *Human Sacrifice*, 4.

variety of types of ritual slaughter of animals and/or the offering of meat and/or vegetables to deities. Daniel Hughes outlines a total of seven categories of sacrifice practiced by ancient Greeks, each with its own associated vocabulary (see chart). It is important to note here that this chart and Hughes's descriptions represent the typical scholarly categorization of sacrifice; in reality, the divisions between these categories and the use of these terms is far more varied and complex than it seems, as Jean Casabona's work (discussed below) has shown.

| Greek Terms        | Expected Context of Rites | Expected Ritual Components                |
|--------------------|---------------------------|---|
| θυσία              | "Olympian" deities        | Blood sacrifice with meal                 |
| ἐναγίσματα         | Heroes                    | Holocaust or burial of offerings          |
| ἐναγίσματα, σφάγια | Ordinary dead             | Holocaust or burial of offerings          |
| όλοκαυτώματα       | "Chthonic" deities        | Holocaust                                 |
| σφάγια             | Battle                    | Spilling of blood                         |
| τόμια              | Swearing of oaths         | Standing on/adjacent to sacrificed animal |
| καθαρμοί           | Purification              | Varies; no meal                           |

Olympic is the first, described above with the term θυσία; the second is sacrifice to heroes, described using ἐναγίζειν, ἐναγισμοί, ἐναγίσματα, and ἐντέμειν; in these types of sacrifice, the animal is not consumed by the attending participants but is instead burnt whole (όλοκαυτεῖν) on the altar or entombed in βόθροι (ritual pits in which to place offerings).<sup>48</sup> Third, Hughes lists funerary sacrifices, which, like the rites for heroes, are associated with the word ἐναγίζειν, but also σφάζειν and its family of terms. Again, similar to the heroic sacrifices, these offerings are either put into the grave or are burnt whole; there typically is

<sup>48</sup> Hughes, *Human Sacrifice*, 4–5.

no shared consumption of the offerings. There are also, fourth, whole burnt offerings (όλοκαυτώματα) that take place at the cults of major deities, those who are neither heroes nor the dead, but who nevertheless receive this type of offering. Frequently, these divine recipients are of the Chthonic variety (as opposed to the Olympian), meaning they are associated with the earth and underworld, and therefore with death.<sup>49</sup> Next in Hughes's list come sacrifices carried out before a battle, often before crossing a boundary either natural or political.<sup>50</sup> These offerings are called σφάγια or σφαγιάζεσθαι, and were neither offered to a specific deity<sup>51</sup> nor eaten by those performing the sacrifice. Sixth, Hughes describes sacrifices made in order to swear an oath properly (τόμια, ὄρχιον/ὄρχια τέμνειν). In these types of sacrifice, the animal is not eaten; rather the oath-takers might surround the animal, stand on its entrails, or hold them in their hands.<sup>52</sup> Finally, animals were sacrificed for purification ceremonies called καθαρμοί. These come in various shapes and sizes, but Hughes's example of purification by passing through the split corpse of a dog in Boetia suffices to illustrate that, here too, the animal's flesh would not be eaten in this type of rite.<sup>53</sup>

All of Hughes' classifications are based on the dual cores of the occasion of the sacrifice and the vocabulary used to describe it. Vocabulary might be seen as a significant factor in the typology of sacrifice, but as it is so variable and is

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<sup>49</sup> Robert Christopher Towneley Parker, "Chthonian Gods," *OCD* 329–330; the division between Olympian and Chthonian deities is problematic; see Scott Scullion, "Olympian and Chthonian," *Classical Antiquity* 13.1 (1994): 75–119.

<sup>50</sup> Hughes, *Human Sacrifice*, 5.

<sup>51</sup> There are, of course, some exceptions to this generalization—in particular, pre-battle sacrifice to Artemis Agrotera by Spartans (Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 60, also n. 37). See Hughes, *Human Sacrifice*, 5 n. 14 for a select bibliography on this type of sacrifice.

<sup>52</sup> Hughes, *Human Sacrifice*, 5.

<sup>53</sup> Hughes, *Human Sacrifice*, 5.



used inconsistently, vocabulary alone cannot be used to build an argument about normative sacrificial categories. Occasion is also necessary. For the purpose of this study, where the implications of human sacrifice are at stake, two word-families in particular bear discussion: σφάγια and θυσία. Jean Casabona's *Recherches sur le vocabulaire des sacrifices en grec* showed that θυσία became in the classical period the “default” or un-marked term for sacrificial offerings, whether vegetable or animal, whether consumed or not.<sup>54</sup> To reiterate, this means that nothing can be assumed about the type of rite described by this term; the meaning of the verb θύω depends on the circumstances and context in which it is found. In Euripides we find an example which is especially pertinent to this study, given the importance of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia to my conclusions. Here the term θύω is used in conjunction with κτείνω; whether a character uses θύω or κτείνω reflects their opinion of whether Iphigeneia's death is a legitimate sacrifice or not, respectively.<sup>55</sup> Agamemnon never uses κτείνω but always θύω; Clytemnestra, on the other hand, almost exclusively uses vocabulary which distances the slaughter from a legitimate sacrifice.<sup>56</sup> A conversation between Clytemnestra and Agamemnon further illustrates the multiple meanings of θύω:

Κλυταιμῆστρα: προτέλεια δ' ἤδη παιδὸς **ἔσφαξας** θεᾷ;  
 Ἀγαμέμνων: μέλλω: 'πὶ ταύτῃ καὶ καθέσταμεν τύχῃ.  
 Κλυταιμῆστρα: κᾶπειτα δαίσεις τοὺς γάμους ἐς ὕστερον;  
 Ἀγαμέμνων: **θύσας** γε θύμαθ' ἃ ἐμὲ χρὴ θῦσαι θεοῖς.

Clytemnestra: Have you already offered the goddess a **sacrifice** to usher in the maiden's marriage?

Agamemnon: I am about to do so; that is the very thing I was engaged in.

Clytemnestra: And then will you celebrate the marriage feast afterwards?

<sup>54</sup> Jean Casabona, *Recherches sur le vocabulaire des sacrifices en grec des origines à la fin de l'époque classique*, (Aix-en-Provence: Orphys, 1966), 69–154, esp. 82.

<sup>55</sup> Casabona, *Recherches*, 78.

<sup>56</sup> Casabona, *Recherches*, 79.

Agamemnon: Yes, when I have offered a **sacrifice** required by the gods of me.<sup>57</sup>

As Casabona points out, Agamemnon and Clytemnestra are talking about two entirely different sacrifices. Clytemnestra is curious as to whether Agamemnon has made the proper preliminary sacrifices for the wedding. She uses ἑσφάξας to refer to these offerings. Agamemnon, referring to a different, more tragic sacrifice, but intending for Clytemnestra to understand that he is responding to her, replies using θύσαι to refer to the sacrifices he intends to perform.

Dans sa [Agamemnon's] pensée, θύω coïncide avec σφάζω. Mais Clytemnestre, qui songe à bien autre chose, s'inquiète de la θυσία et du banquet [...] Ce sont les diverses valeurs possibles de θύω qui permettent ces effets tragiques.<sup>58</sup>

Homer, for his part, uses θύω to refer to sacrifices where meat is the end product, often without naming explicitly the divine recipient of the offering.<sup>59</sup> Casabona suggests that this is because for θύω, what is most important is the context in which the offering is made rather than the divinity on the receiving end.<sup>60</sup> In sum, while θύω is the “standard” term used to describe “standard” sacrificial practice (i.e. including the feast which takes place after the slaughter), the context in which the verb is used is so varied that the conclusion we must come to concerning its meaning is that it is a general verb which certainly allows but does not *require* the sacrifice it describes to include a meal. Other terms, we shall see, are more restrictive in this respect.

Casabona's work is also commonly cited where the word σφάγια comes

<sup>57</sup> Euripides, *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, 718–721 [Kovacs, LCL].

<sup>58</sup> Casabona, *Recherches*, 79. “In his mind, θύω coincides with σφάζω. But Clytemnestra, who is thinking of something else entirely, is concerned about the θυσία and the banquet. [...] These are the various possible meanings of θύω that permit such tragic effects” (Translation mine.)

<sup>59</sup> Casabona, *Recherches*, 80.

<sup>60</sup> For instance, even for the so-called chthonian sacrifices or those offered to heroes, Casabona finds evidence that θύω was used (*Recherches*, 83–85).

into discussion. Casabona reports that when used in the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, the term refers to the ritual gesture of slaughter in a blood sacrifice.<sup>61</sup> That is, in these texts, the term refers to the actual action of slitting the throat or to the stunning action before the throat is cut and does not automatically imply a meal. It is therefore associated with the exsanguination of a sacrificial animal and is sometimes best translated as such.<sup>62</sup> Casabona lists several ways this family of terms is used in early Greek literature: first, it can specifically refer to the sacrifice of an animal in conjunction with other words; second it can imply a sacrifice when other words are present even when the event of sacrifice is not apparent (e.g. *Iliad* 24.621–622); third, the verb can stand in for the whole event of the sacrifice including the meal, since the blood-spilling is such an integral aspect of the whole (*Iliad* 9.466–469, 23.29–32); fourth, it is used in instances where the religious colouring is so faint that it is difficult to say if the action it describes is sacrificial or not (*Odyssey* 1.92, 4.320)—in such cases, slaughter is spoken of but its ritual components are effaced; and finally the term is used when there is a sacrifice of an animal and the animal is not consumed (*Odyssey* 10.532, where an animal is offered as a holocaust). Thus, according to Homer’s use of the term, the σφάγ-\* root implies sacrifice or slaughter of animals either to be consumed or to be left unconsumed.<sup>63</sup>

After Homer, however, the usage shifts. The σφάγ-\* family of words becomes associated with non-ritual killings such as massacres and murders, especially those which occur during civil wars (cf. Eur. *Andr.* 260, 315, 412);

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<sup>61</sup> Casabona, *Recherches*, 155.

<sup>62</sup> Casabona, *Recherches*, 156.

<sup>63</sup> Casabona, *Recherches*, 156–158.

Casabona suggests that some of these occurrences may to have religious overtones, such as Thucydites II 92.3, which describes the suicide (ἔσφαξεν ἑαυτόν) of a passenger on a ship which sunk. For the most part, then, after Homer,

σφάζω connaît des emplois généraux qui n'ont rien à voir avec le sacrifice, bien qu'en certains cas il s'agisse d'actes religieux, voire d'«immolations» au sens large. Mais le mot continue à désigner, comme chez Homère, au sens strict, le rite de l'égorgement dans un sacrifice sanglant, et par métonymie, l'ensemble de la cérémonie.<sup>64</sup>

It is here where the meat, so to speak, of Casabona's argument is located. Here he compares the uses of θύω and σφάζω and finds that while θύω is the umbrella term encompassing the whole of the ceremony, the other, σφάζω, specifically remains the act of slaughter.<sup>65</sup> This is especially clear when the two terms are also often used in conjunction, leading from the general to the specific, as in Herodotus II.39:

ἀγαγόντες τὸ σεσημασμένον κτῆνος πρὸς τὸν βωμὸν ὅκου ἂν θύωσι, πῦράνακαίουσι, ἔπειτα δὲ ἐπ' αὐτοῦ οἶνον κατὰ τοῦ ἱρηίου ἐπισπείσαντες καὶ ἐπικαλέσαντες τὸν θεὸν σφάζουσι, σφάξαντες δὲ ἀποτάμνουσι τὴν κεφαλὴν.

After leading the marked beast to the altar where they will **sacrifice** it, they kindle a fire; then they pour wine on the altar over the victim and call upon the god; then they **cut its throat**, and having done so sever the head from the body.<sup>66</sup>

Thus, particularly when used in conjunction with another term of sacrifice, σφάζω and its associated words take on specific meanings pertaining to blood letting.

Most importantly for us, however, Casabona observes that the term can be used on its own to denote an entire ceremony, of any type of blood sacrifice,

<sup>64</sup> Casabona, *Recherches*, 162.

<sup>65</sup> Casabona, *Recherches*, 162–167.

<sup>66</sup> Herodotus, *Histories*, 2.39 [Godley, LCL].

including those followed by banquet, as in Homer (above) and Herodotus (5.8).<sup>67</sup> He notes, however, that while this use is *possible* and linguistically permissible, it is rare.<sup>68</sup> “il y a une tendance nette à préférer σφάζω pour désigner des cérémonies de caractère chthonien, où le sang joue le rôle principal.”<sup>69</sup> Casabona provides a clear example in Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* 8.3.24, where different types of sacrifice are offered to different deities in succession, clearly showing the distinction in offerings for Olympian and Chthonic gods:

ἐπεὶ δὲ ἀφίκοντο πρὸς τὰ τεμένη, ἔθυσαν τῷ Διὶ καὶ ὠλοκαύτησαν τοὺς ταύρους: ἔπειτα τῷ Ἡλίῳ καὶ ὠλοκαύτησαν τοὺς ἵππους: ἔπειτα Γῇ σφάξαντες ὡς ἐξηγήσαντο οἱ μάγοι ἐποίησαν: ἔπειτα δὲ ἥρωσι τοῖς Συρίαν ἔχουσι.

So, when they came to the sanctuaries, they performed the sacrifice to Zeus and made a holocaust of the bulls; then they gave the horses to the flames in honour of the Sun; next they did sacrifice to the Earth, as the magi directed, and lastly to the tutelary heroes of Syria.<sup>70</sup>

The various uses of the terms for sacrifice are clearly laid out here. First, the use of θύω illustrates its use as an unmarked designation of general sacrifice. Then we have two whole burnt offerings, first to Zeus and then to Helios, and next an offering to Ge, σφάζω, which is not described further. At the end there is a sacrifice to the Heroes of Syria, again undescribed, but contained within σφάζω. As Casabona observes, we do not know what the σφάγια to the heroes and the Earth entailed—we are ignorant as to whether they, too, were burnt or buried, or broiled.<sup>71</sup> Casabona concludes that the key elements here are that the heavenly gods require fire with their sacrificial offerings, which the earthly gods and the

<sup>67</sup> Casabona, *Recherches*, 163.

<sup>68</sup> Casabona, *Recherches*, 164.

<sup>69</sup> Casabona, *Recherches*, 164; “there is a clear tendency to prefer σφάζω to designate ceremonies of a chthonian nature, where blood plays the central role.” (Translation mine.)

<sup>70</sup> Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, 8.3.24 [Miller, LCL].

<sup>71</sup> Casabona, *Recherches*, 164.

heroes need blood for theirs.<sup>72</sup> In many other instances listed by Casabona, σφάζω is used to describe the flow of blood from an animal as a sacrificial offering, usually to chthonic deities.<sup>73</sup> He concludes that blood serves as a pacifying offering, especially on the battlefield, to angry or dangerous deities. “Le sang versé ainsi doit satisfaire les dieux et héros qui habitent le sol, et épargner celui des combattants.”<sup>74</sup> σφάζω, then, is specifically used to describe, especially in the post-classical period, sacrifices where blood-offering is the primary sacrificial mode (as opposed to roasting and banqueting). This is in contrast to what Casabona concludes about another word for sacrifice, θύω, which leaves the contents of the rites it describes open:

il apparaît donc, ici encore, que θύω est un terme très général pouvant s’appliquer aussi bien à des sacrifices aux dieux <<d’en-haut>> qu’à des offrandes aux héros ou aux morts divinisés. Mais par opposition à ἐναγίζω, terme technique désignant les honneurs funèbres rendus aux morts, θύω prend la valeur de <<sacrifier à un immortel ou à un dieu Olympien>>.<sup>75</sup>

That is, to reiterate, θύω is an unmarked term for sacrifice and is not specific about what it entails.

ἐναγίζειν is a further sacrificial term which bears investigating. On the most basic and earliest levels, the term refers to consecrating something, to making an offering.<sup>76</sup> Sophocles describes the ἀγίζειν of a bull to the hearth of

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<sup>72</sup> Casabona, *Recherches*, 164.

<sup>73</sup> Casabona, *Recherches*, 164–166.

<sup>74</sup> Casabona, *Recherches*, 165; “The spilled blood thus must satisfy the gods and heroes who inhabit the earth at the same time as it saves that [sc. the blood] of the combatants” (trans. mine).

<sup>75</sup> Casabona, *Recherches*, 85; “It appears, then, here again, that θύω is a very general term capable of being applied equally well to the sacrifices of celestial deities as to the offerings to heroes or the divinized dead. But in contrast to ἐναγίζω, a technical term designating the funerary rites given to the dead, θύω takes the meaning of ‘sacrificing to an immortal or to an Olympian god’” (trans. mine.)

<sup>76</sup> Casabona, *Recherches*, 198.

Poseidon.<sup>77</sup> But ἐναγίζειν is at once more technical and more difficult to interpret.<sup>78</sup> “Un fait est clair: ce verbe est toujours employé pour des offrandes à des défunts ou à des morts héroïsés.”<sup>79</sup> Casabona observes that Herodotus makes the clearest distinction between “θύειν ὡς ἀθανάτῳ” and “ἐναγίζειν ὡς ἥρωι.”<sup>80</sup> Heroic and funerary cults alike involve both the total annihilation of offerings by breaking them or burning them up completely and the sacrifice and consumption of offerings in the form of a banquet.<sup>81</sup> Although the verb at hand is most frequently used to denote blood sacrifices like those of σφάγια, “rien n’indique que ἐναγίζω ait jamais été *réserve* à des offrandes sanglantes.”<sup>82</sup> In fact, there does not appear to be a strong differentiation between the destructive heroic offerings and the commensal offerings in terms of the use of this vocabulary. That is, ἐναγίζειν appears to be able to refer to either destructive and/or banquet type offerings performed for heroes or the dead but not to gods.

In sum, then, while certain words like ἐναγίζω and σφάζω are more likely to be associated with certain patterns of sacrifice, they are not entirely limited in their meanings. Further, θύω, the standard word for sacrifice, leaves open the possibility of both slaughter and consumption. With the linguistic ambiguities in mind, what, then, can we say about the symbolic significance of sacrifice for Greek and Roman religion?

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<sup>77</sup> Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus*, 1495–1496.

<sup>78</sup> Casabona, *Recherches*, 204.

<sup>79</sup> “One thing is clear: this verb is always used for offerings to the deceased or to the heroic dead” (trans. mine.)

<sup>80</sup> Casabona, *Recherches*, 204; “sacrificing as if to an immortal” vs. “making offerings as if to a hero.”

<sup>81</sup> Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 193, 205.

<sup>82</sup> Casabona, *Recherches*, 206; “nothing indicates that ἐναγίζω was ever reserved exclusively for blood offerings” (trans. mine).

### 3.4 The Sacrificial Meal

Jean-Pierre Vernant's discussion of Greek sacrifice brings up the question of the essential meaning of the sacrificial rite.<sup>83</sup> Studies from the previous century located the climax of the event at the slaughter of the animal; according to this understanding, exemplified by the study of Hubert and Mauss,<sup>84</sup> the slaughter of a sacrificial animal was a way of uniting the divine and mortal spheres, mediated by the victim's death. The climax of the sacrificial procession is thus the death of an animal;<sup>85</sup> in death, the animal leaves the mortal world and is able to transfer itself (but not its flesh) to the sacred realm. The consecration of the animal and its transcendence is, according to this view, somehow contagious, so that just as the animal is transferred to the sacred in its death, so too the sacrificer attains some portion of that sacrality in performing the sacrificial act. This hypothesis assumes that there is a substitution occurring—that the animal is a stand-in for the mortal human who acts as executioner, who, due to the morbid nature of the sacrificial act, must step away at the final moment in order to avoid death.<sup>86</sup> Everything, then, points to the moment of slaughter of the animal. But as Vernant points out, locating the focal point of the rite with the slaying of the victim does not reflect the concerns of Greek theology as established by representations of sacrifice in

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<sup>83</sup> "A General Theory of Sacrifice and the Slaying of the Victim in the Greek *Thusia*" in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* (By Jean-Pierre Vernant; Froma I. Zeitlin, ed.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 290–302.

<sup>84</sup> Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, "Essai sur la nature et les fonctions du sacrifice," *Année Sociologique* 2 (1899): 29–138; repr. Marcel Mauss, "Les fonctions sociales du sacré," in *Oeuvres* (2 vols.; Paris, 1968), 1.193–307.

<sup>85</sup> Burkert, *Homo Necans*, also adopts this perspective. Cf. René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (trans. Patrick Gregory; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

<sup>86</sup> Vernant, "A General Theory of Sacrifice," 293.



literature and art.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, Greek depictions of sacrifice skirt around the slaughter, preferring to deny the violence that Hubert and Mauss, among others, would locate at the heart of the rite.

For Vernant, the avoidance of discussion of the violence inherent in sacrifice indicates the attempt by Greeks to differentiate this type of act from murder.<sup>88</sup> Vernant points out that, without question, in Greek sacrifice, the animal must approach the altar of its own volition; coercion does not enter the picture, and the animal must assent to the sacrifice by nodding or shivering. Even the knife is hidden during the procession. As Vernant states,

the sacrificial ceremony might be precisely defined as follows: the sum of procedures permitting the slaughter of an animal under such conditions that violence seems excluded and the slaying is unequivocally imbued with a characteristic that distinguishes it from murder and places it in a different category from the blood-crime that the Greeks call *phonos*.<sup>89</sup>

This discomfort with the act of slaughter corresponds to the silence in mythology around the moment of sacrifice, which is glossed over almost universally.<sup>90</sup> In vase paintings depicting sacrificial scenes, of which there are many, “not one of them presents the slaying and death of the victim.”<sup>91</sup> This is remarkable. The only time the ritual knife is shown is when it is used to cut up into pieces the already-slaughtered animal. Never is blood depicted as flowing from the throat of the victim.<sup>92</sup> Both myth and practice, then, seem to contradict Hubert and Mauss’s theory of sacrifice, since that theory relies on the slaughter as the climax of the event—a climax which myth and practice take great pains to avoid articulating. If

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<sup>87</sup> Vernant, “A General Theory of Sacrifice,” 293–294.

<sup>88</sup> Vernant, “A General Theory of Sacrifice,” 294.

<sup>89</sup> Vernant, “A General Theory of Sacrifice,” 294.

<sup>90</sup> Vernant, “A General Theory of Sacrifice,” 293, 294.

<sup>91</sup> Vernant, “A General Theory of Sacrifice,” 294.

<sup>92</sup> Vernant, “A General Theory of Sacrifice,” 294.

we are to be respectful of Greek tradition, then our discussion of sacrifice must reflect the *emic* understanding of the rite. As such, the distinction between death as an event and sacrifice as a rite seems to be of paramount importance.

This distinction becomes especially important when sacrifice is done improperly. When blood and gore are mentioned it is with reference to events which ancient authors wish to highlight as murderous, non-normative sacrificial acts.<sup>93</sup> Human sacrifice marks perhaps the pinnacle of impropriety with regard to sacrificial normativity. Although depicted frequently in myth, the treatment it receives in literature clearly marks it as abhorrent. Vernant suggests that the description of the slaughter of human victims in the sacrificial rite is described in all its gory glory *in order to* mark it as wrong.<sup>94</sup> “The gap revealed by the different handling of images aims to show that a human being is neither a good meal nor a good sacrifice.”<sup>95</sup> For Vernant, this proves that the crux of sacrificial activity cannot be the moment of slaughter; for the Greeks, this moment is articulated only when it is necessary to point at a rite as barbaric. That is, the explicitness of such a description highlights such an act as the antithesis of right

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<sup>93</sup> A fascinating exception to this seems to be *Iliad* 23.174–184: “ἐννέα τῶ γε ἄνακτι τραπεζῆς κύνες ἦσαν, καὶ μὲν τῶν ἐνέβαλλε πυρῇ δύο δειροτομήσας, δώδεκα δὲ Τρώων μεγαθύμων υἱέας ἐσθλοὺς χαλκῷ **δηϊόων**: κακὰ δὲ φρεσὶ μῆδετο ἔργα: ἐν δὲ πυρὸς μένος ἦκε σιδήρεον ὄφρα νέμοιτο. ὦμωξέν τ’ ἄρ’ ἔπειτα, φίλον δ’ ὀνόμηνεν ἑταῖρον: ‘χαῖρέ μοι ὦ Πάτροκλε καὶ εἰν Αἴδαο δόμοισι: πάντα γὰρ ἤδη τοι τελέω τὰ πάροιθεν ὑπέστην, δώδεκα μὲν Τρώων μεγαθύμων υἱέας ἐσθλοὺς τοὺς ἅμα σοὶ πάντας πῦρ **ἐσθίει**: Ἑκτορα δ’ οὐ τι δώσω Πριαμίδην πυρὶ δαπτέμεν, ἀλλὰ κύνεσσιν.’ ” / ‘Nine dogs had the prince, that fed beneath his table, and of these did Achilles cut the throats of twain, and cast them upon the pyre. [175] And twelve valiant sons of the great-souled Trojans **slew** he with the bronze—and grim was the work he purposed in his heart and thereto he set the iron might of fire, to range at large. Then he uttered a groan, and called on his dear comrade by name: ‘Hail, I bid thee, O Patroclus, even in the house of Hades, [180] for now am I bringing all to pass, which afore-time I promised thee. Twelve valiant sons of the great-souled Trojans, lo all these together with thee the flame **devoureth**; but Hector, son of Priam, will I nowise give to the fire to feed upon, but to dogs.’ ” [Murray, LCL].

<sup>94</sup> Vernant, “A General Theory of Sacrifice,” 295.

<sup>95</sup> Vernant, “A General Theory of Sacrifice,” 295.

sacrificial behaviour.

Given that the sacrificial meal is in fact an integral part of the sacrifice as a whole, the anxiety around potential or mythical human sacrifice makes sense. George M. Calhoun writes, “Every meal [in the ancient world] was a sacrifice and an act of worship, and every sacrifice a meal.”<sup>96</sup> Dennis E. Smith begins his chapter on the sacrificial banquet in the Greek and Roman world with a quote from Dio Chrysostom: “What sacrifice is acceptable to the gods without the participants in the feast?”<sup>97</sup> The feast is a religious meal attached to the ritual of the sacrifice and not simply a secular afterthought.<sup>98</sup> The meal that occurs after the slaughter must therefore be considered a significant aspect of the practice of sacrifice (θυσία) as a whole; the consumption of the meat sacrificed on an altar therefore has religious import. Sacrifices took place on the altar in front of the temple or inside the precinct boundaries or at the public hearth. The banquets afterwards took place in a variety of locations. At large public events, such as that described by Plutarch<sup>99</sup> it is clear that there are multiple locations for the same meal: some dine with Plutarch, reclining at his table, but others must feast at home, since there were such a large number participating publicly.<sup>100</sup> Smith notes that for this sacrifice, the location of the meal is not a factor in its practice. For other rites, however, the location where the meat is consumed is legislated. For

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<sup>96</sup> George M. Calhoun, “Polity and Society: The Homeric Picture” in *A Companion to Homer* (A. J. B. Wace and F. Stubbings, eds.; London: MacMillan, 1962), 446.

<sup>97</sup> Dio Chrysostom, *3 Regn. (Or. 3)*, 97, qtd. in Smith, *Symposium*, 67.

<sup>98</sup> Smith, *Symposium*, 67–68.

<sup>99</sup> “There is a traditional rite of sacrifice, which the archon performs at the public hearth but everyone else at home, called the driving out of the *bulimy* [...] When I was archon, a larger number than usual participated in the public rite. After we had completed the ritual acts and returned to our places at table, we discussed first the term.” *Quaestiones Convivales* 693E–694a.

<sup>100</sup> Smith, *Symposium*, 70.

instance, Pausanias records that the Epidauran rules for sacrifice mandate that the meat offered must be consumed within the sacred bounds.<sup>101</sup> Thus, the consumption both of the entrails, consumed on the spot, and also of the rest of the meat was restricted to the sacred precinct and could not be taken home or sold in the market in these instances. Sterling Dow interprets these restrictions as secular attempts to equalize the distribution of meat at large public sacrifices.<sup>102</sup> This regulation instead suggests, argues Smith, that the meal was an important enough part of the sacrificial whole that social equalizers needed to be enforced in order to maintain social cohesion.<sup>103</sup> In short, the consumption of meat sacrificed, whether privately in the home or publicly at a cult centre, is a religious act. The legislation around its consumption indicates its religious nature, but even meat removed from the precinct to be consumed at home is eaten in participation with the rest of the sacrificial banqueters. Participating in the feast after the slaughter is therefore a requirement for participating in those examples of *θυσία* which include meat eating (i.e. not *σφάγια*). Since sacrifice transforms the animal being offered from living being into food fit for human consumption—a meal—the consequences of human sacrifice are not insignificant.

### 3.5 Human Sacrifice in the Greek Imagination

Human sacrifice is a type of ritual killing of a human being. Ritual killing

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<sup>101</sup> Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 2.27.1; Smith observes that similar regulations were in force for Hestia (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 2.40) and other sanctuaries (Smith, *Symposium*, 71).

<sup>102</sup> Sterling Dow, "The Greater Demarkhi of Erkhia," *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellenique* 89 (1965): 210.

<sup>103</sup> Smith, *Symposium*, 71.

does not always involve sacrifice, i.e. the offering of the victim to a super-human entity.<sup>104</sup> Scholars of ritual often differentiate, with regards to the ritual killing of humans, between these two categories—one in which the victim is offered to a god or goddess (sacrifice) and one in which the victim is not (ritual killing). However, in common scholarly parlance, we refer to all ritual killing of animals, whether as offerings or not, as ‘sacrifice,’ Hughes proposes, and I tend to agree, that it therefore seems squeamish of us not to do the same for the ritual killing of humans beings.<sup>105</sup> Hughes defines the human sacrifice as “those ritual killings for which the Greeks employ words usually reserved for the sacred slaughter of animals, chiefly, *thuein*, *sphazein*, and their compounds.”<sup>106</sup> Examples of the use of these words to describe human beings’ ritual slaughter can be found, most readily, in the story of Iphigeneia.<sup>107</sup>

It must be stressed that there is no evidence for the actual practice of human sacrifice; human sacrifice *only* occurs in the literary realm. To the Greeks, the best-known cult which—and only in the literature that describes it—required human sacrifice was the Taurian Artemis, whose rite is recalled in the story of Iphigeneia. In this literary context, Iphigeneia is usually (though not always)<sup>108</sup> the daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra; learning of a prophecy that the Greek ships cannot sail to Troy without her sacrifice, her father decides to offer her up to Artemis. There are various versions of the tale but in all of them,

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<sup>104</sup> Hughes, *Human Sacrifice*, 3.

<sup>105</sup> Hughes, *Human Sacrifice*, 4.

<sup>106</sup> Hughes, *Human Sacrifice*, 4.

<sup>107</sup> Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 232; Euripides, *Iphigeneia at Tauris*, 359; cf. Euripides, *Hecuba*, 260-261.

<sup>108</sup> In some less common versions, she is the daughter of Theseus and Helen; Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, “Iphigenia,” *OCD* 765.

Artemis demands the sacrifice of Iphigeneia in return for giving the Greeks a good wind to sail from Aulis to Troy. The ancient texts disagree whether this was the harsh result of the killing of one of Artemis' sacred deer by Agamemnon, after having boasted of his hunting skills in comparison to those of the goddess, or the killing of a sacred goat in the same situation, or whether Artemis' anger was aroused due to the non-fulfillment of a vow by Atreus.<sup>109</sup> In most versions, Artemis replaces the girl at the last minute with a hind or a bear, or sometimes an *eidolon* of herself, so that Iphigeneia avoids sacrifice in the end. In the *Kypria*, Agamemnon is hunting and kills a deer. He is so proud of himself that he brags that he has outdone Artemis. Artemis takes ire at this and prevents his fleet of ships from sailing by creating storms. Calchas interprets the goddess' anger and declares that the only solution is to sacrifice Iphigeneia to the goddess. They send for the girl, telling her that she is coming for her wedding to Achilles. They attempt to sacrifice her, but at the last minute Artemis provides a deer for the sacrifice and takes Iphigeneia to Tauris and makes her immortal.<sup>110</sup> Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis* follows this plot-line, and his *Iphigeneia Among the Taurians* resumes with Iphigeneia as priestess of Artemis' cult at Tauris, where she herself oversees human sacrifices. According to Hesiod, she is replaced by an *eidolon*, an image of herself, which Pausanias later interprets as Iphigeneia's transformation into the divine Hecate.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood, *OCD* 765; see also the helpful chart in Albert Henrichs, "Human Sacrifice in Greek Religion: Three Case Studies" in *Le Sacrifice dans l'Antiquité: Huit Exposés Suivis De Discussions: Vandœuvres-Genève, 25-30 Août 1980* (Jean Pierre Vernant, Jean Rudhardt and Olivier Reverdin, eds; Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1981), 200–201.

<sup>110</sup> Henrichs, "Human Sacrifice," 200.

<sup>111</sup> Hesiod, *Catalogue of Women*, Fr. 32a 15–26 + b M–W; Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.43.1.

