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Quick-witted Women

Literary studies of female characters in the Latin post-Nicene passions of the martyrs

Annelies Bossu

Proefschrift voorgelegd tot het behalen van de graad van Doctor in de letterkunde
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List of Abbreviations

ASS = Bollandisti (eds.) 1643 ss. *Acta Sanctorum* (Antverpiae - Tongerlo – Bruxellis – Parisiis)
BHG = Halkin, F. (ed.) 1957[3]. *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, with a supplement by F. Halkin 1984 (Bruxelles)
BHL = Socii Bollandiani (eds.) 1949[2]. *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina antiquae et mediae aetatis*, with a supplement by H. Fros 1986 (Bruxelles)
CPL = Dekkers, E., Gaar, A. (eds.) 1995[3]. *Clavis Patrum Latinorum* (Turnhout)
GF = Gryson, R., Frede, H. (eds.) 2007. *Répertoire général des auteurs ecclésiastiques latins de l'Antiquité et du Haut Moyen Âge* (Freiburg)
Mombritius = Monachi Solesmenses (eds.) 19102. Mombritius, B. *Sanctuarium seu vitae sanctorum (1480)* (Paris) (reprinted Hildesheim, Olms, 1978)
ODE = Stevenson, A. (ed.) 2010. *The Oxford Dictionary of English* (Oxford)
OLD = Glare, P.G.W. (ed.) 1968. *The Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford)

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Introduction

This dissertation is about Christian martyrs, or rather about narratives which recount their vicissitudes: the Latin late antique passions of the martyrs. The texts are called post-Constantinian or post-Nicene passions too, terms which indicate that they were written after the persecutions of the Christians had come to an end[1]. The terms also distinguish the passions from the earlier, so-called pre-Constantinian or pre-Nicene texts. These earlier accounts of the persecution and death of the Christian martyrs are believed to be historic sources for the events they recount, since they were written during or immediately after the persecutions. The pre-Nicene texts have been edited several times[2], have intensively been studied in the past and continue to be a popular subject of research[3].

For the post-Nicene passions, things are different. As has been said, these texts were written after the persecutions. By that time, the memories of the heroic deeds of the martyrs had become vague. In many cases, not much more than a name was known. Yet accounts of the martyrs' vicissitudes were in great demand, since from the fourth century onwards a cult of Christian saints began to develop within which the martyrs held a prominent position[4]. As steadfast Christians who had died for their faith and thus imitated the sacrifice of Christ[5], they were the first Christian saints. In order to meet the cultic need for details about the life and death of the martyrs[6], the post-Nicene passions

[1] On the use of both terms, see Scorza Barcellona (2001), 39.

[2] The most influential edition is Musurillo (1972), which contains 28 texts. A more recent edition, containing less texts, is Bastiaensen, Chiarini (2007[2]).

[3] See for instance Cobb (2008) (on gender in the pre-Nicene passions), Maraval (2010) (translation of the pre-Nicene passions, with introduction and notes), Bremmer, Formisano (2012) (on the *passio Perpetuae* (BHL 6633)).

[4] On the cult of the saints in the Latin West, see e.g. Delehaye (1912), Brown (1981), Grig (2004a).

[5] On *imitatio Christi* in the Latin post-Nicene passions, see Taveirne (forthcoming).

[6] The passions played a role in promoting the interest for local shrines and attracting pilgrims. It is possible that on the saint's day of a martyr, his or her passion was read. An indication of this practice can be found in

were written. As is to be expected, they are largely fictional texts. This becomes for instance apparent from the many contradictions and anachronisms which they contain. Of course, one can distinguish different forms of fiction. A fictional passion is not the same kind of fiction as for instance a Greek novel[7]. It is impossible for us to know if the authors of the passions themselves believed that they were writing about historical persons and events, but they certainly wanted their audience to believe so. The passions thus belong to the realm of the 'intended truth'[8] and are meant to edify their audience[9]. The passions' historical unreliability worked to their disadvantage. Time and again efforts were made to distil historical information about the martyr from the texts, but when these attempts failed, they were dismissed: 'fictional' was all too frequently equated with 'uninteresting'. When the passions were approached as literary texts, the verdict was often not less scathing: monotony and repetitiveness were the code words. As a result of this disparaging opinion, the post-Nicene passions received far less scholarly attention than their 'authentic' counterparts and many of them are still available only in the *Acta Sanctorum*, the impressive editorial project which the Bollandists undertook between 1643 and 1940.

