Ilinca Tanaseanu-Döbler / Anna Lefteratou /
Gabriela Ryser / Konstantinos Stamatopoulos (eds.)

Reading the Way to the Netherworld

Education and the Representations of the Beyond in Later Antiquity

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Preface

The present volume goes back to a conference held at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen in October 2011 on "Reading the Way to the Netherworld: Education and the Representations of the Beyond in Later Antiquity". For the generous funding of the conference we are indebted to the Courant Research Centre EDRIS ("Education and Religion from Early Imperial Roman Times to the Classical Period of Islam") and the *Graduiertenkolleg* "Götterbilder – Gottesbilder – Weltbilder" (both Georg-August-Universität Göttingen). We wish to thank cordially all speakers who submitted their contributions as well as the colleagues who accepted our invitation to enrich the volume by providing additional papers. Special thanks are due to Dr. Cornelia Oefelein, who has proofread and corrected the majority of the English-speaking papers. Our profound gratitude also goes to Leonie Zitzmann, M. A., who has substantially prepared the volume for copy-editing, and Mrs. Angelika Schmidt, who has assisted us with the compilation of the indices.

Göttingen, November 2015
Ilinca Tanaseanu-Döbler
Anna Lefteratou
Gabriela Ryser
Konstantinos Stamatopoulos

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Ilinca Tanaseanu-Döbler

Introduction[1]

1. Where Is the Beyond?

The Beyond is somewhere at the far west end of the earth or the world, somewhere past Sicily. Its entrance is a gloomy place, a meadow with pale asphodelos flowers, overgrown with poplars and willows. From there, the traveller can look into the underworld proper, the realm of Hades and especially his wife Persephone, the dreaded queen reigning over the dead and the dangerous personnel of the underworld. In doing so, the potential traveller would see shades roaming around, rivers, meadows, people being punished; he would recognize his former acquaintances. By employing a ritual including the killing of a black sheep and pouring its blood into a pit for the shadows to drink one can even communicate with them and gain crucial knowledge about oneself and the future.[2]

The Beyond is somewhere in the air between the earth and the moon. Upon death, the souls rise up as if in brightly coloured bubbles which then burst. Pure souls move in a harmonious manner and exhibit a clean and smooth surface, evil souls shrink fearfully back into themselves and bear stripes and scars of ugly colours. These stripes require quite radical cleansing measures. The Moon is the outer confine of Hades, where souls undergo a second death, leaving behind their entire passible part before ascending to the Sun.[3]

The Beyond has various disjunct regions: a celestial sphere, in close proximity to God's palace, as well as various celestial, terrestrial or subterranean spaces populated by different entities such as angels. Under extraordinary circumstances, humans can be divinely granted to travel to the upper realm and see God's palaces and his angelic court. They can also go on tours of the universe, visiting places such as the prison of the stars, the place of judgment for the fallen angels, or

1 I would like to thank my co-editors Anna Lefteratou, Gabriela Ryser, and Konstantinos Stamatopoulos for their valuable suggestions and corrections; special thanks are due to Marvin Döbler for his patient reading and his critical remarks.

2 Homer, *Odyssey* X 508–537 and XI 13–635.

3 Plutarch, *De sera numinis vindicta* 23–33, 563E–568A with *De facie* 27–30, 942D–945C; *De genio Socratis* 22, 590B–592D. The stripes and scars of the soul derive from Plato's *Gorgias* 523d–525a, cf. also *Republic* 611c–d.

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recesses where souls await divine judgment on the Last Day, separated according to the souls' respective deeds during their earthly lives.[4]

These three accounts exemplarily show the multiplicity of representations of the Beyond in Imperial and Late Antique times. The first is taken from Homer's *Odyssey*, which has Odysseus travel to the underworld to inquire from the seer Teiresias about his way to Ithaca. This is one of the most powerful texts which shaped the traditional *imaginaire*[5] of the world of the dead. It left its mark on epic depictions as well as representations of the underworld in other genres.[6] The second, synthesised from the eschatological myths composed by the Middle Platonic philosopher Plutarch (1st–2nd c. A.D.), stands for a crucial eschatological shift: here, the soul successively ascends upon death to the air, the moon and the upper celestial regions—the underworld is moved

4 *1 Enoch,* XIV 8–25 (vision of God's heavenly palace and court); XVII–XXXVI (Enoch's travels through the universe; prison of the stars: XVIII 12–16; judgment place for the fallen angels: XIX, 1 and XXI 1–9; places of the souls awaiting judgment: XXII1–13); all passages are contained in *1 Enoch* I–XXXVI, the so-called "*Book of the Watchers*".

5 For the history and use of the term "imaginaire" see Castoriadis (1975) and his reception in Iser (1991); a good discussion of the term, its history and its lasting ambiguity is given by Müller (2004), 299–306. I use the term here without any post-modern epistemological implications merely as a convenient shorthand to denote the shared web of images which enable and shape the discourses about the Beyond in a given cultural area—in our case, the Mediterranean in Imperial and Late Antique times—and are in turn shaped by these discourses.

