Early Christian and Jewish Narrative

Edited by

ILARIA RAMELLI and
JUDITH PERKINS

Mohr Siebeck

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The Role of Religion in Shaping Narrative Forms

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Introduction: The Role of Religion
in Shaping Narrative Forms

Ilaria Ramelli and Judith Perkins

This volume elucidates in a variety of ways the remarkable role played by religion in the shaping and reshaping of narrative forms in antiquity and late antiquity. This is particularly evident in ancient Jewish and Christian narrative, which is in the focus of most of the contributions here, but also in some "pagan" novels such as that of Heliodorus, which is treated as well in the third part of the volume, both in an illuminating comparison with Christian novels and in an inspiring rethinking of Heliodorus's relation to Neoplatonism. All of these essays, from different perspectives, illuminate the interplay between narrative and religion, and show how religious concerns and agendas shaped narrative forms in Judaism and early Christianity.

A series of compelling and innovative articles, all based on fresh and often groundbreaking research, is divided into three large sections: part 1 deals with ancient Jewish narrative, and part 2 with ancient Christian narrative, in particular gospels, acts, biographies, and martyrdoms, while part 3 offers a comparison with "pagan" narrative, and especially the religious novel of Heliodorus, both in terms of social perspectives and in terms of philosophical and religious agendas.

The first essay of the first part, by Larry Wills, dealing with ancient Jewish novellas (Esther, Daniel, Tobit, Judith, and *Joseph and Aseneth*) and the differentiation between history and novel, provides a broad methodological framework for the whole section. As he notes, there is still a restless fascination with the process by which ancient Jewish novellas arose, and the relation of these provocative texts to Jewish culture. This question can be partly illuminated by a closer consideration of how ancient prose novels, both Greek and Jewish, differentiated from prose history, but it is also helpful to push this entire question back one level: How did written prose history differentiate from poetic genres? Why history? Why prose? The very use of prose to write narrative history was an important milestone whose significance should not be taken for granted. The novelty of it still requires explanation, as does its philosophical import. Prose is the negative space of tradition and poetry; it rejects culturally sanctioned elegance and artfulness and deliberately obscures its own artifice. "The rise of prose," says Nimis 1994, "implies an attack on the system of oral transmission and performance." And realism in literature, whether ancient or modern, is not really a transparent

representation of reality, but a discourse, a construct, an aesthetic of its own. The entire attraction of prose, both nonfiction and fiction, is to create the illusion of the way things "really" are.

Erich Gruen focuses on Artapanus's rewriting of the Bible as novelistic narrative in his fragmentarily preserved treatise *On the Jews*, in particular in a fragment that deals with Moses, which Gruen compares with the biblical narrative. Like many Hellenistic Jewish texts, Gruen observes, the treatise was ignored or scorned by the rabbis but proved more congenial to Christian churchmen to whom we owe what survives. The question Gruen asks is why a Hellenistic Jew took familiar stories about the patriarchs and Moses and reshaped them, treating the Scriptures cavalierly and producing a form of romance that has his hero enmeshed in Egyptian culture and Greek mythology. The answer, against simplistic solutions such as denying Artapanus's Jewish identity or deconstructing Judaism or else interpreting Artapanus's work as an apology for Judaism, lies in the Jewish Hellenistic religious and cultural context in which he wrote. The aim of entertaining readers and the model of novelistic narratives in the Bible itself are proposed as the most plausible factors.

David Konstan approaches the *Testament of Abraham* as a narrative in a so far unattempted and fruitful comparison with "subversive biography" – a category under which, according to him, the biographies of Jesus Christ and his immediate followers also fall – in particular with the *Alexander Romance*. Whether there was a direct influence of the *Romance* on the *Testament* Konstan does not determine, but he does offer that the *Testament of Abraham* represents something like the spirit and style of the *Alexander Romance*, transposed into to the key of early Hebraic religion.

The second part addresses Christian gospels, acts, biographies, and martyr narratives. The gospel genre, in turn, has been treated as a sub-genre of biography, though the debate on this issue is still open. The collection of Barton 2006 represents well the debate on the literary genre of the gospels: Alexander 2006 here acknowledges similarities with biographies, aretalogies, and martyrologies, while refusing to identify the genre of the gospels with any of them. She rather remarks that they are so difficult to categorise because they emerged in a time of "profound cultural transformation" (30), while Barton 2006a argues that the gospels are the closest literary genre to ancient biography (123). Likewise Hägg 2012 includes the Christian gospels, both canonical and so-called apocryphal, in his monograph on biography in antiquity. Hägg suggests that the authors of the apocryphal gospels tried to fill in the "gaps" in the canonical gospel narratives. Other scholars such as Markus Vinzent and Matthias Klinghardt speak of a gospel genre and even argue that Marcion created it (Vinzent 2014; Klinghardt 2008).

Karen King compares the endings of the *Gospel of Mark* (16:8) and the *Gospel of Judas* (16:8–9), which both leave the narrative unresolved and unredeemed,

even though a promise of salvation is to be found in both Mark 13:13 and Judas 33:6–9. Addressing this tension, King remarks, may offer insights into the relation between narrative forms and religious concerns and agendas. She compares strikingly similar literary strategies in both Gospels, especially prophetic foreshadowing and synecdoche, as well as the above-mentioned suspended endings. In the *Gospel of Judas*, this kind of finale is interpreted – in continuity with the rest of the gospel – as a dissuasive strategy. King persuasively argues further that, by requiring readers to finish the story, the open endings of the *Gospel of Mark* and the *Gospel of Judas* effectively turn readers into authors and even characters. Both gospels complicate the notion of authorship by impelling the reader to choose: to accept or reject Jesus's teaching, to walk in the path of justice or the path of their transgressions. If readers take up such an option, King argues, they become not only authors but characters. She also exemplifies possible ways in which these two gospels' narrative forms relate to their religious concerns and agendas. One way is that readers will see themselves as among the elect. The depiction of the disciples in both these gospels – arguably written in polemic against other Christians of their day – has another potential aim: to correct misunderstandings and "convert" the readers, who may already be believers, to their respective positions on God and salvation, the teachings of Jesus, and the meaning of his death, within the framework of an eschatological tension. For their suspended endings both model and mimic the temporal situation of believing readers: apocalyptically suspended between the revelation of Jesus's prophecies and their final fulfillment.