Aeschylus, however, suggests that she is, in fact, sacrificed, or at least that those witnessing the ritual thought she was.<sup>112</sup> In Aeschylus, non-marked vocabulary is used to describe the girl's sacrifice:

ἐπεὶ δ' ἀνάγκας ἔδω λῆπαδνον  
 φρενὸς πνέων δυσσεβῇ τροπαίαν  
 ἀναγνον ἀνίερων, τόθεν  
 τὸ παντότολμον φρονεῖν μετέγνω.  
 βροτοὺς θρασύνει γὰρ αἰσχρομήτις  
 τάλαινα παρακοπὰ πρωτοπήμων. ἔτλα δ' οὖν  
**θυτὴρ γενέσθαι** θυγατρός,  
 γυναικοποιῶν πολέμων ἄρωγαν  
 καὶ προτέλεια ναῶν.  
 λιτὰς δὲ καὶ κληδόνας πατρῶους  
 παρ' οὐδὲν αἰῶ τε παρθένειον  
 ἔθεντο φιλόμαχοι βραβῆς.  
 φράσεν δ' ἄόζοις πατὴρ μετ' εὐχὰν  
 δίκαν χιμαίρας ὑπερθε βωμοῦ  
 πέπλοισι περιπετὴ παντὶ θυμῷ προνωπῇ  
 λαβεῖν ἀέρδην, στόματός  
 τε καλλιπρώρου φυλακᾷ κατασχεῖν  
 φθόγγον ἀραῖον οἴκοις,  
 βίᾳ χαλινῶν τ' ἀναύδω μένει.  
 κρόκου βαφὰς δ' ἐς πέδον χέουσα  
 ἔβαλλ' ἕκαστον θυτὴρ  
 -ων ἀπ' ὄμματος βέλει  
 φιλοίκτω, πρέπουσά θ' ὥς ἐν γραφαῖς, προσεννέπειν  
 θέλουσ', ἐπεὶ πολλάκις  
 πατὴρ κατ' ἀνδρῶνας εὐτραπέζους  
 ἔμελψεν, ἀγνᾷ δ' ἀταύρωτος αὐδᾷ πατὴρ  
 φίλου τριτόσπονδον εὖ-  
 ποτμον παιῶνα φίλως ἐτίμα—  
 τὰ δ' ἔνθεν οὔτ' εἶδον οὔτ' ἐννέπω:  
 τέχναι δὲ Κάλχαντος οὐκ ἄκραντοι.

But when he had donned the yoke of Necessity, with veering of mind, impious, unholy, unsanctified, from that moment he changed his intention and began to conceive that deed of uttermost audacity. For wretched delusion, counsellor of ill, primal source of woe, makes mortals bold. So then he hardened his heart to **sacrifice** his daughter so that he might further a war waged to avenge a woman, and as an offering for the voyage of a fleet! For her supplications, her cries of “Father,” and her virgin life, the commanders in their eagerness for war cared nothing. Her father, after a prayer, bade his ministers lay hold of her as, enwrapped in her robes, she lay fallen forward, and with stout heart to raise her, as if she were a young goat, high above the altar; and with a gag upon her lovely mouth to hold back the shouted curse against her house—by the bit's strong and stifling might. Then, as she shed to earth her saffron robe, she struck each of her sacrificers with a glance from her eyes beseeching pity, looking as if in a picture, wishing she could speak; for she had often sung where men met at her father's hospitable table, and with her virgin voice would lovingly honor her dear father's prayer for blessing at the third libation—What happened next I did not see and

<sup>112</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood, *OCD* 765; Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*. 218–249.

do not tell. The art of Calchas was not unfulfilled.<sup>113</sup>

The word in Greek which is translated ‘to sacrifice’ in the English excerpt is really two words, θυτήρ γενέσθαι, to become sacrificer. θυτήρ is a derivative of θύειν, the ordinary or unmarked word used to refer to sacrifice, a word used frequently in what Hughes describes as the Olympian sacrifices, the outline of which I gave above: in short, a rite wherein an animal is slaughtered and its flesh is divided, some to be consumed by flames and some by the participants. This term does not *require* such a feast but definitely *allows for it*. Later, in line 233, Iphigeneia is compared to a young goat (χιμαίρας) as she is in the process of being held over the altar in preparation for her sacrifice. Being a smaller animal, goats would have been held aloft to allow the blood to spray the altar. Finally, in this version of Iphigeneia’s sacrifice, it appears that her father does in the end go through with the rite; this conclusion is not stated explicitly (“What happened next I did not see and will not tell”) but is implied with the statement, “the art of Calchas was not unfulfilled.” Calchas, arguably the most famous augur in Greek culture, was responsible for the divinatory conclusion that Iphigeneia’s sacrifice was required to create a favourable wind for the Greek ships to set out from Aulis to Troy. By stating that his oracle was fulfilled, Aeschylus makes clear that Iphigeneia was not spared or whisked away at the last second as in other versions. Although her exact moment of slaughter is not represented, it occurs. In fact, the absence of the moment of slaughter could rather emphasize the sacrificial nature of her death.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 218–249 [Smyth, LCL].

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Vernant, “A General Theory of Sacrifice,” 294.



Whether Iphigeneia's sacrifice took place is more ambiguous in other sources, and Euripides avoids it by having Artemis replace the victim. When describing what would be Iphigeneia's sacrifice, Euripides uses different vocabulary in comparison to Aeschylus, while using other descriptive devices to maintain, overall, the same plot. First, in *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, Iphigeneia is reluctant to submit to the sacrifice. She and her mother attempt to persuade Agamemnon against it, and Achilles, who resents being used to lure Iphigeneia into this deadly trap, rises to her defense. When it becomes clear, however, that the sacrifice will take place in spite of attempts to prevent it, Iphigeneia accepts her fate, deciding that she would rather gain glory in dying for her country than die struggling against the inevitable.<sup>115</sup> When the time comes for the sword to strike her neck, however, Artemis steps in:

ἱερεὺς δὲ φάσγανον λαβὼν ἐπεύξατο,  
 λαιμόν τ' ἐπεσκοπεῖθ', ἵνα πλήξειεν ἄν:  
 ἐμοὶ δέ τ' ἄλγος οὐ μικρὸν εἰσῆι φρενί,  
 κᾶστην νενευκῶς: θαῦμα δ' ἦν αἴφνης ὄραν.  
 πληγῆς κτύπον γὰρ πᾶς τις ἦσθετ' ἂν σαφῶς,  
 τὴν παρθένον δ' οὐκ εἶδεν οὗ γῆς εἰσέδω.  
 βοᾷ δ' ἱερεὺς, ἅπας δ' ἐπήχησε στρατός,  
 ἄελπτον εἰσιδόντες ἐκ θεῶν τινος  
 φάσμ', οὗ γε μηδ' ὀρωμένου πίστις παρῆν:  
 ἔλαφος γὰρ ἀσπαίρουσ' ἔκειτ' ἐπὶ χθονὶ  
 ἰδεῖν μεγίστη διαπρεπής τε τὴν θέαν,  
 ἥς αἵματι βωμὸς ἐραίνεται' ἄρδην τῆς θεοῦ.  
 κὰν τῷδε Κάλχας πῶς δοκεῖς χαίρων ἔφη:  
 ὦ τοῦδ' Ἀχαιῶν κοίρανοι κοινοῦ στρατοῦ,  
 ὁρᾶτε τήνδε θυσίαν, ἣν ἡ θεὸς  
 προύθηκε βωμίαν, ἔλαφον ὀρειδρόμον;  
 ταύτην μάλιστα τῆς κόρης ἀσπάζεται,  
 ὥς μὴ μιάνη βωμὸν εὐγενεῖ φόνω.  
 ἡδέως τε τοῦτ' ἐδέξατο, καὶ πλοῦν οὔριον  
 δίδωσιν ἡμῖν Ἰλίου τ' ἐπιδρομάς.  
 πρὸς ταῦτα πᾶς τις θάρσος αἶρε ναυβάτης,  
 χώρει τε πρὸς ναῦν: ὥς ἡμέρᾳ τῇδε δεῖ  
 λιπόντας ἡμᾶς Αὐλίδος κοίλους μυχοὺς  
 Αἴγαιον οἶδμα διαπερᾶν.  
 ἐπεὶ δ' ἅπαν  
 κατηνθρακώθη θυμ' ἐν Ἡφαίστου φλογί,  
 τὰ πρόσφορ' ἠὔξαθ', ὥς τύχοι νόστου στρατός.

<sup>115</sup> Euripides, *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, 1370–1401 [Kovacs, LCL].

πέμπει δ' Ἀγαμέμνων μ' ὥστε σοι φράσαι τάδε,  
 λέγειν θ' ὅποι' ἀσπερ ἐκ θεῶν μοίρας κυρεῖ  
 καὶ δόξαν ἔσχεν ἄφθιτον καθ' Ἑλλάδα.  
 ἐγὼ παρῶν δὲ καὶ τὸ πρᾶγμ' ὀρώων λέγω:  
 ἢ παῖς σαφῶς σοι πρὸς θεοὺς ἀφίπτατο.  
 λύπης δ' ἀφαίρει καὶ πόσει πάρες χόλον:  
 ἀπροσδόκητα δὲ βροτοῖς τὰ τῶν θεῶν,  
 σώζουσι θ' οὐς φιλοῦσιν. ἡμαρ γὰρ τόδε  
 θανοῦσαν εἶδε καὶ βλέπουσαν παῖδα σὴν.

But the priest, seizing his knife, offered up a prayer and was closely scanning the maiden's throat to see where he should strike. It was no slight sorrow filled my heart, as I stood by with bowed head; when there was a sudden miracle! Each one of us distinctly heard the sound of a blow, but none saw the spot where the maiden vanished. The priest cried out, and all the army took up the cry at the sight of a marvel all unlooked for, due to some god's agency, and passing all belief, although it was seen; for there upon the ground lay a deer of immense size, magnificent to see, gasping out her life, with whose blood the altar of the goddess was thoroughly bedewed. Then spoke Calchas thus—his joy you can imagine—"You captains of this leagued Achaean army, do you see this victim, which the goddess has set before her altar, a mountain-roaming deer? This is more welcome to her by far than the maid, that she may not defile her altar by shedding noble blood. Gladly she has accepted it, and is granting us a prosperous voyage for our attack on Ilium. Therefore take heart, sailors, each man of you, and away to your ships, for today we must leave the hollow bays of Aulis and cross the Aegean main." Then, when the sacrifice was wholly burnt to ashes in the blazing flame, he offered such prayers as were fitting, that the army might win return; but Agamemnon sends me to tell you this, and say what heaven-sent luck is his, and how he has secured undying fame throughout the length of Hellas. Now I was there myself and speak as an eyewitness; without a doubt your child flew away to the gods. A truce then to your sorrowing, and cease to be angry with your husband; for the gods' ways with man are not what we expect, and those whom they love, they keep safe; yes, for this day has seen your daughter dead and living.<sup>116</sup>

In this version Iphigeneia has avoided sacrifice and been swept away to safety by Artemis, but at the same time, the text maintains that she has died. The rescue comes immediately before the conclusion of the play, meaning that the build-up of suspense and imagination of this sacrificial act is maximized; in the end, Iphigeneia is simultaneously dead and alive through her anticipated sacrifice and eleventh-hour stay of execution. Iphigeneia, describing her willingness to be sacrificed in 1555 tells her father that she gladly offers up her body as sacrifice (θῦσαι), not shying away from what she believes must take place.<sup>117</sup> In doing so,

<sup>116</sup> Euripides, *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, 1578–1612 [Kovacs, LCL]

<sup>117</sup> ὦ πάτερ, πάρειμί σοι: τοῦμόν δὲ σῶμα τῆς ἐμῆς ὑπὲρ πάτρας καὶ τῆς ἀπάσης

she takes on the role of sacrificial victim; in the end, even when she does not end her life on the altar, she occupies both categories: she both is and is not sacrificed.

Then, in *Iphigeneia in Tauris* 344–360, Iphigeneia speaks of her sacrifice and compares it to an ordinary sacrifice, though clearly gruesome and un-natural, requiring vengeance:

ὦ καρδία τάλαινα, πρὶν μὲν ἐς ξένους  
γαληνὸς ἦσθα καὶ φιλοικτίρων ἀεί,  
ἐς θούμόφυλον ἀναμετρομένη δάκρυ,  
Ἕλληνας ἄνδρας ἡνίκ' ἐς χέρας λάβοις.  
νῦν δ' ἐξ ὀνείρων οἷσιν ἡγριώμεθα,  
δοκοῦσ' Ὀρέστην μηκέθ' ἥλιον βλέπειν,  
δύσσουν με λήψεσθ', οἵτινές ποθ' ἦκετε.  
καὶ τοῦτ' ἄρ' ἦν ἀληθές, ἡσθόμην, φίλαι:  
οἱ δυστυχεῖς γὰρ τοῖσι δυστυχεστέροις  
αὐτοὶ κακῶς πράξαντες οὐ φρονοῦσιν εὖ.  
ἀλλ' οὔτε πνεῦμα Διόθεν ἦλθε πώποτε,  
οὐ πορθμῖς, ἥτις διὰ πέτρας Συμπληγάδας  
Ἑλένην ἀπήγαγ' ἐνθάδ', ἥ μ' ἀπώλεσεν,  
Μενέλεων θ', ἵν' αὐτοὺς ἀντετιμωρησάμην,  
τὴν ἐνθάδ' Αὔλιν ἀντιθεῖσα τῆς ἐκεῖ,  
οὗ μ' ὥστε μόσχον Δανάϊδαι χειρούμενοι  
ἔσφαζον, ἱερεὺς δ' ἦν ὁ γεννήσας πατήρ.

O my unhappy heart, you were gentle to strangers before, and always full of pity, measuring out tears for the sake of our common race, whenever Hellenes came into your hands. But now, after those dreams that have made me savage, thinking that Orestes is no longer alive, whoever comes here will find me harsh to them. This is true after all, my friends, I have realized: the unfortunate, when themselves doing badly, do not have kind thoughts towards those who are more unfortunate. But no breeze from Zeus ever came, or a boat, bringing Helen here, through the rocks of the Symplegedes—Helen who destroyed me, with Menelaus, so that I might avenge myself on them, setting an Aulis here against that one there, where the Danaids overpowered me and were going to sacrifice me like a calf, and my own father was the priest.<sup>118</sup>

In this case, in line 359, Iphigeneia uses the word ἔσφαζον from the verb σφάζω to describe her fate on the altar. As in Aeschylus' text, Iphigeneia is again compared to a normal sacrificial animal, this time a calf. Although larger than a

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Ἑλλάδος γαίᾳς ὑπὲρ θῦσαι δίδωμ' ἐκοῦσα πρὸς βωμὸν θεᾶς ἄγοντας, εἴπερ ἐστὶ θέσφατον τόδε. καὶ τοῦπ' ἔμ' εὐτυχεῖτε: καὶ νικηφόρου δώρου τύχοιτε πατρίδα τ' ἐξίκοισθε γῆν. πρὸς ταῦτα μὴ ψαύση τις Ἀργείων ἐμοῦ: σιγῇ παρέξω γὰρ δέρην εὐκαρδίως.” / “O my father, here I am; willingly I offer my body for my country and all Hellas, that you may lead me to the altar of the goddess and sacrifice me, since this is Heaven's ordinance. May good luck be yours for any help that I afford! and may you obtain the victor's gift and come again to the land of your fathers. So then let none of the Argives lay hands on me, for I will bravely yield my neck without a word.”

<sup>118</sup> Euripides, *Iphigeneia at Tauris*, 344–360 [Kovacs, LCL].

goat, this animal, too, would have been small enough to be lifted above the altar during the rite. As we have seen above, Euripides represents the sacrifice in different ways depending on whose mouth describes it, but in the end, the significant aspect of this version of Iphigeneia's sacrifice is that it is avoided. And yet, Iphigeneia is still associated with Artemis in cult and characterized by Euripides as both living and dead. This conclusion is important to keep in mind: even when Iphigeneia does not have her blood spilled on the altar at the literary level she still faces death and is therefore Artemis in cult.

Jennifer Larson's study of Greek heroine cults is an important development of Nagy's proposal that antagonism between god and hero and myth corresponds to their association in actual cult practice. Iphigeneia, the sometimes-victim of human sacrifice, was the recipient of cult worship in various locations, including Brauron and Tauris. She suggests that just the act of dying while still a maiden is enough to associate a girl with Artemis.<sup>119</sup> This differs from the association found between male heroes and gods, where there is frequently a similarity between the two which contributes to their association.<sup>120</sup> Larson notes that in fact, for many heroines associated with Artemis, there is no myth of antagonism between the heroine and the goddess—the only reason for their association with her is that the victims happened to be virgins at the time of their death. Iphigeneia is arguably an exception to this, since clearly Artemis is the cause of Iphigeneia's sacrifice and is therefore her antagonist. But since other women and girls who become heroes through their deaths are automatically

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<sup>119</sup> Larson, *Greek Heroine Cults*, 117.

<sup>120</sup> Larson, *Greek Heroine Cults*, 116.

associated with her because of their unmarried status, it seems likely that Larson's conclusions are in general correct.<sup>121</sup> The mythological antagonism reflected in these works seems to represent a long-established understanding of the human-divine relationship with regards to heroization. In short, Iphigeneia represents the best-known of the myths of the sacrificial virgin; her association with Artemis reflects both the cultural expectations around the heroization of girls and is represented in myth as an antagonistic relationship between the goddess and the girl.<sup>122</sup>

Jan Bremmer's essay, "Myth and Ritual in Greek Human Sacrifice: Lykaon, Polyxena and the Case of the Rhodian Criminal,"<sup>123</sup> outlines three cases of human sacrifice that illustrate how myth and ritual forged a relationship in the religious practice of the ancient Greeks. This discussion is useful for our study since Bremmer's cases illustrate how human sacrifice functioned in the cultural expectations of the Greeks. His first example, that of the Rhodian criminal, is one that falls on the ritual side of the ritual-myth trajectory. He analyses the report by Porphyry of the sacrifice of a criminal in Rhodes on the sixth day of Metageitnion each year. Originally, Porphyry states, the victim sacrificed to Kronos was not a criminal; only later did the Kronia festival make use of a man on death row to

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<sup>121</sup> This association-by-default does not occur in the novels; although association for the heroines there is the result of antagonism, there is not always a direct correlation to a specific deity.

<sup>122</sup> Since her sacrifice occurs in the context of a war, Iphigeneia's story also fits into the category of peri-battle sacrifices, when σφάγια or blood-sacrifice without an accompanying meal was commonplace. Plutarch reports that the normal sacrificial offering was replaced with captured Persian prisoners before the battle of Salamis (Plutarch, *Themistodes*, 13); cf. Henrichs, "Human Sacrifice," 208–224; and Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 60 for tales of other maidens sacrificed before battles.

<sup>123</sup> Jan Bremmer, "Myth and Ritual in Greek Human Sacrifice: Lykaon, Polyxena and the Case of the Rhodian Criminal" in *The Strange World of Human Sacrifice* (Jan Bremmer, ed.; Studies in the History of Anthropology of Religion 1; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 55–79.

satisfy the ritual.<sup>124</sup> Oddly, according to Porphyry, the man would be led out to a statue of Artemis Aristoboule,<sup>125</sup> where he would be given wine and then killed.<sup>126</sup> But although Artemis is frequently associated with acts of human sacrifice, there is no known association between her and Kronos, the child-eating god to whom the festival was dedicated. Further, Bremmer points out that while Kronos is a name never given to children due to his blood-thirsty mythology, Aristoboulos is a common name on Rhodes.<sup>127</sup> He concludes that the association between the location of sacrifice and Artemis Aristoboule is unlikely; rather, the criminal might have represented some sort of scapegoat ritual in which the victim is feasted and processed outside of the gates of the city before the sacrifice, a connection that fits both with the geographical and calendrical location of the event.<sup>128</sup> Thus, the real location of the sacrifice is outside of the city gates; the temple of Artemis Aristoboule's location across the street is mentioned as a point of reference rather than of association. Kronos, on the other hand, at whose festival the sacrifice takes place, is associated with human sacrifice elsewhere, such as Crete.<sup>129</sup> Sophocles, too, associates the god Kronos with the human sacrifice which barbarians were rumoured to practice.<sup>130</sup> Bremmer concludes that, since at the time Porphyry writes the origins of the practice on Rhodes was

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<sup>124</sup> Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 56.

<sup>125</sup> This is the interpretation given by H. S. Versnel, *Transition and Reversal in Myth and Ritual* (Vol. 2 of *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion*; Leiden: Brill, 1993), 100f.

<sup>126</sup> Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 56; Porphyry, *On Abstinence*, 2.54, qtd. in Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, 4.16.1.

<sup>127</sup> Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 57 esp n.10; he notes more than 60 examples of the name found inscribed. Cf. the association of the Aristobouliastai: *Inscriptiones Graecae* XII 1.163.

<sup>128</sup> Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 57.

<sup>129</sup> Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 57; Istros *FGrH* 334 F 48; Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, 4.16.7.

<sup>130</sup> Sophocles, *Fragment*, 126 Radt; Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 58.

unclear, the myth of Kronos was used to establish in literature a false history of the practice of killing a condemned criminal every year on that date.<sup>131</sup>

Bremmer's second example is that of Polyxena. This example is one not of ritual propped up by myth, as the previous story is, but of the depiction of a ritual in a myth.<sup>132</sup> Polyxena is a mythological character who is the daughter of Priam and Hecuba. She does not appear in the Homeric tradition, but is mentioned by Euripides, where she is sacrificed on the tomb of Achilles by Neoptolemus to appease Achilles' ghost.<sup>133</sup> Euripides' version in *Hecuba* describes the sacrifice over multiple lines. Polyxena is to be sacrificed to appease the spirit of Achilles, who has appeared above his tomb in golden armour (110). He requests Polyxena as his "special prize" (41). Odysseus is sent by the Greeks to collect Polyxena, who is described using the word πρόσφαγμα or victim (41). As discussed above, the word family around σφάγ-\* is a marked term for a particular type of sacrifice where the ordinary term, θύ-\* is normative or unmarked.<sup>134</sup> That is to say that Euripides uses a special term for Polyxena as a sacrificial victim rather than relying on the ordinary, all-encompassing family of words connected with θύω. σφάγ-\* terms are used multiple times by Euripides: in 41 and 265 it is used for Achilles special sacrificial request; in 109, 119, 135, and 305, σφάγ-\* is used to describe Polyxena as a victim. It is used to describe the sacrifice directly (either as a noun or a verb) in 188, 221, 433, 505, 522, and 571. Only once is the word θύω

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<sup>131</sup> Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 59.

<sup>132</sup> Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 59.

<sup>133</sup> Jennifer R. March, "Polyxena," *OCD* 1213; Euripides, *Hecuba*, 220ff. In older versions of the myth that discusses Polyxena, she is not sacrificed; the *Cypria* has her fatally wounded by Odysseus and Diomedes during the capture of Troy (*Cypria* F43 Bernabé = F 27 Davies.)

<sup>134</sup> Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 60.

used in 223. In that instance, it is used to describe the sacrificial ritual in general.<sup>135</sup> Bremmer asserts that the σφάγ-\* root implies brutality and carnage rather than orderly, approved ritual killing.<sup>136</sup> During the sacrifice itself, Polyxena is taken by the wrist by Neoptolemos (523), as if at a wedding ceremony.<sup>137</sup> As with Iphigeneia's sacrifice, the description emphasizes Polyxena's young unmarried status as a harsh contrast with the reality that she will never marry. Neoptolemos pours a libation at the tomb, probably of unmixed wine, given that Neoptolemos likens it to the blood of the young woman that he is about to spill (536–537). Youths hold Polyxena from struggling, although the willingness of the animal is highly valued in Greek sacrifice, and indeed, Polyxena bravely offers up her throat a few lines later (548–549). Bremmer notes that only rarely do we find depictions of Polyxena being lifted up like an animal (or like Iphigeneia).<sup>138</sup> When finally her throat is slit, the text describes how her blood gushes out (567), the event rarely described in depictions of normative animal sacrifices.

According to Bremmer, Polyxena's great beauty makes her an appropriate victim, since scapegoat sacrifices are often noted for their beautiful appearance—and so are the heroines of the romance novels, as we will discuss shortly.<sup>139</sup> This description of human sacrifice follows the standard protocol for animal sacrifice, with the exception, of course, that the victim is a young woman rather than an ox or a sheep. Bremmer suggests that this shot of normalcy—this adherence to

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<sup>135</sup> Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 61.

<sup>136</sup> Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 61.

<sup>137</sup> Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 62 esp. n. 41.

<sup>138</sup> Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 63.

<sup>139</sup> Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 64; cf. Jan Bremmer, "Scapegoat Rituals in Ancient Greece," in *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion* (R. Buxton, ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 276ff.



standard sacrificial procedure—might have reduced the horror and shock felt by observers of this action, since the audience would be familiar with sacrificial procedure. On the other hand, he notes that the juxtaposition of normative sacrifice with barbaric human sacrifice might have had the opposite effect of creating an even stronger link between reality and fictional human sacrifice, making the scene all the more gruesome.<sup>140</sup> In this way, the scene is witness to the dual possibilities which exist simultaneously in human sacrifice: it is both gruesomely impossible and frighteningly real.

In his third and final example, Bremmer discusses an archaic Arcadian cult, where several ancient authors record the practice of a sacrifice involving a human boy at the time of the Arcadian games.<sup>141</sup> Although the literary preservations of the rite do not agree in all aspects, it seems that the sacrifice was to Zeus Lykaeos; that the participants ate the entrails of the boy who was the sacrificial victim; and that after having eaten the entrails, one of the participants was turned into a wolf for a period of nine years, after which time he could return to society as a human being, so long as he had not consumed human flesh during his sojourn as a wolf.<sup>142</sup> While in both the previous examples given by Bremmer, the victims' flesh is not described by the sources as being consumed in the course of the ritual, in this example the boy's entrails are shared by the participants, as though the victim were a normal sacrificial animal.<sup>143</sup> Bremmer relates the ritual,

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<sup>140</sup> Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 65.

<sup>141</sup> Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 66ff.

<sup>142</sup> Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 67; Skopas, *Olympic Victors*, in *FGrH* 413 F 1; Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 6.8.2; Varro, in Augustine's *City of God* 18.17; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 8.81 gives the most complete account.

<sup>143</sup> On the mechanisms of transformational eating, see my master's thesis, "Like Dew From Heaven: Honeycomb, Religious Identity and Transformation in Joseph

and especially the lycanthropy, to initiation rites; certainly this fits the time in exile from the community.<sup>144</sup> However, it is also unusual, if this ritual does find its context in an initiation, that only one of the individuals who consume human flesh is exiled in this way, as a wolf.<sup>145</sup> At any rate, and regardless of the fact that we have clear lacunae in our information about this ritual, at least three literary sources report regular human sacrifice at Mount Lykaion to Zeus. In terms of origin stories, Hesiod describes the sacrifice and cutting up of a baby as a meal for Zeus on that mountain; the god was disgusted with Lykaon, the sacrificer, and hurled a lightning bolt at his house.<sup>146</sup> Other myths of human sacrifice might also prove useful in understanding this reported rite; the myth of Lykaon has a parallel in that of Tantalus and his son Pelops, in which Tantalus cuts up his son and cooks him as a meal for the gods in order to test their divinity; during the meal, Demeter, distracted by her grief for her kidnapped daughter, accidentally eats the shoulder of Pelops. In the end, Zeus resurrects the boy, replacing his eaten shoulder with a shoulder of ivory, and Tantalus is punished.<sup>147</sup> In terms of determining actual human sacrificial practice, however, this example, like others, has very little material evidence to support it; in fact, *not one human bone has been excavated from the altar of Zeus Lykaios*.<sup>148</sup> It is hard to tell, then, concludes

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and Aseneth,” (MA thesis, McGill University, 2006).

<sup>144</sup> Bremmer observes that the number nine functions as a typical amount of time for an event (“Greek Human Sacrifice,” 73–74; cf. Jan Bremmer, “Heroes, Rituals, and the Trojan War,” *Studi Storico-Religiosi* 2 (1978): 5–38.)

<sup>145</sup> Bremmer, “Greek Human Sacrifice,” 75.

<sup>146</sup> Bremmer, “Greek Human Sacrifice,” 75; cf. M. L. West, *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 154f.

<sup>147</sup> Pindar, *Olympian Odes*, 1.26–27, 47–53; Bacchylides F 42 Maehler; Euripides, *Iphigeneia at Tauris*, 386–388 etc.

<sup>148</sup> Bremmer, “Greek Human Sacrifice,” 78; K. Kouroniotis, “*Anaskaphai Lukaion*,” *Archaeologike Ephemeris* (1904): 162–170. Bremmer notes that one must exercise caution when

Bremmer, just what exactly went on at this cult: “whether the Arcadian ‘wolves’ were real ‘cannibals’ we will probably never know;”<sup>149</sup> I would venture that they were not, given the literary function of cannibalism, which will be discussed below in 3.6. Nevertheless, the recording of this type of cult gives a good example of the lurking possibility of human sacrifice in the Greek imagination, if not actual practice. Further, I would observe, the example of Zeus Lykaios also indicates that human sacrifice was not exempt from the sacrificial barbecue that occurred as part of the normal sacrificial rite, even if Polyxenia’s and Iphigeneia’s sacrifices do not explicitly include them. In other words, the unmarked term, *θυσία*, when used to describe human sacrifice in literature, contains the possibility of a banquet of human flesh.

Again, terminology plays a role in our conclusions about how human sacrifice was imagined by Greek and Hellenistic cultures. Bremmer uses Casabona’s work on the terminology of sacrifice to point out the brutality of Polyxena’s human sacrifice; whereas the *θυ-*\* root is used to describe the sacrifice of an ox, the more shocking *ἄνθρωποσφάγειν* is used to highlight the horror of human sacrifice.<sup>150</sup> Bremmer takes Casabona’s discussion of marked and un-marked language and focuses on the raw gore implied in the *σφάγ-*\* root. When used to describe the ritual sacrifice of a human being, he argues that the term is more loaded than the ordinary *θύω*. In this way, he suggests that the horror of human sacrifice is heightened by using specialized terminology which implies slaughter rather than festivity. As Vernant states, “properly speaking,

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citing excavation results which were done over a hundred years ago now.

<sup>149</sup> Bremmer, “Greek Human Sacrifice,” 78.

<sup>150</sup> Bremmer, “Greek Human Sacrifice,” 61.

there is no human ‘sacrifice’ which is not also a deviant or corrupted sacrifice, a monstrous offering.”<sup>151</sup> That human sacrifice in the ancient world is spoken of using language of slaughter and gore could indicate to some the discomfort felt by those who recorded its occurrence. However I would suggest that the use of the term σφάζω also has a built-in safety mechanism: σφάγια rituals do not include the banqueting aspect of “ordinary” sacrifice and in using that term, one is safely ushered away from the threat of cannibalism.

### 3.6 The Function of Cannibalism in Antiquity

The accusation of human sacrifice in the ancient world is used as a marker of barbarism; it serves to alienate another people from civilization by marking them as outside or other. Evidence of actual practice of human sacrifice is far from prolific; more often than not, a population reported to have practiced human sacrifice has been the subject of a polemical “othering,” as I will discuss below. Certainly, behind the horrific concept of human sacrifice, and the threat it posed to those who might come in contact with its practitioners, is the even more frightful unspoken threat: that sacrifice, in its basic conception, is the process by which a living creature becomes meat. Behind human sacrifice, then, lurks cannibalism. William Arens’ groundbreaking 1979 book, *The Man-Eating Myth: Anthropology and Anthropophagy* accuses anthropologists of failing to recognize the polemical nature of the cannibalism label when doing ethnographic research. Arens claims, and so far no one to-date has proven otherwise,<sup>152</sup> that there has

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<sup>151</sup> Vernant, “A General Theory of Sacrifice,” 295.

<sup>152</sup> There were a number of strong reactions to Arens’ book. Among the positive are: R.

been no anthropologist-observed ritual cannibalism recorded in any culture current or historical.<sup>153</sup> In fact, he claims, anthropologists and historians alike have been duped into believing the culturally motivated accusations of cannibalism as fact; Arens points out throughout his book that in every case he investigated, cannibalism is a brush with which to paint opposing groups. Arens does not deny the occurrence of necessity-cannibalism, resorted to in times of severe famine, plane crashes in the Andes,<sup>154</sup> and bad winters spent in the Sierra

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E. Downs, Review of William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, *American Ethnologist* 7.4 (1980): 785–786; Ivan Brady’s extremely thorough evaluation in *American Anthropologist* 84.3 (1982): 595–611; Khalid Hasan, Review of William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, *Third World Quarterly* 1.4 (1980): 812–814. I remain unconvinced by the following dismissive reviews, which seem to me to fall into exactly the trap Arens takes pains to point out to his colleagues: Thomas Krabacher, Review of William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, *Human Ecology* 8.4 (1980): 407–409; James W. Springer, Review of William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, *Anthropological Quarterly* 53.2 (1980): 148–150; P. G. Riviere, Review of William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, *Man* 15.1 (1980): 203–205; Shirley Lindenbaum, Review of William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, *Ethnohistory* 29.1 (1982): 58–60; and Marshall Sahlins, Review of William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, *New York Review of Books* 1979. The public exchange between Arens and Sahlins can be read here: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1979/mar/22/cannibalism-an-exchange/?pagination=false>. Sahlins’ most recent foray into the cannibalism debate is “Maintained Controversies: Global Warming and Fijian Cannibalism” in *Anthropology Today* 19.3 (2003): 3–5; Arens’ response is convincing to me: Arens and Gananath Obeyesekere, “Cannibalism Reconsidered: Response to Marshall Sahlins (AT 19.3)” in *Anthropology Today* 19.5 (2003): 18–19. See also Peggy Reeves Sanday, *Divine Hunger: Cannibalism as a Cultural Construct* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 9–10.