6 For an analysis of the *nekyia* and a comparison with the Platonic Beyond of the myth of Er, which she reads as developed in conscious distancing from the Homeric model, see Männlein-Robert (2014), for Homer esp. 32–47. The roots of the Homeric *nekyia*'s *imaginaire* itself may be traced back to earlier, non-Greek rituals and imagery, e.g. from the Hittite realm: see Männlein-Robert (2014), 40, who points to the seminal essay of Steiner (1971) and to West (1997), 50 f and 426 f. The most thorough discussion of the parallels, which gives a balanced account of similarities as well as differences and attempts to draw conclusions regarding the development of the Homeric *nekyia* and its place in the epic, is that found in Steiner's above-mentioned article. A recent survey of Hittite ideas about the afterlife can be found in Hutter (2013), for motifs that appear also in the Odyssey see ibid. 166 (sacrifice in pit) or 170 (meadow of the dead). In his recent treatment of the *nekyia* in West (2014), 122–127 and 213.214–224, West does not add further details but only mentions in passing Greek practices as well as Near Eastern parallels, especially Babylonian lore and the epic of Gilgamesh; his focus is mostly on the hypothesis of a Thesprotian *Vorlage* for the *nekyia*. The discussion of Marinatos/Wyatt (2011) on the *koine* of underworld motifs in the Near East and Greece is mostly focused on topography and the attempt to uncover a coherent mythological conception of the Greek underworld, concentrating on the *Odyssey* and attempting to harmonise its account with other Greek material such as Mimnermus, Pythagorean lore or the Orphic gold tablets. The picture emerging from this overly harmonising approach to the sources has to be considered with great caution; however, their discussion of a *koine* of Beyond motifs as a background to the *Odyssey* (2011, 383–387) is helpful for understanding the larger context in which the canonical mythological Greek Beyond emerged. For Near Eastern parallels of the *nekyia* see also Clark (1979), 23–53, focusing on the epic of Gilgamesh.

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upwards.[7] The third example, taken from the collection of early Jewish texts in 1 Enoch,[8] paints a vivid picture of travels to the realm of the divine with its various palaces, described in strong, sometimes paradoxical, images, e.g. hailstones surrounded by fire, as well as the places, located in far-off regions of the earth or subterranously, where the dead can be found.[9]

2. The Research Question: Ancient Beyonds in the Context of Literary, Philosophical, and Religious Education

These approaches to the underworld are but three, albeit representative, examples from a plethora of texts which provide people in the ancient Mediterranean with patterns of visualising and speaking about a postulated realm of reality lying outside ordinary experience and perception—the postmortal destination(s) of human persons.[10] In this volume, we focus on these texts[11] as part of the web formed by the discourses and practices of education in the Greco-Roman world in later antiquity, i. e. the Imperial and the Late Antique period. How are discourses about the Beyond integrated into the "conversation" of the educated, i. e. their ongoing dialogical exploration of the world through education?[12] Why do

7 The idea of an aethereal or astral realm of the dead appears in the 5th century (see Männlein-Robert (2012), 20–26 for a brief history of the localisations of the Beyond in Greek and Roman literature; also ead. (2014), 55).

8 For the structure and history of *1 Enoch* see Uhlig (1984), 483–497.

9 Cf. the discussions of the otherworldly topography in the *Book of the Watchers* (*1Enoch* I–XXXVI) and the *Enochic Parables* (*1 Enoch* XXXVII–LXXI) by Coblentz Bautch (2010) and Nickelsburg (2010), respectively. For an overview of Jewish apocalypses see e.g. Himmelfarb (1983) and (1993). For possible Greek influences on *1 Enoch* see e.g. Bremmer (2010) or (2011), with the critical discussion of Benz (2013b).

10 For the range of various possible conceptions of "Beyond" or "otherworld"—e.g. the home of the divine, of the dead, of both together, or simply liminal, inaccessible spaces in the universe—see e.g. Coblentz Bautch (2010), 37 or Nickelsburg (2010), 55. Correspondingly, we do not include in the volume, e.g., the higher realms of the Platonic worldview but confine ourselves to such levels of reality as are viewed as possible post-mortem human destinations.

11 For systematic remarks on the importance of texts for the study of the Beyond in our period, see e.g. Ameling (2011), 10 or Bremmer (2011), 13. A literary approach to the study of the Beyond is exemplified e.g. in Himmelfarb's works (1982 and 1992) or Benz (2013a). The distinctive approach of this volume is not the concentration on textual representations of the Beyond but the attempt to situate these in the context of education and analyse them as products, contents and media of education.

12 "Conversation" is used here with R. S. Peters' educational model to denote the apex of educational processes, in which the educated individual constantly relates to himself, other human beings and the outside world through education; in this highest form, education becomes a never-ending existential journey. See Peters (1967), 14–22 and (1973), 20.

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educated people speak and write about Beyonds, and to what ends—as "art for art's sake", i. e. part of the literary game of the educated, as a means to convey knowledge or as a means to inculcate moral or religious values or to induce other educational processes? With this focus on education, we bring a new perspective to the established and vast field of studies on ancient Beyonds.[13]

The Beyond is a topic that can be approached both from a literary and from a religious angle. Therefore, we take into account the whole range of literary and religious education in the Imperial period and Late Antiquity: while *paideia*, Graeco-Roman higher education, stands at the centre of our inquiry, we also explore its reception and neighbouring or rival educational discourses by looking at examples from Christian and Jewish religious education. A few remarks shall briefly outline the spectrum of our material.