Laura Nasrallah investigates the phenomenon of people writing as the apostle Paul or inventing histories of Paul after his death, considers the impact of such writings, and notes how these traditions are also marked in the archaeological record. In particular, she discusses the Pastoral Epistles, the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, the pseudepigraphical correspondence between Paul and Seneca, and evidence of some Pauline traditions in cities that were significant to Paul's own life and travels, placing them within a broader cultural context of practices of history as seen in education, games, and literature of the period. Adopting a productive approach, Nasrallah argues that some traditions of Paul-after-Paul should be understood in light of the idea of an author function, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, in light of ancient practices of history and the idea of historiography as articulation of the possible, rather than in light of the binary of truth versus falsehood, or history versus fiction.

Dennis MacDonald focuses on the *Acts of John*. The frequent appearances of outrageous miracles in the so-called Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, he observes, may wrongly suggest that they are void of literary or philosophical sophistication. Over the past two decades, however, MacDonald has become increasingly convinced that the authors of at least two of these works, the *Acts of John* and the *Acts of Andrew*, both Christian Platonists writing in Greek around

the year 200 c.e., expected their more educated readers to detect their philo-
sophical uses of Greek mythology. His short essay here argues that the author
of the *Acts of John* rewrote the Lucan version of the calling of former fishermen
to follow Jesus; the author not only recognized Luke's literary debt to a famous
story about Dionysus and the pirates but made the connection more pronounced.
Here one sees a fascinating case of the growth of a tradition inside the Synoptic
Gospels that finds an interpretation in later apocryphal narratives.

Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta challenges the general consensus that the *Acts of
Thomas* was composed in Syriac in third-century Eastern Syria. He remarks that
this theory not only places *ATh* in very discordant position in the context of the
Apocryphal Acts of Apostles (AAA), all of which were written in Greek during
the second half of the second century, but also relies on rather shaky grounds.
The hypothesis of a Syriac original is based, on the one hand, on alleged Syriac
echoes in the text of ms U – our best testimony for *ATh* – and, on the other, on the
so-called influences of Thomasine traditions that, in turn, were supposedly in-
fluenced by Bardaisan and Mani. An unbiased approach to the textual evidence,
however, according to Roig Lanzillotta shows that the hypothesis of a Syriac
origin of the *ATh* is not tenable. His essay provides an overview of the project in
progress at the University of Groningen, which, on the basis of a new approach
to the testimonies, reevaluates the textual evidence with a view to demonstrating
not only that *ATh* was originally written in Greek, but also that it should be dated,
together with the other AAA, to the second rather than to the third century.

Mark Julian Edwards investigates the use of the novelistic motif of the deferred
fulfilment of prophecy in early Christian fiction. One of the more refined tropes
in ancient works of narrative literature was to represent a dream as being fulfilled
first in a figurative and then in a literal sense. The most familiar instances belong
to the second sophistic era, for instance in Achilles Tatius. But there is classical
precedent in the *Oedipus Rex*, where Jocasta exclaims that men have often slept
with their mothers in dreams. Anyone familiar with ancient traditions of onei-
romancy would know that such dreams were supposed to symbolize conquest
of one's native soil, which Oedipus had already achieved in the sight of all before
he fulfilled it literally and unwittingly by marrying his mother. Christians were
familiar from the Bible with other cases of partial, followed by plenary, fulfilment
of a prophecy. Sometimes the first fulfilment seems to be metaphorical. In other
cases, literal, though imperfect, fulfilment precedes the true consummation,
e. g., in the application of Isaiah 53 to Hezekiah. Finally, there are cases where a
prophecy appears to have miscarried because the Lord has a higher plan. Other
prophecies, like Agabus' prediction that Paul will die in Rome or Christ's refer-
ence to his ascension in the Gospel of John, are fulfilled in fact but not in the
written narrative. As Edwards notes, prophecy, dreaming and prefigurement are
employed in early lives of Christian martyrs. A clear parallel to the novel is fur-
nished by the *Life of Cyprian*, where the promise of death "tomorrow" seems at

first to be hyperbolic and then assumes its literal force. In the *Acts of Ignatius*, the author makes use of Romans, in which the saint looks forward to his own death as a victim of beasts in the arena and then refers to the soldiers who guard him as leopards. In the *Acts*, this figurative use of feral imagery is put into the mouth of Ignatius well before his martyrdom, and passages from Romans are then progressively interlarded with the narrative, until at last the literal encounter with the beasts secures his crown. Other examples come from the Clementine romances, which bear witness to a Christian familiarity with the pagan novel. One cannot, however, speak of simply borrowing, as this corpus, like the early martyrologies, draws on numerous and varied antecedents from the scriptures.