It is the aim of this dissertation to approach the Latin post-Nicene passions as an underexplored corpus of late antique narrative fiction and to examine if the prevalent depreciatory opinion of these texts does justice to their literary quality.

In this introduction, I will first present the corpus texts. Secondly, I will discuss previous research on the passions from a literary point of view. Thirdly, I will specify my research questions, which allowed further delimitation of the corpus, and I will discuss the methodologies used to answer them. Finally, in a fourth section, I will present the structure of the dissertation, which contains five articles, preceded by a *status quaestionis*.

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the prologue of the *passio Agnetis* (BHL 156). In Rome, however, the passions were long banished from public reading. On the cultic function of the passions, see Aigrain (2000[2]), 126-127; Van Uytfanghe (2001a), 205-206; Philippart, Trigalet (2008), 118-122.

[7] On the fictionality of the Greek novels, see Morgan (1993).

[8] For this term, which she uses with regard to the apocryphal acts of the apostles, see Cameron (1991), 119.

[9] On martyrs as models for the faithful, see e.g. Février (1991); Scorza Barcellona (1994), 10-12; Grig (2004a), 46-47; 50-51.

1.1 The corpus

This dissertation offers some case studies of Latin post-Nicene passions of the martyrs which were written between the fourth and the end of the sixth century. The sixth century was chosen as a chronological boundary, as it is considered the conventional end point of late antiquity and the beginning of the Middle Ages. The choice to focus on the Latin passions and to leave out the large number of Greek post-Nicene passions was based on two considerations. Firstly, a corpus of both Greek and Latin texts would have been too extensive, and secondly, the Latin passions were chosen since for these texts an (albeit sometimes tentative[10]) dating is available. These datings are provided by the *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*[11] and the works by Gryson and Frede[12] and Lanéry[13]. For the Greek post-Nicene passions, such dating hypotheses are lacking.

When the decision had been made to study the Latin post-Nicene passions which can be dated between the fourth and sixth century, a corpus had to be composed. The list of Latin passions from the doctoral dissertation of the supervisor of this dissertation, Danny Praet[14], formed the starting point. In collaboration with my colleague Maarten Taveirne[15], I reviewed and completed this list and checked the available datings in the *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*, the works by Gryson and Frede, Lanéry and occasional other sources. The different datings which have been suggested for a specific passion are not always unanimous. The *passio Bonosae* (BHL 1425) is a rather extreme example: whereas both the *Clavis Patrum Latinorum* and Gryson and Frede date this text to the sixth century, Lanéry suggested a twelfth century dating. Since it lies beyond the scope of this dissertation to formulate my own dating hypotheses, the decision was made to include all passions for which a fourth till sixth century dating has been suggested. The 113 texts which meet these requirement have been introduced into a database, and a list of these texts with the suggested datings can be found in Appendix I. Since it is the aim of this dissertation to provide detailed literary analyses of the post-Nicene passions, 113 texts proved too large a corpus. It was necessary, then, to make a selection of texts which could further be analysed in detail. How this selection was obtained and which

[10] On the problematic datings of the post-Nicene Latin passions, see Philippart, Trigalet (2008), 112-113; Lanéry (2010), 31-34.

[11] Dekkers, Gaar (1995).

[12] Gryson, Frede (2007).

[13] Lanéry (2010).

[14] Praet (1997).

[15] In his doctoral research, Maarten Taveirne studies the Biblical stylization of the Latin post-Nicene passions.

texts it includes will be treated after I have discussed previous research on the post-Nicene passions from a literary point of view.

1.2 Previous research on the post-Nicene passions from a literary point of view

Literary studies of the post-Nicene passions are scarce. This is due to the already mentioned prevailing view that they are uninteresting texts, totally lacking in literary subtlety and creativity. Hippolyte Delehaye, the pioneer of hagiographic study, had a low opinion of the texts: in his extensive literary study of both authentic and post-Nicene passions, he wrote that the latter reminded him of 'uniform constructions lacking style, made of stones imported from the same quarry and assembled according to the same pattern'[16] and in his book on the Roman post-Nicene passions a few years later, he pointed out that when reading the texts 'one has the impression of constantly turning the pages of a same book'[17]. The disparaging opinion of the texts has not really changed since then. In an article in which he argues that stereotypy and the presence of *topoi* in hagiographical texts do not preclude originality and an intelligent approach of the common material, Van Uytfanghe tellingly emphasizes that his statement does *not* hold true for the post-Nicene passions[18], and in her contribution to the recent international history of Latin and vernacular hagiographical literature, Lanéry refers to the 'literary and narrative homogeneity' of the Italian post-Nicene passions. In her overview of the passions, she time and again draws attention to the resemblances which this passion or other bears to other post-Nicene passions.