Paideia in the Roman Empire is fundamentally marked by reading, performing, hearing, and writing texts.[14] These texts also transport knowledge about gods, rituals, or complex worldviews—that is, also knowledge about religion. Some of the texts pertaining to this elite discourse may be taught, read or written as literature, with no explicit intention to convey a religious message or to contribute to the religious formation and way of life of their readers. Thus, the classical poets, historians or orators taught in school mostly formed a common ground between pagan and Christian students and intellectuals in the periods we study here.[15] Individual actors could, however, challenge this valuation. A

13 The fascination of the Beyond has for a long time been fuelling a steadily growing body of scholarly literature. For an overview of the afterlife (not only the Beyond) in the Mediterranean see e.g. Bremmer (2002), who concentrates on the development of concepts of the soul and of ideas and practices connected with its life after death, taking a religio-historical approach; he does not focus exclusively on the issue of representation and texts. The contributions in Klauser/Dassmann/Thraede (1982) focus more unspecifically on ancient pagan and Christian notions and images of death and the Beyond. The contributions in Ameling (2011) highlight different aspects of death and the Beyond in later antiquity and the interconnections between various religious traditions (esp. the contribution of Bremmer (2011)). Classical volumes on travels to the Beyond include Himmelfarb (1983) and (1993), Culianu (1991) or the collected essays in Collins/Fishbane (1995). From recent years see the collected volumes of Nicklas (2010), with a focus on the "otherness" of other worlds and their "relation to this world" in Jewish and Christian thought, Bukovec/Kolkmann-Klamt (2013), with a focus on the Eastern Mediterranean and a systematic introduction in the tradition of phenomenological comparative religion, or Hamm/Robert (2014) with a broader historical scope. The monography of Benz (2013a) analyses narratives about travels to the Beyond from Hellenistic Judaism to the Middle Ages by focusing on their narrative strategies for visualising the Beyond. A recent collected volume covering Mediterranean Beyonds has now been published but could unfortunately not be accessed by us: I. Baglioni, Sulle Rive dell'Acheronte, I–II, Rome 2014.

14 For bibliography on the subject of education in the Roman Empire I refer the reader to Tanaseanu-Döbler (2012), 97–104.

15 For this coexistence and the Christian reception of *paideia* see Bremmer (1995), the case study of Vössing (1997) on school and culture in Imperial North Africa, and the in-depth

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well-known example is the attempt of a prominent fourth-century convert from Christianity to paganism, the emperor Julian, to claim Homer and Thukydides as the exclusive property of the pagans and reinforce this claim through imperial legislation.[16] In such cases, literary *paideia* might acquire religious connotations. A special case is represented by philosophical texts which may display from the outset an intention to outline the right notions about the divine and the proper forms of life and piety, providing their audience with proposals for a distinct form of religiosity. In the period under study, Platonic philosophy gradually focuses more and more on religious topics and acquires religious overtones.[17] As Platonism becomes the undisputed point of reference in the philosophical panorama of Late Antiquity, it advances also to the position of a stronghold and intellectual basis of a distinctive form of pagan elite religiosity.

The fundamental anthropological concern with the Beyond offers us a peculiar focus to grasp the shifts which occur in Imperial and Late Antique times in the ideals, contents or actors in the field of education. Whereas *paideia* remains a common ground for elite education in the Roman Empire, largely untouched by religious allegiance and affiliation, with the rise of Christianity new forms of decidedly religious education gain social visibility and prominence. New texts are added to the corpus of texts read by cultured Greeks or Romans—writings regarded as divinely inspired, such as the Old and New Testament, but also Christian fiction or theological treatises. This causes shifts and disruptions in the established hierarchy of authoritative texts. Educated non-Christians may perceive these changes as a decline from the venerable ideals and standards of true education.[18] Educated Christians must come to terms with texts stemming from *paideia* and transporting the traditional polytheistic

analysis of the role and valuations of *paideia* in the Late Antique Christian discourse by Gemeinhardt (2007).

16 Julian's edict triggered negative reactions from both his pagan admirer Ammianus Marcellinus (XXII 10, 7 and XXV 4, 20) and his Christian opponent Gregory Nazianzen, who emphasises the cultural aspect of Greek literature and education in his or. IV and V, de-emphasising its religious potential. For the edict and Julian's conception of education in religious matters see Tanaseanu-Döbler (2012), 105–117 with further literature.

17 For the peculiar universalistic and exclusive impetus of Platonic philosophy and its *Wahlverwandtschaft* with Christianity see Auffarth (2012), 55 f.

18 Cf. e.g. Porphyry in Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI 19, 1–11: the Bible as a straightforward text of questionable literary standard, which Christians such as Origen wrongly treat as if it were Homer. On this passage see the recent study of Becker (2015) with further bibliography. In his *Contra Galilaeos*, the emperor Julian juxtaposes Plato's *Timaios* with the creation account of *Genesis* to show how Moses expresses ideas comparable to Plato, only in a much less polished way (frg. 6, 8 and 9 Masaracchia). Julian's attempt to charge higher school education with religious valences and prohibit Christian teachers from teaching rhetoric is, however, quite exceptional (see Tanaseanu-Döbler (2012), 105–112 and 115–117). See also the *locus classicus Confessiones* III 5,9, where Augustine describes his youthful distaste for the poor literary quality of the Christian Scriptures in comparison with Cicero.