Vincent Hunink addresses the early Christian Greek text known as the *Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena* (*AXP*), commonly dated to the fourth century, one of the finest examples of what may be considered the early Christian novel. Ever since it first publication, which came as late as 1893, the text remained largely neglected, probably on account of its plain style and its rather limited appeal as a story. Only recently, scholarly attention for the *AXP* has come up, with special interest in either questions of gender or the theological background of the apocryphal acts. Hunink studies the *AXP* primarily as a narrative text in its literary context. First, the tale of Xanthippe and Polyxena bears some striking similarities to the earlier *Acts of Thecla*. As scholars have observed, it may to some extent even be labeled a rewriting of that much more famous text about a woman at the side of Paul. A somewhat more detailed analysis is given, in order to gain a better understanding of the *AXP*. In addition, the *AXP* can best be understood in the wider tradition of the ancient novel. Notably the second part of the narrative, centering on the wanderings of Polyxena, profitably may be compared to the popular genre with its roots in non-Christian literature. Various minor themes that are typical for the ancient novel are addressed, such as the notions of love, friendship, virginity and fidelity, travel by sea, robbery, and supernatural elements (notably helpful wild beasts). The *AXP*, as a meaningful adaptation of popular narrative texts, both Christian and non-Christian, merits serious attention from modern readers.

Richard Pervo offers an extremely detailed and articulated analysis of the same *Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena*. This text is related to various apocryphal Acts and other texts, but, Pervo notes, it is not hagiography or an example of the later apocryphal Acts. It is a Christian novel, the story of three women, among whom the role of the heroine is distributed. It is thus atypical of romantic novels. This essay explores carefully the structure and plot of the story, placing it within a general historical and literary context.

Ilaria Ramelli investigates how the superimposition of different religious discourses and agendas over the centuries shaped the complex development of the narrative concerning King Abgar the Black of Edessa and the apostle Addai through different literary genres, such as epistles and epistolary novels, history, hagiography, biography, acts of apostles, and historical novels. Indeed, the

narratives containing the Addai-Abgar legend examined by Ramelli developed through a number of literary forms, each shaped almost always by the religious, and religious-political, motivations of their authors or redactors. Ramelli offers that the story of Abgar and Addai is rooted in a historical fact (Abgar's knowledge of the activity and execution of Jesus and his correspondence with the emperor, which took place historically for political reasons). It then became a religious narrative, first to celebrate – and possibly defend – Abgar the Great, when the Abgar-Addai legend crystallized, and then to pursue various religious-political agendas. One of these agendas was that of the newly established Edessan "orthodoxy" in the *Doctrina Addai*, with its concern for appropriating to "orthodoxy" a legend that was probably first promoted by a milieu, Bardaisan's, which had meanwhile become suspected of heresy. Another of those agendas was that of the *Acts of Mari*, in which this narrative was helpful to provide a link between Mari and the apostles, so as to support the authority of the patriarchal see of Seleucia-Ctesiphon. Moses of Chorene, like Eusebius in his own Abgar-Addai narrative and partially perhaps Bardaisan, had as a goal the celebration of the early spread of Christianity in Mesopotamia. His religious-political agenda was that of promoting the origins of Armenian Christianity as apostolic – even boasting about the first Christian state as "Armenian" (Osrhoene) – over against the Chalcedonian church with which the Armenian church was in conflict. Procopius of Caesarea, instead, has no evident religious agenda, but rather links the Abgar narrative to Chosroe's plans on conquering Edessa. This is why he concentrates on the promise of impregnability for Edessa contained in the Abgar-Jesus letters and therefore leaves the Addai narrative completely aside. Ramelli observes that, if the Addai-Abgar legend is rooted in history but developed in narratives that added many fictional elements, it comes as no surprise that the novels which present it in the fullest form are two historical novels, the *Doctrina Addai* and the *Acts of Mari*, and that Eusebius, Moses, and Procopius incorporated this story in their historical works, as Bardaisan of Edessa and Julius Africanus may have already done. In the case of the Addai legend, it is particularly evident how religion, and religious agendas changing over time, shaped narrative forms. Ramelli demonstrates this at every stage of the development of the Abgar-Addai story, from its possible roots in the historical letters exchanged by Abgar and Tiberius for eminently political reasons, through Bardaisan, Eusebius, the *Doctrina Addai*, some Syriac *Transitus Mariae*, the *Acts of Mari*, Procopius, and Moses of Chorene.

A different, but in many ways parallel, multi-stage reshaping of a narrative in accord with the religious agendas of subsequent authors can be observed in the case of Paul's speech at the Areopagus, first historically delivered in Athens – as is probable – then reported by the author of Acts and later reworked in the *Acts of Philip*, the *Doctrina Addai*, and the *Acta Maris*, as has been shown by Ramelli 2012. The modalities of all these instances of reception of the Lucan narrative

differ not only from one another but also from that of Patristic philosophers, especially Ps. Dionysius the Areopagite and his interpretation of Paul as a "philosopher."

Kathryn Chew explores the motifs of passion and conversion in the stories of the Greek novelistic heroines and early Christian female martyrs. Over the past few years, Chew has been working on thematic comparisons of the stories of novelistic heroines and the early Christian female martyrs, with the idea that since these genres for a certain time co-existed, they might have been mutually influential (as opposed to one-way influence), as Bowersock and Ramelli have argued. After focusing on chastity, violence, and suffering, here Chew examines passion – not in the sense of suffering but of desire and love – and conversion. The issue of passion is necessarily entwined with that of self-control, a leading virtue for both pagans and Christians. Self-conscious heroines exhibit restraint toward their lovers (and aversion to all others) before marriage, even as they desire marriage. Female martyrs, on the other hand, due to the fact that their sole means of marriage to Jesus is through their own deaths over which they have no control, are quite vocal about their desire for their heavenly bridegroom, as the frequent use of marriage vocabulary demonstrates. Martyrs, too, exhibit self-control in resisting the advances of all earthy suitors, which keeps them in parallel with the behavior of the heroines. Chew's examination of the martyrs' use of marriage vocabulary also suggests that falling in love with Jesus does not violate self-control but rather celebrates it, in that it takes self-control to prefer the rewards of the next world to the enticements of the present one. Conversion is also an essential element of the stories of both heroines and martyrs, in that the privileged culture (Greco-Roman or Christian) is implicitly or explicitly valued above other cultures. Thus, as martyrs often convert onlookers to their religion, so do the heroines' experiences show that, in a world full of cultures, it is better to be Greek (or Roman). Furthermore, there is an implicit connection between passion and conversion, in that the depiction of the heroines'/martyrs' passion for their heroes/Jesus adds to the appeal of their respective cultures.