The similarities which the passions display, it has often been argued[19], are the result of the lack of historical information on the martyr. The hagiographers had to look for inspiration elsewhere, and found it in the Bible, on the one hand, and in the fictional traditions of antiquity on the other. The elements which the Bible and the fictional

[16] "*elles (i.e. the post-Nicene passions) font penser à des constructions uniformes et sans style, dont les pierres, provenant d'une même carrière, seraient assemblées sur un plan uniforme*" (Delehaye (1966[2]a), 171).

[17] "*on a l'impression de tourner sans cesse les pages d'un même livre*" (Delehaye (1936), 18-19).

[18] Van Uytfanghe (1999), 371: "*à la fin de l'Antiquité, le remploi ne menace pas encore l'originalité … Il se fait, en général, de manière intelligente, sauf sans doute dans les Passions dites épiques du 5^e^ et 6^e^ siècles….*". On the term 'epic' for the post-Nicene passions, cf. infra, chapter 1.

[19] See e.g. Delehaye (1966[2]a), 17; Lanéry (2010), 20.

traditions provided subsequently became stock components of the passions and were passed on from one text to another.

I will not go into the affinities of the passions with the Bible, which are of course numerous. For these interconnections, I refer to the research of my colleague, Maarten Taveirne[20]. This leaves the correspondences between the post-Nicene passions and the fictional traditions of antiquity. These correspondences constituted the subject of the greater part of research on the passions which did adopt a literary approach. The first chapter of this dissertation (cf. infra, chapter 1) provides a short overview of this research, which mainly highlighted interconnections with the pagan novelistic tradition. The overview allows for two observations which are relevant for the refinement of the research question of this dissertation. Firstly, the same passions are time and again discussed, while many other texts remain unexplored, and secondly, a prevalent focus on the apparent similarities between the passions and the fictional traditions in terms of *topoi* and specific scenes distracts attention from the individual characteristics of the texts.

1.3 Research questions, further delimitation of the corpus and methodologies

The main research question, i.e. to establish if the Latin post-Nicene passions are indeed as uninteresting from a literary point of view as is often claimed, can now be refined. Firstly, I will explore the topicality of the passions, which can of course not be denied. Previous research indentified the novelistic tradition of antiquity, and the Greek novels in particular, as the main source of several *topoi* in the passions. I therefore surveyed the 113 selected passions with an eye to identifying novelistic material in these texts. The most important novelistic *topos* which proved to be present in the passions is the defence of chastity: 20 of the 113 texts contain this topos. The first research question, then, is to explore how these 20 texts deal with this *topos* and how the passions' handling of the *topos* relates to the Greek novels'. A list of the restricted corpus of these 20 texts can be found in appendix II. Next to suggested datings, this list contains further details on the passions: the available editions are included, as well as suggested provenance and an indication of the passions' length. As becomes clear from the list, it is a varied corpus in terms of date (texts dated to the 4th, 5th and 6th century and even

[20] Cf. supra, note 15.

later according to some scholars), provenance (the lions' share of the texts are believed to be written in Italy and more specifically Rome, but the corpus also contains texts which are thought to be of Gaulish or North African origin) and length (the longest text, the *passio Anastasiae* (BHL 1795 + 118 + 8093 + 401), numbers approximately 6330 words, whereas the shortest, the *passio Marcianae* (BHL 5257 – 5259), numbers approximately 770 words). Moreover, the corpus contains well-researched texts, such as the *passio Anastasiae* (BHL 1795 + 188 + 8093+ 401) or the *passio Agnetis* (BHL 156) but also includes passions which received almost no scholarly attention, e.g. the *passio Bonosae* (BHL 1425) or the *passio Marcianae* (BHL 5257 – 5259). Yet in spite of these differences, the passions clearly form a unity, not only because they share the *topos* of the defence of chastity, but also because they all feature women: the defence of chastity is mainly an issue female martyrs have to deal with.