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universe—whether by explicit rejection of such texts or by designing a programme of how to read the classics without losing one's soul, as does Basil of Caesarea in his *Address to the Young*.[19] Besides the new textual basis, Christianity also adds new accents to the understanding of education, and specifically of religious education. Developing a new concept of religious identity, Christians insist on the importance of religious education and at least basic religious knowledge for all members, regardless of their social status.[20] This *novum* brings with it new practices and institutions designed to convey the letter and the content of religiously relevant texts to a mixed audience, e.g., catechumenal instruction or homilies. The "cultural technique" of rhetoric,[21] the backbone of *paideia*, is put to the use of the Christian institution, e.g. by designing homiletic handbooks, such as Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*. The preacher straddles the two roles of teacher for the whole congregation—including less proficient members—and rhetor on display for the intellectual public, both Christian and pagan, who criticaly appraise his performance and may well admire him as a rhetorician regardless of religious allegiances.[22] Finally, another shift needs to be taken into consideration: the emergence of new intellectual and religious trends in Late Antique Judaism. While in Hellenistic and early Imperial times Jewish intellectuals such as Flavius Josephus or Philo of Alexandria actively participated in Graeco-Roman *paideia*, in Late Antiquity, the new emerging Jewish intellectual trends, most notably Rabbinic Judaism, consciously opt for another linguistic and conceptual idiom and thus distance themselves from the idiom of *paideia*. How far does this separation go—can we still trace common themes, motifs and concerns in Rabbinic texts and texts coming from the pagan or Christian Graeco-Roman discourse?

In our volume, we will address these shifts in the textual corpus of education and explore their impact on literary and/or religious conceptions and images of the Beyond. We concentrate on texts stemming from pagan, Christian and Jewish educational elites and leave out the domain of religious practice, excepting its literary representations. The focus on the educated elite allows us to perceive historical developments and differences more clearly against the background of the shared discourse of *paideia*.

19 Schwab (2012), 149–156. For a recent comprehensive and detailed analysis of early Christian engagement with traditional *paideia* see Gemeinhardt (2007).

20 Tanaseanu-Döbler (2012), 137–141.

21 Nesselrath (2015), 176.

22 See Nesselrath (2015), 168–177 for John Chrysostom as orator and possible student of Libanios and for Libanios' congratulations to Christian students who become bishops; cf. also Augustine's primarily rhetorical first approach to Ambrose of Milan, as sketched in the *Confessiones* V 13, 23.

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3. The Material: Structure and Overview of the Contributions

The volume is divided into four sections: 1. Greek pagan education, 2. Latin pagan education and its reception, 3. Christian theology, 4. Rabbinic Judaism, mirroring the variety of educational discourses in the Roman Empire as described above.

The analysis of pagan Greco-Roman education addresses different genres and their Beyonds. The first section is devoted to examples from Greek pagan literature and philosophy. Our starting-point is perhaps the greatest literary explorer of the Beyond in the Second Sophistic—Lucian of Samosata, whose pieces on the underworld have had a lasting influence on literary depictions of the realm of the dead throught Byzantine times, notwithstanding the rival Beyonds of Christianity.[23] *Heinz-Günther Nesselrath* presents an overview of Lucian's various depictions of Hades, enquiring into the literary models which Lucian uses to create his own pictures and present them to his educated public for enjoyment. As Nesselrath underscores, any attempt at harmonising Lucian's underworlds must fail. Their incommensurability and the inconsistencies sometimes found in one and the same text may have different reasons: Lucian may simply not be concerned with systematic coherence but rather with crafting a good story. He also may aim at highlighting the paradoxical nature of the dead and the underworld precisely by exploiting inconsistencies. As a unifying element of all Lucianic underworlds, there emerges a general sense that every description of the Beyond is fundamentally inadequate. Correspondingly, Nesselrath argues, Lucian may want to turn his readers away from useless abstract speculation to life in the here and now. *Katerina Oikonomopoulou* presents a close reading of Lucian's *Cataplus*, highlighting the micro-workings of Lucian's reception and subversion of traditional literary images of the underworld transmitted via epic or philosophical texts. The use of katabatic themes connects Lucian to 'high' literature and authoritative genres such as epic, so that he can put on a mask of seriousness. He also addresses the usual philosophical topics of justice and retribution in the underworld and of gaining and claiming actual knowledge about this ultimately inaccessible realm. However, these claims are subverted and the authoritative character of the epic and philosophical underworlds is deconstructed, an endeavour that could be read as a undermining of traditional *paideia* as a source of reliable knowledge about the afterlife and underworld.