The third part brings in "pagan" narratives, and especially Heliodorus's novel, in a comparative approach with Christian narratives, with special attention to the social landscapes they disclose and the philosophical and religious agendas that underlie them. Judith Perkins argues that a comparison of the divergent views on linguistic difference informing two chronologically and geographically related prose fictions, Heliodorus's *Aithiopika* and the *Acts of Thomas*, reveals critical social dynamics of the early imperial centuries. The *Aithiopika*'s concerted attention to language usage, especially barriers to communication, functions to reify social differences and to naturalize the position and privileges of the multiethnic imperial elite administering the empire. In contrast, the almost concurrent production of two versions of the *Acts of Thomas* (Syriac and Greek), as well as its focus on creating multi-status communities, redirects the social paradigm offered by

narratives like the *Aithiopika*. Language was a prime social marker in the early imperial period. The classicizing Attic standard that was being embraced by the Greek-speaking educated elite across the empire, Rome's partners in empire, was both a mark of distinction and a basis for differentiation from the sub-elite. With its complexities of plot, language, and style, the *Aithiopika* seems aimed at the *pepaideumenoi*. And its last scene, showing the Ethiopian leaders switching between Greek and Ethiopian as they negotiate the return, marriage and future coronation of the long-lost daughter of the Ethiopian royal family, exemplifies the mechanics of rule. The members of the Ethiopian-speaking crowd are described as celebrating the events, "although they understood little of what was said" (10.38.3). Their language deficiencies are shown to limit the crowd's civic understanding and participation. Instead, the appearance of the *Acts of Thomas* in both Syriac and Greek and its early rendering into multiple languages – Ethiopic (Ge'ez), Coptic, Georgian and Armenian, for example – reflect a more inclusive attitude toward language and community. A detailed comparison with this Christian narrative highlights this difference.

Svetla Slaveva-Griffin explores religion and Neoplatonism in Heliodorus's *Aithiopika*, helping readers understand better his taciturn approach to Christianity in the novel. Religion underpins all transformative events in the life and character of the main heroine, so much so that she herself could be viewed as an embodiment or an allegory of the changing fate of religion in late antiquity. Building upon Sandy's conclusion about the shared interest of the late Neoplatonists and Heliodorus in allegory and theurgy, Slaveva-Griffin looks into another, unexplored, area of possible Neoplatonic influence on Heliodorus: Plotinus's treatment of allegory – where philosophy and religion are epistemologically fused – and the value of ἀγάλματα. The fusion of philosophy and religion in Neoplatonic allegory, Slaveva-Griffin argues, provides the conceptual foundation for the presence of religion in the storyline, the topography, and the characters of the *Aithiopika*. In this interpretive framework, Chariclea can be read as an allegory of the divine, a "living ἄγαλμα" herself. Her beauty is a copy of divine presence and beauty, and therefore they both shine through her. Ultimately there is no real physical foundation for her existence; she is an idea in a human form.

Like the collected essays in Pinheiro, Perkins, and Pervo 2013, which investigate the core role played by narratives in Christian and Jewish self-fashioning in the Roman Empire, the present volume fruitfully bridges the disciplinary gap between classical studies and ancient Jewish and Christian studies,[1] offers new insights, and hopefully opens up new paths of inquiry.

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[1] "It is only recently that scholars of ancient Greek and Roman literature have begun to lift the quarantine against Christian texts and to treat them as part and parcel of the material that we study. In addition to the idea that 'pagans' and Christians (or Jews) belonged to separate worlds, a further impediment to the comparative study of the ancient novel and christian narratives has been the relative disregard of, not to say disdain for, post-classical texts in general and the novels

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in particular. Over the past three decades, the novels have been rehabilitated to a great degree as significant literary compositions, and are even included in the syllabi and reading lists of classics departments, but such recognition has yet to be accorded to Christian works (the same can be said of Jewish narratives). The result has been that, even now, and despite some noteworthy contributions, relatively little investigation has been devoted to possible intersections between the novels and Christian literature. We hope here to indicate some important connections, and point the way to fruitful areas of new research" (Konstan and Ramelli 2013, 180). The present collection hopefully represents a remarkable advancement on this line.

Part 1: Ancient Jewish Narrative

The Differentiation of History and Novel: Controlling the Past, Playing with the Past

Lawrence M. Wills

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There is still a restless fascination with the process by which ancient Jewish novellas arose (Esther, Daniel, Tobit, Judith, and *Joseph and Aseneth*), and the relation of these provocative texts to Jewish culture. This question can be partly illuminated by a closer consideration of how ancient prose novels, both Greek and Jewish, differentiated from prose history, but it is also helpful to push this entire question back one level: How did written prose history differentiate from poetic genres? Why history? Why prose? The very use of prose to write narrative history was an important milestone whose significance should not be taken for granted. The novelty of it still requires explanation, as does its philosophical import. Prose is the negative space of tradition and poetry; it rejects culturally sanctioned elegance and artfulness and deliberately obscures its own artifice. "The rise of prose," says Steve Nimis, "implies an attack on the system of oral transmission and performance."[1] And realism in literature, whether ancient or modern, is not really a transparent representation of reality, but a discourse, a construct, an aesthetic of its own. The entire attraction of prose, both non-fiction and fiction, is to create the *illusion* of the way things "really" are.[2]

In Greece the first writer of prose was said to have been the sixth-century B.C.E. philosopher Pherecydes of Syros, and as Simon Goldhill has noted, the Athenian Enlightenment followed his example and turned to prose to communicate a new philosophical authority in the areas of politics, laws, science, rhetoric, medicine, theology, philosophy, history, and ironically, aesthetics (the mastery, in prose, of non-prose!). The German term *Fachprosa* or technical prose has been used by scholars to refer to this kind of writing; it implies a technical mastery of a field

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[1] Nimis 1994. See also David Carr (not to be confused with David McLain Carr) 1988; Godzich and Kitay 1987. It is also the case that in the West, prose – both history and fiction – had a non-localized, non-*polis* orientation that spoke to a wider world. Konstan 1994, 230. For this reason, prose would have a special role in colonial identity.