Notwithstanding the clear importance of *topoi* in the literary elaboration of the corpus texts, I argue that a focus on the topicality of the passions does not do justice to the specificity of the individual texts. The second research question, then, is to explore if these passions deserve to be studied as literary creations in their own right. In order to formulate an answer to this research question, I provide literary analyses of four of the selected 20 texts, namely of the *passio Caeciliae* (BHL 1495), *passio Susannae* (BHL 7937), *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae* (BHL 1787) and *passio Agnetis et Emerentianae* (BHL 156). Ideally, all 20 texts should have been discussed in detail, but this proved impossible in four years of research. Consequently, the conscious choice was made to select a smaller amount of passions for detailed analysis. The analyses of these four texts may make a beginning to the reappraisal of the passions' literary quality.

I pay attention to different aspects of the four selected texts. The main focus is on an aspect which is fundamental to their narrative architecture: characterization. To what extent do the passions show a degree of complexity in characterization which would underpin their literary value? By characterization, or construction of character, I mean the ascription of relatively stable or abiding mental, cognitive, social, moral and personal traits[21] to literary characters. In this dissertation, these characters are the female protagonists of the four selected passions, and occasionally other characters of these passions for reasons of comparison. The traits can be attributed to the characters by different narrative techniques. Drawing on both ancient rhetorical theory and modern narratology, Koen de Temmerman, co-supervisor of this dissertation, proposed

[21] For 'character' as the totality of these traits, see e.g. *ODE*, s.v. *character*. Both ancient as well as modern concepts of 'character' are semantically complex. Moreover, the modern term cannot unproblematically be mapped unto an ancient context. For these issues, as well as for divergent definitions of literary character in different scholarly approaches, I refer to De Temmerman (2014), esp. 5-6; 26-29.

a paradigm containing these techniques[22]. A literary character can be characterized through identification, direct attribution of traits (direct characterization) and indirect attribution of traits (indirect characterization). Indirect characterization can be either metaphorical (a character is aligned with something or someone else) or metonymical (a character is characterized through an attribute, which can be emotion, membership of a group, action, speech, appearance or setting). In the passions, all these techniques of characterization are used, and instances of these techniques will be referred to in this dissertation. Yet one technique is the most prominent and will be discussed in greatest detail: metonymical characterization through speech. Through speech, traits like rhetorical ability, astuteness and cunning are attributed to the martyrs. The emphasis on speech is consistent with Goddard Elliott's observation that 'in the *passiones* direct speech constitutes an act of first importance'[23]. In my analysis of characterization in the passions, attention is also paid to character development. In these texts, characters are subject to evolution. This observation is in line with Keunen's thesis that character development in western narrative is intertwined with the Jewish-Christian philosophy of time, in which time exhibits a linear pattern[24].

In the studies of the four passions which are presented in this dissertation, the analysis of the martyrs' characterization is intertwined with the study of other aspects of the texts. Firstly, intertextuality is highlighted: the passions interact with pagan genres such as the Greek novel or love poetry and with the Bible, apocryphal texts and other martyrological accounts. Secondly, in line with the focus on female characters, gender roles are discussed. In this respect, the already mentioned dedication to chastity is important: from the fourth century onwards, sexual abstinence, as a bloodless martyrdom or *martyrium sine cruore*, becomes an important theme in the post-Nicene 'bloody' passions[25]. Since sexuality can be understood as 'a site for the inscription of gender in antiquity'[26], this sexual abstinence has implications for the female martyrs' position with regard to men and for the women's agency[27]. The attention for gender roles leads to a third aspect of the texts which is treated in the analyses: the historical

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[22] See De Temmerman (2010), 28-42 and De Temmerman (2014), 33-41.

[23] Goddard Elliott (1987), 24.

[24] Keunen (2011).

[25] See e.g. Consolino (1984). On the general idea of ascetism as a new way of martyrdom from the 4th century onwards, see Van Uytfanghe (2001b), 1332-1333.

[26] Burrus (2007) 6, in her introduction to a recent collection of essays which explore the ways in which constructions of gender intersect with religious discourse in several literary sources. The collection contains one essay discussing a passion: Perkins (2007) explores the positive valuation of the maternal body in the *passio Perpetuae*.

[27] On the connection between sexual abstinence and the position of women in late antiquity, see e.g. Clark (1986); Drijvers (1987).

and cultural context of the passions. The tension between the worldly and the heavenly, for instance, or the contemporary views on conversion or female teachers prove to be important for our understanding of the texts and their characters. As texts which were meant to be believed and edify their audience, the passions are strongly embedded in the community they were written for.