Whereas in both papers on Lucian the Beyond addressed is the world of the dead as encountered in epic or tragedy, Homerically located either sub-

23 For Lucian's Byzantine afterlife see e.g. the discussion of the *Timarion* in Kaldellis (2007), 276–283.

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terraneously or within a fabulous geography in a distant region of the earth, *Ken Dowden* takes us to the Imperial and Late Antique transformations of the Platonic representation of the Beyond which we encountered in Plutarch's eschatological myths. In this view, the realm of the souls of the dead is localised in the sphere of the air and the stars, and the moon functions as a key station in the ascent of the souls from earth towards the stars. The analysis of selected texts as well as funerary inscriptions and sarcophagi allows Dowden to describe how this astral eschatology, developed initially within the elite framework of philosophical education, increasingly spread and gained currency also among larger parts of the population of the Roman Empire through what he calls a "trickle down effect". This opens up a larger perspective for understanding education in Imperial and Late Antique times as an ongoing practice involving various societal levels. The dissemination of the astral eschatology is especially attested by the proliferation of corresponding funeral imagery, as this also needed to be actively "read", i. e. decoded, to fulfil its function. The gaze at a sarcophagus is thus comparable to a reading or deciphering process—the onlooker (not necessarily a *pepaideumenos*) "reads" his way to the astral Beyond.[24]

The Late Antique philosophical elaboration of this astral Beyond is highlighted by *Ilinca Tanaseanu-Döbler* in a paper on one of the most prolific representatives of Neoplatonism. Writing in a context dominated by Christians, Proklos comments on the Platonic myth of Er, which is one of the key texts to shape Platonic astral eschatology. The commentary is an example of Late Antique philosophical education at the highest level: it is addressed by the professor to one of his promising students. It is also an instance of what I term the "literarisation" of Late Antique pagan religion—as the level of public cult practice disappears, pagan religiosity lays increasing emphasis on verbal cultic acts, as well as on texts and theology.[25] Commenting on Plato as a repository of theological and cosmological knowledge allows Proklos to explore reality—including the Beyond—through the encounter with the text, as it were, in the very act of writing. In order to enable this read and written journey, Proklos devotes great care to establishing that Plato's story is not mere fiction. He also underlines the workings of divine providence on the level of individual life and death. The punishments which Er

24 The connection of visual motifs with texts enables a grounded historical "reading" of the sarcophagi, which otherwise might be easily "misread" by the modern historian; see Benz (2013b), 217 f. For the interplay between textual and visual imagery related to the afterlife see also the brief hermeneutical sketch of Pezzoli-Olgiati (2010).

25 I use the term "literarisation" here to denote this shift towards reading and writing in Late Antique pagan religiosity, which I studied with regard to theurgy and to the importance of writing about rituals (see Tanaseanu (2013), 241 f (verbal acts replacing sacrifice in Proklos vs. Iamblichus) and 283–285). See also, e.g., Anghel (2012) for the religious changes in Athens and the religiosity of the philosophical circles, and Krulak (2014), 372–382, who describes how in Late Antique Athenian pagan intellectual religiosity sacrifice loses its prominence.

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describes are thus of ultimate concern to everybody. Plato is the true guide to the true Beyond, and—so we can surmise—Platonists who accept his view (and implicity not the rival Christian one) stand the chance of a happier afterlife.

The late bloom of Greek epic during Late Antiquity is mirrored in the volume by three contributions. *Calum Maciver* addresses the construction of the world of the dead and the afterlife in Quintus Smyrnaeus' *Posthomerica*—a continuation of Homer's *Iliad*. He notes the inconsistencies and conflicting eschatologies which surface in the poem—on the one hand, the traditional Homeric Hades, on the other hand, a philosophical eschatology leading the outstanding souls onto an ascending trajectory. Various aspects of *paideia* can be noted in the *Posthomerica*: Quintus displays his familiarity with the canonical literary text *par excellence* and his mastery of its style. He also shows himself acquainted with *en vogue* philosophical ideas, which lead him to propose his own Stoically flavoured ethics through the Homeric mouthpiece of the wise Nestor. Homer and philosophy are simply juxtaposed, without any systematic harmonisation.

A comparable mix of mythological and philosophical images, complicated by the addition of possibly Christian motifs, characterise also the representations of the Beyond in Nonnos, perhaps the most famous and puzzling Greek epic author from Late Antiquity, to whom two papers are devoted. Both papers centre on Nonnos' *Dionysiaka*. *Marta Otlewska-Jung* offers an overview of allusions to death and afterlife in the epic and shows that Nonnos does not purposefully and directly engage with the underworld and afterlife as such, but only through allusions clustering around the deaths of individual characters in the epic plot. Indeterminacy marks the brief localisations of Hades, cast as a place for dead souls and a place of punishment. The world of the dead "below" is contrasted with catasterisms for special or deserving dead. Some passages might indicate that Dionysos bestows on his adherents hope in a distinctive afterlife in communion with him, closely paralleling Christian ideas. Throughout, Nonnos paints his dead as quite sentient creatures who retain their character and feelings and are present to the world of the living—thereby increasing the indeterminacy of their presumed place of abode. *Anna Lefteratou* explores the ways in which Nonnos casts India as a metaphoric Beyond against the background of traditional and contemporary pagan literature as well as Christian ideas about India. She suggests a reading of Dionysos' Indiad as a metaphorical *katabasis* which extends the epic topos of a journey to Hades to an exotic geographic space on the fringes of the known world. In doing so, Nonnos appears to combine old and new ideas of India, drawing not least on the association with blackness and moral depravity enhanced by the Late Antique Christian discourse and using it to deconstruct former utopian ideas of India.

The sphere of Latin literature is represented by a selection beginning with Propertius' elegies. *Merryl Rebello* analyses the various literary scenarios of communication between the dead and the living which Propertius' elegies explore.