<sup>153</sup> Arens’s most recent work on the subject is “Rethinking Anthropophagy” in *Cannibalism and the Colonial World* (F. Barker, et al., eds.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 39–62. In this piece he maintains his position: “I see no reason to revise my original premise concerning the mythological nature of these creatures [sc. cannibals]” (40). More recently, G. Obeyesekere’s book, *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), confirms Arens’ conclusions, although its distinction between cannibalism (fictional) and anthropophagy (real) draws criticism from Arens in his review (*The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 115.3 (2006): 295–298). In an email dated September 27<sup>th</sup> 2012, Arens confirmed to me that no events of culturally-sanctioned cannibalism or anthropophagy have been witnessed or verified by any anthropologist in the intervening years: “Fortunately for my argument, I do not know of any eye witness accounts of [cannibalism] as a custom.”

<sup>154</sup> The sixteen survivors of the 1972 plane crash in the Andes, a group of rugby players, survived for over ten weeks by consuming the flesh of their dead comrades. After the fact, when interviewed by media, one of the survivors, Pancho Delgado said this: “When the moment came when we did not have any more food, or anything of that kind, we thought to ourselves that if Jesus at His last supper had shared His flesh and blood with His apostles, then it was a sign to us that we should do the same—take the flesh and blood as an intimate communion between us all” (in Piers Paul Read, *Alive: The Story of the Andes Survivors* [New York: Avon, 1974], 306). Later, the Archbishop of Montevideo condoned the survivors’ decision, as did Gino Concetti, a

Nevada.<sup>155</sup>

This conclusion is based on the fact that, excluding survival conditions, I have been unable to uncover adequate documentation of cannibalism as a custom in any form for any society. Rumors, suspicions, fears and accusations abound, but no satisfactory first-hand accounts. Learned essays by professionals are unending, but the sustaining ethnography is lacking.<sup>156</sup>

Arens questions why accusations against Christians and Jews have been (rightly) dismissed as polemical but those against “primitive” societies studied by anthropologists have been taken as legitimate.<sup>157</sup> In doing so, he highlights the crux of the issue behind cannibalism: that it is *always* an accusation and *never* a condoned cultural activity. In other words, even in the field of anthropology, what cannibalism *means* is more important than whether or not it is practiced. This is even more the case in story, and in particular in the romances, where cannibalism is real in the narrative. In other words, this is to say that cannibalism is a purely narrative phenomenon; it is real only in the sense that it is a cultural narrative. As such, its narrative functions are extremely significant and hold a wealth of cultural meaning.

Philip Harland takes up where Arens’s study loses relevance for us. Harland’s essay on the banqueting practices of outsiders in the Greek novels and other Greco-Roman literature illustrates how the label of cannibal is used to depict the barbarity of those considered outside the civilized world. Harland rightly observes that the process of creating a barbaric Other is as much about

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theologian writing for *L'Osservatore Romano*. Monsignor Rubio, however, denied that the consumption of human flesh in the context of survival could be likened to the eucharist (Read, *Alive*, 308–309).

<sup>155</sup> Interestingly, the bone evidence from the Donner Party expedition is inconclusive regarding deliberate butchery of human flesh, despite the initial admission of the survivors that they had resorted to cannibalism (Ethan Rarick, *Desperate Passage: The Donner Party's Perilous Journey West* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008], 193).

<sup>156</sup> Arens, *Man-Eating Myth*, 21.

<sup>157</sup> Arens, *Man-Eating Myth*, 9.

defining the civilized as it is about distinguishing and distancing the uncivilized. In focusing on common meals and banquets as means of creating social cohesion, Harland points out how scandalous or wrong religious behaviour, such as human sacrifice and cannibalism, become tools with which the authors of the romances delineate right behaviour. As such, Harland argues that these “anti-associations” of bandits represent the opposite of what legitimate voluntary associations could be expected to be.<sup>158</sup> His examination includes the cannibalistic scene from the fragmentary Lollianos text, which, he observes (following Henrichs), “follows the usual Greek pattern of sacrifice, including the central importance of the internal organs (σπλάγχνα).”<sup>159</sup> However, the ritual is inverted—the sacrifice is grotesque: as in the cases of Polyxena and Iphigeneia, it uses a human rather than an animal as the sacrificial victim. For Harland, this anti-ritual creates identity: it forms from a group of disparate hoodlums a band of barbarian brothers, a danger to chaste Hellenic society. The rite of consuming certainly solidifies the group and unites its human members; however it also cements the relationship between the cult and its presiding deity. As Dio Chrysostom articulates, the consumption of sacrificed flesh is what makes whole the act of sacrifice.<sup>160</sup> Slaughter is therefore not enough; the sacrificial victim must be consumed by the participants.

### 3.7 Human Sacrifice and Implied Cannibalism in the Novels

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<sup>158</sup> Philip Harland, “‘These People are ... Men Eaters’: Banquets of the Anti-Associations and Perceptions of Minority Cultural Groups” in *Identity and Interaction in the Ancient Mediterranean: Jews, Christians and Others: Essays in Honour of Stephen G. Wilson* (Zeba A. Crook and Philip A. Harland, eds.; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 58–59.

<sup>159</sup> Harland, “Men Eaters,” 61; cf Albert Henrichs, “Pagan Ritual and the Alleged Crimes of the Early Christians” in *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten* (Patrick Granfield and Josef A. Junmann, eds.; Münster: Verlag Aschendorff, 1970), 33–34.

<sup>160</sup> Dio Chrysostom, 3 *Regn.* (*Or.* 3), 97.

Human sacrifice and cannibalism are literary phenomena, we must accept. Thus it is appropriate to view the ritual events in the novels as taking part in this cultural narrative about how human sacrifice and cannibalism function—they create communities, certainly, but they especially function to cement these cultic relationships. John Winkler’s refutation of the historicity of one such event serves as an example of how important it is to take these types of scenes as literary events. In his article, “Lollianos and the Desperadoes,”<sup>161</sup> Winkler presents an argument against taking the human sacrifices described in many of the Greek romances as representations of actual rituals, as Henrichs proposed.<sup>162</sup> Taking the extremely fragmentary text of *Phoinikika* as the core of the discussion, Winkler evaluates the scene of human sacrifice and cannibalism that takes place in fragment B. Henrichs proposed that the scene in Lollianos represents an actual, probably Dionysian, rite and that this fragmentary text can be used to recreate in part our understanding of this cult and its rituals.<sup>163</sup> As such, he concluded that Kerényi and Merkelbach’s proposal to understand the Greek novels as ciphers for the ancient mystery cults was methodologically correct.<sup>164</sup> Winkler’s disagreement with Henrich’s conclusions comes from three areas. First, Winkler concludes that fragment B’s description of the black and white masquerade outfits worn by the practitioners is not a reflection of the historical requirements of some Dionysiac cult but rather the literary use of ghost costumes in order to create fear

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<sup>161</sup> John Winkler, “Lollianos and the Desperadoes,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 100 (1980): 155–181.

<sup>162</sup> Lollianos, *Die Phoinikika Des Lollianos: Fragmente Eines Neuen Griechischen Romans* (Albert Henrichs, ed.; Bonn: R. Habelt, 1972), 29.

<sup>163</sup> Henrichs, *Die Phoinikika des Lollianos*, 78 n. 6.

<sup>164</sup> Henrichs, *Die Phoinikika des Lollianos*, 78.



in the audience.<sup>165</sup> Second, and most importantly for our study, Winkler shows how the pattern of human sacrifice in Lollianos is incongruous with what we know of ritual murder of human beings in Greek and other religious traditions of the ancient Mediterranean; he concludes, again, that the details of these sacrifices are not included because they are historical but rather in order to create a sense of horror in the readers.<sup>166</sup> Finally, Winkler explores the historicity of bandits themselves, who are called Boukoloi in *Phoinikika*, a name which has provoked their association with the Boukoloi mentioned in Dio.<sup>167</sup> Here Winkler allows for a slightly more historical interpretation of Lollianos' naming practices, suggesting cautiously that an Egyptian rebel group might have adopted the name Boukoloi given the prominent role the herding-type of *boukoloi* played in rebellions earlier in Egyptian history. Again, Winkler guards against a reading which historicizes the named Boukoloi in the novel and rather proposes that the group is a natural one to include given the context out of which the text arose.<sup>168</sup>

Winkler's conclusions are important for this study because they are founded on an understanding of how literature develops and is created. He notes that literary interdependence is not always as direct as it seems; imitation may make it seem as though the dependence is one-to-one when in actuality it may reflect the common usage of a wider literary pattern, as with the constant use of brigands in the Greek romances.<sup>169</sup> This explains the common use by many of the

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<sup>165</sup> Winkler, "Desperadoes," 157–166.

<sup>166</sup> Winkler, "Desperadoes," 166–175.

<sup>167</sup> Winkler, "Desperadoes," 175–181; Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 71.4.

<sup>168</sup> Winkler, "Desperadoes," 181.

<sup>169</sup> Winkler, "Desperadoes," 156; or indeed, with the trope of theophagy in general, as I argue.

novels of what have become recognizable tropes: travel, danger, near-death, disguise and recognition. However, he also notes that direct literary dependence is very frequently represented by a *development* of an aspect used in the original text rather than its word-for-word reproduction. It seems likely, for instance, that Heliodorus had read Achilles Tatius' work when he created the bandits, but Heliodorus does not copy Achilles Tatius' bandits wholesale; he rather develops them to fit his own creation. I would further argue that even when an older text *is quoted* word for word, that the reference to the older text takes on new meaning in its new context. That is, when the novelists cite Homeric texts, they not only call to mind the meaning in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* but also give an additional meaning to that quotation by virtue of including them in their plots.

Further, Winkler observes that recurring tropes in novels do not necessarily betray the usage of one text by another; rather stories and their peculiarities are spread like seeds in the wind and authors may pick and choose useful elements from these stories without directly having read or heard the original tale. As Winkler puts it, "Sinbad and Odysseus both drive hot stakes into a giant's eye(s): the specificity of detail seems to demand a connection, but it need not be that Shahrazad read Homer."<sup>170</sup>

Finally, Winkler makes the observation that stories do represent, to some extent, the realities their authors experienced. "The connection between these two literary texts [Euripides' *Iphegeneia at Tauris* and Xenophon's *Ephesian Tale*] is that they are rooted in the same circumstances of human society—national isolation and xenophobia—and in the same selective powers of human

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<sup>170</sup> Winkler, "Desperadoes," 157.

imagination.”<sup>171</sup> That is, two texts might have similarities in how they describe a certain scene because they share motivation; rather than assuming a direct or indirect literary relationship, in certain cases the similarities may reflect actual cultural assumptions. In Winkler’s article, he offers the example of the “motif of a shore landing where the heroes are captured by natives and brought somewhere to be disposed of as slaves.”<sup>172</sup> In this case, it is not out of place to venture that this might be a likely turn of events in real life as well as the novels. However, as always, distinguishing between truth and fiction is not always as clear-cut.

For the purpose of this project, the division between historical truth and literary fiction is irrelevant; the literary context of a text is inseparable from its social implications since it is society which governs our horror when we read of Leucippe’s plight on the altar or of Charicleia’s at the hands of her parents. This, too, is something that Winkler acknowledges, although in passing. After his treatment of sacrificial scenes in the novels, he concludes that these scenes are not representative of actual religious practice in the ancient world because (a) there is no precedent for them in non-fictional literature and (b) their description takes pains to invoke horror and disgust: “as soon as we admit the factors of fear and loathing, the narrator’s objectivity in the face of his audience is compromised.”<sup>173</sup> Certainly, these gruesome scenes, whether they depict or only suggest the sacrifice of the heroines of our novels, are crafted in order to jar and shock the reader: it is horrific that such a divine creature should meet such an end! But additionally shocking is the consumption of the flesh of the divinely beautiful

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<sup>171</sup> Winkler, “Desperadoes,” 157.

<sup>172</sup> Winkler, “Desperadoes,” 157.

<sup>173</sup> Winkler, “Desperadoes,” 171.

heroine. Winkler takes pains to emphasize the distinction in the Greek world between sacrifice which is eaten and that which is not (σφάγια).<sup>174</sup> “These two classes are exclusive. In the rare and highly shocking cases where a human victim is sacrificed, the ritual is not a meal but a *sphagion*.”<sup>175</sup> For Winkler, who is questioning the historical veracity of the rituals performed in the novels, this is an important point: they *cannot* be representations of actual events because human sacrifice, when it rarely occurs, is *always* σφάγια and the cases in the novels are clearly meal-type sacrifices. As I have been arguing throughout, human sacrifice and cannibalism are *always* literary and as such exist *only* in the cultural narrative. Winkler’s differentiation between σφάγια and θυσία, then, when we acknowledge that that we are working entirely in the literary realm, is significant: we have a human sacrifice which culminates in a meal and is called θυσία. In the novels, then, we have our first instance where the word θυσία implies a meal of human flesh as part of the ritual.

I would argue that it is exactly this fact which makes the scenes in the novels so shocking and also so significant. When we examine the instances of human sacrifice—apparent or just-barely-prevented—in the Greek romance novels, it is clear that the author’s choice of words is intended to send a thrill up the readers’ spines. The terms used to describe the impending sacrifice of our heroines is never σφάγια<sup>176</sup> and always some variation of θυσία or an equivalent term:

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<sup>174</sup> Winkler, “Desperadoes,” 166–168.

<sup>175</sup> Winkler, “Desperadoes,” 166–167, citing Friedrich Schwenn, *Die Menschenopfer bei den Griechen und Römern* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1914; repr. 1966).

<sup>176</sup> The only exception to this is in a phrase uttered by Theagenes and then the term is in conjunction with θυσία. For analysis of this occurrence, see below, note 184.

| Novel                         | Citation  | Context  | Explicit Feast? | Term(s) Used                        |
|-------------------------------|-----------|--|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Ephesian Tale</i>          | 2.13.1    | Robbers sacrifice Anthia to Ares                         | no              | θυσίαν (x3), θύεσθαι                |
| <i>Ethiopian Story</i>        | 9.1.4–5   | Discussion of Theagenes and Chariclea as sacrifices      | no              | θυσίας, ἱερεῖά                      |
| <i>Ethiopian Story</i>        | 10.4.5    | Theagenes and Chariclea as sacrifices to specific gods   | no              | θυσίας                              |
| <i>Ethiopian Story</i>        | 10.9.1    | Theagenes laments his fate                               | no              | θυσίαι and σφαγαὶ together          |
| <i>Ethiopian Story</i>        | 10.16.4–7 | Hydaspes discusses Charicleia's sacrifice                | no              | (ἱεουργεῖν), ἐναγίζειν              |
| <i>Ethiopian Story</i>        | 10.16.10  | Hydaspes leads Charicleia to the altar                   | no              | θυσίαν, ἱερείων                     |
| <i>Leucippe and Clitophon</i> | 3.12.1    | Leucippe is taken to become a sacrifice by the bandits   | yes             | ἱερεῖον                             |
| <i>Leucippe and Clitophon</i> | 3.15.1–6  | Graphic description of Leucippe's sacrifice              | yes             | (σπονδῆν)                           |
| <i>Leucippe and Clitophon</i> | 3.16.5    | Clitophon wails about Leucippe's death                   | yes             | (θύμασιν)                           |
| <i>Leucippe and Clitophon</i> | 3.19.2    | Recounting the events leading up to Leucippe's sacrifice | yes             | καταθύσαι                           |
| <i>Leucippe and Clitophon</i> | 3.20.2    | Recounting the events leading up to Leucippe's sacrifice | yes             | θυσίας                              |
| <i>Leucippe and Clitophon</i> | 3.22.3    | One bandit discusses his band's sacrificial traditions   | yes             | θυσίας, ἱερείας, ἄνθρωπον καταθύειν |

This is not to say that θυσία always indicates that a meal will take place during the rite; as I discussed above, this term is the generic, un-marked term for sacrifice. Rather, in its lack of specificity, in its ambiguity, it allows for the thrilling possibility of consumption. That is, the authors have made a choice, despite the fact that other instances of human sacrifice are safely described as σφάγια, not to use a term which specifies that the flesh will *not* be eaten.

In *An Ephesian Tale*, Anthia has been captured by a gang of bandits led by Hippothous when we hear the gruesome details of what is to befall her:

οἱ δὲ περὶ τὸν ἱππόθοον τὸν ληστὴν ἐκείνης μὲν τῆς νυκτὸς ἔμειναν  
 εὐωχούμενοι, τῇ δ' ἐξῆς περὶ τὴν θυσίαν ἐγίνοντο. παρεσκευάζετο δὲ πάντα  
 καὶ ἀγάλματα τοῦ ἄρεος καὶ ξύλα καὶ στεφανώματα· ἔδει δὲ τὴν θυσίαν  
 γενέσθαι ρόπῳ τῷ συνήθει. τὸ μέλλον ἱερεῖον θύεσθαι ἔτε ἄνθρωπος εἴτε  
 βόσκημα εἴη κρεμάσαντες ἐκ δένδρου καὶ διαστάντες ἠκόντιζον, καὶ ὅποσοι  
 μὲν ἐπέτυχον τούτων ὁ θεὸς ἐδόκει δέχεσθαι τὴν θυσίαν, ὅποσοι δὲ  
 ἀπέτυχον αὐθις ἐξιλάσκοντο. ἔδει δὲ τὴν ἀνθίαν οὕτως ἱεουργηθῆναι.<sup>177</sup>

The bandit Hippothous' gang spent that night partying, and the next day they got busy with their sacrifice. When everything was prepared—images of Ares, firewood, and garlands—the sacrifice was to be carried out in their usual manner: they hung the victim that was going to be sacrificed, whether human or animal, from a tree, stood at a distance, and tried to hit it with javelins, and the god was considered to accept the sacrifice of all who scored a hit, while those who missed tried to appease him a second time. It was Anthia who was to serve as this kind of sacrificial victim.

Luckily for Anthia, an officer of the peace named Perilaus bursts in at the last moment and rescues Anthia from her brutal fate. Examining the passage, it is clear that nowhere in the course of the description is any consumption of her flesh ruled out; the term *θυσία* leaves open what will occur after the death of the victim. The cult of the god Ares does not appear to require *σφάγια*-only cult and therefore does not imply *de facto* non-banquet worship.<sup>178</sup> We are therefore left with what the text of our novel itself says. The passage describes first the sacrifice and then Anthia as sacrificial victim in ambiguous terms (*θυσίαν*, *θύεσθαι*) which neither imply nor rule out a ritual meal. We do know, from their preparations, that they have gathered firewood in order to create a fire; at least, then, the victim is to

<sup>177</sup> 2.13.1

<sup>178</sup> The god Ares, to whom these bandits dedicate the sacrifice, had very few established cults (Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 169–170), making it difficult to say (a) whether there was a normative pattern of sacrifice to Ares and (b) whether it can be inferred here based on the items gathered for preparation. The few references we have to the cult of Ares are from Pausanias. In 8.48.4–5, Pausanias recounts the establishment of a festival of Ares where women alone partake in the sacrifices (*θυσία*) and the feast that takes place afterwards. In contrast, 3.22.6–7 refers to a temple and grove of Ares in Geronthrae which holds a festival each year at which women are forbidden; no mention is made of what takes place during the festival. Pausanias notes a Spartan puppy sacrifice (no mention of banquet) to Enyalios (a god associated with Ares) in 3.17.9. The type of sacrifice which might historically be expected to be offered to Ares cannot, therefore, be articulated in any concrete sense; the few examples we have of the cult of Ares include explicit mention of feasting but in other cases do not specify. We do not know whether banquet-type sacrifices were the norm or whether only *σφάγια* types were expected. Ares's “established” cult therefore does not have bearing on what occurs in *An Ephesian Tale*.

be put to the flame after it is killed. It is unclear from this passage, however, whether it will be burnt wholly or merely cooked. I suggest that the ambiguity displayed by the text is telling. Ares' cult is unhelpful in establishing a context in which to locate this sacrifice; so too is the language, which does not automatically infer cannibalism, but takes no trouble to rule it out. The reader is left with the terrifying suspense of the unknown: human sacrifice will certainly occur, but will those prepared flames cook the meat of our poor heroine's corpse, or will she be "lucky" and escape cannibalization? The lack of specificity in this passage creates space for the reader to imagine the worst: Anthia might be eaten by a horde of bandits in some perverse barbarian rite.

*An Ethiopian Story* includes more than a whole chapter of anticipation of the human sacrifices of Charikleia and Theagenes. The drama begins at the end of chapter eight when Charikleia and Theagenes are bound in chains and dragged off for safe-keeping. At the start of chapter nine, we learn that as the first of prisoners of war, they will be used as victory sacrifices under Ethiopian law. Our heroes are carted off with utmost care; their guards are given instructions "to spare no pains in catering to their needs and stint nothing in their care, but above all to keep them clean of all impurity, for they were now being kept as a pair of sacrificial victims."<sup>179</sup> To emphasize this, let me restate that Heliodorus describes the pair as being treated *just like ordinary sacrificial animals*. The chosen sacrificial animal in Greek religion must be pure and unblemished and treated with care; so too are the victims here. Hydaspes, the Ethiopian king (and secretly Charicleia's father!), orders that the every need of Charicleia and Theagenes be met with no expense

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<sup>179</sup> Heliodorus, *An Ethiopian Story*, 9.1.5.

spared, and their chains are to be replaced with chains of gold.<sup>180</sup> This emphasis on the over-the-top treatment of Charicleia and Theagenes highlights their re-categorization as consecrated sacrificial victims and heightens the expectation of their impending ritual deaths.

At this point, the suspense is left for quite some time while the battles rage. At the end of twenty-four sections, we finally hear from our heroes again. They are brought before Hydaspes again, who remains ignorant of his relationship to the victims before him. A long discussion follows about Charicleia's beauty, her resemblance to a daughter the king once dreamt he had, and other coy allusions to Charicleia's true parentage before they are whisked out of the plot again until the middle of book ten. We begin again to hear about the preparations for the sacrifice. Persinna, the queen, is the Priestess of the Moon and the only woman allowed to be present at the sacrifice; her husband the king is the Priest of the Sun. Charicleia, we learn, is to be sacrificed to the Moon and Theagenes to the Sun.<sup>181</sup> After a long description of the location and layout of the sacrificial area, lasting several sections, the rite begins: Charicleia and Theagenes, along with the other prisoners, are brought before the Priest of the Sun. Persinna remarks on the radiant beauty of Charicleia and compares her to the daughter she gave away at birth; she begs her husband to make this victim exempt.<sup>182</sup> Hydaspes states that it is impossible to save her from her fate unless she were proven to be impure—if she has the “taint of intercourse with a man.” The test for this is to walk across a golden gridiron without being scorched; only Theagenes and Charicleia, the very

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<sup>180</sup> 9.1.5.

<sup>181</sup> 10.4.5.

<sup>182</sup> 10.7.4–5.



two for whose escape Persinna had hoped the test would allow, pass the test. Charicleia, when it is her turn, dons her radiant Delphic robe and stands on the gridirion as a dazzling vision, her hair loose and flowing around her. Her divine appearance shocks the crowd but her proven virginity at the same time seals her fate as a sacrificial victim.<sup>183</sup> At the very moment of the most remarkable display of her divine beauty, Charicleia is confirmed as a sacrificial victim: as Theagenes stated earlier, “A life of virtue earns a fine wage in Ethiopia: sacrificial slaughter [θυσίαι καὶ σφαγαὶ] is chastity’s reward.”<sup>184</sup> At the last minute, however, Charicleia saves herself by finally making her case in front of the king and successfully convinces her father of his relationship to her by showing everyone her recognition tokens. Even then, her father seems determined to sacrifice his daughter to the gods.<sup>185</sup> He makes what seems like an impassioned exhortation on the sacrificial practice and why he as king must go through with the sacrifice of his own daughter.

The drama of the sacrifice is spread out over so many sections that the first-time reader must have envisioned Charicleia’s death on the altar many times over by the time she is able to breathe this sigh of relief. The suspense is released after the climax of Charicleia’s ordeal on the gridiron, but the tension returns as the display of her magnificence apparently cements her fate as a sacrificial victim even as it simultaneously suggests her divinity. The terms used for the sacrifice in

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<sup>183</sup> 10.9.3.

<sup>184</sup> 10.9.1; “τὰ πείχαιρα παρ’ αἰθίοφι τῶν καθαρῶς βιούντων θυσίαι καὶ σφαγαὶ τὰ ἔπαθλα τῶν σωφρονούντων.” Theagenes’s use of the term σφαγία falls under one of the categories of use in Casabona’s analysis in that he has used both the general term to refer to the rite as a whole, potentially including a meal of the victim, and the specific term to refer to the moment of blood-letting. See above, section 3.3; Cf. Casabona, *Recherches*, 163; Herodotus, *Histories*, 2.39, for example, uses the terms in conjunction in much the same way.

<sup>185</sup> 10.16.4–7.

this section vary. Theagenes uses *θυσία* and *σφάγια* in conjunction in 10.9.1 indicating, as Casabona has shown, an ordinary, unmarked sacrificial rite. However, Hydaspes, declaring that he will put Charicleia on the altar in 10.16.7, uses the term *ἐναγίζειν*, a term usually reserved for offerings to the dead or heroes, as discussed above. This is odd, given that we know that the Sun and the Moon are neither deceased nor heroes; they are gods in their own rights, and decidedly celestial ones at that.

It is also the first time that the verb is used to describe what should have happened to Charicleia; previously the most common descriptors were *θυσία* and *ιερεία*. Clearly this is a highly marked use of this word in the context of this novel. It is bizarre for the king to refer to the impending sacrifice using this term. Nor, as my discussion of the term above shows, does its use relieve the anxiety about whether the victims will be part of the festive banquet afterwards, as the heroic cults, too, included feasts after certain types of sacrifice included under this term.

What purpose does Hydaspes' use of this term serve, then? I propose his choice of words is deliberately chosen to lessen the importance of the sacrifice he is pretending to attempt to legitimize—the king is trying to play down the sacrifice in order to save his daughter's life and has therefore deliberately chosen an incongruous word. At last, when Hydaspes leads Charicleia off to the altar, he compares her fate to the one she will never have, of being dressed as a bride.<sup>186</sup> All the while, we learn from the narrator, Hydaspes is praying “that his oration,

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<sup>186</sup> 10.16.10; this reference is reminiscent of the other sacrificial maidens of Greek literature, especially Iphigeneia, who was lured to the sacrifice with the promise of her own wedding.

whose rhetoric he had contrived to ensure its ineffectiveness, would fail to carry its point.”<sup>187</sup> Finally, then, Hydaspes’ choice of that peculiar sacrificial term has found motivation: he purposefully selected a term marked as an offering to the dead or to heroes rather than one which would be appropriate for the most important celestial deities of Ethiopia in the hopes that the crowd would change its priorities and beg for his daughter Charicleia’s release.

The significance, then, of sacrificial terminology in the novels is not to be discounted; in Heliodorus’ romance, it serves first to create tension and concern about the fate of Charicleia and Theagenes, but in particular Charicleia, whose sacrificial drama is drawn out more thoroughly than Theagenes’ is. The terms used are purposefully ordinary—they neither confirm nor deny the type of sacrifice or whether there is to be a banquet of the carved flesh of the victims. Contextually, all the reader knows is that there is to be a θυσία to the celestial gods of the Sun and the Moon of some virginal humans and some other (ordinary) sacrificial animals. The human and animal victims are treated with equal care leading up to the ritual and every victim, human and animal alike, are expected to be free of blemish. It is only when the King is attempting to downplay the importance of this celestial-type sacrifice that he chooses a marked vocabulary word, and even then, the word he chooses implies a banquet as part of the rite.

The final incident of human sacrifice in the corpus of Greek romances is found in *Leucippe and Clitophon*.<sup>188</sup> Having just hired a boat to take them along

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<sup>187</sup> 10.17.1.

<sup>188</sup> While Callirhoe is not at risk of becoming a human sacrifice like the other heroines, Chaereas nonetheless experiences her loss in the form of a suspected loss of chastity. While this may not seem an appropriate equivalence to modern readers, for whom chastity is perhaps not as

the Nile to Alexandria, poor, ill-fated Leucippe and Clitophon are attacked the Boukoloi and captured. They are tied up and left in a hut, giving Clitophon time to reflect at length on their fate. In his soliloquy, Clitophon holds the gods responsible for their fates, from the shipwreck they have just survived to their impending capture by the bandits:

“ὦ θεοὶ καὶ δαίμονες,” ἔφη, “εἴπερ ἐστέ που καὶ ἀκούετε, τί τηλικούτων ἡδίκηκαμεν, ὥς ἐν ὀλίγαις ἡμέραις τοσούτῳ πλήθει βαπτισθῆναι κακῶν; νῦν δὲ καὶ παραδεδώκατε ἡμᾶς λησταῖς αἰγυπτίοις, ἵνα μηδὲ ἐλέου τύχωμεν. [...] μάτην σοι, ὦ θάλασσα, τὴν χάριν ὡμολογήσαμεν· μέμφομαί σου τῇ φιλανθρωπίᾳ· χρηστοτέρα γέγονας πρὸς οὓς ἀπέκτεινας, ἡμᾶς δὲ σῶσασα μᾶλλον ἀπέκτεινας. ἐφθόνησας ἡμῖν ἀληστεύτοις ἀποθανεῖν.

“O all ye gods and guardian angels [δαίμονες],” said I, “if really ye exist and can hear me, what great wrong have we done to be plunged in such a sea of troubles in so short a space of time? Now have you also delivered us over into the hands of Egyptian robbers, so that we have not even a chance of pity. [...] Ah, all in vain, O sea, did we give you thanks: now I blame your mercy; you were kinder to those whom you destroyed, and you have destroyed us yet more grievously by keeping us alive; you grudged us death save by a robber’s hand.”<sup>189</sup>

Suddenly, one of the bandits returns to fetch a virgin from among the captives: “If there chance to be a virgin among the captives, I am to take her away for the god, to be a propitiatory and cleansing sacrifice for the host.”<sup>190</sup> While Leucippe is carted off to be a most unwilling sacrifice, the rest follow at a slower

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highly valued, Winkler has observed instances in the Greek romances, in particular *Leucippe and Clitophon*, where loss of sexual virtue is described using gruesome metaphors of slaughter and vice versa (Winkler, “Desperadoes,” 173). The strongest example is found first in 2.23.5 when Leucippe’s mother dreams that she witnesses “a robber with a naked sword snatch her daughter from her, throw her down on her back, and then rip her up the middle of the belly with the blade, beginning from the groin [lit. genitals].” (Greek: ἔτυχε γὰρ ὄνειρος αὐτὴν ταραξᾶς. ἐδόκει τινὰ ληστὴν μάχαιραν ἔχοντα γυμνὴν ἄγειν ἀρπασάμενον αὐτῆς τὴν θυγατέρα καὶ καταθέμενον ὑπτίαν, μέσσην ἀνατέμνειν τῇ μαχαίρᾳ τὴν γαστέρα κάτωθεν ἀρξάμενον ἀπὸ τῆς αἰδοῦς.) This unmistakable reference to sexual violence is echoed when Leucippe is slit from stem to stern in 3.15. It is no surprise, then, that Chaereas expresses the loss of Callirhoe’s virtue in similar terms to when she is “dead” in the first book; upon hearing the lie that Dionysius has at last managed to take Callirhoe as his wife (7.1.3–6), Chaereas mourns for his lost bride (7.4.10; compare 3.3.5–6). Callirhoe’s ‘death’ exists only insofar as Chaereas assumes her chastity has been violated but given the parallels between violence and sexuality in *Leucippe* especially, this final climax in the drama of *Callirhoe* may belong to this category as well; instead of the virgin it is virginity itself on the altar.

<sup>189</sup> 3.10.1–2, 6.