In conclusion, then, I will not adopt one methodology to explore the literary value of the post-Nicene passions. I will focus on topicality, characterization, intertextuality, gender roles, and on the historical and cultural context of the passions. In my view, a similar diversified approach offers the best opportunities to reveal the passions' literary wealth and their individual characteristics.

1.4 Structure of the disseration

This dissertation consists of five articles, which are preceded by a *status quaestionis*. As mentioned, the first chapter, the *status quaestionis*, provides an overview of the publications which have explored the interconnections between the post-Nicene passions and the fictional traditions of antiquity. Given the subject of this dissertation, the focus lies on the Latin post-Nicene passions, but Greek post-Nicene passions will be discussed too, since Greek and Latin passions were often treated together. Not all Latin passions which are mentioned in this overview are part of the larger corpus of 113 texts, since some of them have not been dated to the time span of the fourth till sixth century.

The second chapter aims to provide an answer to the first research question, namely how the twenty selected passions deal with the *topos* of the defence of chastity and how the passions relate to the Greek novels in this respect.

In the third chapter, a first analysis of a specific passion is provided: the *passio Caeciliae* (BHL 1495). By means of an analysis of both Caecilia's as well as her husband Valerianus' speech, the intratextual individuation of these characters is explored within the thematic area of rhetorical ability, and attention is also paid to character development in this area.

Chapter four builds on the observations of the third chapter, as it compares the way Caecilia is characterized through her speech to the characterization of another female martyr, the protagonist of the *passio Susannae* (BHL 7937). This comparison is particularly relevant, since in line with the emphasis on the monotony of the post-Nicene passions, it has been argued that the *passio Susannae* is a mere copy of the *passio Caeciliae*. In our analysis of the martyr's characterization in both passions, the historical and cultural background of the texts plays a role too.

In a fifth chapter, the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae* (BHL 1787) is analyzed. In this study, the focus lies on gender roles. The article explores how the characterization of the protagonists Chrysanthus and Daria reveals different, ambiguous approaches to traditional gender roles and how character development can be detected in this thematic realm. Furthermore, the observations concerning gender roles are linked to the historical and cultural context of the passion.

The sixth and final chapter analyses the *passio Agnetis* (BHL 156). Unlike the passions discussed in chapters 3, 4 and 5, the *passio Agnetis* received much attention in contemporary scholarship. This is due to the apparent eroticism of the text on the one hand, and its literary qualities on the other. Unlike the other post-Nicene passions, it has been argued, the *passio Agnetis* gives evidence of a remarkable literary refinement. The analysis of the *passio Agnetis* explores the martyrs' characterization through speech against the background of the other accounts of Agnes' martyrdom: Damasus' epigram, Ambrose's *De virginibus*, a (pseudo-) Ambrosian hymn, Prudentius' *Peristephanon* and the Greek version of the martyrdom (BHG 45).

Chapter 1 The post-Nicene passions and the fictional traditions of antiquity: interconnections

Over the past decades, the interplay between early Christian and Jewish narrative and the fictional traditions of pagan antiquity has received increasing attention. Striking similarities between both narrative environments suggest that they are no worlds apart and encourage the study of their interconnections. Several recent volumes attest to the vitality of this field of research: *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative* (1998, ed. R. F. Hock, J. B. Chance and J. Perkins), *Ancient Fiction. The Matrix of Early Christian and Jewish Narrative* (2005, ed. J-A. A. Brant, C. W. Hedrick and C. Shea), *Fiction on the Fringe. Novelistic Writing in the Post-Classical Age* (2009, ed. G. A. Karla) and *The Ancient Novel and Early Christian and Jewish Narrative: Fictional Intersections* (2012, ed. M. P. Futre Pinheiro, J. Perkins and R. Pervo).

Before I turn to the main argument of this review article, I will briefly touch upon the early Christian and Jewish narratives which have often been discussed in connection with the fictional traditions of antiquity. As we will see, the novelistic tradition in particular is well represented. Firstly, attention has been drawn to the interconnections between the canonical Bible and the pagan fictional traditions. Although it has been pointed out that a division between canonical and apocryphal texts is undesirable when one approaches these texts from a literary point of view[1], the distinction is still often made. The Old and New Testament as well as the canonical book of acts have been connected to several fictional traditions, such as classical epic, tragedy and, mainly, the novelistic tradition[2]. Secondly, similarities between apocryphal texts, such as the

[1] See e.g. Pervo (1987) on the division between canonical and apocryphal acts.