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She argues that Propertius uses death and the dead as a vehicle to convey a distinctive, elegiac set of values centred on the individual and his love—as opposed to the epic exaltation of war and public engagement. The literary ambiguity of the underworld allows Propertius to draw two separate underworlds—a more conventional, epic setting for celebrating the imperial dead, and a distinctive elegiac underworld. Propertius dwells on the ambivalence and indeterminacy associated with the dead and their realm which was already noted in Lucian, Quintus or Nonnos and connects it especially with the oscillation of the dead themselves between materiality (bodies, bones, ashes) and immateriality. A physical space, the grave, is represented as a privileged interface between the dead and the living. By propagating his elegiac values, Propertius not only shows himself as master of the game of literary education, but goes further to actively assume the role of teacher (*praeceptor*) of a way of life, thereby—we could argue—rivalling and usurping the role usually assigned to philosophers in the Imperial period.

The literary exploitation of the ambivalence and the otherness associated with the underworld in Statius' *Thebais* is analysed by *Ulrike Egelhaaf-Gaiser*. Focusing on liminal situations and characters, she explores how Statius uses the underworld and its personnel to progressively underline the cosmic dimension of the disturbance caused by the Theban war, by assigning the Underworld and its furies a key role in exciting the strife among the living and by gradually associating Thebes more and more closely with the underworld. By blurring spatial boundaries or boundaries between dream and consciousness, by subverting the topos of the underworld as a source of reliable knowledge or by blending together underworld figures, Statius destroys the certainties of the reader and emphasises the threatening and destabilizing potential of the underworld. He proves himself a master of the canon of the epic and tragic underworld and displays a peculiar power of innovation which calls into question his classification as an epigone.

Two papers explore the description of the underworld and the possible contacts with the world of the living in Apuleius' novel. *Stelios Panayotakis* analyses the presence of katabatic themes and episodes in the *Metamorphoses*, focusing on Psyche's journey and the Isiac initiation. Psyche's journey is read as an ingenious play with and subversion of the traditional epic *katabasis*—not Eurystheus and Hercules, but Venus and Psyche. The function of the tale, presented as fiction within fiction, oscillates between *mythos* and *logos*, presenting the educated reader with a well-known philosophical alternative[26] and allowing him his choices of interpretation. The Isiac *katabasis* of Lucius takes up the tale of Psyche and combines it with Vergilian and traditional religious motifs, blending Greek and Roman Beyonds. The function of magic in the novel as a means of communication between the living and the dead is emphasised not least by drawing attention to Isis' ambivalence herself, as a goddess closely associated with

26 Cf. *Gorgias* 523a.

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magic. Apuleius' Beyonds thus cater to the taste of the literary educated public of the Second Sophistic and its predilection for religious themes in literature; they also function as a vehicle for instruction, highlighting right and wrong ways of life. *Konstantinos Stamatopoulos*' paper focuses on a particular case of magical communication with the dead in the *Metamorphoses*. Highlighting Apuleius' conception and employment of necromancy[27] in its Greco-Roman literary and religious context, he shows how this practice is cast both in literary sources and in sources stemming from or claiming to represent religious practice as a particularly accurate method of divination, going back once more to Homer's *nekyia*. The sources allow to describe a basic pattern of necromantic animation in Imperial literature, which Apuleius takes up and changes to suit his literary purposes. In this pattern, a special role is assigned to the witch or magician, who is cast as an expert of the underworld, its topography and personnel, and who wields power over this particularly effective (though gruesome) source of knowledge. By comparing the literary accounts of necromancy with similar rituals outlined in the Greek and Demotic magical papyri, the author argues for a connection between literary representations and actual religious practice.

Departing from the Imperial period, three papers take us into the Latin epic tradition and its transformation and reception in pagan and Christian Late Antiquity. *Gabriela Ryser* analyses Claudian's *De raptu Proserpinae* as a typical example of Late Antique epic revival and merging of genres when she highlights the combination of epic and epithalamium used by Claudian to describe Proserpina's abduction and wedding scene in Hades. We see here the celebrated court poet at work, catering to the literary tastes of an audience steeped in classical education, by taking up and developing well-known mythological topics concerning the underworld and placing his own emphases—such as love and its effect on the whole cosmos, including the underworld, the tension between the upper world and the netherworld, or providence. The question of religious affiliation, whether pagan or Christian, appears to be irrelevant in this setting, both to the poet and to his audience. Classical education, albeit speaking of gods and goddesses, appears here as an exclusively literary common ground and discourse which enables the audience to enjoy Claudian's play with genres and subversion of their expectations.

Petra Korte offers an analysis of an influential Christian reception of Vergil's *Aeneid* and its underworld: Fulgentius' *Expositio Virgilianae continentiae*. Fulgentius takes his point of departure from the Late Antique pagan commentary tradition on Vergil, which promotes the poet to the rank of divinely inspired sage who aptly hides divine truths under a pleasant fictional guise. Taking his cue from Vergil's *Aeneid* VI, Fulgentius twists the setting on a literary level,

27 On necromancy cf. also Bremmer (2002), who presents the development of ancient Mediterranean necromancy and perceives an increased interest in the matter starting with the late Republic and going on into Imperial times (71–83, here 76).