[2] Michel de Certeau draws attention to "the ideological repressing of [history's] own social conditions of production, thus hiding from view the values built into its narrative representation of the past." The words are from Gerhard van den Heever's discussion of Certeau. Van den Heever 2005, 62; see also Ward 2000, 37–46.

of knowledge. Prose narrative was a new, relatively unadorned medium that *presumed* to depict reality more as it was. Most of the writings in the fields listed above were attributed to known, real, named authors. The named author is in control of *Fachprosa*: "Prose becomes … the medium for authoritative expression, the expression of power."[3]

Unadorned, unstylized prose also arose in Israel at about the same time as it did in Greece. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi describes the age of prose that began in the fifth century B.C.E. in Judah.[4] Soon thereafter, in a new, larger, more diverse world, epic-like materials receded as the dominant discourse. Myth found a rebirth in apocalypses, communicating the sense of a true reality hidden behind the false reality, but among those less disenchanted, two genres, novel and a new kind of history, were created – indeed, co-created – over the course of a few centuries. Fiction presented a quotidian redemption for a new generation of colonized citizens,[5] but how could anyone be redeemed by the new *historical* writing? History seems like a suppression of imagination, a drama of life with the gods and the irrational stripped away. History is reduced epic, played out on a time line that we define. The named author of history is the voice who controls the inquiry, the voice that imposes an authorial control over the past: "The voice of the author as a personal, evaluating, reviewing presence is constantly being performed in [Herodotus's] *History*."[6] And as in the modern period, the voice that speaks in history writing is a named *male* author writing in a male-gendered discourse, while novels cross-culturally are often anonymous and female-gendered.[7] Herodotus thus inserted his named persona into an epic-sized inquiry that pushed history into the same prosaic, technical context as science, medicine, and philosophy. If *Fachprosa* is the language of technical mastery, then history is the technical mastery of myth and the past; history is the past under authorial

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[3] Goldhill 2002, 5.

[4] Eskenazi 1988. The earlier biblical prose, even in the history books, is based in epic and oral traditional forms and is only half-prosaic. It should also be clear that, although it is important for the present essay to note that prose arose at about the same time in Greece and Israel, this is not a cultural contest of "first founders"; prose had arisen in Egypt long before. See Lichtheim 1975–80, 1:10–11. We may ponder at some other time why Goldhill's *Invention of Prose* and Eskenazi's *Age of Prose* did not mention each other's subject matter – very similar developments that occurred during the same century, about five hundred miles apart, and which had already been compared creatively by Arnaldo Momigliano and Morton Smith; see below n. 14.

[5] See Wills 2011. The fascinating debate over whether the Greek novels reflect a more "colonized" or more "colonizing" viewpoint is treated there, but especially note Perkins 2009, 62–89; Whitmarsh 2001, 17–20; Wills 2000, 113–32.

[6] Goldhill 2002, 5, 28. On *Fachprosa*, see Rydbeck 1967; Alexander 1993; and Gamble 1995, 33–34. Rosalind Thomas (2000) also emphasizes that the generic similarities of Herodotus are not to "history" – which did not yet exist – but to natural philosophy and medicine, also written in *Fachprosa*.

[7] The Harvard modern historian Jill Lepore notes this division of gender construction as well. Lepore 2008, 80–82. See also Wills 2011 In the ancient world, Pamphile of Epidaurus, first century C.E., was a rare example of a named female historian.

control. If myth or the gods are included in a work of history, they are chan-
neled – not as a transparent account of the gods' narrative nor as the ancient
heroes' narrative but as *our* narrative, told by *me* to *us*.[8] History places before us
national redemption on *our* time line.

Yet, depending on when the biblical history books are dated, it may be argued
that written prose had arisen in Israel before the time of Pherecydes, and many
scholars have asserted that a true historical consciousness is evident in Israel
before Herodotus. Indeed, a strong interest in origins is found in Israel which
is quantitatively stronger than that found in other ancient literatures. Although
some Babylonian chronicles may sustain a rudimentary account of past events,
it seems slight compared with that found in Israel. The texts of the great ancient
Near Eastern empires have little to say about the founding of their own nations.
According to Moshe Weinfeld, they "were not cognizant of a beginning of their
national existence."[9] Partial parallels can be found in other cultures, but Peter
Machinist rightly argues for a quantitative distinction between Israel and Meso-
potamia on this point.[10] By contrast, however, the Greek historical tradition, in
keeping with Greek *Fachprosa* in general, is one in which the "I" – the voice of
the text – is a real named person, who reflects on the validity of his or her own
enterprise and by doing this establishes a speaking authority. In the Greek histo-
ries, the analytic or reflective "I" asserts itself as a commentator on or critic of the
other authorities, even criticizing Homer or the gods themselves. There is thus a
significant break between the historian and the epic poet. To be sure, the author
grants the theoretical possibility of his own fallibility, but this disingenuousness
only serves to bolster his authority as a truth seeker. Machinist noted the differ-
ence between this model and the ancient Near Eastern and biblical models.[11] For
the ancient Near Eastern texts about the past, the authorities whose voices could
be heard were (1) the king, (2) tradition, or (3) the gods. The Hebrew Bible texts
express an absolute authority of God and God's dealings in history, and they try

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[8] History always carries over into "social memory," a group's construction of its constitutive
past. The social memory of the community is the primary goal of history writing, the construc-
tion of a people's identity. On identity in Jewish history writing, see Wills 2009, esp. chs. 2 and
4. There is little distinction between history and social memory, contra Halbwachs 1992. As an
introduction to social memory, see Kirk 2005, 1–11; see also Mendels 2004; Yerushalmi 1996.