<sup>190</sup> 3.12.1; εἴ τις παρθένος ἐστὶν ἐν τοῖς εἰλημμένοις, ταύτην ἀπάγειν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, ἱερεῖον ἐσομένην καὶ καθάρσιον τοῦ στρατοῦ.

pace. Before they can arrive at bandit headquarters, however, they are met by a group of soldiers who successfully butcher the bandits and free Clitophon, who convinces the soldiers to go with him to save Leucippe. The next day they make their way to the bandit lair and watch from a distance as Leucippe is made ready for sacrifice:

ἄγουσι δὴ τινες δύο τὴν κόρην, ὅπισω τῷ χεῖρε δεδεμένην· καὶ αὐτοὺς μὲν οἷτινες ἦσαν οὐκ εἶδον, ἦσαν γὰρ ὥπλισμένοι, τὴν δὲ κόρην λευκίππην οὖσαν ἐγνώρισα. εἶτα κατὰ τῆς κεφαλῆς σπονδὴν χέαντες, περιάγουσι τὸν βωμόν κύκλῳ καὶ ἐπηύλει τις αὐτῇ, καὶ ὁ ἱερεὺς, ὡς εἰκός, ἦδεν ᾧ δὴν αἰγυπτίαν· τὸ γὰρ σχῆμα τοῦ στόματος, καὶ τῶν προσώπων τὸ διελκυσμένον ὑπέβαινε ᾧ δὴν. εἶτα ἀπὸ συνθήματος πάντες ἀναχωροῦσι τοῦ βωμοῦ μακρὰν· τῶν δὲ νεανίσκων ὁ ἕτερος ἀνακλίνας αὐτὴν ὑπτίαν, ἔδραμεν ἐκ παττάλων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐρηρυσμένων, οἷον ποιοῦσιν οἱ κοροπλάθοι τὸν μαρσύαν ἐκ τοῦ φυτοῦ δεδεμένον· εἶτα λαβὼν ξίφος βάρπτει κατὰ τῆς καρδίας καὶ διελκύσας τὸ ξίφος εἰς τὴν κάτω γαστέρα, ῥήγνυσι· τὰ σπλάγχνα δὲ εὐθύς ἐξεπήδησεν, ἃ ταῖς χερσὶν ἐξελκύσαντες ἐπιτιθέασι τῷ βωμῷ, καὶ ἐπεὶ ὠπτήθη, κατατεμόντες ἅπαντες εἰς μοῖρας ἔφαγον. ταῦτα δὲ ὁρῶντες οἱ μὲν στρατιῶται καὶ ὁ στρατηγὸς καθ' ἓν τῶν τραπτομένων ἀνεβόων καὶ τὰς ὄψεις ἀπέστρεφον τῆς θέας, ἐγὼ δὲ ἐκ παραλόγου κατήμενος ἐθεώρουν. Μέτρον γὰρ οὐκ ἔχον τὸ κακὸν ἐνεβρόντησέ με. ... ἐπεὶ δὲ τέλος εἶχεν, ὡς γε ὥμην, τὸ ἔργον, τὸ σῶμα ἐνθέντες τῇ σορῷ καταλείπουσι, πῶμα ἐπ' αὐτῆς ἐπιθέντες, τὸν δὲ βωμόν καταστρέψαντες, φεύγουσιν ἀμεταστρεπτί. οὕτω γὰρ αὐτοῖς ποιεῖν ἔτυχε μεμαντευμένος ὁ ἱερεὺς.

Then two of them led up the girl, her hands tied behind her back. I could not see who they were, as they were in full armour, but I recognized her as Leucippe. First they poured libations over her head and led her round the altar while, to the accompaniment of a pipe, a priest chanted what seemed to be an Egyptian hymn; this at least was indicated by the movements of his lips and the contortions of his features. Then, at a concerted sign, all retired to some distance from the altar; one of the two young attendants laid her down on her back, and strapped her so by means of pegs fixed in the ground, just as the statues represent Marsyas fixed to the tree; then he took a sword and plunging it in about the region of the heart, drew it down to the lower part of the belly, opening up her body; the bowels gushed out, and these they drew forth in their hands and placed upon the altar; and when they were roasted, the whole body of them cut them up into small pieces, divided them into shares and ate them. The soldiers and the general who were looking cried out as each stage of the deed was done and averted their eyes from the sight. I sat gazing in my consternation, rooted to the spot by the horror of the spectacle; the immeasurable calamity struck me, as by lightning, motionless... When the business came, as I thought, to an end, the two attendants placed her body in the coffin, put the lid upon it, overturned the altar, and hurried away without looking round; such were the instructions given to them by the priest in the liturgy which he chanted.<sup>191</sup>

This is the most explicit and the most shocking of all the cases of human

<sup>191</sup> 3.15.1–6

sacrifice reported in the novels, and perhaps in all of Greek literature. The graphic detail with which the sacrifice and perverse banquet is described is horrific; further, that the sacrifice and disembowelment are even described at all is shocking. In her book, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman*, Nicole Loraux observes how women in tragedies die off-scene. Their deaths are described but never depicted. Just as in the vase paintings described by Vernant, where the act of slaughter is never shown, virgin sacrifice in theatre also takes place out of sight. Nevertheless, their deaths are described. Since in tragedy, words are of paramount importance,<sup>192</sup> what occurs verbally is as significant if not more so than that which is depicted physically by actors on the stage. That is, the fact that the deaths of the virgins in the Greek tragedies occur in the imaginations of the audience does not diminish their significance, but rather creates the co-existence of multiple meanings.

In connections with these deaths that are put into words, I would repeat what Beaudelaire said about beauty, when he defined it as “lending itself to conjecture.” Death by report lends itself to conjecture vastly more than does violence exposed to public view. [...] This is all the more true in that tragedy uses for the spoken description words of multiple meaning, words that are somehow ‘in the know.’<sup>193</sup>

In this way Nicole Loraux articulates the paradoxical nature of the virgin sacrifice. The death occurs not on stage but in the imaginations of the audience; in that way, it is more powerfully real than it would be were it depicted using theatrical tricks. Leucippe’s graphic, full-frontal sacrifice, disembowelment, and cannibalization is so far out of the norm in its central place in the theatre of the plot. However, as it is revealed later on, Leucippe’s death is also an act of theatre:

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<sup>192</sup> Nicole Loraux, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman* (Anthony Forster, trans.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), vii.

<sup>193</sup> Loraux, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman*, x.

it is not real. This transgressive *double-entendre* created by Achilles Tatius provokes horror and then relief as the ruse is exposed.

In the other examples, the narratives spin out the drama of the impending sacrifice in order to enact the sacrifice in the minds of the readers without actually having it occur within the bounds of the plot. Here, Achilles Tatius does not rely on suspense to create the image of human sacrifice and ritual cannibalism in the minds of his readers: he outlines each step of this rite so that its memory burns in their minds as it does in Clitophon's as he describes it first hand. And yet, the theatre of the event persists; the sacrifice is exposed as a fake but the readers are left pondering, *what if?* There is no doubt here that this is an alimentary sacrifice of an ordinary, although horrifically perverted, type. Leucippe, just like the beast in Burkert's *Greek Religion*, has a libation poured over her head and is led around the altar before being slaughtered and her entrails roasted and eaten. This woman, only shortly before described as a divine beauty, is graphically slaughtered before the readers' eyes. However, just as in the other novels, this sacrifice too never actually takes place. Despite appearances to the contrary, Leucippe has not been eviscerated by bandits, her entrails eaten; rather, she is safe in the coffin, alive (3.17.7). Her sacrificers are actually Clitophon's old friends, Menelaus and Satyrus, who have contrived to trick the robber band into thinking the sacrifice is real. Using their knowledge of the theatre and having conveniently found a trick sword, the pair have sewn a sheep's stomach up with its guts and bound it to Leucippe's stomach under her robes. The trick sword, with its collapsing blade, cuts only so deep as to tear the false stomach and split it open; Leucippe therefore

only had to *act* the part of the sacrificial virgin all the while remaining safe on the altar and then in the coffin. Leucippe's sacrifice is the most graphic of all those which occur (or do not occur) in the romances. Her cannibalism is the most explicit even though she is never actually eaten. As far as the narrator, Clitophon, and the readers are concerned, Leucippe is slain on the altar and her entrails are consumed as part of this perverse ritual.

The heroines in the novels are both sacrificed *and* not sacrificed; they are eaten *and* not eaten. The anxiety of the readership occurs *because of the ambiguity in the verb used*; this imagination allows for both possibilities to exist simultaneously. In literature, unlike real life, it is possible for contradicting realities to coexist. In literature, this creates a depth of meaning akin to a *double entendre*. The 'sacrifice' of these maidens, whether or not it actually occurs in the plot, happens in the language describing the potentiality of the action; the sacrifice exists as a reality in the text each time the event is discussed. The sacrifices of Leucippe, Charicleia, and Anthia are realities in the narrative realm. And as such, their effect is likewise real. To some extent, the "comedy of innocence" observed by Meuli<sup>194</sup> is taken to a more complex level in the novels: where in the anthropological examination of normal Greek sacrifice, a discomfort with the guilt associated with the hand that slays has been ritualized, in the romances the discomfort is represented by the victims preventing the guilt in the first place. That is, that our heroines escape death re-imagines the trope of the guilty knife, as exemplified in Porphyry's *De Abstentia* 2.28.4–2.30; where in

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<sup>194</sup> Karl Meuli, "Griechische Opferbäuche" in *Phyllobolia für Peter von der Mühl* (Olof Gigon, ed.; Basel: Schwabe, 1946), 185–288.



reality the anxiety around murder finds a ritual solution, in the novels a narrative solution takes its place. The heroines—like Iphegeneia—are simultaneously alive and dead. Their sacrifice is envisioned and witnessed by both readers and characters; in the end, the performance is real.

### 3.8 Sacrifice and Simultaneity

With this in mind, I propose that these sacrifices are the moments when these heroines become identified with their antagonistic goddess. Nagy's proposal in *The Best of the Achaeans* is, I argue, represented also in these novels, where antagonism, radiant beauty, and death intersect to identify the heroines with divinity. The trope of the apparent death, or *Scheintod*, is a stock plot device in the ancient novels used to create tension and suspense, but *Scheintod* also has another function. Tracing the history of resurrection in Greek and Latin literature, Bowersock notes that for the ancients, the concept of a resurrected human was foreign; necromancy was a popular feature of ancient magic, but according to Bowersock, resurrection was not a common concept in non-Jewish literature until after the Jesus movement.<sup>195</sup> Bowersock, perhaps unintentionally, suggests that the heroines' false deaths and lively reappearances are suggestive of their association with the divine: "Gods might die and be reborn, but not mortals of flesh and blood."<sup>196</sup> Antonius Diogenes' *The Wonders Beyond Thule* includes the character of Zamolxis who had been resurrected from death and was thence

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<sup>195</sup> Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 103.

<sup>196</sup> Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 102.

regarded as a divinity.<sup>197</sup> Thus, in the eyes of the Hellenistic and Roman world, to be brought back from death gives a person a certain divine quality; that heroes, for example Protesilaus,<sup>198</sup> returned from Hades participates in this understanding as do, to a certain extent, the apotheoses of the emperors. The association between divinity and coming back from the grave is solidified by the constant mis-identifications of these heroines with various divinities (*Ephesian Tale* 2.2; *Leucippe and Clitophon* 7.15; *An Ethiopian Story* 1.2, 1.21; *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 1.1, 1.14, 2.1, etc.). The apparent deaths of the heroines therefore reinforce their divine identity, marked, as discussed above in chapter two, by their shining, radiant beauty. Their sacrifice identifies them with the virgins, such as Iphigeneia, who were offered to Artemis and who as a result became heroines, straddling the divine-mortal divide. But their sacrifice also represents the climax of the antagonism between them as heroines of the narrative and the deity responsible for their fates.

In Greek hero cults the death of the hero is required to establish the cult to the hero; it is also that moment of death which in literature establishes the identification of the hero with the god or goddess.<sup>199</sup> According to Nagy, even though Achilles' death is postponed until after the *Iliad*, the text uses Patroclus as his surrogate and thus the death of the hero still takes place.<sup>200</sup> Thus, the deferral of the hero's death does not mean that that death does not occur in the narrative;

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<sup>197</sup> Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 100; Photius, *Bibliothèque*, 109a-b [166], p. 141, ll. 41-42 (Henry), on Myrto. For Zamolxis, see 110a [166], pp. 143-144, ll. 22-37 (Henry). Herodotus, *Histories*, 4.94-96.

<sup>198</sup> Philostratus, *Heroikos*, 11.7, for example.

<sup>199</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 286.

<sup>200</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 142; cf. 33, 113 on how Patroclus is the surrogate for Achilles.

as Nagy shows, a hero can in some ways be both alive and dead at the same time in the literary world. This deferral of death is also what happens in the romances when Leucippe, Anthia, and Charicleia avoid sacrifice; though only Leucippe has a surrogate (in the form of her own theatrical mock-sacrifice) the ambiguity of the language used to describe the impending sacrifices serves to realise all of the heroines' ritual deaths. The paradoxical nature of their death, life, and identities is firmly bound up in their ritual sacrifice. But further, the establishment of their cults occurs in that language: the sacrifices take place that establish their cult while the heroines are at risk of being put to death on the altars. In the potentiality of the heroines' consumption by their cult practitioners, their identity is consumed with that of the goddess responsible for their plight. The relationship between the eaters, the eaten, and the goddess is so interwoven that it becomes its own cause and effect: the identities of the goddess and the heroine become "infinitely reversible" in the pattern of Greek mythology and epic.<sup>201</sup> As with the identification of the hero and the deity in epic, in the novels the death and the cultic rites collide to create the divine-hero association. The cannibalism present in the descriptions of the cultic activity enacted on the heroines represents both the climax of the antagonism with the deity and the establishment of the cult through the death of the hero.

### 3.9 Conclusions

If the death of the hero is necessary for the cult's establishment and

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<sup>201</sup> Maggie Kilgour, *From Communion to Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 13–14.

corresponding identification with the deity,<sup>202</sup> so too the apparent death and cannibalization of the heroines are necessary for establishing their divine identity. Not one of the romantic heroines, as far as I know, has an established cult, but the apparent death of the heroines hints at this expected outcome. The girls are modeled after the heroes, both of Homer and of cults like that of Iphigeneia, and they behave in ways expected of the Greco-Roman hero, epic or not. At the same time, their ritual deaths occur in the context of a cultic meal, something that is horrific in its performance and yet is unmistakably located in the cultic world. The romantic heroines appear to be sacrificed on altars but do not die. The worshippers appear to consume their flesh (or intend to) and yet do not. A cult event both occurs and is narrowly avoided simultaneously. I argue that the novels conflate what in Nagy's examples from epic and lyric traditions occur separately. That is, for Nagy, the death of the hero and his antagonism with a god occur within literature while the cult worship around a hero and his association with that god occur in historical reality. In the novels, the lines are blurred between categories. History and fiction, life and death, mortal and divine all appear to occupy the same space. They are blended and so are the events surrounding the identification of these heroines with goddesses. The novels further act as focusing lenses within which ritual gains meaning. The heroines' deaths, the events which would establish the cult that in turn would associate them with a goddess, is prevented, but the readers and other characters at the same time witness their consumption or near-consumption in a cultic meal. The verbs used in the novels offer no reassurance; instead they evoke the anticipation of the sacrifice and

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<sup>202</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 286.

potential feast so that the sacrificial performance becomes real. The antagonism displayed by the goddesses or gods responsible for the fates of the heroines is clearly articulated throughout the novels, but at the same time, their identification with the goddesses through their appearances and through the actions of those around them make clear that the girls *are* the goddesses. Everything is happening at the same time, and everything is happening in the narrative world. The cultic act, which is the result of the death of the hero, occurs but the death is prevented; the association with the goddess that is the result of the cultic activity takes place, but often both before *and* after the sacrifice; often, the misfortunes of the heroine both occur and are prevented by her god-like appearance.

Above all, moreover, it is in the commensality that occurs after the sacrifice of the maiden that the association between the goddess and the heroine is cemented. In that cult act, which occurs completely within narrative, we find represented what for Homer's heroes occurred in real practice. The hero's death is the catalyst for the establishment of his cult, where animal sacrifice and feasts occur on his behalf and for the god with which he is associated. In the novels, the sacrificial performance of the death of the heroine not only represents the climax of the antagonism which draws the divine identity ever closer, but since it occurs in a sacrificial setting, this consumption of her flesh solidifies the association between heroine and goddess. The simultaneous convergence of life and death, divine and mortal, cannibalistic feast and the escape from it all point to this culmination of identities for the heroines: because they are killed and consumed in the narrative world, they become (and have always been) the deities we always

suspected them to be.

## Chapter 4

“My Flesh is Meat Indeed”  
(John 6:55, *KJV*)

#### 4.1 Introduction: Reconsidering John 6:51c–58

καὶ ὁ ἄρτος δὲ ὃν ἐγὼ δώσω ἡ σὰρξ μου ἐστὶν ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ζωῆς. Ἐμάχοντο οὖν πρὸς ἀλλήλους οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι λέγοντες, Πῶς δύναται οὗτος ἡμῖν δοῦναι τὴν σάρκα αὐτοῦ φαγεῖν; εἶπεν οὖν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐὰν μὴ φάγητε τὴν σάρκα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ πίνητε αὐτοῦ τὸ αἷμα, οὐκ ἔχετε ζωὴν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς. ὁ τρώγων μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ πίνων μου τὸ αἷμα ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον, κἀγὼ ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ· ἡ γὰρ σὰρξ μου ἀληθὴς ἐστὶν βρῶσις, καὶ τὸ αἷμά μου ἀληθὴς ἐστὶν πόσις. ὁ τρώγων μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ πίνων μου τὸ αἷμα ἐν ἐμοὶ μένει κἀγὼ ἐν αὐτῷ. καθὼς ἀπέστειλέν με ὁ ζῶν πατήρ κἀγὼ ζῶ διὰ τὸν πατέρα, καὶ ὁ τρώγων με κἀκεῖνος ζήσει δι' ἐμέ. οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς, οὐ καθὼς ἔφαγον οἱ πατέρες καὶ ἀπέθανον· ὁ τρώγων τοῦτον τὸν ἄρτον ζήσει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

And the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh. οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.

Returning at last to the Gospel of John and Jesus’ strange exhortation in 6:51c–58, we should, at the outset, lay out what we have discovered up until this point. First, it is crucial to remember that John 6:51c–58 is not making a eucharistic statement but rather a christological one. Throughout the gospel, but explicitly in the prologue, John takes great pains to emphasize both Jesus’ fleshly and divine qualities. As I have argued above in chapter one, John understands Jesus’ humanity and divinity as co-existing in a dialectical state, since Jesus’ signs, often very physical, lead directly to observers’ recognition of his divinity. Given the preoccupation that John’s gospel has with the relationship between Jesus’ divinity and his humanity, it is appropriate to evaluate the meaning of Jesus’ words in John 6:51c–58 in light of this concern. Attempts to understand this scene in terms of the eucharist (which is so important in other gospels) have



led to circular arguments involving the so-called Ecclesiastical redactor and assumptions about the early Christian development of a focus on the sacraments. John 6:51c–58 comes on the heels of a statement made about Jesus’ human parentage in John 6:41–51b, making divine/mortal identity a logical context in which to understand his statements about eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

Previous studies which have approached John 6:51c–58 have largely sought context only from within the New Testament, even though it has lately been recognized that John’s Jesus shares many characteristics with the Greco-Roman hero. John’s christology is dependent on Jesus’ close and unique relationship with God the Father, a relationship which is expressed through language distinguishing Jesus as the *only* son of God (as opposed to the disciples as well); this divine father/human son relationship is well established in the ancient world and normally marks the divine ancestry of a heroic figure such as Heracles, or of a soon-to-be-divine ruler, such as Augustus. And yet, as we have seen in sections 1.7 and 3.2—and as we will discuss further in 4.2—this father-god is the antagonistic deity responsible for our hero’s death. As I discussed in 1.6, a further way in which John’s Jesus resembles the heroic figures of the Greco-Roman world is through his concern for right ritual practice, especially given that the Christian rituals ordinarily expected to be described, such as eucharist and baptism, are nowhere to be found in this gospel.<sup>1</sup> Cultic actions are those which define or maintain community; John’s Jesus is therefore very interested in issues of cult, despite the fact that his approach differs from those of

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<sup>1</sup> Berenson Maclean, “Jesus as Cult Hero,” 201.

the other evangelists.<sup>2</sup> Jesus' discussion in John 4:20–24 on the right type of προσκυνητής, where προσκυνέω and related terms are used ten times in the space of four verses, speaks to the idea that Jesus' mission creates true worshippers of God, not just true believers.<sup>3</sup> Jesus' statements in John 6:51c–58 are the literary performance of a ritual meal—a ritual that exists in narrative only, like the human sacrifices performed on the heroine; but I argue that this narrative meal is not the eucharist. Instead, this section references the cultic meal that establishes the hero cult and as such establishes the hero's divinity. For John, Jesus' sacrifice is not complete without the meal that makes him equal to God. In examining Jesus' commandment to eat his flesh and drink his blood in the context of the Greco-Roman hero, I will show how John uses this anthropophagic meal to make a christological claim.

Second, we should keep in mind the conclusions we have drawn about the novels throughout chapters two and three. It is significant that the heroines of the romances are formed in the image of gods, as I proposed in chapter two. The heroines' appearance, and especially their glowing aura, incites those whom they encounter to worship them. The actions of the pious bystanders confirm divine identity for the heroines. Further, in section 3.2. I demonstrated how the deities are responsible for the heroines' ill-fated adventures. In each case, a divine being is responsible for the misfortunes suffered by the couple; the couple often voices frustration directed at these specific deities. And finally, in section 3.7, I illustrated the significance of the climax of the antagonism between the deity and

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<sup>2</sup> Berenson Maclean, "Jesus as Cult Hero," 201.

<sup>3</sup> Berenson Maclean, "Jesus as Cult Hero," 202.

the heroine, which is found at the (near) sacrifice and consumption of the female half of the couple. The anticipation of this climax evokes the sacrifice in the minds of the readers so that the rite takes place even if it does not end up taking place in the narrative. In the one romance in which the sacrifice and feast do occur, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, the sacrifice of Leucippe turns out to be a false-death (*Scheintod*), an act which even further associates the heroine to the deity. In each case of potential or actual sacrifice, the language used to describe the impending slaughter is ambiguous; this ambiguity creates the possibility that the heroines will be consumed and not simply slaughtered.

This slaughter and consumption represents the establishment of cult, entirely within the narrative. As Nagy has shown, it is the formation of the cult and its rites that brings about the association between the hero and the god. There is a clear association in the Homeric texts among the hero's glorification, his death, and the sacrificial feast.<sup>4</sup> This association is developed and expanded in the Hellenistic period. It is visible in the novels in their concern for divine identification and the climactic moment of human sacrifice that implies consumption of the divine heroines. In John, the glorification, death, and sacrificial meal of Jesus are likewise intimately connected. John 6:51c–58 is the locus of this interconnection. The novels therefore act as a focusing lens with which we can view the relationships between human beings and gods, since both the antagonism and the association occur, for the novels and in John, within the narrative realm. Sacrifice itself is a driving metaphor in the narrative worlds of Greco-Roman literature. As we have seen in sections 3.5 and 3.6, human sacrifice

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<sup>4</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 59–60.

in particular carries certain associations such as barbarism and horror, the likes of which are usually not depicted in detail either in literature or in pictorial representations. The depiction and anticipation of the sacrifices in the novels and the horror which necessarily accompanies them is marked. The sacrifices that occur in the novels represent the moment at which the antagonism between the hero and deity transforms into the identification of the two with each other. In the classical world, and as Nagy has demonstrated, the tension between deity and hero in narrative was only fully realized in the establishment of a cult where the pair were associated: “antagonism in myth, symbiosis in cult.”<sup>5</sup> The novels transform this relationship so that it takes place entirely within the bounds of narrative.

Thus, given that John’s gospel focuses on the divine identity of Jesus and that John’s Jesus shares characteristics with heroes, it makes sense to examine John 6:51c-58 in light of what we know about contemporary views of the divine-mortal relationship, and in particular in view of the imaginings exhibited in the romance novels of the first through fourth centuries C.E. I argue that John 6:51c–58 re-purposes the sacrificial language of eating flesh and drinking blood in order to make explicit Jesus’ divine identity. First, I will provide an overview of the context in which cannibalistic statements in the ancient world would have been understood. This provides some landmarks by which we can evaluate the meaning of Jesus’ statement as early interpreters saw it. An approach from this perspective allows us to see how early interpreters of John’s gospel were uncomfortable with a eucharistic interpretation of John 6:51c–58 and also questions the association

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<sup>5</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 286.

between the Christian practice of the eucharist and anthropophagic accusations.

Second, I will demonstrate that John's gospel participates in the trope of antagonism between patron deity and hero. In Jesus' case, the fact that God sends him to earth demonstrates this antagonism in two ways: in coming down to earth, Jesus necessarily becomes subject to death, but further, it is God's intent in sending him that he should die *on behalf of* others. Thus, in John, God and Jesus share an antagonistic relationship that ultimately leads to Jesus' death. This assertion benefits from comparison with *Life of Aesop*, which Lawrence Wills has already compared with John's gospel, and with the novels in question in this study.

Third, having established this particular relationship, I will make the point that Jesus' death in fact happens contemporaneously with the exhortation to consume his flesh and drink his blood in John 6:51c–58. Using Bultmann's analysis of time and eschatology in John, I argue that, just as in the Greek romances where the heroines are simultaneously mortal and divine, Jesus' death occurs at the same time as his identification with the deity. This point is important to make: Jesus makes clear allusions in his speech in 6:51c–58 to his death and the fact that they occur in this speech signals, too, his association with that antagonistic God and therefore his divinity.

Finally, I return to Jesus' words in John 6:51c–58 and evaluate them in light of what we know about cultic sacrificial meals, and in particular, in light of Nagy's conclusions about the ramifications of such a meal for divine-hero association.

## 4.2 Cannibalism and Christianity: An Overview

Allegations of cannibalism are frequent in ancient literature. Jews have perhaps been the longest victims of this allegation; Apion, in the first century C.E., reports that

they [sc. Jews] would kidnap a Greek foreigner, fatten him up for a year, and then convey him to a wood, where they slew him, sacrificed his body with their customary ritual, partook of his flesh, and while immolating the Greek, swore an oath of hostility to the Greeks.<sup>6</sup>

Damocritos, of the same era, also reports this ritual murder and consumption of a foreigner by a group of Jews.<sup>7</sup> Philip Harland proposes that these accusations are the extension of the assumption among some Greco-Roman authors that Jews were intolerant of outsiders. The charge of cannibalistic rituals thus served to confirm this rumour and also to cordon off this group from the normative religious groups present in the Hellenistic and Roman world.<sup>8</sup> Thus, given our discussion above in chapter three about the use of cannibalism as an accusation against those whom the Greeks and Romans considered Other, it should be no surprise that Christians also frequently seem to have defended themselves against charges of cannibalism and child sacrifice.

In Tacitus' *Annals* 15.44 we find the claim that Christians were "a class hated for their abominations" (*flagitia*).<sup>9</sup> Tacitus is not forthcoming concerning

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<sup>6</sup> Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.91–96 (LCL); "Ac postremum consulentem a ministris ad se accedentibus audisse legem ineffabilem Iudaeorum, pro qua nutriebatur, et hoc illos facere singulis annis quodam tempore constituto: et comprahendere quidem Graecum peregrinum eumque annali tempore saginare, et deductum ad quandam siluam occidere quidem eum hominem eiusque corpus sacrificare secundum suas sollemnitates, et gustare ex eius uisceribus, et iusiurandum facere in immolatione Graeci, ut inimicitias contra Graecos haberent."

<sup>7</sup> Menahem Stern (ed. and trans.), *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (3 vols.; Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974–84), 1.531.

<sup>8</sup> Harland, "Men Eaters," 57; Jonathan Rives comes to the same conclusion in "Human Sacrifice Among Pagans and Christians," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 85 (1995): 73–74.

<sup>9</sup> "Ergo abolendo rumori Nero subdidit reos et quaesitissimis poenis adfecit quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Christianos appellabat."

the nature of these abominations, but the term *flagitia* comes up frequently when Christian activities are discussed negatively; the term, though vague, has been interpreted as referring to cannibalistic meals,<sup>10</sup> an association which persisted. Pliny's *Letter to Trajan* also alludes to the possibility of Christians behaving in ritually abhorrent ways. Pliny refers to the "unlawful meals" supposedly hosted by Christians, but refutes the charge rather than substantiating it. As far as Pliny has uncovered, Christians come together "to partake of food—but food of an ordinary and innocent kind."<sup>11</sup> These non-Christian authors all refer to the peculiar practices of the early Christian groups. According to their reports, Christians are well-known for their inappropriate ritual acts which, at least for Pliny, include meal practices. However, as Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta observes, these authors are curiously vague about what exactly these abominations and/or meals entail; only Apion's accusations against Jews (as reported by Josephus) go into any detail concerning specific abhorrent activities. For details about *Christian* ritualized cannibalism, we must turn, oddly enough, to the Christian sources, as the pagan ones are insufficiently specific.<sup>12</sup>

Both Tatian and Justin Martyr specifically refute the abomination of eating human flesh. Tatian assures his readers that "we [Christians] do not practice cannibalism—that is a lie of you educated people—but according to you Pelops, even though he is Poseidon's darling, becomes the gods' dinner, Cronus

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<sup>10</sup> The association appears to go back at least to H. Achelis, *Das Christentum in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* I (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1912), 294.

<sup>11</sup> Pliny, *Letter to Trajan*, 10.96.8; "quibus peractis morem sibi discedendi fuisse rursusque coeundi ad capiendum cibum, promiscuum tamen et innoxium."

<sup>12</sup> Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, "The Early Christians and Human Sacrifice" in *The Strange World of Human Sacrifice* (Jan N. Bremmer, ed.; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 81–102.

devours his sons and Zeus swallows Metis.”<sup>13</sup> Tatian throws the accusation back in the faces of the Greeks, citing their own mythology for proof that their own gods consumed human flesh. Tatian is not explicit in contextualizing the nature of the supposed cannibalism of Christian groups, but instead focuses on refuting the accusation. Justin is more forthcoming about the alleged context for Christians’ anthropophagic meals, alluding to the practice twice. In the first instance, Justin refers to the practices of Christian groups to which he does not belong and therefore cannot confirm: “whether they commit the shameful deeds about which stories are told—the upsetting of the lamp, promiscuous intercourse, and eating human flesh—we do not know.”<sup>14</sup> Here Justin links inappropriate sexual conduct with cannibalistic feasts, although he takes care in the surrounding context to distance “good” Christians from the offending heretics who might perform such rituals. Justin’s second reference comes in the form of a reflection on the likelihood of finding both zeal for earthly pleasures and zeal for death in the same sort of person:

For I myself too, when I was delighting in the teachings of Plato, and heard the Christians slandered, and saw them fearless of death, and of all other things which are counted fearful, saw that it was impossible that they could be living in wickedness and pleasure. For what sensual or intemperate person, or whoever counts it good to feast on human flesh, could welcome death that he might be deprived of his enjoyments, and would not rather always continue the present life, and try to escape the observation of the rulers; and much less would he denounce himself when the consequence would be death?<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> παρ’ ἡμῖν οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνθρωποφαγία· ψευδομάρτυρες οἱ πεπαιδευμένοι γεγόνατε· παρ’ ὑμῖς δὲ Πέλοψ δεῖπνον τῶν θεῶν γίνεται καὶ Ποσειδῶνος ἐρώμενος, καὶ Κρόνος τοὺς υἱοὺς ἀναλίσκει, καὶ ὁ Ζεὺς τὴν Μῆτιν καταπίνει.” (Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos*, 25.3 [Whittaker].)

<sup>14</sup> “εἰ δὲ καὶ τὰ δύσφημα ἐκεῖνα μυθολογούμενα ἔργα πράττουσι, λυχνίας μὲν ἀνατροπὴν καὶ τὰς ἀνέδην μίξεις καὶ ἀνθρωπείων σαρκῶν βοράς, οὐ γινώσκομεν.” Justin Martyr, *Apologies* 1.26.6–7 [Barnard].

<sup>15</sup> “καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸς ἐγώ, τοῖς Πλάτωνος χαίρων διδάγμασι, διαβαλλομένους ἀκούων χριστιανούς, ὁρῶν δὲ ἀφόβους πρὸς θάνατον καὶ πάντα τὰ ἄλλα νομιζόμενα φοβερὰ, ἐνενόουν ἀδύνατον εἶναι ἐν κακίᾳ καὶ φιληδονίᾳ υὑπάρχειν αὐτοῦς. τίς γὰρ



Justin's logic is that (a) even when he was not a Christian, he found the accusation of cannibalism impossible to believe because (b) pleasure in life (i.e. the base pleasure of eating forbidden human flesh) is incompatible with indifference towards death. In his two statements on the subject, Justin at once dichotomizes "real" Christians, whose hatred of earthly pleasures is irreconcilable with anthropophagy, with "false" or heretical Christian groups, who may or may not host such abhorrent banquets, where darkness allows unnatural sexual acts to go unchecked and where human flesh is the main course.