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"descending" to the underworld by taking Vergil as his guide through Vergil's own poem and underworld. The *Aeneid* and especially the underworld are systematically cast as a *locus* of knowledge and education, being allegorised as an image of earthly life. The Christian author takes up the penchant of pagan Late Antique commentators for a philosophical eschatology which presents life below the moon, and also earthly life, as the actual underworld. He also adopts the pagan commentators' use of allegory as the ideal device to harmonise the conflicting Beyonds of Vergil's *Aeneid* and of the philosophical texts. Fulgentius goes beyond this tradition to place Christianity in the picture, making his Vergil systematically point to a surplus of knowledge stemming from divine revelation.

The reception of Vergil's underworld in *Aeneid* VI in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages is also highlighted by *Chiara Tommasi Moreschini*, who discusses the possibilities and problems of reconstructing ancient Celtic ideas about the underworld. Her starting-point is Vergil's "golden bough" and its reception in the light of possible Celtic influences; from there, she discusses Greco-Roman views of Celtic Beyonds and of the Celts as particularly knowledgeable about and concerned with death and the Beyond as well as reminiscences of Celtic ideas in Christian medieval texts. Of particular interest are instances of Late Antique texts which localise the world of the dead at the far north-western end of the inhabited world. Here, a geographically remote place, "beyond" everyday Roman experience is merged with the "otherness" of the world of the dead, blurring the boundaries between physical and non-physical reality and stressing that the Beyond can actually be physically experienced as part of everyday life in these distant regions.

With the last two examples we already touch upon Christian theological discourse. Five papers are devoted to the imagery and literary use of the Beyond in the works of Christian theologians, highlighting hallmarks and tradition strands in the emergence of a Christian discourse on the Beyond, from the tentative and sometimes conflicting images of the New Testament to the full-blown development of the Medieval *imaginaire* of purgatory.[28] We have chosen examples from Eastern and Western Christianity, who display fundamentally different eschatological options, so as to show the broadness of the spectrum of Christian Beyonds.

Marvin Döbler discusses a text from the formative period of a specifically Christian Beyond: the Lukan parable of the rich man and the poor Lazarus. Starting from examples of scholarly engagement with the text and their often divergent search for parallels in the Mediterranean from Egypt to Greece, he shows how the parable's Beyond on the one hand conveys a strong general sense of being anchored in Hellenistic pagan and Jewish imagery. On the other hand, Luke paints a new picture that is not reducible to older sources. This picture is

28 For a succint magisterial exposition on the main lines of the development of a Christian Beyond see Bremmer (2002), 56–70.

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done in very broad strokes, without interest in sketching a detailed topography of the underworld, but it is vividly presented as quite real and of ultimate concern to the audience. It is used by Luke to achieve various goals: on the one hand, moral education and exhortation to repentance, on the other also the conscious construction of tradition and of a sense of continuity between Israel and the nascent Church, at the same time opening up a space of individual exegetical reflection by allusions to other key passages in his overall gospel narrative.

As Döbler notes, from a medium of religious education, the text later becomes a key component of Christian authoritative textual representations of the Beyond and as such a content item of religious education and reflection. The urgency with which it stresses that after death there is no possibility to change one's lot can be sensed in other authors such as Tertullian or Gregory the Great. *Andrea Villani* collects and discusses Tertullian's extant passages on the world of the dead and shows that Tertullian is less concerned with creating a coherent systematic picture than with adapting the underworld imagery to the needs of his respective argumentation. Thus, Tertullian stresses compatibilities between Christian and pagan ideas when it comes to presenting Christianity as a respectable religion to the wider cultured pagan public. In works directed at a Christian audience, he resorts to the Bible and employs the image of the underworld as a vehicle, either in order to underline the importance of repentance and make public penitence more palatable, or in order to emphasise the corporeal nature of souls and sketch the chronology of the afterlife. For Tertullian, the world of the dead is essentially corporeal, with a neat separation between the sinners punished in everlasting fire in a cave below the earth and the righteous who expect resurrection in a place of their own (*refrigerium*). Only martyrdom provides a shortcut or direct key to heaven.

Whereas Tertullian takes Bible passages such as Luke 16, 19–31 quite literally, his contemporary Clement and, later, Origen employ allegorical interpretation to describe an essentially different, spiritualised Beyond marked by an ongoing process of instruction. Here, the possibility of improvement and repentance does not end with the physical death. *Ilaria Ramelli* charts the development of this pedagogical discourse on the Beyond from Clement to Theodore of Mopsuestia, attempting to trace different instances of the conception of final restauration (*apokatastasis*). Divine goodness is presented by Clemens, Origen or Theodore primarily as healing and educative: punishments are understood in a Platonic manner as a means to achieve purification and salvation.[29] In this worldview, the

29 Cf. Plato, *Gorgias* 525a–526c (punishment either as a means of healing or, if the sins are incurable, as a means of determent; it is the first conception that prominently influences the Christian authors discussed in this book); the same idea of curable and incurable sins can be found in *Republic* 614e). Cf. also Plutarch, *De sera numinis vindicta* 24–26, 564C–565E, on which Feldmeier (2003), 335, n. 37 aptly notes: "Insofern beschreibt dieser Mythos, auch wenn er eine der schauerlichsten "Höllendarstellungen" der antiken Literatur enthält, weniger das *inferno* als das *purgatorio*" (italics in original).