[9] Weinfeld 1993, 1. See also Pardes 2000, 4–5, 16.

[10] Machinist 1986, 183–202. Any attempt to interpret these differences as indicating a supe-
riority of Israelite writing would be at odds with the direction of this essay, but there did seem
to be quantitative differences among the cultural products of the different ancient Near Eastern
nations. On the parallels, see Younger 1990. At some point in the post-exilic period, the "epic
books" of Genesis–Deuteronomy and the "history books" of Joshua–Kings are understood as
one long history of Israel, what David Noel Freedman (1963) dubbed the "Primary History."
In a post-Homeric world, Greek epics of various kinds were also collected and summarized in
prose to create an *epikos kyklos* ("cyclic epic"). The popularity of historical scenes in art from
the fourth to third centuries B.C.E. was evidently based on prose summaries, not original epics;
see West 2003, 3–4.

[11] Machinist 2003, 135. See also Dihle 1982, 71–75, 89.

to present that as forcefully as possible. A human voice would imply fallibility, and although the *characters* Moses and Elijah could reflect fallibility, the anonymous narrators of the tradition could not. They are transparent to the absolute authorities of God and the past. By this process, Moses and Elijah had in effect been made infallible, in spite of their storied faults.

Greek history, unlike Israelite history, is also characterized by an explicit reflection on method; the word *historia* did not originally mean history but systematic inquiry, and it is, as Goldhill asserts, a "strikingly contemporary term."[12] Despite an early engagement with prose history writing in Israel, the systematic inquiry of *historia* is lacking. Discourse about events on a human time line is engaged enthusiastically, but not a method of questioning and evaluating – at least, not on an explicit level. It is possible, however, that the discernment of history is more internalized in Israel, through the use of irony. Irony destabilizes certainty and forces the same awareness of multiple possibilities that Greek *historia* fosters. Do passages such as the death of Absalom in 2 Sam 18:9–15 or the end of Judges evoke such searching questioning – "What the hell just happened?!" – that they constitute a sort of *historia*, reasoned inquiry? To the extent that this is true, a major distinction between Greek and Hebrew history, and the reason for excluding the latter from history, is minimized.[13] In addition, Israel invested an analogous *historia* in prophecy. Prophecy arose at the same time as Israelite historical consciousness (they were co-created), and a moral *historia* of the "recipients" of history – the kings of Israel, Judah, and the nations – was explicit, searching, and constant.

Important similarities and differences between Greek *historia* and Israelite reflection can thus be found, but we turn now to a further development. It is when the stylized prose of the biblical historical books evolves into the *Fachprosa* of Ezra-Nehemiah that another important similarity to Greek history appears in Judah: named, known, male authors. The "I" of Ezra and the "I" of Nehemiah are as revolutionary as the "I" of Herodotus, and appear at about the same time.[14] What Greek historians provided that Israelite and Judean historians did not was an *explicit* reflection on the criteria of good history, and yet for all the critique by elite authors, Greek history writing continued to develop in two registers: a restrained, rationalistic register, championed by Herodotus, Thucydides, and Polybius, and a less restrained, popular register that utilized rhetorical techniques to manipulate emotion. We may even conclude that the three upper-register

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[12] Goldhill 2002, 10–12. It was not until Aristotle (*Poetics* 1450a–51b, 1459a) that *historia* was understood to mean a genre, "history," rather than investigation.

[13] Cf. Brettler 1995, 47.

[14] This statement is true even if parts of Ezra-Nehemiah were added by other authors. On Ezra-Nehemiah and the discovery of the *I*, see Momigliano 1990, 5–28; Bowersock 1991, 27–36; M. Smith 1972, 122–25.

historians mentioned here were atypical.[15] The texts of the rationalistic register were more likely to recount recent wars, while the rhetorical historiography was more likely to interweave myths, legends, and genealogy to arrive at a universal chronological system of the ancient past. If Herodotus was the father of history in Greece, Hellanicus of Lesbos (fifth century B.C.E.) was the father of second-register history. He merged history and heroic legend with lists of priestesses to create a fuller chronological system. "In order to make the system work," says John Van Seters, "he had to synchronize numerous mythical strands by duplicating names and events, filling in blank spaces with stories invented on the model of other accounts."[16] Hellanicus was also creative in ensuring that the vision of the whole of history would not be impeded by a lack of data. The gaps could and should be filled, by the spontaneous generation of the truth – what better way to control history? Such endeavors anticipate some of the developments in Jewish history, such as Demetrius the Chronographer (c. 225 B.C.E.) and 2 Maccabees (c. 100 B.C.E.).

The broad influence of rhetoric is also felt in this second register of history writing; affecting the audience emotionally became a common goal. The later rhetorician Quintilian can be quoted at some length:

We may move our hearers to tears by the picture of a captured town. For the mere statement that "the town was stormed," while no doubt embracing all that such a calamity involves, has all the curtness of a dispatch, and fails to penetrate to the emotions of the hearer. But if we expand all that the one word "stormed" includes, we shall see the flames pouring from house and temple, and hear the crash of falling roofs and one confused clamor blended of many cries; we shall behold some in doubt where to fly, others clinging to their nearest and dearest in one last embrace, while the wailing of women and children, and the laments of old men, that the cruelty of fate should have spared them to see that day, will strike upon the ears. Then will come the pillage of treasure sacred and profane, the hurrying to and fro of the plunderers as they carry off their booty or return to seek for more, the prisoners driven each before his own inhuman captor, the mother struggling to keep her child, and the victors fighting over the richest spoil. For though, as I have said, the sack of a city includes all these things, it is less effective to tell the whole news at once than to recount it detail by detail.[17]

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[15] Gabba 1981, 50; see also Mendels 1997, 35–37. Schepens (1997, 159–64) argues that a distinction between the historians of recent events and chronographers of the ancient past is a modern distinction only, but Marincola (1999b, 307–308) counters that it is an ancient distinction in that recent histories are more narrative and ancient chronographies more analytical – just like Demetrius.