The reference Julian makes to the overturned lamp, which creates the dark atmosphere in which perversity can flourish, is also found in Tertullian's *Apology*:

Come, plunge your knife into the babe, enemy of none, accused of none, child of all; or if that is another's work, simply take your place beside a human being dying before he has really lived, await the departure of the lately given soul, receive the fresh young blood, saturate your bread with it, freely partake. Then while as you recline at table, take note of the places which your mother and your sister occupy; mark them well, so that when the dog-made darkness has fallen on you, you may make no mistake, for you will be guilty of a crime, unless you perpetrate a deed of incest [Thelwall].<sup>16</sup>

Tertullian has included a much more elaborate description of the human sacrifice which initiates the anthropophagic banquet. Here, the victim is an infant whose blood is mopped up with bread and eaten. After that rite, while the diners are reclining, the lamps are knocked over by dogs<sup>17</sup> so that in the darkness, the second part of the banquet can proceed. Again like Justin, Tertullian links sexual

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φιλήδονος ἢ ακρατῆς καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων σαρκῶν βορὰν ἀγαθὸν ἡγούμενος δύναίτο ἂν θάνατον ἀσπάξασθαι, ὅπως τῶν αὐτοῦ ἀγαθῶν στερηθῇ, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐκ παντὸς ζῆν μὲν αἰὶ τὴν ἐνθάδε βιοτήν καὶ λανθάνειν τοὺς ἄρχοντας ἐπειρᾶτο, οὐχ ὅτι γε ἑαυτὸν κατήγγελλε φονευθησόμενον;" Justin Martyr, *Apologies*, 2.12.1–2 [Barnard].

<sup>16</sup> "Veni, demerge ferrum in infantem nullius inimicum, nullius reum, omnium filium; eul, si alterius officium est, tu modo assiste morienti homini, antequam uixit, fugientem animam nouam exspecta, excipe rudam sanguinem, eo panem tuum satia, uescere libenter. Interea discumbens dinumera loca, ubi mater, ubi soror; nota diligenter, ut, cum tenebrae ceciderint caninae, non erres. Piaculum enim feceris, nisi incestum." Tertullian, *Apology*, 8.2–3 [LCL].

<sup>17</sup> This is made clear earlier, in 7.1: "the dogs, our pimps, forsooth, overturning the lights and getting us the shamelessness of darkness for our impious lusts."

impropriety with cannibalistic feasting. Lanzillotta's discussion of the context is helpful here:

The passage occupies the central segment of a longer section of the *Apology* (Chapters 7–9), in which Tertullian deals with the accusation. Whereas in chapter 7 he presents the charges against Christians and approaches them from different angles, in Chapter 9 he intends to turn them against the accusers. In this context, Chapter 8—the chapter that includes our passage—has a clear transitional function, since it allows him to focus on his main goal: providing a number of examples of human sacrifice that will present it as a token of paganism.<sup>18</sup>

As such, when Tertullian in chapter 7 compares the Christian “mysteries” to the pagan ones, he observes the peculiarity of the content of the former being widely known when this is not the case for the latter cults.<sup>19</sup> In this way, Tertullian sets up the potential for turning the tables on his accusers. When we reach chapter 8, then, we find a parody of the accusations rather than a refutation done with seriousness. The author's sarcasm in his treatment of this issue suggests that the content of the ritual should not be taken as a literal representation of an actual accusation, “but rather as a parody or an intentional deformation that had to serve his argument.”<sup>20</sup> Tertullian effectively transforms a defensive argument into an offensive one by repurposing the cannibalistic accusation and altering it into a reminder of ritualized human sacrifice as initiation, something he imagines is well reported in pagan cults.<sup>21</sup>

Minucius Felix's account, which relies on Tertullian's,<sup>22</sup> likewise reflects an attempt to refute accusations of cannibalism by painting pagans with the same brush. His work *Octavius* is a dialogue between Caecilius, a representative of

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<sup>18</sup> Lanzillotta, “Early Christians,” 89.

<sup>19</sup> Lanzillotta, “Early Christians,” 91; Tertullian, *Apologies*, 7.8–14.

<sup>20</sup> Lanzillotta, “Early Christians,” 92.

<sup>21</sup> Lanzillotta, “Early Christians,” 92.

<sup>22</sup> Lanzillotta, “Early Christians,” 93–94.

right Roman *religio*, and Octavius, defender of Christianity. Caecilius brings up a scene of ritual abomination during one of his arguments which bears marked similarity to Tertullian's in *Apology* 8.2–3. He states:

Now the story about the initiation of young novices is as much to be detested as it is well known. An infant covered with meal, that it may deceive the unwary, is placed before him who is to be stained with their rites: this infant is slain by the young pupil, who has been urged on as if to harmless blows on the surface of the meal, with dark and secret wounds. Thirstily—O horror! they lick up its blood, eagerly they divide the limbs. By this victim they are pledged together; with this consciousness of wickedness they are covenanted to mutual silence [Roberts and Donaldson].<sup>23</sup>

Minucius here leaves out the incestuous banquet and transforms the initiation ritual into one that also binds the practitioners together in oath. Both Minucius Felix and Tertullian, upon whose text the former bases *Octavius*, twist the argument into a reversal of the charges.<sup>24</sup> Minucius, like Tertullian, points out the various myths in which Greco-Roman deities consume human flesh, and also makes use of examples of human child sacrifice in Africa; to this end, Minucius (through his character Octavius) refocuses the argument into one against pagan practices. However, since Minucius clearly relies on Tertullian's account to put words in the mouth of his fictitious Roman debater, his account cannot necessarily be taken as a reflection of actual charges brought about by non-fictional Roman accusers.

Lanzillotta's argument about the lack of specificity in pagan texts and the overwhelming detail in texts by Christian apologists concerning charges of

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<sup>23</sup> "Iam de initiandis tirunculis fabula tam detestanda quam nota est. Infans farre contextus, ut decipiat incautos, adponitur ei qui sacris inbuatur. Is infans a tirunculo farris superficiei quasi ad innoxios ictus prouocato caecis occultisque uulneribus occiditur. Huius, pro nefas! sitienter sanguinem lambunt, huius certatim membra dispertunt, hac foederantur hostia, hac conscientia sceleris ad silentium mutuum pignerantur. Haec sacra sacrilegiis omnibus taetriora." Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 9.5.

<sup>24</sup> Lanzillotta, "Early Christians," 94.

anthropophagic rites is significant for my argument: he suggests that the trope of cannibalistic accusations originates among Christian authors rather than pagan ones. That is, he postulates that Christian authors brought up the charges themselves *without pagan accusations to defend*.<sup>25</sup> While Lanzillotta does provide a possible explanation for the popularity of this trope in Christian writings, I would argue that this supports what I, along with Harland and Rives, have argued about the role of cannibalism in a socio-literary context. What this signifies is that cannibalism is a way in which boundaries are established between groups. Such accusations firmly delineate camps of “right” practice and “wrong” practice and, as such, mark out a space of belonging for those making the accusation and for those forced to refute it, often while re-directing the focus to another group. In other words, not only did Christians turn the negative association of cannibalistic practices onto pagan activities, but they also re-focused the function of the accusation itself so that it enforced the community of Christianity as a viable Other group. In responding to fictional accusations largely (uniquely?) propagated by Christians themselves, Christian authors established their community as one that is distinct from the surrounding non-Christian culture; but rather than embrace the implications of the accusation fully, these authors chose to paint pagans as the Other, non-dominant culture instead.

Keeping in mind the discussion of William Arens’s work above, in chapter three, it is clear that the role of cannibalism in antiquity functions in much the same way that Arens outlines in his book; that is, ritual cannibalism exists only in the literary world, and thus in the minds of those who wish to establish

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<sup>25</sup> Lanzillotta, “Early Christians,” 101.

boundaries between “us” and “them.” The fact that these allegations are repeated and recorded by ancient Christian sources suggests that even with negative connotations, the accusation and its refutation together function to bolster community identity. Both Philip Harland and Jonathan Rives have supported the examination of cannibalistic accusations in the context of the wider Greco-Roman world.<sup>26</sup> As I discussed briefly above, Harland’s treatment of the bandits’ banquets in the romances illustrates how expectations of foreign religious practices serve to distinguish the main characters from those who attempt to hurt them. The cannibalistic rituals practiced by the *boukoloï* mark them as barbarian; Clitophon even expresses his regret that they had not been captured by Greek bandits (3.10). Foreigners in literature are marked as foreign by their practices and as barbaric by human sacrifice and cannibalism just as Jews and Christians are marked and mark others as Other using the same or similar tactics. Harland’s contribution is significant in that it identifies the importance of the banquet in these identity-forming allegations: “ritual murder and the accompanying cannibalistic meal, symbolic of inverting piety and destroying society itself, stand out as the epitome of the anti-banquet.”<sup>27</sup>

Jonathan Rives’ article, “Human Sacrifice among Pagans and Christians,” largely agrees with Harland’s estimation of the function of cannibalism in ancient society, although Rives focuses only on human sacrifice.<sup>28</sup> Rives, discussing in chronological order the development of the accusation of human sacrifice, concurs that it serves as a boundary marker between good and bad religion, and as

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<sup>26</sup> Harland, “Men Eaters,” 56–75.

<sup>27</sup> Harland, “Men Eaters,” 74.

<sup>28</sup> Rives, “Human Sacrifice,” 65–85.

such, between normative/ruling cultures and other, subservient cultures and peoples. Rives observes that the Taurians and the Carthaginians were both subjected to the allegation that they sacrificed human beings, especially foreigners, in the case of the Taurians.<sup>29</sup> Like the views held by some Greeks about Jews being hostile to outsiders, the claim that certain “barbarian” peoples practiced human sacrifice reinforced that view and in turn maintained the division between right/Greek/civilized and wrong/foreign/barbarian. Rives emphasizes that this use of human sacrifice (and I would argue, cannibalism as well) evolved over time, so that “people were able to manipulate its meaning in order to present new and challenging ideas.”<sup>30</sup> That is, the same trope was applied to various groups throughout history, some with negative associations and others, as in Herodotus, with some degree of objectivity, so that human sacrifice was a marker of difference, but not necessarily of a lesser people.<sup>31</sup> Such discussions left the hierarchization of sacrificial practices up to the audience, rather than stating it outright;<sup>32</sup> examples can be found in both classical Greek texts and later in Roman ones, illustrating that even though at one point in time, Romans were considered “barbarians” by Greeks, the same language was appropriated by Romans once Rome became the dominant empire. This, for Rives, is the important fact to consider: that peoples or groups throughout history have turned the tables on previous dominant groups and made use of the same methods at creating and maintaining religious and cultural boundaries. Once Christianity gained more than

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<sup>29</sup> Rives, “Human Sacrifice,” 67–68.

<sup>30</sup> Rives, “Human Sacrifice,” 69.

<sup>31</sup> Rives, “Human Sacrifice,” 69.

<sup>32</sup> Rives cites the *Minos* 315b–c, a (pseudo-)Platonic dialogue between Socrates and another person where cultural relativism is discussed, and Cicero’s *de Re Publica*, 3.13–15 (“Human Sacrifice,” 69).

a toe-hold in the Greco-Roman world, its writers, too, began using human sacrifice in their campaign to malign “pagan” religion.<sup>33</sup>

#### 4.3 Other Interpretations of Anthropophagy in John 6:51c–58

Now that we have established a general picture of how allegations of cannibalism function in ancient Christian writings, we should return to John 6:51c–58 to apply what we have learned. Porphyry’s<sup>34</sup> commentary on this section makes for an excellent starting point, since his direct contact with the text as a non-Christian provides a glimpse into how the Greco-Roman world might have reacted to John 6:51c–58. Porphyry is so appalled at Jesus’ statement as recorded by John that he dismisses it outright, refusing to allow even for an allegorical interpretation:

Πολυθρύλητον ἐκεῖνο τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦ διδασκάλου ἐστίν, ὃ λέγει· <ἐάν μὴ φάγητέ μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ πίνητέ μου τὸ αἷμα, οὐκ ἔχετε ζωὴν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς.> τοῦτο φάρ οὐθηριώδες ὄντως οὐδ’ ἄτοπον, ἀλλ’ ἀτοπήματος παντὸς ἀτοπώτερον καὶ παντὸς θηριώδους τρόπου θηριωδέστερον, ἄνθρωπον ἀνθρωπίνων σαρκῶν ἀπογεύεσθαι καὶ πίνειν ὁμοφύλων αἷμα καὶ ὁμογενῶν καὶ τοῦτο πράττοντα ζωὴν ἔχειν αἰώνιον. Ποίαν γάρ, εἰπέ μοι, τοῦτο ποιοῦντες ὑπερβολὴν ὠμότητος εἰς τὸν βίον εἰσάξετε; ποίαν τούτου τοῦ μύσου ἐναγεστέρα κακίαν ἄλλην καινοτομήσετε; οὐ φέρουσιν ἀκοαί-οὐλέγω τὴν πρᾶξιν, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ τὸ λεγόμενον νεώτερον τοῦτο καὶ ξένον ἀνοσιούργημα, οὐδὲ τῶν Ἑρινύων αἰ φαντασίαι ποτὲ τοῖς ἐκτόπως ζῶσι τοῦτο κατεμήνυσαν, οὐδὲ Ποτιδαῖται, εἰ μὴ λιμὸς ἀπάνθρωπος αὐτοὺς κατελέπτυνε, τοῦτο κατεδέξαντο· [...] τίς οὖν ὁ λόγος οὗτος; κἂν φάρ ἀλληγορικῶς ἔχη τι μυστικώτερον καὶ λυσιτελέχτερον, ἢ ὁσμὴ τῆς λέξεως διὰ τῆς ἀκοῆς εἴσω που παρελθοῦσα αὐτὴν ἐκάκωσε τὴν ψυχὴν τῇ ἀηδίᾳ ταραξάσα, καὶ τῶν ἀποκρύφων τὸν λόγον ἐσίνωσεν ὅλον παρασκευάσασα σκοτοδιναῖσαι τῇ συμφορᾷ τὸν ἄνθρωπον. βλέπετε φοῦν τί παθόντες συμπείθεσθαι τοὺς εὐχερεῖς ἀλόγως προτρέπεσθε, βλέπετε ποῖον οὐ μόνον ταῖς ἀγροικίας, ἀλλὰ καὶ ταῖς πόλεσιν ἐπικεκώμακε κακόν! “Ὅθεν δοκεῖ μοι μήτε Μάρκον μήτε Λουκᾶν μήτ’ αὐτὸν τοῦτο γεγραφηκέναι Ματθαῖον, ἅτε δοκιμάσαντας οὐκ ἄστέιον τὸ ῥῆμα, ἀλλὰ ξένον καὶ ἀπάδον καὶ τῆς ἡμέρου ζωῆς μακρὰν ἀπωκισμένον.”<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Rives, “Human Sacrifice,” 76.

<sup>34</sup> 234–c. 305 C.E.

<sup>35</sup> Macarius Magnes, *Apocritica* 3.15 is assigned to Porphyry by Adolf von Harnack, *Porphyrius, Gegen die Christen 15 Bücher. Zeugnisse, Fragmente und Referate* (Berlin: Abhandlungen der königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1916), I.88 Fr. 69; The text is preserved in Macarius, *Monogenes* 3.15.

That saying of the Teacher is a far-famed one, which says, “Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in yourselves.” Truly this saying is not merely beast-like and absurd, but is more absurd than any absurdity, and more beast-like than any fashion of a beast, that a man should taste human flesh, and drink the blood of members of the same tribe and race, and that by doing this he should have eternal life. For, tell me, if you do this, what excess of savagery do you introduce into life? What kind of evil more under a curse than this defilement could you invent? Ears cannot bear it—I do not speak of the deed but also of this new and foreign deed of impiety. The phantoms of the Furies never revealed this to those who lived in strange ways, nor would the Potideans have accepted it unless they had been reduced by a savage hunger. What does this saying mean? For if it, allegorically understood, has some meaning more mystical and useful, the odour of the saying going inside through the hearing injures the soul. It disturbs the soul by its odiousness and harms the secret meanings—makes the entire person dizzy because of the offense. Observe, what has happened to you that you exhort people easily convinced in an irrational manner to be won by persuasion. Observe what kind of evil has gone careening about not only in the country but also in the cities. Wherefore it seems to me that neither Mark nor Luke nor even Matthew recorded this, because they regarded the saying as not a comely one, but strange and discordant, and far removed from civilized life [Cook].<sup>36</sup>

For Porphyry, the literal meaning must make sense before allegorical meanings can be teased out.<sup>37</sup> Porphyry’s criticism of Christianity sets John’s gospel apart from the other three canonical gospels because of its abhorrent commandment to consume flesh and blood; no doubt this was viewed as especially disgusting to a philosopher who advocated vegetarianism in other texts. This text is preserved in Macarius’ *Monogenes*; Macarius interprets John 6:51c–58 as eucharistic in content although Porphyry does not get so far as this, since he refuses to allegorize. Macarius’ comments on Porphyry’s critique hinge on the idea that infants consume milk made from their mother’s blood, presumably to illustrate a non-abhorrent incident of consuming the blood of another human being.<sup>38</sup> The example of Porphyry and Macarius serves to articulate two approaches to John 6:51c–58 in antiquity, albeit a few hundred years after the composition of John.

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<sup>36</sup> Porphyry, F. 69; trans. from John Granger Cook, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 203.

<sup>37</sup> Cook, *Interpretation*, 203 n.216; cf. Jean Pépin, “Porphyre, exégète d’Homère,” *Porphyre, Entretiens sur l’Antiquité Classique* 12 (1965): 235–236.

<sup>38</sup> Macarius Magnes, *Monogenes*, 3.23.



On the one hand, Porphyry reacts similarly to οἱ ἰουδαῖοι in John 6:52—he rejects the words that Jesus says as abhorrent. On the other, Macarius attempts to apologize for Porphyry’s “misunderstanding” of the situation first by giving an example of natural “cannibalism” and then by treating Jesus’ statements as allegorical and referring to the Eucharist. That is, both Macarius’ and Porphyry’s responses reflect the expectations around the consumption of human flesh and its meaning as far as the ancient world is concerned. Porphyry comments on how uncivilized and foreign such a statement is while Macarius attempts to mitigate the strangeness by appealing to natural parallels.

J. Albert Harrill’s contribution to the discussion further pinpoints the context in which John 6:51c–58 is understandable, especially because he recognizes that a preoccupation with sacramentalism has for too long governed scholarly approaches to a text which is reluctant on the subject. Harrill and I agree that the statement Jesus makes in this section is understood as shockingly literal by those who hear it:

The context makes clear that they [Jesus’ audience] hear Jesus saying something literally obscene (disgusting to the sense): to indulge in cannibalism by consuming *his* flesh and blood. The offense of the saying triggers the decision by “the Jews” [sic] to kill Jesus (cf. 7:1; 5:18) and the desertion of “many disciples” (6:66). [...] This scene is one of factionalism. In this context, the forms of speech that would normally provide warrants for a particular kind of instruction (midrash) serve solely to emphasize Jesus’ strangeness as the Other. This parody of a traditional epiphany belongs to the Fourth Gospel’s regular subversion and reinterpretation of familiar symbolism. Indeed, subversion of familiar symbolism is *the* principal strategy of the Fourth Gospel.<sup>39</sup>

Harrill concludes, and I concur, that what John does is repurpose the “cultural taboo of cannibalism” in order to create a community positively defined by it. Because a main theme of John is factionalism, wherein Jesus speaks out against

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<sup>39</sup> J. Albert Harrill, “Cannibalistic Language in the Fourth Gospel and Greco-Roman Polemics of Factionalism (John 6:52–66),” *JBL* 127.1 (2008): 135.

various actors, creating schisms amongst those who hear his speeches (7:30–31, 40–44; 9:9, 16; 10:19–21), Harrill identifies parallels between John and other texts (both Jewish and classical) where cannibalism is used to describe warring factions. Jesus “provokes the misunderstandings in his audience deliberately,”<sup>40</sup> creating divisions both between himself and those around him and among his audience. As I have shown above, and as Harrill also points out, cannibalism (and human sacrifice) was a prominent way in which Greco-Roman polemicists talked about those who disagreed with them.<sup>41</sup> John’s use of this technique, then, is not surprising. That he would repurpose the motif, flipping it on its head so that identification as a cannibal became a positive rather than a negative, is surprising. However, this repurposing is also typical of John’s genre-bending bent, as I will show below.<sup>42</sup> Harrill observes that there are other examples of minority groups in the Hellenistic world reclaiming negative associations, such as the Cynic Diogenes who embraced the name when Plato called him a dog.<sup>43</sup> Thus, Harrill suggests that Jesus’ statement in John 51c–58 was intended to offend but also to subvert, since this is the pattern that John’s Jesus has followed throughout the gospel:

John introduces motifs familiar from Jewish tradition only to subvert each by redirecting the symbol to an exclusive application to Jesus—ascension to heaven (1:51; 3:13; 6:62), living water (4:10; 7:37–39), Moses “lifting up” the serpent (3:14; 8:28; 12:32–34), Abraham’s children (8:31–58), the manna from heaven (6:31–42) [...] The positive appropriation of cannibalistic language, therefore, fits an overall exegetical pattern of Johannine irony, subversion, and polemic.<sup>44</sup>

Harrill points out the various places in John where the way in which Jesus speaks

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<sup>40</sup> Harrill, “Cannibalistic Language,” 149.

<sup>41</sup> Harrill, “Cannibalistic Language,” 150.

<sup>42</sup> Attridge, “Genre Bending,” 14.

<sup>43</sup> Harrill, “Cannibalistic Language,” 154; Diogenes Laertius 6.40, 6.61.

<sup>44</sup> Harrill, “Cannibalistic Language,” 155.

triggers division and in particular, creates boundaries between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders,’ sections which largely, given the narrative context, mean divisions between Jesus’ followers and οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι.<sup>45</sup> I would argue that this subversion of motifs in order to establish clear divisions extends to texts outside the Jewish milieu, and can be said, also, of the Greco-Roman literature of John’s era. The romance novels reflect cultural understandings of divinity, mortality, and the relationship between the two that John would have been exposed to as a person living in the ancient Mediterranean world and that John was equally capable of re-directing to his own ends regarding Jesus’ role on earth and his relationship to God. In other words, John’s author manipulates tropes common to the literary world of the ancient Mediterranean in order to make definite statements not only about insiders and outsiders, but also, relatedly, about Jesus’ divinity.

Thus, the main place where I diverge from Harrill is in identifying the multiple meanings embedded in John 6:51c–58. Harrill concludes that the cannibalistic language in John 6:51c–58 is a kind of *shibboleth* which establishes boundaries between those who belong and those who do not, and further promotes desertion among those who are not worthy.<sup>46</sup> Certainly, some of those who had been following and listening to Jesus leave after the problematic statement (6:66). It is clear that John makes use of this pre-existing boundary creator in order to repurpose it in his own way; it maintains its function as a community divider but at the same time subverts the expected sides. I suggest that this is not the only purpose of this motif, and that anthropophagic language in John 6:51c–58 in fact

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<sup>45</sup> Harrill, “Cannibalistic Language,” 155–156.

<sup>46</sup> Harrill, “Cannibalistic Language,” 157; Smith, *Symposium*, 274–275 also puts forward this interpretation of Jesus’ words.

also has a strong link to heroines in the romance novels, whose cannibalistic adventures function to establish their divine identity. That is, while I agree with Harrill that John's Jesus exploits the motif of cannibalism-as-identity-marker, I argue further that John's use of the motif centres around identifying Jesus *as divine*. Certainly, John defines his implied audience as those willing to consume the flesh and blood of Jesus, but the consumption of that flesh and blood does more than simply articulate boundaries for that community; rather, it creates the association between Jesus and God because it *also* repurposes the heroic mode of divine identification. In other words, this trope is active on multiple levels. John's insertion of a cannibalistic reference within the allusions to Jesus' death in John 6:51c–58 becomes comprehensible in light of Nagy's proposal that antagonism in literature corresponds to association in cult. The significance of this manipulation of tropes is apparent once the sacrificial meal itself is explored.

#### **4.4 Antagonism between Jesus and God**

In the Gospel of John, Jesus' antagonism with the one whom he calls his father, that is with God, echoes what we witness in the Greek novels concerning the antagonism experienced between the heroines and the deities who sent them on their travels and who ultimately led most of them up to the point of death. Although I have touched on Lawrence Wills's treatment of the subject above, his analysis of John's gospel as reflecting a paradigm for the hero cult warrants further discussion in this context. Wills compares the gospel to the anonymous

*Life of Aesop*, which is roughly contemporary with John.<sup>47</sup> The plot of the novel follows Aesop's life; it begins with the protagonist a mute slave, whose devotion to Isis is rewarded with the gift of speech. Eager to make use of his new-found ability, he relentlessly instructs those around him—including his owner—using witty phrases. When Aesop is eventually freed, he travels to Delphi where his teachings are not accepted with the same good humour that they were in Samos, where they establish a shrine to him to show their appreciation for his help. Aesop criticizes the Delphic practice of ritualized chaotic division of sacrificial meat, so that the supplier of the sacrifice often does not receive his portion.<sup>48</sup> The Delphians respond badly to this criticism and condemn him to death; when Aesop is executed, a plague overwhelms the city. In order to rid themselves of the disease, the citizens consult an oracle of Zeus who tells them to sacrifice to Aesop in order to be free of the plague.

Aesop's antagonistic deity is Apollo, the leader of the Muses. Aesop's first misstep in the inevitable path to his downfall is that he sacrifices to the Muses instead of to Apollo and even goes so far as to have a statue of himself built. When Aesop reaches Delphi, it is with Apollo's help that the citizens frame Aesop for theft. At the end, Aesop asks the god for help, and Aesop is executed; but the plague hits the Delphians shortly thereafter. Wills writes:

It was the suggestion of Perry that Aesop's reverence for Isis and the Muses reflected a popular disenchantment with Apollo and the class he was identified with, the slave-owning class of the pretentious aristocratic philosopher. Gregory Nagy, however, argues that Apollo is throughout the patron deity of Aesop; the latter becomes estranged from the god, only to be reunited in death. This estrangement, in fact, is typical of hero cults in ancient Greece, where there is,

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<sup>47</sup> Wills, *Quest*, 23-50.

<sup>48</sup> This may sound familiar; this same ritual took place at Pyrrhos' death, discussed above in 3.2 and of course by Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 118–141.

according to Nagy, “antagonism in myth, symbiosis in cult.”<sup>49</sup>

Nagy’s treatment of the Aesop tradition is significant for this study of John because in it, Nagy is careful to point out the feedback loop present in the myth and ritual: Aesop’s death is the cause of the ritual institution he critiques while at the same time, his death in the narrative is caused by his critique.<sup>50</sup> That is, everything is occurring at the level of narrative. It is this relationship which establishes the association of Aesop with Apollo. Thus *Life of Aesop*, too, reflects the understanding of the relationship between chosen human and god that is recorded in literature from the time of the epics to the turn of the millennium and after. In particular, the complicated cause and effect relationship between the antagonism, the ritual, and the divine identification found in *Aesop* as observed by Wills and Nagy is also found in the Greek romances. As I have illustrated above, this feedback loop of antagonism–sacrifice/cannibalism–divinity is a key manifestation of the type of relationship Nagy finds between heroes and gods in Homer’s epics. Likewise, I argue that this “antagonism in myth, symbiosis in cult” is also found in John.

Further, Wills notices similarities with the *ways* in which Jesus and Aesop die. In *Life of Aesop*, the Delphians put him to death in a way that makes him a *pharmakos*, a scapegoat.<sup>51</sup> The act of putting a person to death is polluting, and the only way for this act to be purified is with the establishment of the hero’s cult. Wills’s outline of Jesus’ death shows the parallels between his sacrifice and the trope of heroic death in the Greco-Roman world. He points out that (likely pre-

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<sup>49</sup> Wills, *Quest*, 27.

<sup>50</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 286.

<sup>51</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 308.

Pauline) formulas speak of Jesus or Christ as one who has died for the sins of others—in other words as an expiation.<sup>52</sup> In particular, Wills observes that the oracle uttered unwittingly by Caiaphas in John 11:50 makes a significant point of contact with the heroic death narratives, where frequently the “sacrifice of the hero is demanded or predicted by an oracle.”<sup>53</sup> Caiaphas’ words, “It is expedient that one man should die for the people, so that the whole nation not perish,” make it clear to the readers (though ironically not to Caiaphas himself) that Jesus’ death is on behalf of the nation and can therefore be seen as expiatory. Jesus’ death at the request of certain factions of οἱ ἰουδαῖοι results in his worship by certain other factions of that same community.<sup>54</sup>

Wills also observes that Jesus’ death in John occurs at the same time as the sacrifice of the Passover lambs in the Jerusalem temple.<sup>55</sup> As I have observed earlier, John’s gospel avoids discussion of the expected Christian rituals of baptism and eucharist and yet maintains a concern for the practice of ritual; Nagy, too, notices this feature in the heroic epics which are the focus of his work, the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*.<sup>56</sup> The fact that John shares his concern for right ritual practice with Homer suggests that the leap from literary death to cultic concern is indigenous. Likewise, John’s location of Jesus’ death at the time of that other, ordinary expiatory sacrifice, further establishes Jesus’ death in a sacrificial, and therefore heroic, context. In other words, John’s concern with right ritual practice

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<sup>52</sup> Wills, *Quest*, 43; 1 Cor 15:3; Romans 3:25; 1 Cor 5:7; see also Mark 10:45.

<sup>53</sup> Wills, *Quest*, 44.

<sup>54</sup> Wills also notes that at this point in early Christian history the distinction applied by scholars between Jews and Christians does not make sense (*Quest*, 44).

<sup>55</sup> Wills, *Quest*, 45; John 19:36.

<sup>56</sup> Gregory Nagy, introduction to *The Iliad* by Homer (Robert Fitzgerald, trans.; London: Random Century, 1992), vii.

combined with the manner and timing of Jesus' expiatory death, as prophesied by Caiaphas, creates an image of Jesus which shares significant points with the hero of the epic and with Aesop. Jesus' and Aesop's manners of death are therefore comparable; in this way, Jesus can also be viewed as a heroic *pharmakos*.

Wills also points out that there seem to be striking similarities between Aesop's characterization and Jesus': the travelling distributor of pithy wisdom is persecuted and eventually executed as a kind of scapegoat/*pharmakos*. Clearly much of Jesus' narrative follows a very similar pattern, especially, Wills observes, if we consider Jesus' relationship to his own community, οἱ ἰουδαῖοι.<sup>57</sup> It is especially appropriate for the current study that Wills here quotes Nagy:<sup>58</sup>

By losing his identification with a person or group and identifying himself with a god who takes his life in the process, the hero effects a purification by transferring impurity. [...] In such a hero cult, god and hero are to be institutionalized as the respectively dominant and recessive members of an internal relationship.<sup>59</sup>

This method of establishing such an eternal relationship can also be observed in the romance novels we have been discussing so far. In each case, the protagonists have experienced alienation from their communities. There are some differences worth articulating: whereas in the novels, the great beauty of the heroines gave them away as divine creatures, Aesop's disfiguring ugliness is remarkable.

Winkler calls this satirical characterization of the main character the trope of the Grotesque Outsiders, one who is more capable of penetrating humanity's veneer because of his or her marginal status.<sup>60</sup> As such, it is a satirical novel, but this, Wills is quick to point out, in no way effaces its usefulness in examining the finer

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<sup>57</sup> Wills, *Quest*, 28.

<sup>58</sup> Wills, *Quest*, 28–29.

<sup>59</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 307.

<sup>60</sup> John Winkler, *Auctor and Actor: A Narratological Reading of Apuleius' Golden Ass* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 276–291; Wills, *Quest*, 26.



points of the genre as a whole, especially since *Leucippe and Clitophon* might well fall into the satirical camp itself.<sup>61</sup> The overarching theme in both *Aesop* and John of alienation and execution also plays out in the romances; Aesop's satirical ugliness functions has a reversal of the goddesses' beauty, but further, the trope of the outsider is clearly visible in all the examples. In short, while Wills compares just *Aesop* and John for his comparison, for the purposes of this project, where consumption is also a factor, it is significant that the romances also follow this narrative pattern in which the protagonists experience exile.

In Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, the alienation comes not just from the couple's geographical distance from their families, but also from their emotional break with their home. The pair runs away to avoid the backlash from being discovered almost *in flagrante* by Leucippe's mother.<sup>62</sup> Their flight to the ship signals not just the physical distance between the star-crossed lovers and their families, but also their separation from a previously beloved community which has turned against them by their actions. In Xenophon's *Ephesian Tale*, Anthia and Habrocomes experience this unfortunate separation from their community in the form of a forced exile mandated by the oracle.<sup>63</sup> Although their parents are distressed at the thought of sending away their beloved children, they follow the oracle's directions; their obedience results in the perilous journey foretold by the oracle, and in particular, in Anthia's near-sacrifice by bandits in 2.13.1–5.

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<sup>61</sup> Wills, *Quest*, 27; cf. Bruce D. MacQueen, *Myth, Rhetoric, and Fiction: A Reading of Longus's Daphnis and Chloe* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990.)

<sup>62</sup> Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* 2.25.3; 29.1–30.2.

<sup>63</sup> 1.10.7–10.