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Beyond is understood as a phase of purification and learning, steadily advancing the individual soul towards God. Its localisation is much less important than its function: for Origen, the Beyond is a school.[30] This strand of thought is transmitted to Syriac Christianity, which is greatly influenced, *inter alios*, by Theodore of Mopsuestia.

Dmitrij Bumazhnov presents one radical instance of this theology in his analysis of Isaac of Niniveh. Isaac goes so far as to state that God's love for mankind is directed at human nature as such, not at its individual concretions, i. e. at the individual person. Isaac goes so far as to state that the weakness of the human creature which makes sin inevitable is part of the divine plan of salvation, which will reach all beings – a theological mode of reasoning which starts from premises comparable to Augustine's doctrine of predestination to reach the opposite conclusion. Given this theological basis, *apokatastasis* is the only possible end of the history of salvation, in which the vicissitudes of the world and the punishments in the Beyond function merely as temporary means of instruction. Here, not only the Beyond but also the historical world loses any significance besides the basic function of being an instrument of divine pedagogy for the individual souls.

With Gregory the Great and his stories about near death experiences and the underworld, we experience a Christian view and use of the Beyond which on the one hand takes up Platonic and Vergilian ideas, and on the other hand takes a grim, Tertullian-like, approach at moral and religious pedagogy—or andragogy, as it is directed to adults and wishes to reinforce the importance of a proper life and the position of the Church as the sole institution able to provide respite and care for the dead souls who suffer.[31] As *Christoph Auffarth* shows, Gregory takes great care to plausibilise his—not always coherent—glimpses into the Beyond by a variety of strategies, in order to reinforce their motivational impact. "Real" experience of valuable and trustworthy witnesses plays a central role, although only accessible at one remove, by stories fixed in writing.[32]

These Christian Beyonds show how authors steeped in Greco-Roman *paideia* put the literary repertoire and techniques acquired through it to the service of Christianity. Christian theologians are part of their cultural and educational landscape, even if they reject or downplay it expressly. They add to it stories and *theologoumena* from the Bible and Hellenistic Jewish writings, which themselves

30 Although localisation is mentioned *en passant*; e.g. Origen, *De principiis* I 2, 11 Görgemanns/Karpp with a clearly aereal/astral eschatology.

31 For an integrated view of the connection of purgatory with penance and church discipline in Latin Christian authors within a broader cultural and theological perspective see Merkt (2010).

32 As we can gain from a comparison with Bremmer (2002), 95 f, who discusses Augustine's strategies of plausibilisation in *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, Gregory shares this concern and his strategies with Augustine, and also shares with him one of the stories, which circulated in literary texts since Plutarch—according to Bremmer, Augustine's version represents "the first Christian NDE" (95).

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in turn are already part of the panorama of Hellenistic culture and bear the imprint of the Hellenistic cultural, literary and philosophical idiom.[33]

This is different in the case of the two examples from Judaism, which are both taken from Rabbinic texts. Our question here is how a discourse that refuses integration into the conceptual and linguistic world of *paideia* can be situated within the Late Antique panorama, how it draws its Beyonds and how it interacts with its Greco-Roman surroundings. The two papers highlight points of contact: *Ron Naiweld* describes how the notion of the "world to come"—a chronological, historically eschatological Beyond, is given an exclusively soteriological focus and is thus employed as a vehicle to motivate Jews to adopt and maintain the rabbinic way of life. The "world to come" remains unspecified in its details—e.g., topography or figures—, and may be taken to function as an empty signifier for eternal reward. In this context, Israel is re-defined on a spiritual basis, as those who follow the right way of life, regardless of ethnicity. As Naiweld argues, Rabbinic texts might be considered quite comparable to Paul's redefinition of Israel.

Elisabetta Abate shows how necromancy—which we encountered in Latin texts as a particularly effective mode of divination—and the widespread conception of the underworld as a place of punishment and, therefore, a means to redress the balance of justice are taken up in Rabbinic texts and employed to reflect on and cope with the collective memory of the traumatic Roman domination. The Rabbinic text she analyses draws on a motif which also appears in Christian Late Antique texts, especially the *Apocalypse of Paul* and from there in various writings, e.g., as Christoph Auffarth notes in his paper, the *Dialogi* of Gregory the Great: the idea of temporary respite from otherworldly punishment. In the Rabbinic text, this topos is connected with the idea of the cosmic pervasiveness and valability of the Sabbath which extends as far as the underworld and the ghosts of the dead, who are not tormented and also cannot be conjured on this day.

4. Systematic Reflections

The papers present us with a vast array of case studies and textual Beyonds of the Roman Empire, which are created and transmitted as part of education. Through literary and religious education, Late Antique intellectuals acquire a repertoire of established motifs from authoritative texts about what the Beyond is like. They also acquire a repertoire of possible approaches to these motifs, which is linked to cultural techniques transmitted through educational processes—the use of literary genres and their conventions, aesthetic paradigms, or modes of engagement with texts regarded as inspired or sacred. Some of the textual Beyonds studied here were elaborated, transmitted and read as an item of

33 For Judaism as anchored in the Hellenistic culture see e.g. the seminal work of Hengel (1988).

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