[16] Van Seters 1983, 14, 21–24, 30; Lesky 1966, 330; Wiseman 2004, x.

[17] 8.3.67–70 (Loeb edition, with minor changes). There was no separate category of "tragic," "pathetic," or "rhetorical" history, as formerly believed, but a quantitative distinction. Aristotle's separation of history and tragedy (*Poetics* 23.1) was forced and unique. Doran 1981, 86–87; see also Walbank 1960, 216–34. Feldman (1998, 13–14) begins with a distinction between critical history and rhetorical history and then argues that they merge by the Hellenistic period. True, they are often merged in Greek discussions of history, but Mendels (1997, 35–37) rightly maintains a continuing distinction that can sometimes be discerned in the practice of history.

Though Quintilian is specifically speaking of rhetoric, not history, this description will sound like a model for the description of the siege of Jerusalem in 2 Macc 3:18–21; 5:15–16. What are viewed by modern scholars as rhetorical excesses in 2 Maccabees may seem more typical of history writing when viewed by this second-register standard. Further, Quintilian concludes by advocating yet one more technique to improve style: "To secure the vividness we seek, our descriptions need only give the impression of truth, nay, we may even add fictitious incidents of the type that generally occur." The embellishing and even invention of incidents thus falls within the accepted practices of rhetoric, but though frowned upon in the first (except for the composition of speeches), it was found in second-register history.

History Writing and the Colonial Margins

For all the ideological conservatism of ancient historians, the evolution of histories is marked by continuous experimentation. Different styles and different combinations of mythical themes, family and local histories can be found, and finally a stretching of the time line to incorporate myth and history into universal history. It may seem strange to think of "history" as an experimental endeavor, but a rich genre was bound to include many different practitioners of varied levels of intellectual attainment. History was as experimental as fiction. In addition, the new genre of history allowed for the affirmation of the history of one's own party, one's family, or even the family of one's patron, so it should not surprise us when this occurs in 2 Maccabees or Josephus. The changes in history writing, as well as the polemical critiques of them, also reflect the colonized realities of the authors; critique implies a colonial culture war.[18] Regardless of where the earliest creators of history writing began, by the time we reach the universal historians of the first century B.C.E., we find that two of the three most famous practitioners, Pompeius Trogus and Strabo, hailed from the provinces (the third was Diodorus Siculus). In postcolonial theory, Partha Chatterjee introduced the term "colonial universalism" to describe the colonial dominance by the colonizer that has the goal of erasing the particularism of the colonized through education. In the work of Homi Bhabha, however, this assumption of unidirectional influence is challenged.[19] Colonial universalism also arises from the colonized. It is the mimicry of the colonized, the desire of the colonized to live in the ambivalence of two worlds, and especially the colonized author's desire to "do universalism right," to expose the unacknowledged particularism of the colonizer and demonstrate the truer universalism that arises from the colonized. Thus, the universal histories of

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[18] Clarke 1999.
[19] Chatterjee 1986; Bhabha 1994, esp. 85–92.

the Greeks and Romans, often written by the provincials and universal in both time and space, reflect colonial universalism, and we will encounter this again in some of the Jewish and Christian authors.

The tensions of one group of colonized authors – Jewish writers – and their negotiations between Jewish tradition and a Hellenistic world order have been investigated recently by many scholars. Erich Gruen focuses on the ethnic confidence of Jewish writers, and Steven Weitzman suggests that Jews under colonial rule used the "arts of the weak" as strategies: appeasement, symbiosis, flattery, mimicry, diplomacy: "In some cases … what might look like assimilation to a foreign culture can be placed within an alternative narrative of cultural persistence, one in which Jews poach resources from the *other* for use in sustaining their own culture."[20] Anthony Smith sees the Jewish struggle against the Seleucids as "ethnicism," the colonized people's assertion of their own native identity, using the language of the colonizers.[21] Contrary to some assessments, then, Jewish authors were not responding directly to a few influential writers in Athens or Alexandria or Rome, but to the common consensus view of all the Hellenistic cultural forces and indigenous ethnic competitors in the *oikoumenē*. Jews and other ruled ethnic groups developed hybridized colonial histories written mainly in Greek, assimilated to the Greek historical tradition. The Jewish histories of this period should thus be seen as relating to three different bodies of literature: older Israelite history, Greek history (especially of the second register), and the competitive ethnic histories of the other ruled peoples (Manetho, Berossus, and Philo of Byblos).

As a result of other developments in postcolonial criticism, it is necessary to rethink the traditional way of describing this interaction. The debate has often been framed as a question of the mixing of a clear Judaism and a clear Hellenism. Is Josephus more Jewish or more Hellenistic? Do the Jewish authors have a core of Jewish values and an outer garment of Hellenism? Are Jewish authors positive about Hellenism or negative? In addition to colonial universalism, two other challenges that derive from postcolonial criticism apply here. First, it should not be assumed that a pristine Judaism or Hellenism existed prior to their interaction; the Judaism before Hellenism was not "pure" but Persianized Judaism (from Ezra and Nehemiah), which struggled internally against Syrianized Israel (the opponents of Ezra and Nehemiah), and Hellenism was also thoroughly syncre-

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[20] Weitzman 2005, 9 (using the critical insights of Certeau 1984, esp. 35–39); Gruen 1998, 12–40; 2002, 219–31. Weitzman's fine work and my own have addressed the same times and issues from two slightly different emphases; he stresses the more *conscious* reactions of Jews to more *explicit* threats from great empires coming against a more *public* and *central* aspect of identity, the temple; here and in "Jewish Novellas in a Greek and Roman Age" I stress the more *unconscious* reactions to more *implicit* threats against *private* and *marginal* sectors of Jewish life. This is not a criticism of his work, but simply a note about the complementary nature of our efforts.