Callirhoe and Chaereas' tale also contains a subtler variation of this type of community alienation. Chaereas, for his part, does not experience the same type of exile, since the entire community, even Callirhoe's own father, exempts him from the punishment he earned through 'murdering' his wife. Callirhoe, for all intents and purposes, is dead at the time that the couple begins their adventures. In one sense, her 'death' marks her formal alienation from her family and homeland even before she is kidnapped by pirates. She continues in her alienation even after she reluctantly shares her tale of woe with Dionysius and begs him to reinstate her to her family.<sup>64</sup> Thus, Chariton's female protagonist, Callirhoe, fits very well into Nagy's and Wills's paradigm, in which the hero/heroine loses his/her community identity and becomes instead associated with a divinity.

Finally, *An Ethiopian Story* makes, as usual, for a more complicated example. Since the tale opens for the reader part of the way through the plot, we only find out much later that Charicleia has been alienated from her true community and family almost since birth. Similarly to Callirhoe and Leucippe, who both feared that they would be suspected of infidelity by their husband and mother respectively, Charicleia was exiled because of Queen Persinna's own fear of the stain of adultery: The Queen, Charicleia's true mother, felt compelled to send away her fair-skinned daughter who lacked her parents' dark skin on account of being conceived while her mother was gazing at a portrait of Andromeda. The tokens of identity given to Charicleia by her mother might lessen the severity of the emotional alienation but do nothing to temper the fact of Charicleia's decades-

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<sup>64</sup> 2.5.9–12.

long exile from her family and homeland.

The parallels Wills draws between *Life of Aesop* and portions of John where Jesus specifically distances himself from his community, such as John 8:39–47, are therefore also parallels that exist in the romances. Although the latter are not as explicit in developing this theme of alienation as are *Life of Aesop* or the Gospel of John, their resulting association with divinities could not be clearer, as my previous discussion in chapter two has shown. The same pattern, Wills notes, is followed in the Jesus narrative, “especially if we begin to consider the latter [sc. Jesus’ expiatory death] in terms of an ambivalent relationship with his people, that is to the Jews [sc. οἱ ἰουδαῖοι], Israel, or Jerusalem.”<sup>65</sup> The notion of the expiatory death is complicated in the romance novels, but as Nicole Loraux has shown in her work, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman*, the slaughter of a woman in tragedy is *always* expiatory.<sup>66</sup> This is clearly the case, for example, with Iphigeneia.<sup>67</sup> Does Loraux’s claim also apply to the apparent-deaths the heroines undergo in the romances? What expiation is required by the plots of the romances that these heroines’ deaths should be necessary? The individual sacrificial circumstances are not expiatory in context. Charicleia and Theagenes are to be thanksgiving offerings, the first-fruits of war. Leucippe is a propitiatory and cleansing sacrifice<sup>68</sup> which appears later to also, to some extent, be initiatory, since Menelaus and Satyrus are tested by their performance of the sacrifice.<sup>69</sup> Anthia, for her part, is also to be a propitiatory (ἐξιλάσκομαι) sacrifice when she

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<sup>65</sup> Wills, *Quest*, 28.

<sup>66</sup> Loraux, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman*, 4.

<sup>67</sup> Euripides, *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, 1378–1384.

<sup>68</sup> 3.12.2.

<sup>69</sup> 3.19.3.

is set to be shot through with spears while hanging from a tree.<sup>70</sup> We must therefore turn to the overarching narrative for an answer.

I would suggest that it is the original angering of the deities which necessitate the sacrifices of these heroines. Habrocomes mocks Eros with his arrogant resistance to the god's powers;<sup>71</sup> Chaereas makes void his affections for Callirhoe with his murderous jealousy, and so can be said to inspire the wrath of Aphrodite; Leucippe's willingness to transgress normal virtue in the face of her affections for Clitophon offends Artemis. Finally, the comparison between Charicleia's appearance and Andromeda's would have evoked the myth of Andromeda in the minds of the readers.<sup>72</sup> Since Andromeda is the expiatory sacrifice ordered by Poseidon after her mother insulted the Nereids, Charicleia's resemblance is therefore evocative of the sacrifice of another maiden at the behest of the gods. As such, the four novels pertinent to this project seem also to participate in the same narrative pattern shared by *Life of Aesop* and the Gospel of John. To this end, I would argue further that these novels hold particular significance for the interpretation of John's gospel since they share John's anthropophagic overtones, which are absent in *Life of Aesop*.<sup>73</sup>

The final aspect of this comparison between Jesus' death and that of the hero comes in the form of the antagonism between him and his deity, in this case, God his Father. John's Jesus does not speak out against his antagonist on the cross

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<sup>70</sup> 2.13.2.

<sup>71</sup> *Ephesian Tale*, 1.1.5; 1.2.1.

<sup>72</sup> *An Ethiopian Story* 10.14.7.

<sup>73</sup> The fable Aesop tells in 134–139, involving a rabbit who is eaten by an eagle despite an attempt at rescue by a dung beetle could be interpreted as having cannibalistic allusions, since Aesop is clearly the rabbit in the fable; but since his death is off a cliff and does not carry around it the language of sacrifice, I do not count it as applicable to this problem.

as does Mark's in 15:34, but I would argue that this antagonism is nevertheless present in John. In the same way that the romance novels lay at the feet of the gods the blame for the protagonists' dangerous travels, John also points out the ways in which God is responsible for Jesus' death on the cross. As Jo Ann Brant notes, even the very act of placing Jesus on earth, which God does, makes him vulnerable to death.<sup>74</sup> Although the gospel appears to defend itself against pointing the finger at God by making villains out of those who misinterpret Jesus' signs,<sup>75</sup> and by making Jesus appear comfortable with his role in the drama, it is nevertheless clear that all of Jesus' actions are at the behest of his father, God: "the Son can do nothing of his own accord" (John 5:19). God's responsibility clearly includes the behaviours, and especially the signs, that lead to his trial and execution. Jesus' words at his arrest, "Shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?" (John 18:11b) indicate that John's Jesus understands his death to be the will of God and thus God's ultimate responsibility. At his trial with Pilate, Jesus again makes clear that God is at the helm; he tells Pilate, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given to you from above." Although Pilate seems responsible for what is about to happen to Jesus, the author is careful to redirect the focus to the ultimate antagonist. Without God's will, Jesus could not have been put to death. In the same way, then, that the heroines of the romances are at the mercy of the gods who control their adventures, Jesus' death comes at the behest of his God.<sup>76</sup> Nagy's observations about the heroes and their relationships to the gods of the epics are therefore applicable here. Just as Apollo

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<sup>74</sup> Brant, "Divine Birth," 202.

<sup>75</sup> Brant, "Divine Birth," 204.

<sup>76</sup> See also Menken's discussion of this: "Eucharist or Christology?" 192–193.

and Achilles are locked in this potentially deadly relationship, so too is Jesus' life in the hands of God.

Jesus' remark in John 10:18 is particularly important in this respect, not only in that it points to Jesus' death being completely the will of God but also in that it simultaneously points to Jesus' identity with God: "No one takes it [his life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father."<sup>77</sup>

Likewise, Bultmann acknowledges that Jesus' time on earth "is God's revelation, the deed of the Father who glorified and will glorify, who wills that this life with its end be understood as *his* doing."<sup>78</sup> As such, in acknowledging that it is uniquely God's will that he die, in his agency in that act and in his willingness to die, Jesus again confirms his divine identification. To this end, John 6:51c–58 is especially important to the relationship that is created over the course of the gospel between Jesus and God since it points to the ultimate event of antagonism between god and hero.

John 6:51c–58 foreshadows Jesus' death by referring to the giving of

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<sup>77</sup> "οὐδεὶς αἶρει αὐτὴν ἀπ' ἐμοῦ, ἀλλ' ἐγὼ τίθημι αὐτὴν ἀπ' ἐμαυτοῦ. ἐξουσίαν ἔχω θεῖναι αὐτήν, καὶ ἐξουσίαν ἔχω πάλιν λαβεῖν αὐτήν. ταύτην τὴν ἐντολὴν ἔλαβον παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου." Jesus frequently speaks of his obedience to God's will in other passages in John as well: for example, 5:36 ("τὰ γὰρ ἔργα ἃ δέδωκέν μοι ὁ πατήρ ἵνα τελειώσω αὐτά, αὐτὰ τὰ ἔργα ἃ ποιῶ μαρτυρεῖ περὶ ἐμοῦ ὅτι ὁ πατήρ με ἀπέσταλκεν." / "For the works which the Father has granted me to accomplish, these very works which I am doing, bear me witness that the Father has sent me;") 6:38 ("ὅτι καταβέβηκα ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ οὐχ ἵνα ποιῶ τὸ θέλημα τὸ ἐμὸν ἀλλὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πέμψαντός με." / "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me;") 8:28 ("εἶπεν οὖν [αὐτοῖς] ὁ ἰησοῦς· ὅταν ὑψώσῃτε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, τότε γνώσεσθε ὅτε ἐγὼ εἰμι, καὶ ἀπ' ἐμαυτοῦ ποιῶ οὐδέν, ἀλλὰ καθὼς ἐδίδαξέν με ὁ πατήρ ταῦτα λαλῶ." / "So Jesus said, 'When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority but speak thus as the Father taught me;") and 17:4 ("ἐγὼ σε ἐδόξασα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς τὸ ἔργον τελειώσας ὃ δέδωκάς μοι ἵνα ποιήσω." / "I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do." For another scholar who agrees that God's purpose in sending his son to earth is that he be put to death, see Eduard Schweizer, "Was meinen wir eigentlich wenn wir sagen 'Gott sandte seinen Sohn...?'" *NTS* 37 (1991): 212–216.

<sup>78</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 429.

Jesus' flesh for the life of the world. Bultmann states that the language used in 51c is especially suggestive of Jesus' death,<sup>79</sup> since other early Christian texts make use of δίδωμι + ὑπέρ, as John does, when referring to Jesus' gift of his life.<sup>80</sup> Thus, although John does not use the same sacrificial terms employed by the romance novels, there is, nonetheless, a sacrificial overtone to John 6:51c–58 in that these verses reference Jesus' death *on behalf* of others. The most significant term used to describe Jesus' death in 6:51, δίδωμι + ὑπέρ—ὁ ἄρτος δὲ ὃν ἐγὼ δώσω ἢ σαρξ μου ἐστὶν ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ζωῆς—implies the giving over or handing over of something. In non-Christian contexts, the term δίδωμι is used to refer to ritual offerings which are given over to a god.<sup>81</sup> In the New Testament, especially when used in conjunction with ὑπέρ, the term connotes Jesus' expiatory death on the cross. Harkening back to Isaiah 53, the phrase functions to point to Jesus as one who suffers death on behalf of other people.<sup>82</sup> Brown's commentary on John is explicit in associating the term with Jesus' death and specifically his crucifixion, although he further associates it with the eucharist. Barrett also agrees that 51c presents a clear reference to Jesus' death.<sup>83</sup> Both Barrett and Bultmann agree that the further commandment in verse 52, which escalates the commandment to include blood, not just flesh, further emphasizes the scene's reference to Jesus' death. However, in my view both

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<sup>79</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 234–235.

<sup>80</sup> Galatians 1:4; 2:20; Romans 8:32; Ephesians 5:2; Titus 2:14; Luke 22:19.

<sup>81</sup> E.g. *Iliad* 12.6; *Odyssey* 1.67. Interestingly, the same verb can also be used to describe the handing over of a daughter to become a wife (e.g. *Iliad* 6.192; *Odyssey* 4.7). Such a use complements the idea that chastity in *Chaereas and Callirhoe* is the sacrificial offering. See above, chapter 3 note 186.

<sup>82</sup> Ellen B. Aitken, *Jesus' Death in Early Christian Memory: The Poetics of the Passion* (Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus: Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments 53; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht/Fribourg: Academic Press, 2004), 31.

<sup>83</sup> Barrett, *John*, 283.

Bultmann and Barrett fall short in that they conclude that this reference to death, concretized by the inclusion of the blood, ultimately evokes the eucharist. While this is not an unreasonable association, the use of δίδωμι in correlation with ὑπέρ is found throughout the New Testament in verses whose context is not eucharistic, but rather, sacrificial.<sup>84</sup>

The best example of this is found in Ephesians 5:2: “καὶ περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ, καθὼς καὶ ὁ χριστὸς ἡγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ **παρέδωκεν** ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν τῷ θεῷ εἰς ὁσμὴν εὐωδίας.” Here, Jesus is referred to as a “fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” after he has given himself up (παρέδωκεν... ὑπέρ). This metaphor<sup>85</sup> works to transform Jesus into a sacrificial offering. Sacrifice is a vehicle<sup>86</sup> for understanding and interpreting Jesus’ death, a vehicle that takes on a life of its own, influencing and injecting meaning into a wide range of texts and concepts. This use of sacrificial language, rather than simply remaining a way of describing Jesus’ death, becomes reversed: Jesus’ death is understood only through the sacrificial metaphor, and so the use of sacrificial language such as δίδωμι + ὑπέρ stands as a placeholder for his death, consistently and subtly alluding to that event.

Other instances where this phrase, δίδωμι + ὑπέρ, occurs include Galatians 1:4, 2:20; Romans 8:32; Titus 2:14; and Luke 22:19. Each of these cases implies expiation through Jesus’ sacrificial death, but *only* the Lukan reference pertains to the Eucharist. There is no reason, therefore, to assume

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<sup>84</sup> Helmut Koester suggests that the association between sacrificial imagery and the Last Supper comes relatively late (“The Historical Jesus and the Cult of the Kyrios Christos,” *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 24.3 (1995): 13–18).

<sup>85</sup> And this is not, we should note, a simile—Jesus is not *like* a sacrifice.

<sup>86</sup> See I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), esp. 95–100.



eucharistic undertones to δίδωμι + ὑπέρ in John 6:51. Rather, the phrase clearly connects Jesus' statement to the sacrificial language used elsewhere in the New Testament to refer to his expiatory death.

If we accept that Jesus' words in John 6:51c–58 are an allusion to his crucifixion, at this point, we can cast our nets for comparisons in the literature of the ancient Mediterranean world. As I noted above in my discussion of Wills's work on the hero Aesop, the hero's death as a *pharmakos*, one who dies on behalf of the community, forms a parallel here. Aesop's death does not necessitate cannibalism on the part of those who, afterwards, establish his cult, but the pattern of his death alerts us to other possible comparisons, namely, the heroines of the romances. Indeed, the fact that the language is sacrificial locates Jesus' statement more firmly in the milieu of the sacrificial deaths of the heroines of the romance novels than in a eucharistic context. The presence of sacrificial and consumptive language should be examined alongside other uses of sacrificial and consumptive language in the realm of literature. John 6:51c–58 is therefore linked by this terminology to the sacrificial terminology used in the romances.

The heroines are especially appropriate as a lens with which to examine the meaning of John 6:51c–58 since their deaths are also both allusions and illusions: they allude to the deaths of the heroes of the epics at the same time as they are illusory and do not actually take place. That is, the sacrifices of the heroines in the novels do not actually occur but rather appear to occur; in this way, they do actually take place in the narrative reality created by the words describing the horrific act. John 6:51c–58 alludes to a future death and at the same time evokes the illusion of that death having taken place already, as I will discuss

below in 4.2. This has the effect of creating in the imaginations of the readers the anticipation that these sacrifices will or have already occurred. The points I wish to make are as follows:

1. Jesus in 6:51c–58 discusses his death and consumption of flesh in a way that brings to mind most vividly the corporeality of death. In this way, the language used by John resembles that used by Achilles Tatius in *Leucippe and Clitophon*. Although the verbs used in John 6:51c–58 are not extraordinary verbs of eating or drinking, as I have shown in chapter one, the commandment to consume human flesh is certainly unusual if not abhorrent. Further, John's Jesus uses sacrificial language that, though different in terms of vocabulary from the novels, is consistent with the metaphor of sacrifice and death in New Testament texts.

2. Such explicit discussions of gory sacrifice stand out in the ancient literature, which, as I discussed above, is usually more discreet about references to sacrificial practice, preferring to couch blood and gore in the language of banquet and aroma.

3. I argued above in 3.7 that Achilles Tatius' motivation for making Leucippe's 'sacrifice' more shocking was to create a sense of un-reality in the minds of the readers that simultaneously reinforces the fact that the sacrifice happens. The forceful language used creates a situation in which the unthinkable is made startlingly real: Leucippe is simultaneously killed and is alive.

4. I therefore suggest that John's statement regarding Jesus' flesh and his commandment to consume it functions in a similar way. We have already concluded that this section of John prefigures Jesus' death in a way that calls to

mind the extremely physical reality of a fleshly death. As such, this graphic reminder of Jesus' impending crucifixion as *pharmakos* is made real in John 6:51c–58 through the use of this allusory and illusory language. That is, just as the romances use such descriptions to imply both the death and false-death of their heroines, so too does John vividly place in the minds of his readers the imminence of Jesus' death. The imagined deaths of heroines in tragedies create multiple simultaneous meanings in the minds of the readers. The anticipation of the act makes the event just as real as if it had actually occurred. The sacrificial death and consumption of the heroine takes place at the narrative level. Thus, when Jesus alludes so strongly and graphically to not only his own death but also the consumption of his flesh, the anticipated death seems to take place before the mind's eye of the audience; the killing and the eating take place as the reader ingests the words Jesus speaks.

#### **4.5 Jesus' Death and God's Glory: Contemporaneity in John**

The reference in John 6:51c–58 to Jesus' sacrifice and consumption makes narratively real Jesus' identification with God. In his statement, Jesus points to his sacrifice and references the sacrificial consumption of his flesh, which in turn suggests the resolution of his antagonistic relationship with God. These claims can be made in part because of John's peculiar manipulation of time, a phenomenon which Bultmann names contemporaneity,<sup>87</sup> and in part because of John's use of the simultaneity of divine and mortal identities that we also saw at play in the romances. Jesus' death and the consuming of his body by his followers

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<sup>87</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 198.

is one of a series of conceptual overlaps which are found in many aspects of John's christology and which also appear in the expression of divinity put forward by the romance novels. It is fitting then to view John 6:51c–58 from the vantage point of two intersecting concepts: the simultaneous identities of mortal and divine, and the contemporaneous events of sacrifice and immortality, both of which John shares in common with the romances.

At first glance, it seems impossible for Jesus to be alive and eternal on the one hand and be killed and consumed on the other, yet both of these possibilities occur simultaneously in John 6:51c–58. As I illustrated above in 4.2, Jesus' use of δίδωμι + ὑπέρ evokes the metaphor of sacrifice. This allusion to his sacrificial death brings about his sacrifice, which takes places in the minds of his audience at the very moment he utters the words. His identity as the Son of God, the one sent from heaven, is reinforced in his seemingly contradictory statement in 6:51c–58.<sup>88</sup> This statement is understandable once we tease out the ways in which John makes use of simultaneity of being and contemporaneity of time. In this way, the antagonism, the association of hero and god, and the event of the cult meal in both the romance novels and in John overlap each other both in ontology and in time.

This simultaneity of ontology is also well represented in other aspects of John's christology. Menken points out that Jesus is *both* the bread *and* the one who gives it; "Jesus *gives* what he *is*."<sup>89</sup> This collision of Jesus' death and his association with God is also present in the "I am"-sayings and also other statements that he makes associated with them: "Jesus is life (11:25; 14:6), and he

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<sup>88</sup> Peter, because of the Bread of Life Discourse, correctly identifies Jesus as "the Holy One of God" / "ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ" in 6:69.

<sup>89</sup> Menken, "Eucharist or Christology?" 194.

gives life (15:21; 6:33; 10:28; 17:2). He is the resurrection (11:25; 14:6), and raises believers (6:39, 40, 44, 54). [...] He is light (1:9; 8:12; 9:5), and he gives light (1:5, 9).”<sup>90</sup> That these simultaneities manifest themselves not just in corresponding ontological and donatory statements, but also in actions, gives a framework within which John 6:51c–58 is understandable as a christological statement. That is, it makes sense that Jesus casts himself simultaneously as both the one who gives the bread and the bread itself in the context of Jesus’ other statements concerning his dual identity; his statements in John 6:51c–58 lend themselves naturally to christological interpretation in this context.

This simultaneity is corroborated by the strange sense of time in John’s gospel. John has no future: everything occurs in the present. This is discussed by Bultmann, referring to the evangelist’s lack of future eschatology:<sup>91</sup> “the completion of the eschatological event is not to be awaited at some time in the future; it is taking place even now in the life and destiny of Jesus.”<sup>92</sup> For Bultmann, John’s gospel has no future: the time of God is already here in the presence of Jesus (John 4:23). Likewise, then, Jesus’ death is not a future event with regard to John 6:51c–58; it is rather an imminent, present event that *is* rather than *will be* since it is the salvific act which is the zenith of the revealer’s presence on earth. In the same way that he was not created and has always existed, (John 1:1–4), Jesus’ death is not a moment in history but an ongoing

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<sup>90</sup> Menken, “Eucharist or Christology?” 194; these statements are further matched by Jesus’ actions, such as the resurrection of Lazarus in 11:1–44 and the healing of the man born blind in chapter 9.

<sup>91</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 107, 167.

<sup>92</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 128; in 190n.1, Bultmann recommends Doris Faulhaber, *Das Johannesevangelium und die Kirche* (Kassel: Stauda, 1938), 89f on the Johannine concept of the “now.”

ontological, salvific, and eschatological reality. Most important for our study are Bultmann's statements about Jesus' death: "*past and future are bound to each other*. That the hour of death is the hour of glorifying God rests on the fact that the entire work of Jesus serves the revelation."<sup>93</sup> This bears repeating: Jesus' death in John takes place at every moment, and at the same time is beyond time, because Jesus' signs point to God's glory which is only manifest in Jesus' death. This revelation is contemporaneous with Jesus' work on earth and thus with his mortality. Thus, John's references to Jesus' crucifixion throughout his gospel, but in particular in 6:51c–58, do not allude to future events in a linear narrative of historical events, the way such allusions might function in the synoptic gospels, but rather they remind the reader of an event which is both concurrent and a-temporal. Like Jesus' very existence, his death is outside of time itself.

In earthly time the 'coming' of the Revealer and his 'going away' are separate events, in eschatological time they are contemporaneous [...] The Evangelist will make this paradox clear by means of the concept of Jesus' *δοξασθῆναι*, which took place in his activity in the past, but which comes to fruition only in his death.<sup>94</sup>

Likewise, I argue, we must not attempt to understand Jesus' statements in John 6:51c–58 as part of a linear description of his activities, outside of the context of John's continued use of Jesus' signs (a) as pointing simultaneously to God's glory and (b) Jesus' expiatory death on the cross. Not only do these events take place in a simultaneous way, their *meanings* colliding, but they also take place in a contemporaneous way, *their temporal location colliding*. Jesus' statements about the consumption of his flesh coincide with his divinity in John's temporal landscape at the same time as they intersect with the event of Jesus' expiatory

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<sup>93</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 429.

<sup>94</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 198.

sacrificial death.<sup>95</sup> That is, the fact that these contemporaneous (time) and simultaneous (identity) statements exist in John as a method to communicate Jesus' divinity and association with God the Father support the function of these tropes in John 6:51c–58 where they are at work as christological markers. Just like the heroines in the romance novels, then, Jesus is capable of actualizing his death and consumption through statements about himself, which are therefore also about his divine nature. That Jesus makes such offensive claims about the consumption of his flesh concurrently with the allusion to his salvific death is the expression of John's christology: the act of his death occurs in the moment that its implications are ingested. As Jesus commands the ingestion of his dead body, he appropriates the identity of his Father and is divine.

I argue that this exhortation to consume Jesus' flesh represents the contemporaneity of literary death and heroic cult *aition* in the same way that this reference to sacrifice and *θυσία* functions in the romances. The commandment to eat Jesus' flesh and drink his blood in John 6:51c–58 acts as a focusing lens, bringing together aspects of the heroic role that are disparate in the epics but which collide and intersect by the time of the romances; the climax of the antagonism between God and Jesus (that is, Jesus' death) is foreshadowed in John 6:51c–58 and at the same time the cult is established through the sacrificial act and associated consumption of the cult meal. This understanding of John 6:51c–58 fits well within John's existing christological concerns. In multiple places throughout the gospel, John articulates the love between God, Jesus, and the

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<sup>95</sup> To put this in the language of the Hellenistic sacrificial tradition, one might say that this is a sacrifice that requires “on the spot” or οὐ φερόν consumption of meat. Cf. Scullion, “Olympian and Chthonian,” 98ff.

world in such a way that necessitates Jesus' death; the Father's gift of the Son to the world is in fact the gift of his death. Menken observes that each time the terms "give" or "gift" are used in John with reference to this relationship, Jesus' death is implied: "The structure of John's christology [...] makes it clear that Jesus' act of giving himself as bread (6:51c) constitutes the climax of the Father's act of giving Jesus as bread (6:32)."<sup>96</sup> The association between God and Jesus is cemented in this way. This is all the more clear given the parallel sentences describing the giving of the bread. At first, in verse 32, Jesus is the bread which comes from heaven, sent by the Father; but later, in 51, Jesus himself becomes the giver of the bread. It is in the reference to death and the consumption of his flesh that Jesus and God become associated, just as heroes and gods become associated through cult.

Although Menken's analysis of John 6:51c–58 has thus far been helpful for this study, since it supports my argument about the contemporaneous reality and potentiality of Jesus' death as well as my proposal that the section should be read christologically in this light, I do not concur with his conclusion about the meaning of the anthropophagic eating encouraged by John's Jesus. Menken proposes that for a christological reading of this section to stand, the eating and drinking must be considered metaphorical. He argues that a literal reading of the section demands a eucharistic interpretation, since it is only in this context that the cannibalistic overtones can be mitigated:

a literal understanding of "to eat" and "to drink" in vv. 53–58 [...] is possible only when "flesh" and "blood" indicate eucharistic elements; when these terms here refer to the crucified Jesus [...] the verbs have to be understood in the same

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<sup>96</sup> Menken, "Eucharist or Christology?" 193–194.



metaphorical way as “to eat” in vv.50, 51ab. ‘To eat Jesus’ flesh and drink his blood’ then means: to believe in him as the one who dies for the whole world. Or, in slightly different words: to believe that in Jesus’ violent death God is acting for the life of the world.<sup>97</sup>

I argue rather that a metaphorical reading is not necessitated by excluding the eucharist from our discussion of John 6:51c–58. Having established points of contact with other literature from the ancient Mediterranean, and based on an analysis of the complex ways in which heroes and their cults are established, I suggest that Jesus’ flesh and blood are the flesh and blood of a hero killed for the lives of his people and that this flesh and blood is not just the *aition* which establishes the cult but is also the sacrifice consumed by worshippers. The consumption cements the cult which in turn solidifies the association between Jesus and God; this association originates in the antagonism present throughout John, an antagonism which culminates in Jesus’ death as a *pharmakos*.<sup>98</sup>

The function of Jesus’ words as cult *aition* dovetails with the conclusions other scholars have drawn about Jesus’ role as the giver of cultic law. As Berenson Maclean has observed, the “institution of *cult* is the decisive indication of heroic status,”<sup>99</sup> something that she argues, and I agree, Jesus does with words. Cult, in essence, is made up of actions that create and define a community of worshippers.<sup>100</sup> As discussed in the first chapter, John differs from the other canonical gospels in that it is not explicit about typically sacramental practices

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<sup>97</sup> Menken, “Eucharist or Christology?” 195.

<sup>98</sup> This makes the interpretation of the so-called misunderstanding of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in v. 52 very curious; it is after their incredulity that Jesus reemphasizes his statement. But it seems to me that their “misunderstanding” is ironic in that it is not, in fact, inaccurate. What Jesus is doing *is* promoting a (narrative) consumption of his flesh and blood; their disgust at this premise is understandable, but for more than cannibalistic reasons, since in fact Jesus is declaring himself equal to God with those words. To some extent, then, οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι here are objecting to Jesus’ divinity.

<sup>99</sup> Berenson Maclean, “Jesus as Cult Hero,” 199.

<sup>100</sup> Berenson Maclean, “Jesus as Cult Hero,” 201.

such as baptism and eucharist. Nevertheless, John's gospel is preoccupied with cultic actions, with the establishment of a cultic community in the pattern of the heroic cults. Jesus' discussion of right worship (προσκυνέω, προσκυνητής) in John 4:20–24 indicates not only that John is interested in cult, but also that that cult is brought about by knowing.<sup>101</sup> Berenson Maclean proposes that the focus on remembrance in the Farewell Discourse (John 13:31–17:26) points to this logocentric cult, where words and signs previously articulated by Jesus make sense only later, in light of his death, and where the act of remembrance is a rite which establishes the community of worshippers and therefore a heroic cult in line with what we find in *Heroikos*.<sup>102</sup> That the remembrance of Jesus' signs in the past and their reinterpretation in the present or future engages worshippers in the act of cult supports my supposition that John 6:51c–58 represents a cultic meal of the hero at the level of narrative; the remembrance of words in John as an act of cult ritual emphasizes the idea that John's cult exists in the narrative realm, just as those of the romance novels do. John 6:51c–58 makes sense when it is interpreted in light of Jesus' death, an event to which the scene deliberately points. Thus, Jesus' death as cult *aition* makes comprehensible the words he utters about the consumption of his flesh. Indeed, in light of how cult appears to work in John, that utterance is in itself a cultic act. The establishment of the cult is therefore of paramount importance in understanding the meaning of Jesus' commandment to eat his flesh and drink his blood. In other words, this commandment functions as cult *aition*.

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<sup>101</sup> Berenson Maclean, "Jesus as Cult Hero," 203–204.

<sup>102</sup> Berenson Maclean, "Jesus as Cult Hero," 203–207.

#### 4.6 Conclusion: Cult Meals and Jesus' Words

I have established that Jesus' statement in John 6:51c–58 alludes not only to his sacrificial death but also to his bodily sacrifice since it uses the specifically sacrificial formula of δίδωμι + ὑπέρ. In other words, this section of John embeds a sacrificial ritual in narrative. I have likewise determined that Jesus' exhortation in this pericope is not a *description* of the early Christian practice of the eucharist. His exhortation to eat his flesh and drink his blood is not a description at all; rather the words spoken affect his identification with God. I propose that narrative does not necessarily reflect historical reality, but rather that words used to articulate meaning create reality at the level of narrative: Jesus' words in verses 51c and 53–57 function as a ritual in ink. That is, Jesus' words in these verses can be understood as a 'speech act.' Jesus' words are the cult *aition*, establishing his association with God in the narrative reality. As such, John 6:51c–58 functions to articulate Jesus' divine identity.

The narrativity of the ritual, of this *aition*, operates on two levels in John, since Jesus' words are twice removed from the historical world: once because this consumption of flesh and blood is embedded in a narrative of Jesus' life and teaching, and twice because within that narrative it is embedded in the speech of the character of Jesus. Thus two narrative realms are present in this passage: a sub-narrative describing Jesus on the shore, discussing the bread of life, and a meta-narrative, which is Jesus' statements about the bread of life. Jesus' words represent a ritual that takes place at the level of story even when that ritual does not ever actually take place either (a) in the sub-narrative (i.e., Jesus' flesh is

never narratively consumed) or (b) in historical reality (i.e. this eating of Jesus' flesh, metaphorical or otherwise, is not a reference to any actual ritual).<sup>103</sup>

John's use of sacrificial language links Jesus' statement with his own imminent sacrificial death. The cultural expectations around sacrifice differ depending on the context; victim, deity, and occasion all contribute to the shape and tone of the ritual. I have argued above in chapter three that the human sacrifices that (almost) occur in the romance novels are left deliberately ambiguous. The language used to describe the impending sacrificial deaths of the heroines is vague in order to scandalize the readership, since it leaves open the possibility of a cannibalistic banquet post-sacrifice. Although *θυσία* is certainly the unmarked term for sacrifice, implying no expectations one way or the other, it allows for the consumption of meat more readily than the marked term *σφάγια*, which is not used in the romances to describe these sacrifices. Likewise, John's use of the construction *δίδωμι + ὑπέρ*, while it implies sacrifice, does not seem—in the New Testament texts which use it—to *require* a meal, but as Ephesians 5:2, John 6:51, and even Luke 22:19 illustrate, consumption of the flesh which has been given for the purpose of sacrifice is a distinct and likely possibility, since the terminology reflects an unmarked, ordinary sacrifice. In this way, too, John is like the romances: it leaves open, and indeed, in the case of John 6:51c–58, strongly

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<sup>103</sup> An example of the force of narrative meaning imposing itself on historical events is the crucifixion of Jesus. It is the narrative that creates meaning and symbolism around that event; the historical event itself represents the execution of a criminal, one among many. The historical event makes no statement about the significance of this one death. It is only in the narrative world that Jesus' death on the cross is given meaning: notions of sacrifice, of God's will, and of salvation only exist in the world of narrative, that preserved in the gospels and that created by the emerging Christian community. The historical Jesus died, but the character of Jesus in the narrative died for a theologically significant reason. In other words, to a certain extent, even Jesus' *sacrificial* death on the cross exists only in the narrative realm.

implies the possibility of a feast of Jesus' sacrificed body. Coupled with an understanding of the performative and transformative quality of the speech act, Jesus' words in John 6 certainly promote an association between words, sacrifice, and consumption; when examined then in light of Nagy's conclusions about how divine identification is linked to antagonism and sacrifice, it seems clear that this section of John establishes Jesus' association with the god who is responsible for his death. Thus, on the one hand, Jesus' speech in John 6:51c–58 brings about the sacrificial death of Jesus in narrative; on the other hand, the language of consumption references the cult meal which is the means of identifying god with hero.

That John 6:51c–58 associates Jesus' sacrificial death with the consumption of his flesh agrees with what we know of Greco-Roman sacrificial practice. Dennis Smith is clear in his discussion of the banquet in the ancient world about the inseparability of sacrifice and cult meal. The meal that takes place at a sacrifice is actually an integral part of that sacrifice and not an afterthought. Some cults have specific prohibitions on removing the meat of a sacrificed animal from the precincts; in these cults the barbecue portion of the ritual is clearly associated with the slaughter of the animal. Other cults are less specific about where the meat should be consumed, and as such, meat could be taken away to prepare and eat or to sell at market. Smith warns against separating the consumption of the flesh from the butchering of the animal even in the latter situation.<sup>104</sup> Citing Homeric sacrifices, which “invariably” conclude with a

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<sup>104</sup> Smith, *Symposium*, 68.

meal,<sup>105</sup> and Dio Chrysostom, who wrote, “What sacrifice is acceptable to the gods without the participants in the feast?”<sup>106</sup> Smith concludes that unmarked, θυσία-type sacrifices, include the festal meal; the meal is included in and is an integral part of the θυσία and is not, therefore, an external activity. In other words, it should be expected that in unmarked θυσία sacrifices, the event of a meal of the sacrifice is inseparable from the act of slaughter which is so frequently the focus of study. Jesus’ sacrifice, as it turns out, is no exception. The Gospel of John participates in this expectation that a meal is needed for a complete sacrifice.

John 6:51c–58 fits with an understanding of the function of sacrifice that includes the meal as a requisite part of the ritual; in the pattern of the heroic cults where the sacrificial banquet pattern establishes the identification of the hero and the deity, the identification of Jesus with God cannot occur without the consumption of the sacrificial meat, which is Jesus’ flesh. Anthropophagy in John 6:51c–58 is therefore not simply a re-figuring of an identity-forming marker for the community. It is not just a transformation of the common finger-pointing done by ancient philosophers and theologians, as traced by Rives, Lanzillotta, and others. Certainly, John 6:51c–58 ought to be examined in light of these other socio-historical functions, but the heroic characterization taking place in the Gospel requires that the scene be evaluated in the context of other such literary anthropophagic events. Harland and others have identified the role of this type of feast in Othering barbarians and creating or establishing boundaries between

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<sup>105</sup> Smith, *Symposium*, 68.

<sup>106</sup> *Orationes* 3.97.

Greeks and barbarians; while it can be argued that John makes use of this cultural understanding of cannibalistic *θυσία*, the *reason* that this cultural understanding makes sense in John is because it also makes use of the cultural understanding of the relationship between a hero and his god.

We know that the divine-mortal antagonism Nagy identifies in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* manifests itself most prominently at sacrificial banquets. Pindar's *Paean* 6 describes the sacrifice that takes place at a Delphic festival, and almost in the same breath, records the death of Achilles at the hands of his associated god, Apollo. The antagonism between Achilles and Apollo is therefore closely related to the Delphic *theoxenia*, a banquet at which the gods, as guests, and the sacrificers, as hosts, share the meal together.<sup>107</sup> Pindar's *Paean* 6, which was composed for the purpose of Delphic *theoxenia*, is a glorification of Apollo. The paean describes animosity among the gods (6.50–53), which is retold by the Muses (54–58). The paean describes a sacrifice in 62–64 but then breaks off. The next section still extant, 78–80, describes how Apollo, disguised as Paris, kills Achilles in battle.<sup>108</sup>

The fact that this antagonism between hero and god is established in a paean composed for recitation at a sacrificial banquet at which both gods and human beings participate in the meal has important parallels with the pattern of

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<sup>107</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 60; for an overview of *theoxenia* see M. Jameson, "Theoxenia," pages 35–57 in *Ancient Greek cult Practice from the Epigraphical Evidence* (R. Hägg, ed.; Proceedings of the Second International Seminar on Ancient Greek Cult, organized by the Swedish Institute at Athens, 22–24 November 1991; Skrifter utgivna av Svenska institutet i Athen 80.13; Stockholm: P. Åströms Förlag, 1994).

<sup>108</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 60–61. This quarrel is also described in *Iliad* 24.25–30. Nagy also remarks that Apollo also "had a quarrel" with Hera and Athena, the deities associated with Paris. This seems to support a parallel between the quarrels of the gods on the one hand and their associated mortal counterparts on the other (61–62).

antagonism and sacrifice found in the romances, and, more significantly, in John 6:51c–58. Nagy observes that the antagonism between deity and human is articulated most clearly at a sacrificial meal—a sacrificial meal shared by the god and the mortal together. This corresponds to the argument I am making regarding the romances and John 6:51c–58 in particular, where the gods are not only present at the sacrificial banquet-in-narrative, but also participate as sacrifice. Thus, in the romances, the gods responsible for the plights of the heroines also participate in the sacrificial meal, since the heroines as divine beings also themselves play the role of the sacrificial offering. John’s Jesus, too, is both the god offering up the meat and the meat itself—he is the giver and the gift: “My flesh is meat indeed.” In this way, the participation of the gods in the sacrificial meal that aligns the identities of hero and deity is manipulated and its significance re-emphasized. The divine-mortal overlap reflected in the *theoxenia* Pindar’s *Paeon* 6 records is manipulated in the romances and in John so that the consumption of *the deity* is what accomplishes the divine identification of the hero.

Jesus’ command to consume his flesh and drink his blood is therefore best understood in the context of other heroic expiatory sacrifices and cult meals. Jesus the *pharmakos* is led to his death by the will of God, his father, with whom he is identified. His death is brought about by the animosity of those whom he meets but is ultimately the responsibility of God: it is the will of God that Jesus dies. Moreover, Jesus’ death is expiatory. He is the *pharmakos* who is sacrificed on behalf of (ὑπέρ) the people. This firmly locates Jesus in the heroic tradition of the literature of the Hellenistic world. This tradition includes the practice of the sacrificial meal, which, as I have argued, is part and parcel with the act of



sacrifice in un-marked cases. In Homeric literature, as Nagy has shown, the cultic meal frequently articulates the height of the antagonism that exists between the god and the hero; likewise in John 6:51c–58, Jesus’ sacrificial death and the consumption of his flesh *as sacrificial meat* coincide. At this pivotal moment in John’s intensely present-time narrative, Jesus becomes identified with God, his antagonist, through that consumption. At its core, then, John 6:51c–58 is the culmination of Jesus’ statements concerning his divinity. His flesh is the meat to be eaten by those for whom he was sacrificed; indeed, it is the only way for this christological statement to become realized.

What John does in 6:51c–58 is not only a conflation of various ideas about identity and divinity present in the Hellenistic context in which the text was produced, but also the manipulation of those tropes in a way that is provocative. Harold Attridge has identified John’s propensity to manipulate popular genres and tropes in this way, calling it ‘genre-bending.’ Attridge specifically cites John 6:51–58 as a locus of this type of manipulation, although he does not identify the genres that I have taken pains to demonstrate in this study. He recognizes that the statements Jesus makes in this section are “deliberately provocative” with their graphic language,<sup>109</sup> and serve to “confront not only the characters in the text, but the hearer of the Gospel with the stark reality of the cross and perhaps also with the memory of the cross in the meal that Jesus’ followers share.”<sup>110</sup> I agree with Attridge that this section points directly to Jesus’ death on the cross in a way that emphasizes his corporeality but I disagree with his apparent (though cautious)

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<sup>109</sup> Attridge, “Genre Bending,” 15.

<sup>110</sup> Attridge, “Genre Bending,” 15.

understanding of this section as referring to the eucharist. Instead, I have applied Attridge's excellent identification of the function of genre-bending in John to the Greco-Roman context in the form of the Hellenistic romances; as such, and as I have argued throughout, John here manipulates the expectations around the establishment of a hero cult in literature and the related association of the hero with the divine. John manipulates these expectations so that he becomes the sacrificial meal that creates his divine association with God his father while at the same time enforcing a communal cohesion through anthropophagic, and indeed, theophagic, activity. John manipulates the expectation of the hero as *pharmakos*, as expiatory sacrifice, so that the antagonism of the deity brings about the (human) sacrifice of the hero and also brings about, in Jesus' case, the consumption of that expiatory sacrifice. Thus, for John, Jesus' death is not enough: for Jesus to be divine—for him to be identified with the Father—the expected cultic meal must be consumed.

To understand how Jesus' words bring about the narrative reality of both his sacrifice and consumption, it is useful to think of John 6:51c-58 in the context of other types of performative speech. A speech act is differentiated from ordinary speech in that it *does* something rather than *describes* something. Thus, "performative enunciations are expressions that are equivalent to actions: the verb itself is the accomplishment of the action which it signifies."<sup>111</sup> Approaching John in this way presupposes that text can be understood as language; viewing text as language or as a potential speech act is a development from the anthropological or

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<sup>111</sup> H. S. Versnel, "The Poetics of the Magical Charm: An Essay in the Power of Words," *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World* (Paul Mirecki and Marvin W. Meyer, eds.; Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 141; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 146.

philosophical speech act theories,<sup>112</sup> but one which has precedent.<sup>113</sup> J. L. Austin's work on speech acts defines the phenomenon as having three possible elements, the most relevant for this study being the illocutionary act, which is the act *in* saying something.<sup>114</sup> A useful and much-used example is the statement "I do" spoken aloud during a marriage ceremony, which is not just the confirmation of the act of marrying.<sup>115</sup> In other words, this statement does not describe but enacts; making this utterance brings about the state of matrimony. Key to Austin's theory and to our application of it to John 6:51c–58 is the fact that the statement participates in intelligible social rules—in other words, that the statement reflects culturally agreed-upon intentions and attitudes, or "mutual contextual beliefs."<sup>116</sup> Thus, the context in which a speech act is made is significant: Jesus' use of key terms to locate his statements within the language of sacrifice and death influences (a) its ritualized content and therefore its function as a speech act, and

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<sup>112</sup> See especially J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words* (J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa, eds.; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975); Isaiah Berlin, et al., *Essays on J. L. Austin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973); S. J. Tambiah, "The Magical Power of Words," *Man* 3 (1968): 175–208.

<sup>113</sup> In particular, Dietmar Neufeld, "Reconceiving Texts as *Speech Acts*: an Analysis of the First Epistle of John" (PhD diss., McGill University, 1991), who gives an excellent overview of Austin's contributions on pages 85–103; J. Eugene Botha, *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman: A Speech Act Reading of John 4:1–42* (Leiden: Brill, 1991); Hugh C. White, "Introduction: Speech Act Theory and Literary Criticism," *Semeia* 41 (1988): 1–24. Another consideration is how to approach performative utterance or speech acts when such statements are made within a narrative, and are therefore not an historical utterances but literary ones. As a ritual in ink, John 6:51c–58 differs from the 'I do' of a marriage ceremony and further differs from what Botha and Ricoeur discuss (Botha, *Samaritan Woman*, 74; Paul Ricoeur, "The Model of Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text," *New Literary History* 5 (1973): 97). While Botha and Ricoeur preserve the relationship between the speaker (or author) and the addressee, the reader in this case, this study remains concerned with the narrative level only, and not the authorial voice, as such. In other words, the character of Jesus is the speaker of the utterance, not John as author. For more on narrative-level speech act analysis, see Botha, *Samaritan Woman*, 85.

<sup>114</sup> Austin, *Words*, 98–108.

<sup>115</sup> Originally used by Austin, *Words*, 5 and *passim*.

<sup>116</sup> Neufeld, "Texts as *Speech Acts*," 102; Botha, *Samaritan Woman*, 71; K. Bach and L. M. Harnish, *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts* (Cambridge: MIT, 1979), 5–6.

(b) how hearers of the statement ought to understand it.<sup>117</sup> Some characters within the narrative of John 6 are confused by Jesus' statement: οἱ ἰουδαῖοι (6:52) and some disciples (6:60). They have made the wrong cultural associations. Others do share these "mutual contextual beliefs" and understand the ramifications of Jesus' statement (6:69).

Jesus' statement functions as a declarative illocutionary act, one which alters the narrative reality in being uttered.<sup>118</sup> It does this using shared cultural reference points that draw connections with how gods and mortals interact through sacrifice. It further accomplishes this alteration through the use of threatening language ("unless you eat...you have no life in you") and the deferral of future promises to create suspense ("whoever feeds on this bread will live forever").<sup>119</sup> Remember that the sacrifices of the heroines in the novels take place in the narrative because of their anticipatory and deliberately ambiguous language; likewise, in John 6:51c–58, anticipation is used to realize sacrifice in the words of Jesus. In other words, in the moment when Jesus makes his controversial statement, his bodily sacrifice and the consumption of his sacrificed flesh as banquet both take place.

Jesus' words, then, enact the cult sacrifice and meal. John 6:51c–58 participates in the contemporaneity of time throughout John to bring about Jesus' death through an allusion to it in this pericope; by referencing his death as *pharmakos*, on behalf of others, John's Jesus makes real and imminent the act of

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<sup>117</sup> Aitken, *Jesus' Death*, 24.

<sup>118</sup> John R. Searle, "A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts" in *Language, Mind, and Knowledge* (Keith Gunderson, ed.; Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science 7; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975), 344–369.

<sup>119</sup> Botha, *Samaritan Woman*, 104–105.

his own sacrifice and consumption. This language also references the sacrificial banquet of the Greco-Roman hero, identifying Jesus with God. It is the death of the hero that creates the association with the god through cult and banquet. The antagonism between hero and god which permeates a narrative translates into association through cultic practice, as Nagy has shown. The example of Pindar's *Paean* 6 illustrates that this antagonism is most explicit at the sacrificial banquets at which both gods and human beings participate in the consumption of the meat. The link between antagonism, consumption, and divine beings has important parallels with the pattern of antagonism and sacrifice found in the romances, and, more significantly, in John 6:51c–58. In uttering the words, “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you,” Jesus effects his sacrifice, and in doing so, makes narratively real the action that associates him with the divine. In other words, John 6:51c–58 accomplishes Jesus' identification with God through Jesus' performative speech, which collides the death of Jesus at the will of an antagonistic deity with his sacrificial consumption which is the *aition* of his cult.

## Conclusion

“Equal to God”  
(John 5:18; *Iliad* 20.447)

Identity and ontology are major themes in both John's gospel and in the Hellenistic romance novels, as the present study articulates. Nagy's seminal work on the relationship between extraordinary humans and deities is here applied to the Gospel of John, a text which participates in many of the conventions of the ancient literary world. Tracing the ways in which the narrative relationship between heroes and gods has been developed in Hellenistic literature such as the romance novels provides an innovative way of understanding Jesus' simultaneously divine and mortal ontology. In doing so, I have created the space to examine the modes of consumption in John 6:51c–58 outside of eucharistic interpretations.

John's gospel is much more preoccupied with Jesus' correct identity than the synoptic gospels are. In both the prologue and throughout the gospel, John takes pains to emphasize both Jesus' fleshly and his divine qualities: therefore, it is in this light that Jesus' signs and statements should be interpreted. Thus, John 6:51c–58 should be examined as a christological statement in line with the other signs John uses to identify Jesus with God, and not, therefore, as a eucharistic scene. The consumption of Jesus' flesh and blood in this scene is the literary performance of a ritual meal which participates in the ancient world's understanding of heroic figures and their association with antagonistic deities.

To clarify the import of this perspective, I use the romance novels as parallel texts that demonstrate the significance of such a close identification between a god and an extraordinary mortal and likewise implicate both the antagonism and the association in the narrative world. As most of the novels were likely composed after the Gospel of John, it should be clear that I am not arguing

for a direct (or even indirect) literary dependence. Rather, I am making the suggestion that the romances preserve a way of thinking about how divinity is conferred on extraordinary humans, a way of thinking that seems, from its prevalence dating back to the Homeric texts and continuing in popularity in the novels, to have survived and thrived through the time period in which John was writing. We can use the novels as a window through which to view the *Weltanschauung* which to some extent shaped John's approach to identifying divinity in Jesus. The authors of the novels use established tropes from Homeric and classical literature to cast their heroines as potential goddesses. As exceptionally beautiful, shining human beings, the heroines of the romances are consistently viewed and worshipped as goddesses by the characters they encounter on their travels. These travels, however, occur at the behest of the overseeing deities whom the heroines so closely resemble. The novels thus represent a development of Nagy's argument concerning the relationship between gods and heroes in ancient Greek literature: "antagonism in myth, symbiosis in cult."<sup>1</sup>

It is especially clear that the novels reflect the kind of relationship Nagy describes when we consider that virtually all of the romantic heroines face potential death as sacrificial offerings; it is this act that fully cements the heroines' identification with the goddesses. Nagy has shown that there is a direct association among the hero's glorification, his death, and the sacrificial feast in Homeric texts.<sup>2</sup> The ambiguous language used in these sacrificial scenes

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<sup>1</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 286.

<sup>2</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 60.



manipulates the expectations around whether the divinely beautiful heroines will be consumed as part of the sacrificial meal; the deliberate avoidance of terms normally used to describe non-alimentary sacrifices (e.g. σφάγια) allows for the terrifying anticipation of the consumption of these goddess-women, as we witness in *Leucippe and Clitophon* 3.15. What the novels illustrate in particular is a shift that occurs in the concept of antagonism in myth, symbiosis in cult: whereas in the classical literature a distinction existed between mythology and historical reality, such that antagonism and symbiosis occurred in separate spheres of reality, in the novels of the Hellenistic period, both the antagonism and the symbiosis occur at the level of narrative. The novels thus act as a focusing lens through which we can view the narrative relationships between human beings and gods.

This conflation of the antagonism, the identification, and the meal functions in the novels both to highlight the intimacy and resolve the discomfort inherent in the divine-mortal relationship. The fact that divine identification, divine antagonism, and divine consumption occur simultaneously and contemporaneously in the novels paves the way for us to understand more fully how the statements made in John 6:51c–58 can function. In John 6:51c–58 we see the culmination of the relationship between God and the hero, who in this case is Jesus. The antagonistic nature of Jesus' relationship with God is visible through the fact that God is ultimately responsible for Jesus' expiatory death (John 5:19; 10:18; 18:11b) in a way parallel to the fact that Apollo is ultimately responsible

for Aesop's expiatory death in *Life of Aesop*.<sup>3</sup> Using sacrificial language (δίδωμι + ὑπέρ), John evokes Jesus' impending death, conflating Jesus' glorification with his death in a set of statements that exhort his followers to consume his flesh and blood. John's gospel is notorious for its bizarre sense of time, and this a-temporality is exploited in this pericope: Jesus' sacrificial death and the consuming of his body occur contemporaneously.<sup>4</sup> Just as in the romances, Jesus' fleshly body is consumed in the moment that the words in 6:51c–58 evoke the image of his sacrifice; the sacrifice of his body both occurs and does not occur. Thus, like the heroines of the romances, in the end, Jesus both does and does not die; he is in fact immortal God.

Jesus' exhortation to consume his flesh and drink his blood represents the contemporaneity of literary death and heroic cult *aition* in the same way that this reference to sacrificial death functions in the romances. The simultaneity of mortal and immortal identity and the contemporaneity of sacrifice, death, and consumption collide and intersect in Jesus' words, telescoping the disparate roles of hero and god Nagy identifies in the epics. It is in this statement of consumption and death at God's behest that Jesus and God are identified, in the same way that first in the epics and later in the novels, the antagonistic gods become associated with heroes through the consumption of the cultic sacrificial meal.

The conclusions of this project are bolstered by the work of other scholars in the field. First, Wayne Meeks' 1967 monograph, *The Prophet King: Moses*

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<sup>3</sup> Wills, *Quest*, 43–44.

<sup>4</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 429.

*Traditions and the Johannine Christology*<sup>5</sup> uses references in John to Moses and the Exodus tradition to argue for a simultaneity of the roles of prophet and king in the character of the Johannine Jesus;<sup>6</sup> although Meeks does not articulate his conclusions using the same vocabulary as this project, his understanding is that the two roles both overlap and interpret each other in this context, and thus produce entirely new characteristics while building off of both older and adjacent Jewish traditions of mortal-divine interaction. Meeks demonstrates that Jesus is characterized as God's direct agent through the use of references from the Hebrew Bible.<sup>7</sup>

In particular, he shows that the Bread of Life Discourse in John 6 points directly to Jesus' relationship with God in its use of the Exodus tradition and its manna/bread dichotomy.<sup>8</sup> Here Meeks joins those who recognize that John 6:51c–58 is not an explicit eucharistic description but rather a christological statement, although he maintains that such an allusion to the eucharist might be “taken for granted.”<sup>9</sup> Finding parallels in early Jewish and Christian literature as well as in the Hebrew Bible, Meeks argues that the bread imagery in John 6, specifically the scattering and the gathering up of fragments of bread in 6:12–13, ought to be interpreted in light of the sacrificial imagery later on in the chapter and in light of older references to God, who gathers up Israel, along with his prophets.<sup>10</sup>

Meeks specifically connects Jesus to Moses, and through his analysis of

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<sup>5</sup> Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (Novum Testamentum 14; Leiden: Brill, 1967).

<sup>6</sup> Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, 25.

<sup>7</sup> Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, 286–292.

<sup>8</sup> Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, 91–98, 292.

<sup>9</sup> Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, 93.

<sup>10</sup> Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, 98.

Moses' role as prophet Meeks emphasizes Moses' intimate relationship to God, and thus Jesus' intimacy with the divine. Meeks, however, does not extend his study to explain Jesus' divine ontology, a question which remains unanswered despite Moses' decidedly close relationship with the divine.<sup>11</sup> The current project therefore takes the association between God and Jesus further than Meeks' study does, even while approaching John's relationship to other literature in a similar way. The allusions to the Exodus tradition in John 6:51c–58 certainly point, as Meeks suggests, to a christological interpretation of the pericope. In expanding the repertoire of texts used to understand Jesus' ontology to include the contemporary romances, I have highlighted the simultaneity inherent in Jesus' divine and mortal identification.

It is significant that Meeks's conclusions match up well with my own arguments in this project. John is a text which clearly makes use of Jewish literary and cultural tropes. In this respect, the current understanding of early Judaism together with Christianity as parts of an over-arching Hellenistic world, which produced and shared narratives, traditions, and attitudes, makes it particularly appropriate to use novelistic tropes to illuminate John 6:51c–58. In joining with scholarship since Hengel's *Judentum und Hellenismus*<sup>12</sup> in rejecting the false

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<sup>11</sup> Meeks notes that there were fears that Moses' ascents specifically seemed to cause discomfort around the idea that Moses was at risk of inciting people to idolatry because of his special relationship with the divine (*The Prophet-King*, 141, 211) and that, at least in Samaritan sources, "belief in" Moses alongside belief in God was theologically significant (238–240).

<sup>12</sup> Martin Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus: Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2. Jh. v. Chr.* (WUNT 10; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1969); since then, to name only two of many examples, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, ed., *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001) and Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1990).

dichotomy between “Judaism” and “Hellenism” this project does not attempt to omit or ignore Jewish facets of John, but rather to broaden the cultural repertoire available to us in interpreting its theology. In particular, the pericope in question illustrates not only the complexity of the cultural and narrative exchange in the Hellenistic world, but also the importance of turning to texts produced outside of Jewish and/or Christian communities to uncover more about the theological concerns of John’s gospel.

Kasper Bro Larsen, our second supporting example, has done just that. As he points out, it is crucial “that we see the New Testament texts, including the Fourth Gospel, as inherent players in a larger Panhellenistic *koine*, both with regard to content and form.”<sup>13</sup> Larsen’s study applies this reasoning to the trope of the Recognition Scene, and argues that this narrative device describes what Larsen calls the “hybrid” identity of Jesus as both God and mortal.<sup>14</sup> Using methods similar to those adopted in the present study, Larsen’s work views John as “part of an ancient literary milieu where generic conventions and expectations were diffusing on various levels.”<sup>15</sup> That is, both Larsen and I understand John as participating in the literary world of the ancient Mediterranean. Our parallel approaches lead us to similar conclusions about Jesus’ divine nature: that it is neither completely σάρξ nor entirely δόξα, as the previous century’s debates would have it.<sup>16</sup>

Larsen, skipping over the more recent literary descendants of the epics

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<sup>13</sup> Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 8.

<sup>14</sup> Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 219.

<sup>15</sup> Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 20.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. above, section 1.2.

(the novels examined in this project), makes use of one particular trope in Homer's works, the Recognition Scene, or *anagnorisis*, as a way to understand John's depiction of how characters in the gospel know God through Jesus and experience Jesus' physical presence. The key element in a recognition scene is the idea of revelation—that there is a hidden truth which is gradually made known through various clues. Jesus' divinity is the hidden truth in this analysis; like Odysseus, his full identity is kept hidden, although unlike Odysseus, this is not because Jesus himself keeps it a deliberate secret.<sup>17</sup> Larsen's conclusions, like my own, understand John as participating in the literary expectations of the Hellenistic world, in particular with regard to how Jesus is imaged as divine. While Larsen uses the trope of recognition and this project examines sacrifice as divinizing act, both projects share a methodology that supports the interaction of Johannine christology with the workings of the divine-mortal relationship in Greco-Roman religion.

Both of these works, though written decades apart, share certain methodological elements with the current project: both Meeks and Larsen seek to interpret John's christological elements in light of the culture of literary tropes which informed the gospel. Meeks locates John in a Jewish milieu which would have understood Jesus' role vis-à-vis God in terms of previous Jewish leaders' relationships to the divine. Larsen, on the other hand, interprets John as a text that shares affinities with Homeric literature, especially in how it envisions Jesus as divine. My own work engages with similar ways of approaching John 6:51c–58. As a text which is the product of the Hellenistic world, John necessarily both

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<sup>17</sup> Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 61–62.

makes use of and subverts common narrative tools of the eras; as a text whose aims are overwhelmingly christological, John articulates Jesus' divinity in multiple ways, manipulating both Greek literature and the Hebrew Bible in order to clarify Jesus' identification with God.

This "subversion of familiar symbolism"<sup>18</sup> is a technique that John frequently uses to communicate his meaning.<sup>19</sup> In John 6:51c–58, sacrificial associations are manipulated to point to Jesus' divinity. But further confirmation of this subversion, and particularly of the subversion of the correspondence between antagonism in myth and association in cult<sup>20</sup> is found one chapter earlier, when John again uses loaded terminology to describe Jesus. In John 5:18, οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι say that Jesus makes himself equal to God: ἴσον ... τῷ θεῷ. This identification is made shortly after an earlier sign that Jesus performs, the healing in 5:1–9 of a man at a pool. These words, in this context, are reminiscent of the epic use of a similar phrase, which in the *Iliad* is δαίμονι ἴσος, one which Nagy identifies as foreshadowing the death of the hero specifically: Nagy writes that "the deployment of this epithet coincides with the climax of ritual antagonism between god and hero."<sup>21</sup> It is used of various characters in the *Iliad*, some of whom come dangerously close to rousing the gods' anger and are spared, and some of whom continue to provoke the animosity of the gods and are killed.<sup>22</sup> These words in John 5:18 thus anticipate what is upcoming in chapter 6:51c–58:

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<sup>18</sup> Harrill, "Cannibalistic Language," 149.

<sup>19</sup> See also, Attridge, "Genre Bending," *passim* and Wayne Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91.1 (1972): 65–66.

<sup>20</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 121.

<sup>21</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 143.

<sup>22</sup> Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 143–144; e.g. Patroclus in *Iliad* 16.786–789 and Achilles in *Iliad* 20.447; 22:359.

Jesus' death at the hands of an antagonistic deity and the sacrifice and banquet which associate Jesus with God.<sup>23</sup>

This project brings to the forefront these points of contact between John's gospel, the novels, and the modes of association between gods and heroes in the ancient world. John's interaction with the social and literary conventions of the Hellenistic world shows how the author both adhered to and subverted ideas about how gods and extraordinary humans relate. In John 6:51c–58 Jesus speaks the words that realize his sacrificial death and which enact the sacrificial banquet, all within the narrative. These words of consumption, and in particular of the consumption of divinized flesh, find affinities with the sacrifice and consumption of the heroines of the romances, whose divinity is simultaneous with their identity as human beings and whose association with the god is contemporaneous with their anticipated deaths. Given how instrumental the sacrificial meal is in identifying the hero with the deity in Homer, the romances, as literary descendants of Homer's epics, have provided a telling context in which to examine John 6:51c–58.

This project focuses on a specific scene in the Fourth Gospel but its method necessarily invites speculation about other major thematic aspects of John's Gospel and theology, such as the nature of sacrificial death, the divine-mortal relationship, and the significance of Jesus' presence on earth. This project therefore has significant implications for the ongoing debates about the nature of

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<sup>23</sup> Wayne Meeks discusses this phrase in his essay, "Equal to God," pages 91–105 in *In Search of the Early Christians: Selected Essays* (Allen R. Hilton and H. Gregory Snyder, eds.; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002). He remarks on page 95 that the phrase in John 5 bears no resemblance to similar phraseology in 'pagan' circles, following Bultmann, *John*, 183 n. 1.



Jesus' signs, his flesh and glory, and the mechanisms of his incarnation and death. In particular, this project's identification of John 6:51c–58 as a ritual in ink, removed from historical practices of early Christian consumption (i.e. the eucharist), has far-reaching ramifications. This passage not only manipulates Greco-Roman understandings of hero-god association in cult and in narrative in order to establish Jesus as divine, but does so entirely at the narrative level. As a rite which takes place entirely *in the text*, Jesus' sacrifice and consumption in 6:51c–58 represents a type of performance which could shed light on a number of other such literary events, since rituals in ink are a prevalent trope in early Christian and Jewish literature that have not been evaluated in their own right. This neglect has manifested itself in the difficulty in interpreting texts which make use of this technique. Specifically, works such as *Joseph and Aseneth*, *Perpetua and Felicitas*, and a number of apocalyptic texts would benefit from further study in light of this observation.

In demonstrating that John 6:51c–58 contributes to the overall christological message of John's gospel, my project resolves the perceived theological tension between this section and the rest of John. Rather, this pericope is a major contributor to broader Johannine ideas about Jesus' divinity; the fact that it in turn draws on notions of divinity from the Greco-Roman world as preserved in the romance novels illustrates how integral Hellenistic literature and its tropes are in understanding early Christian theological ideas. Early Christian texts necessarily reflect the modes of thinking and cultural expectations of the ancient Mediterranean, and viewing John through this lens is an enterprise whose implications have only begun to be brought to light. Likewise, in contributing to

this method of interpretation, this project encourages the continued use of interdisciplinarity when interpreting ancient Jewish and Christian texts.

Finally, this project articulates the significance of consumption and banqueting as parts of sacrifice. The motif of sacrifice is central to Christianity, and as I have shown, is central to John in establishing Jesus' divinity. Sacrifice is therefore not just a metaphor; understanding sacrificial motifs as contributing to the construction of narrative reality could lead to new appreciations of how eating and drinking function in the early Christian imagination.

## Appendices

## Appendix A: Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*

Our main characters are, of course, Chaereas and his beloved Callirhoe. However, before we meet the heroes, we first meet the author, who introduces himself in the first line and tells us that he is going to recount “the story of a love-affair which took place in Syracuse,” implying but not explicitly stating that the story might be a true—i.e. historical—one. However, there is no evidence for the existence of any Callirhoe, daughter of Hermocrates, the leader of a defence against the Athenian navy in 415–413 B.C.E. To be sure, Hermocrates himself existed, as we know from Thucydides, but of Callirhoe we have no proof. At any rate, it is with Hermocrates and his great military reputation that Chariton begins his novel. He describes the beauty of Hermocrates’ daughter as divine, like the beauty of Aphrodite, and that word of her looks encouraged flocks of gawkers to come to Syracuse to see. Eros conspires to make her a match of Chaereas, who, like Callirhoe, is exceedingly handsome and likened to Achilles and other heroes. Eros thinks this an amusing match since the fathers of Chaereas and Callirhoe are political rivals, never to be reconciled. Nevertheless, Eros succeeds.

At a festival of Aphrodite in which all the women participate, Callirhoe has her first chance to leave her home and go out in public, accompanied by her mother. Whom did they chance to meet along the road but Chaereas, glistening and ruddy from a session at the gym. The pair instantly fall in love with each other, and poor Chaereas is so distracted with emotion that he has trouble making it home. Callirhoe prays to Aphrodite that she give her the man she saw. The two suffer secretly in their love for each other until Chaereas tells his parents that he wants to marry Callirhoe; the news is not well received, since Chaereas’ father is

sure that Hermocrates would never consent to give his daughter to the son of his political nemesis. Chaereas' love sickness worsens and he neglects his usual activities. News spreads about his suffering in love, and soon the population assembles to demand that Hermocrates allow the marriage; happily for the plot, he agrees. The whole city prepares to celebrate the impending marriage, although they do neglect to let Callirhoe in on the plan. Eventually her nurse tells her she is to be married, but not to whom; predictably she is distraught at the thought that it would not be her beloved. At the wedding, she happily learns that it is Chaereas and is overjoyed, her face shining with happiness so that the gathered crowd assumed that she must be a manifestation of Artemis with her glowing face.