[21] A. Smith 1986, 56–57. See the discussion of this in Cohen 1999, 138–39.

tized.[22] Second, it should be remembered that the colonial author operates at the
boundary in a state of ambivalence, hybridity, and mimicry. The colonized author
exists willy-nilly in both worlds and cannot be said to be either Jewish or Greek
without the qualifier of the colonial relation. The same is true of the colonizer,
who cannot exist apart from the colonial relation, no matter the city of residence.
The former description of the Greek-era Jewish authors in terms of a series of
either-ors – Jewish or Greek identity, core or garment, positive or negative toward
Hellenism – should be dropped in favor of a recognition of the fundamentally
hybridized relation of the colonized and the colonizer. The ambivalent status of
the ruled ethnic author destabilizes many of the former dualistic debates.

Yet across this colonizer/colonized boundary there is a way to define "history"
that recognizes both sides as well as their interaction. Ancient historians, both
Greek and Jewish, used writing about the past to construct present identity
through two main assumptions: first, the events recounted really occurred, and
second, they occurred on the time line that continues to *our* day. They are the
events of *our* past, *our* social memory. To emphasize the connection between
a historical narrative and the present community, Greek and Roman histories
intentionally avoided the clear resolution and closure that other ancient genres
displayed; they problematized the endings.[23] The closure that an "artistic" work
normally presupposes is avoided in the conclusion of a historical work, as it is
honestly admitted that a choice was imposed and a neat closure to the narrative
is impossible. History has no end. Rather, the author insisted that the text might
end but the story and the time line continue into the audience's present. And at
the beginnings of the narratives as well, the authors of histories inscribed them-
selves into the narrative by presenting a persona and by choosing a point on the
continuous time line to establish the work's *archē*. Jewish histories as well from
the Hellenistic and Roman periods clearly follow this pattern. Open endings are
found at the conclusions:

With this I conclude my *Antiquities*. … I shall at some future time compose a running
account of the war and of the later events of our history up to the present day. (Josephus,
Antiquities)

This, then, is how matters turned out with Nicanor, and from that time the city has been
in possession of the Hebrews. So I will end my story. If it is well told and to the point, that
is what I myself desired; if it is poorly done and mediocre, that was the best I could do …
And here will be the end. (2 Maccabees)

At the beginnings of the narratives as well, Jewish histories, like the Greek and
Roman ones, presume that they are choosing a point on the continuous time line
to establish the work's *archē*:

[22] Wills 1990; 2008, esp. 53–86. On the general issues, see Bhabha 1994, esp. 38, 59, 85–92,
139–70, 179.
[23] Roberts et al. 1997; Marincola 1999a.

After Alexander, son of Philip the Macedonian, who came from the land of Kittim, had defeated King Darius of the Persians and the Medes, he succeeded him as king. (1 Maccabees)

The time line is therefore a fundamental element of a Foucauldian *epistēmē,* a prior metaphysical assumption of narratives about gods and figures of the past.[24]

Novels, however, differ from histories both at the end and at the beginning and are more like poetic genres: they construct a firmly closed ending that may have pointed forward, but not to the present. As Xenophon of Ephesus concluded his novel, "They lived happily ever after, the rest of their life together was one long festival." The idealized future at the end of the novel does not extend to the reader's present but is closed off; it has closure. There is a time line *within* the fictional narratives (the plot), but the time line does not extend to the present. It is unreal time, or time outside of time, or pretend time, or even play time. Likewise, while the author of a history, consistently named and male, began with a preface, inscribing himself into the narrative of history and stating the goals and methods that would guarantee authority and lead the narrative onto the time line, the author of novels began with plot or, in some cases, pretend prefaces and sometimes even a pretend authorial voice. The author of fiction implicitly *rejects* personal authority concerning the veracity of what follows – or alternatively, mocks it: "I swear that every word I am about to say is true"; compare the mock apocalyptic at the beginning of Greek Esther or the pretend-king at the beginning of Judith. Novels introduce an *archē* that is counter to reality, a pretend *archē*. In respect, then, to both the beginning and the ending, history was open to the timeline while the novel was closed off or unreal, and this will be key to our definition of history. The novel presents an artificial problem-in-time, and the problem is resolved. Novel is thus history's irresponsible twin; it offers quotidian redemption in an *invented* history.[25] Yet novel and history are still alike in another, surprising way: not only do they both employ *Fachprosa* to compose prose narrative, but the rendering of reality in both history and fiction also involves an assumption about myth – that it has been tamed. History and fiction exercise the same power over myth, time, and the forms of tradition: the writer can choose.

We may now complete this reflection on history writing in the Greek period by proffering a broader definition of history. History need not be defined by reasoned investigation (*historia*) or a theory of causality or any other rationalistic goal, but by whether the narrative is understood by author and audience to have taken place on a time line that continues into the present.[26] This is the essence of social memory. History is part of *our* story, whether it occurred a week ago

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[24] Foucault 1970.

[25] Wills 2011

[26] On the definition of history, see Van Seters 1983, 2, 354, 359. He also operates (4–5) with a more general definition of the history genre, which I find quite apt: history is traditional literature that reflects on the meaning of the past and defines the people of the present. Other broader definitions of history can be found in Brettler 1995, 12; and Halpern 1988, 8.