But not everyone is happy with the nuptials; Callirhoe's former suitors, in fact, plan revenge. They decide to frame Callirhoe for infidelity and break up the marriage so that one of them could marry her instead. While Chaereas is called out to visit his injured father, the rejected suitors make it appear as if Callirhoe has thrown a party in the couple's house and has not done a very good job of hiding the spilled wine and discarded torches. When this plot does not succeed in breaking up the marriage, they decide to employ a colleague with great talent at flirtation. This man would win the affections of Callirhoe's maid. With this accomplished, another actor tells Chaereas that he has overheard some gossip that he has heard around town—that his wife, Callirhoe, has been unfaithful! Grief-stricken, Chaereas asks for proof and the man instructs him to wait outside his house at nightfall and watch for a young man to enter secretly. Of course, the reader knows that this secretive young man entering the house by night is the hired lover of the maid, and not Callirhoe's paramour at all. But Chaereas believes

what he sees and rushes in to Callirhoe's room, where she is waiting for him in bed. As she gets up to greet him, in his rage, he kicks her hard in the diaphragm and she stops breathing. The household assumes she is dead. Chaereas presses the maids for information and finds out the truth and decides to kill himself, only to be persuaded against the idea by his good friend Polycharmus.

The very next day, Chaereas is tried as a murderer and the rejected suitors rile up the crowd against him, since everyone loved Callirhoe so much. Chaereas does not defend himself but instead admits his guilt bitterly and begs the crowd to stone him to death and not to give him a burial lest he pollute the very earth with his guilt. This produces so much sympathy from the crowd that they come to his side, even Hermocrates, and so the trial is called off. Chaereas, however, still feels his guilt very strongly, as one might imagine, and once more decides to kill himself. Again, Polycharmus talks him out of it and urges him at least to wait until Callirhoe is buried. A description of the grand funeral follows. Callirhoe is entombed by the sea with all her wealth. However, a pirate is watching as all this unfolds.

The pirate, Theron, decides to wait until dark and then plunder the grave for its riches. He and his recruits break in only to find the corpse alive! Terrified that she is a ghost, at first the robbers hold back, but Theron sees opportunity. He convinces his compatriots to take her on board their boat to be sold as a slave in a foreign locale. They sail to Miletus, where they have little success selling Callirhoe, until Theron comes across a despondent Dionysius, a wealthy man whose wife has just died, and his head servant Leonas. Theron tells Leonas that a beautiful slave girl is just the thing to cheer up his grief-stricken master. They go

to the house, which is luxurious, to discuss the purchase, and eventually they agree to make the sale at Dionysius' country estate. The household, when they see Callirhoe at last, are astounded by her beauty. The deal is struck and they agree to exchange half the money then and there and the other half when the legal documents are signed. Of course, Theron does not want to wait for any legal documentation and so leaves having received only half of his payment but avoiding incarceration for selling a free woman.

Nevertheless, Leonas tells the good news to his master, Dionysius, who refuses to believe a slave could be so beautiful but is cheered regardless. Callirhoe for her part wakes up the next morning, is bathed and dressed as though she is the mistress and not a new slave, and goes to visit the shrine of Aphrodite. There she meets Dionysius, who mistakes her for the goddess, since she looks identical to the statue of Aphrodite there. Dionysius falls instantly in love with her, encouraged by naughty Eros. However, he refuses to act on his feelings until he can find out the legal status of this woman. The next day Callirhoe and Dionysius again meet in the shrine and they talk. Callirhoe tells her master that she is not a slave from Sybaris, as Theron claimed, but refuses to talk about her past; she is determined to accept her lot. In the end, Dionysius convinces her to open up about her identity and she begins to tell them her story, omitting the part about a violent husband. She asks Dionysius to contact her father so that she could be returned to her home. Dionysius is distraught at the thought of losing his beloved but agrees, still not losing hope of winning her love in the meantime.

Dionysius asks Plangon, a servant, to talk to Callirhoe in only the most favourable terms in the hopes that she might eventually come to admire and love

him. Dionysius only falls more in love with Callirhoe, but Callirhoe remains chaste and loyal to her husband Chaereas. Unfortunately, her chastity is challenged by the fact that she has been pregnant in fact since their very wedding night and is only now discovering it; she confides in Plangon who advises that she procure an abortion. Out of Callirhoe's hearing, Plangon actually plots to encourage Callirhoe to marry Dionysius and thus save her pregnancy by hiding it as Dionysius' child. Callirhoe sees a vision of Chaereas instructing her to keep the child, and so the decision is made. Dionysius is overcome with the good news, brought to him by Plangon. Plangon, as part of a plan to deceive Dionysius as to the parentage of Callirhoe's foetus, tells him that Callirhoe is intent on having legal children with him, so she must be free and he must be willing to father children with her; without these two conditions, she will not marry him. This is no problem for Dionysius. The two put off the wedding only so long as to arrange for it to be celebrated publicly. The wedding takes place in town, and everyone watching assumes Callirhoe is a Nereid, or Aphrodite, come out of the sea.

Meanwhile, back in Syracuse, Chaereas, intending to kill himself at his wife's tomb, comes across the broken entrance, only partly closed by Theron in his haste. A number of Syracuseans hear the news and together they discover that Callirhoe's body has disappeared! Chaereas, comparing his situation to that of Ariadne and Dionysus and Semele and Zeus, assumes that his wife was actually a goddess, taken from him by a powerful god. He decides to go and search for her corpse and many ships are dispatched. The grave robbers, however, have been lost at sea this whole time, enduring terrible storms and darkness caused by Providence. When Chaereas' ship eventually finds them, only Theron is still alive,



alone on the ship still packed with Callirhoe's funeral riches, which are easily recognized by Chaereas. Chaereas tows home the boat with its pirate captain. Theron lies about his identity and purpose and is put to trial, where he repeats his false story. But a member of the audience recognizes him for the pirate he is; Theron is then tortured until he confesses, but refuses to tell who bought Callirhoe. He is sentenced to death while an embassy sets out to find Callirhoe's master and retrieve her. They reach Ionia and moor at the same beach at Dionysius' estate. When they go to pay their respects at Aphrodite's temple, they see the image of Callirhoe that Dionysius had left there as an offering. A passer-by explains the story of the image and directs them to Dionysius' estate where they would see how like the goddess his wife is. Shocked, Polycharmus persuades Chaereas to think carefully about how best to approach the subject of his wife's identity with her new husband. Dionysius' steward, Phocas, meanwhile, spots the ship and investigates. He determines the purpose of the visit and hatches a plan to protect his master and his new love. He tells the Persian army that the ship is carrying spies; the Persians take the ship and sell everyone into slavery, Polycharmus and Chaereas to the same master, one Mithridates, in Caria. That night, Callirhoe dreams of Chaereas in chains and calls out his name. Dionysius overhears, and she explains that it is her grief at seeing her dead first husband, whose chains symbolize his death, that caused her to cry out.

Seven months after their marriage, Callirhoe gives birth to her son, which is really Chaereas', and the town holds a festival. Callirhoe asks Plangon to be freed, desiring to prevent her secret from getting out by binding Plangon to her with loyalty and gratitude. The couple visit and worship at the temple of

Aphrodite, where Callirhoe privately thanks the goddess for giving her an image of her husband in the form of her child, and prays that her son will return to meet his grandfather Hermocrates. She dissolves into tears and the priestess, hearing the commotion, comes out and tells her that she should rejoice in her good fortune, since two foreigners just came the other day and worshipped her as the goddess. Callirhoe catches on that these foreign worshippers might just be Chaereas and Polycharmus and decides to look into the matter.

Callirhoe returns home and tells Dionysius what the priestess had told her, and Dionysius is curious enough to investigate who was worshipping his wife without any further prodding. Dionysius interrogates Phocas, but Phocas lies and denies that there were visitors; Dionysius does not believe him and threatens Phocas with torture. Phocas repents and tells Dionysius the story, warning him that it will start out badly but that he will be pleased with the result in the end, since Phocas had successfully done away with the people who had come to take Callirhoe away from Dionysius; he even tells the relieved Dionysius that Chaereas was killed on the ship, though the readers know differently, and indeed, Dionysius instructs Phocas to check whether Chaereas is among the dead. Meanwhile, Dionysius tells the servants that barbarians came down and burnt a ship, all in earshot of his wife, who is greatly disturbed upon learning that Chaereas is dead.

Having cried herself to sleep, Callirhoe again dreams, this time of barbarian robbers and the rescue of Chaereas by herself. To ease her distress and preserve her beauty, Dionysius encourages Callirhoe to build a tomb for Chaereas, and she agrees, in the end building a tomb just like hers, by the sea, and as the readers know, also for someone still alive! At the funeral, not only does the whole

of Ionia attend, but also two satraps, Mithridates of Caria and Pharnaces of Lydia, who came to see Callirhoe's beauty for themselves. Mithridates is astonished at her beauty and falls to the ground and finds himself helplessly in love.

Meanwhile, in Caria, Chaereas is working himself to the bone in Mithridates' pits. When their master returns, he is visibly ill from lovesickness. At the same time, some of the other slaves attempt to escape and are sentenced to death, but Chaereas and Polycharmus are included in that lot. Polycharmus protests and blames Callirhoe for their problems, with the result that the overseer decides to investigate this woman who was obviously part of the plot. So the overseer takes Polycharmus to Mithridates to explain himself. When he names Callirhoe under torture, Mithridates is surprised that is the same name as the woman he loves; he orders this "other" Callirhoe brought to him for punishment, but Polycharmus explains that this is Callirhoe of Syracuse. At this, Mithridates realizes that the women are one and the same and demands to know his slave's business with his beloved. Polycharmus tells the whole story, and just in time, Mithridates spares Chaereas from execution. Mithridates sends the pair to get cleaned up and arranges a banquet for them, where he tells a suicidal Chaereas that he has seen Callirhoe as the wife of another and the mother of a son. In the morning, Mithridates allows them to return to Miletus to reclaim Callirhoe, but convinces Chaereas to write her a letter first, to ensure that she is willing to leave her husband. Mithridates includes his own letter to Callirhoe and sends them with gifts for her (though to escape suspicion, he tells the slaves they are for Dionysius) via his administrator, Hyginus. Hyginus leaves the gifts of gold unattended while going secretly on ahead to suss out the situation, and the slaves

run amok in his absence, arousing the suspicion of the authorities. Under torture, the slaves say that the gold is a gift to Dionysius. The magistrate sends on the gifts and the letters to Dionysius, oblivious to their real intent and content. Seeing that one is to Callirhoe from Chaereas, Dionysius faints in fear, but decides to keep the letter from her, assuming that it is a ploy by Mithridates to steal away Callirhoe, and never suspecting the letter to be from Chaereas himself.

The next day, the other Satrap, Pharnaces of Lydia, pays Dionysius a visit and Dionysius persuades him to write a letter to the King, Artaxerxes, on Dionysius' behalf, damning Mithridates for attempting to steal his wife. Pharnaces agrees to help damn his rival for Callirhoe's affections, for he, too, has fallen in love with her. Upon receiving the letter, King Artaxerxes decides to summon Mithridates to trial, and to summon Callirhoe as well, but for less judicial reasons. In Babylon, Mithridates prepares for the trial. He instructs Chaereas to remain hidden and not deny Dionysius' assumption that he is dead until the last minute. Meanwhile Dionysius is regretting bringing his beautiful wife to Babylon, since, surprisingly, many "barbarians" were busy falling in love with her wherever they went. Eventually, many of the wives complain to the King's wife, Statira, that this foreign woman is ruining the Persian women's reputations for beauty. Statira and the elite wives choose the most beautiful woman and dress her up to compete with Callirhoe in a beauty contest, which Callirhoe clearly wins.

Finally, the day of the trial arrives and the king acts as judge. The letters are read out, the players and Callirhoe are present, and Dionysius is the first to speak against what he thinks were Mithridates' attempts to steal his wife, stating

that either Chaereas is alive and sent the letter, or that Mithridates is guilty of adultery, little knowing how true his words are. Almost as soon as Mithridates begins his defense, Chaereas is called for, as if from the grave, and the men immediately begin to fight over who should have Callirhoe given that she is a woman with two husbands and at least as many suitors. The king dismisses the crowd to deliberate on the situation and decides that there should be a new trial to determine Callirhoe's rightful husband. There follows several pages of the lamentations of Callirhoe, Chaereas, and Dionysius, each in his or her own chambers; Chaereas attempts suicide for a sixth time in the novel, only to be stopped for a sixth time by the faithful Polycharmus.

Meanwhile, the king, hopelessly in love with Callirhoe, realizes he does not want to decide which of these other men Callirhoe should be the wife of, and so drags out the trial with a festival and many sacrifices and a hunting excursion. But he cannot be distracted from his passion and decides to pursue Callirhoe, who resolutely refuses his advances and despairs her fate once more. He gives Callirhoe a choice: lie with the king for one night and get the husband of her choice, or refuse him and be punished horribly. Again she refuses, but is taken aback when Chaereas' potential fate is alluded to.

Suddenly, however, the king learns of a rebellious army taking over his territory just across the Euphrates. He leaves to take care of the situation, along with Dionysius, who is obliged to join him, being a citizen. The king also takes his household, and includes Callirhoe in his entourage. Chaereas, however, is not obliged to go with the party and remains in Babylon. When he discovers that Callirhoe has been taken to battle, he again declares that he will kill himself, and

this time, Polycharmus agrees with him and wants to join him, but suggests that they use their deaths for political gain. They decide to go and join the Egyptian rebels and aid in the downfall of Artaxerxes and Dionysius. The Egyptian is so elated at these volunteers that he appoints Chaereas his advisor and eventually grants him a large force to battle the Tyrians, whom Chaereas conquers with a Trojan-horse-type trick. The Egyptian rewards him with the promise of Syria should they win the war.

The Persian king, meanwhile, has decided to leave most of his entourage on an island, Aradus, for safe-keeping. (Coincidentally, the island is noted to be the location of an old shrine of Aphrodite.)

Chaereas is now the commander of the naval force of the Egyptian rebels, but the Persians advance and take the Egyptian infantry out; their king falls on his sword rather than be captured. But at sea, Chaereas is victorious and eventually sails to Aradus to rest his troops and refuel. The captives on the island are rounded up and later, one of Chaereas' men discovers that they hold the Queen among their captives. There is a lacuna in the text at this point, but when it resumes, Callirhoe has been told that she will be married to the admiral, who, unbeknownst to her, is actually Chaereas. She weeps and carries on; her refusal is reported to Chaereas, who is in the dark about her identity as well. At long last, and with Polycharmus' encouragement, Chaereas goes to see the despairing woman, but does not immediately recognize her, but when he speaks to her, Callirhoe does. Reunited, the pair is celebrated by the whole ship.

The next day, an Egyptian brings the news that the land troops have not fared as well as the naval forces and that the Egyptian king has been killed. The

messenger also says that the Persian king is coming to Aradus to rescue his wife, whom he has heard is a captive there. Fearing that they would be separated again, Chaereas hatches another plan and they set sail for yet another of Aphrodite's sacred islands, Paphos. There, Chaereas regroups his men and tells them about the Persians' victory. The men immediately argue that they should set sail for home, for Greece, since they have ships. Pretending to be reluctant, Chaereas eventually agrees. He also consents to Callirhoe's request that Statira be returned to her king along with other high-ranking women. With that, Chaereas and Callirhoe finally depart for home, deciding to leave their son in Dionysius' care and to start fresh in Syracuse. When the Syracusans see the war-ships approaching, they are alarmed and tell the Egyptian messenger that the ships must come in only one at a time. When at last Chaereas and Callirhoe reveal themselves in splendour, the crowd and Hermocrates are overjoyed. The couple tell their tale of woe and joy to the assembled masses, Callirhoe gives thanks to Aphrodite, and they live happily ever after.

### **Appendix B: Xenophon of Ephesus' *An Ephesian Tale***

Anthia and Habrocomes are the main characters of Xenophon's story. Each is exceedingly beautiful and beloved by the community. They fall in love at the hands of the gods: Habrocomes' pride in himself has caused Eros to become angry; as punishment, Eros causes the youth to fall madly in love with Anthia when Habrocomes catches sight of her at a festival for Artemis in which Anthia is participating. Anthia, too, falls passionately in love; the pair are in fact so infatuated that they take ill, worrying their parents, who eventually are so

distressed that they consult the oracle of Apollo at Colophon; they learn that their children are in love with each other and decide that they should marry. The oracle also tells them about vague trials and hardships the couple must face in order to achieve fortune in the end. Habrocomes and Anthia are therefore married and immediately put on a ship with their slaves, Leucon and Rhode. They stop first at Rhodes where the couple offer a set of golden armour to the sun god's temple, but as soon as they set out again, the ship is attacked by pirates. Habrocomes, Anthia, and their slaves are taken by the pirate captain to his country home near Tyre, where the first mate forms an attachment to Habrocomes and another pirate to Anthia. Having pledged their fidelity to each other at the outset of their journey, Habrocomes and Anthia find themselves in a tight spot; they ask the pirates for time to consider their advances, leaving the readers in suspense as to what will happen next.

At the beginning of the second book, we learn that they have decided to commit suicide together in order to avoid breaking their vows of chastity to each other. At the last minute, the pirate captain claims the couple as his own slaves, rescuing them from the first mate and his friend. But now the pirate captain's daughter, Manto, falls in love with Habrocomes, who steadfastly rejects her propositions. Disappointed, Manto decides to take revenge by accusing Habrocomes to her father of attempting to rape her. Habrocomes is whipped and arrested, separating him from his beloved Anthia. When Manto marries a Syrian, Anthia must follow her mistress to her new home, putting further distance between our heroic couple. In Syria, Manto forces Anthia to marry a goatherd; rather than break her vow, however, Anthia convinces the goatherd not to sleep



with her, and he is convinced by her persuasive manner. However, now Manto's husband has come under the spell of Anthia's great beauty; Manto then orders the goatherd to kill his bride. The goatherd refuses and instead sells her to some Cilician merchants, who take her with them back home. Before they reach their destination, however, they are shipwrecked and Anthia is taken hostage by the bandit Hippothous and his company. They decide to sacrifice Anthia to their god, Ares, but she is saved at the last minute by Perilaus, a magistrate from Tarsus. Perilaus in turn falls in love with her and asks her to marry him; she is able to ask for a month's grace in which to make her decision.

At the start of the third book, Habrocomes manages to clear his name and leave prison. He sets out in search of Anthia, arriving at each location just a little too late. The reader witnesses Habrocomes come across the series of misadventures experienced by Anthia, told this time from his perspective. He finds the goatherd, who tells him about their unconsummated marriage and about her sale to the Cilicians. Eventually, at the end of the second book, Habrocomes makes it to Cilicia only to meet Hippothous, the robber whose band attempted to kill Anthia before being raided by Perilaus. Habrocomes makes friends with the robber and together they travel to Cappadocia. Here the reader is treated to an excursus containing the life story of the robber, Hippothous, which tells of his own tragic experience with love.

Meanwhile, Anthia's thirty days are up, and she must respond one way or another to Perilaus' proposal. She decides to take her usual approach to unwanted sexual attention and kill herself. She buys some poison from a doctor and takes it, but in fact the doctor has only sold her a strong sleeping potion. Thinking her

dead, Perilaus entombs her and Anthia wakes up in her grave hours later. Some grave robbing pirates break in seeking treasure and steal her away to Alexandria to be sold as a slave. Habrocomes, again, sets out after her, leaving Hippothous behind. In Egypt, Anthia again faces unwanted attention from her new master. She avoids sleeping with him by telling him that she has been promised to the goddess Isis since birth and must wait another year until her vow is over. Habrocomes, in a shocking turn of events, is shipwrecked in the Nile Delta and caught by bandits to be sold as a slave. His new master's wife propositions him but again he maintains his chastity. The master's wife kills her husband in order to open the door for Habrocomes, but he is even more horrified at this; as revenge, she accuses him of the murder and he is brought before the Egyptian prefect in Alexandria.

At the start of the fourth book, we again meet Hippothous, who has begun to search for his friend Habrocomes after they parted ways. He and his new band of desperadoes have crossed Egypt and into Ethiopia. Habrocomes, as punishment for the murder of his master, has been tied to a cross on the banks of the Nile and has been left to roast in the hot sun, all the while praying to the sun god. His prayers appear to work, for a gust of wind knocks his cross into the river; but he is soon retrieved and sentenced again to death, this time by fire. Again he is saved when the river floods its banks and extinguishes the fire. The Egyptians are astounded by these apparent miracles, so they imprison Habrocomes and try to figure out how to proceed. They eventually decide to free him, and Habrocomes, who has completely lost track of Anthia, decides to search for her in Italy. In fact, Anthia is in Ethiopia, having been taken there by her master as a member of his

entourage. There she meets Hippothous, who once again kidnaps her, although neither recognizes the other from their previous encounter. Again Anthia is the object of affection of one of the bandits; he tries to rape her but she kills him with a sword! The rest of the bandits throw her into a pit to be eaten by the two giant dogs in it. She is guarded by another of the bandits, who predictably falls in love with her and feeds the dogs secretly so that they will not eat Anthia.

The fifth and final book brings the readers briefly back to Rhodes where the slaves, Leucon and Rhode, now live, having been freed and made their fortune. We then learn that Habrocomes is staying with an old fisherman in Syracuse. The author again inserts a plot diversion here, in the form of the old man's life story. After this, Habrocomes ventures to Nuceria in the south and works in a quarry. Hippothous and his band, meanwhile, have returned to Egypt; they are again raided and again Hippothous is the only survivor. Anthia, rescued from her pit by the organizer of the raid, a man named Polydus, is taken by her rescuer, who is naturally madly in love with her. She escapes him and hides in the temple of Isis. There she is told by an oracle that she will be reunited with Habrocomes shortly, but not until she is sold into a brothel in Tarentum by Polydus' jealous wife. There she avoids her job by faking epilepsy. Meanwhile, Hippothous has married a rich woman and has come to Tarentum with his male lover. He runs into Anthia and finally recognizes her. They set out to Rhodes and meet Habrocomes there when they arrive; then the three of them find Leucon and Rhode again. The main characters happily reunited, one would think the tale successfully resolved, but the author divides the recognition scenes into three. Habrocomes first meets Leucon and Rhode in the temple of Helius. There, the two

former slaves have set up a pillar next to the golden armour the couple offered at the beginning of their journey; the pillar is inscribed in the memory of Habrocomes and Anthia. Then Leucon and Rhode come across Hippothous and Anthia, again in the temple. Finally, Habrocomes hears of Anthia's arrival in the city and runs through the city shouting her name, ending up at the temple where the group is assembled. After sharing their tales of woe and vowing never again to be apart, the whole group decides to return to Ephesus where they live happily ever after.

### **Appendix C: Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon***

*Leucippe and Clitophon* begins with the chance meeting between the author and Clitophon, the main character. The author and Clitophon have both happened upon a painting depicting the rape of Europa, which prompts Clitophon to tell the author his own tale of amorous misadventures. Clitophon tells the author how he was engaged to his half-sister, Calligone, but instead fell in love with his cousin Leucippe from Byzantium. While he pursued Leucippe with help from his friend Clinias, his father meanwhile made plans to go through with the wedding to Calligone. Meanwhile, Calligone, at a midnight beach sacrifice, is kidnapped by Byzantines, namely by Callisthenes, who mistakes her for Leucippe, who is renowned for her beauty. With Calligone conveniently out of the way, Clitophon feels free to pursue Leucippe even more aggressively and persuades her to sleep with him, an act which is interrupted in the nick of time by her mother.

The lovers, Clitophon's friend Clinias, and a slave Satyrus, escape on a

boat headed for Alexandria only to be shipwrecked. Luckily, they survive and end up on a beach on the Egyptian coast. The group prays for a sign and then comes across a temple containing two pictures of Andromeda and Prometheus, which foreshadows Leucippe's and Clitophon's impending suffering. As they head towards Alexandria, the party is set upon by bandits; only Clitophon escapes thanks to the help of some soldiers. Leucippe is not so lucky and is forced to participate in a ritual sacrifice; before Clitophon's very eyes she appears to be disemboweled by the bandits from just earlier. In fact, it is an illusion masterminded by Satyrus and his new friend Menelaus, who pose as bandits and orchestrate the trick. They use a theatrical knife and sheep's innards and Leucippe is safe and sound inside the coffin. Upon learning this, Clitophon is overjoyed and again presses Leucippe to sleep with him; she refuses, citing a dream in which Artemis came to her and told her to wait until they were married. Clitophon later has a dream of Aphrodite who confirms the advice.

Their host, General Charmides, at this point falls in love with Leucippe, who buys enough time with her own temporary madness for him to be killed in a battle with the bandits. At long last, our heroes, Leucippe and Clitophon, make it to Alexandria. An Egyptian, Chaereas, heals Leucippe from her insanity and promptly (and predictably at this point) falls in love with none other than our Leucippe. Clitophon and Leucippe, despite seeing a portentous painting showing the fate of Philomela, accept Chaereas' invitation to his home only to fall prey to Chaereas' arranged kidnapping of Leucippe by pirates. Clitophon attempts to follow them and rescue his lover, only to witness Leucippe's beheading onboard their ship.

He returns to Alexandria heartbroken, only to find Clinias, his old friend. Eventually Clitophon decides that he might as well take advantage of the rich widow, Melite, who has been putting the moves on him. They sail to her hometown, Ephesus, but Clitophon insists on chastity until they arrive at their destination. However, once there, Clitophon discovers in a letter that a pitiful slave-girl working under Melite's steward Sosthenes is in fact Leucippe, not beheaded, but sold by the pirates into slavery! At this point, Clitophon again refuses Melite's overtures. At the same time, Melite's long-thought-dead husband miraculously appears, alive! He beats up Clitophon and locks him in a closet. Melite, meanwhile, discovers Leucippe's letter to Clitophon and is heartbroken. Suddenly full of pity for her, Clitophon acquiesces to Melite at last, despite the fact that the relationship is clearly over and the fact that Clitophon's own beloved has finally been found. Melite nevertheless decides to help Clitophon escape and disguises him in some of her clothes. Her husband, Thersander, sees through this flimsy plan and has Clitophon arrested. Meanwhile, he, Thersander, and the steward Sosthenes have been forcing their attentions on poor Leucippe, who has been locked up in a hut. When she successfully resists, Thersander takes his revenge by pretending that Melite has in fact murdered Leucippe and by making sure that the jailed Clitophon hears of this rumour. Anguished, Clitophon admits that in fact he helped Melite kill her, thinking that at least he would be confirming Melite's guilt, with the bonus of ending his own tortured life. His friend Clinias denies his statement, but the judge sentences him to death regardless.

Suddenly, Leucippe's father, Sostratus, appears in Ephesus on work. At the same time, the word spreads that Leucippe is not dead but has escaped the hut

and has taken sanctuary in Artemis' temple, where she is shortly reunited with Clitophon and her father. Two days later, Leucippe and Melite both undergo a trial to prove their chastity. Leucippe is tested by the pan pipes and Melite by the waters of the Styx. Both, of course, pass these tests, and Thersander, humiliated, leaves the city. Leucippe and Clitophon return to Byzantium, where they are married, and then home to Tyre.

#### **Appendix D: Heliodorus' *Ethiopian Story***

The tale opens in the midst of the plot. On this body-strewn beach is a girl with a wounded young man at her side: Charicleia and Thagenes. The pair, the protagonists, is then captured by bandits, led by Thyamis, who take them to their lair by the Nile. There they meet another Greek named Cnemon who tells his own sad story: he was exiled from Athens by his evil stepmother and her slave Thisbe, who later arranged the murder of her mistress. Thyamis, who is the son of a high priest in Memphis, has a dream that he should marry Charicleia. However, he changes his mind during a battle with a rival band of brigands and decides instead to kill her while she is hidden in a cave for safe keeping. He is then taken captive. When Theagenes and Cnemon go to the cave, they see a dead body at its mouth. This was the woman killed by Thyamis, but it is not Charicleia; rather it is Thisbe, whom Thyamis mistook for Charicleia in the dark. It turns out that Thisbe, too, was hidden in the cave for safe keeping, having been stolen by a bandit from her lover, the merchant Nausicles. The group sets out and Knemon, acting as a scout, is the first to come upon an old man who is none other than Thyamis' father Calisiris. Calisiris leads Cnemon to the house of his friend, the merchant

Nausicles, where Calisiris begins narrating his own tale of misadventures.

He is a Priest of Isis at Memphis but he left that city to go to Delphi to escape his rivalrous sons. There he met Charicles, a priest of Apollo, who wanted help with his foster daughter, Charicleia, who had been given to him secretly as a small child by an Ethiopian sage. The problem is that Charicleia refuses to marry. While Calisiris is still at Delphi, this Charicleia meets a young Thessalian man named Theagenes and falls in love, but begins to waste away with love sickness. Calisiris is called in to cure her but discovers a belt embroidered with hieratic characters belonging to the girl—a birth token from her mother. Through this he deduces that Charicleia is really the albino daughter of the Ethiopian queen, Persinna, who exposed her daughter as an infant because of her white skin, fearing that she would be accused of adultery when really Charicleia's colouring is the result of Persinna gazing on the picture of Andromeda at the moment of conception. An oracle instructed Calasiris to bring Charicleia back to her birth parents in Ethiopia; so the group, Calasiris, Theagenes, and Charicleia, decide secretly to leave Delphi by sea.

Nausicles interrupts Calisiris' story at this point by arriving home. He has been searching for Thisbe with the help of the army of the Persian viceroy to Memphis, Oroondates. Instead, he has come across Charicleia and Theagenes; Charicleia he has kept, but he has sent Theagenes off as a gift for the Persian king. Charicleia is purchased back from Nausicles by Calisiris, who then continues his interrupted story.

As the trio sail from Delphi, they decide to spend the winter at Zacynthus where they meet a wicked pirate named Trachinus, who naturally falls in love



with Charicleia. The group flees the pirate but is captured by him at sea, almost at the mouth of the Nile. At this point, however, Trachinus' second in command decides to fight his master for the love of the fair maiden, and a great battle ensues. All of the pirates perish, leaving only the captives, Charicleia, Theagenes, and Calasiris, alive. At this point, as we know, Theagenes and Charicleia are captured by bandits, leaving poor Calasiris to wander around alone. Here ends Calasiris' tale.

The next day, Calasiris hears news of Theagenes, who, while on his way to the Persian king, has in fact been taken captive by none other than Thyamis, son of Calasiris, and his merry band of land-pirates. Calasiris and Charicleia hurry after them, disguised as beggars. They discover that the bandits have headed to Memphis in an attempt to oust the current high priest at Memphis, Calasiris' son and Thyamis' brother, and replace him with Thyamis. When the pair arrives, they find the brothers engaged in single combat. The brothers recognize their father and Theagenes recognizes Charicleia! Soon after, Calasiris, who is very old, dies, and the lovers, Theagenes and Charicleia, are forced by Oroondates' wicked wife Arsace to stay with her in her home, since she is in love with Theagenes. Theagenes manages to resist her advances until it is revealed that, since he was Oroondates' prize and slave, he therefore belongs to Arsace. He then agrees to sleep with her so long as she agrees to break off her arranged marriage between Charicleia and the son of Arsace's confidant, Cybele. The son is enraged at the news of the broken engagement and tells tales to Oroondates, who is waging war at Thebes at the time against the Ethiopians. Theagenes is tortured for his lack of sexual interest in Arsace; he is soon joined by Charicleia when she is

unjustly accused of murdering Cybele, her ex-fiancé's mother. In reality, the woman accidentally drank her own poison, intended for Charicleia. Charicleia was to be burned alive as punishment, but she miraculously survives the flames and instead is imprisoned with Theagenes. Word soon reaches Arsace's husband Oroondates about this situation, and he summons Theagenes and Charicleia to him. Arsace, in a panic, kills herself. But before the pair can reach Oroondates, the Ethiopians against whom the Persian king has been fighting, capture them and take them to their king, Hydaspes. Oroondates is captured in the battle but escapes and leads his army against Hydaspes, but loses the battle. Hydaspes returns home to the Ethiopian capital of Meroë where a victory festival is being prepared. At this festival, the two Greek captives, Theagenes and Charicleia, are to be sacrificed to Helios; first they must undergo a test of their chastity, which they pass. At this, the last minute, Charicleia whips out the embroidered ribbon which is her birth token, and Persinna, the queen, recognizes her daughter. Charicleia is therefore saved from sacrifice and embraced as the daughter of the king. But she is too embarrassed to explain who Theagenes is, so he is led off to the altar for sacrifice. At—again—the last minute, Charicles, Charicleia's father, grabs Theagenes and denounces him as his daughter's kidnapper. And so the audience learns the truth about the lovers and Theagenes is spared. In the end, the sage Sisimithres declares that the practice of human sacrifice is at an end. Theagenes and Charicleia are married and crowned as priests of Helios, fulfilling the oracle which began the ordeal.

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