[2] On the Bible and Homer, see e.g. Gordon (1962), on the Gospels and Homer, MacDonald (1998) and (2005). On the Gospel of Matthew and Greek tragedy, Cousland (2005). On the Bible and the novelistic tradition, Frye (1976), on the Gospels and the novelistic tradition, Kermode (1979), Wills (1997), with an overview of previous research on the Gospel genre and its origins (1-22), Shiner (1998), Pervo (1998), Brant (1998), Hedrick (1998), Ramelli (2005a), (2005b), Reimer (2005) (Reimer and Ramelli focus on the influence of the Gospels on the

Protevangelium Jacobi and, mainly, the Apocryphal Acts, and the pagan novelistic tradition have elaborately been studied[3]. Thirdly, the interconnections between the ancient Jewish novels (*Esther*, *Daniel*, *Judith*, *Tobit*, *Joseph and Aseneth*) and the pagan novels have been explored: the Jewish novel is 'a bridge between the Hebrew Bible and the genre known to classicists as the Greek novel'[4]. Finally, Saints' Lives have also frequently been connected to the pagan novelistic tradition[5].

In this article, I will focus on a type of late antique Christian texts which received little attention in research on the interactions between Christian and Jewish narrative and the fictional traditions of antiquity: the Greek and Latin late antique, so called post-Nicene[6] passions of the martyrs. In the past, these accounts of the vicissitudes of the heroes and heroines of the Christian faith were mainly studied from a historical perspective. Countless attempts were made to distil historical information about the martyr and his or her martyrdom from the texts and the martyr's cult received ample attention too. Yet as the Bollandist Hippolyte Delehaye remarked in 1936 with regard to the Roman post-Nicene passions (and the same certainly goes for the other passions as well): '*les passions romaines ne sont pas des documents historiques mais appartiennent à la littérature*'[7]. Indeed, these narratives, which were written a long time after the

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novels), Fullmer (2007). On Paul's Epistles and the Greek novels, Alexander (1998). On the influence of the gospels and the book of acts on the novelistic tradition, Bowersock (1994), Ramelli (2001). On the book of acts and Virgil, Shea (2005), on the book of acts and the novelistic tradition, Pervo (1987), Chance (1998). On the book of Acts and Plato's *Republic,* Dupertuis (2005). For a study on the book of acts alongside several other literary genres, both pagan, Jewish and Christian see Alexander (2005).

[3] On the *Protevangelium Jacobi* and the Greek novels, see Ehlen (2012). On the Apocryphal Acts and the novelistic tradition, Söder (1932) is the seminal study. See also Perkins (1992), Corsaro (1995), Milazzo (1995), Perkins (1995), Szepessy (1995), Cooper (1996), Aubin (1998), Thomas (2003), with an overview of research on the literary genre of the Apocryphal Acts (3-7), Rhee (2005), König (2009), Konstan (2009), Andújar (2012), Eyl (2012), Greene (2012), Hirschberger (2012), Moretti (2012), Spittler (2012); on the Apocryphal Acts, the Greek novels and Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*, Giraudet (2012). On the *pseudo-Clementines* as an atypical example of the Apocrypyhal Acts, see Edwards (1992) and Bremmer (2010).

[4] Quotation from G. Nagy in his foreword to Will's book on the Jewish novels: Wills (1995), ix. Generally on the Jewish novel and for further references, see Wills (1995) and (2002). On *Joseph and Aseneth*, see also the recent essay of Braginskaya (2012), in which she argues that the affinities with Apuleius' and Chariton's novel do not necessarily indicate interconnections between *Joseph and Aseneth* and the pagan novelistic tradition.

[5] See e.g. Clark (1984), esp. chapter 4, Goddard Elliott (1987), Perkins (1994), Perkins (1995), Johnson (2006). See also the two recent volumes of the Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography (2011), which contain several essays on the literary aspects of Byzantine *vitae*.

[6] Besides 'post-Nicene', the late antique passions are also termed 'post-Constantinian'. On the use of both terms, cf. Scorza Barcellona (2001), 39-40.

[7] Delehaye (1936), 14. Of course, the post-Nicene passions are historical documents to a certain extent, in that they provide a lot of information about the cult of the martyrs which they praise (as pointed out by Delehaye (1934), 37) and about the time they were written in. Examples of such a historical approach can be found in the works of Kate Cooper: e.g. Cooper (1994) and (1996), 116-127 (on the *passio Anastasiae* and the information

persecutions, are literary texts. Like the Christian and Jewish texts which were discussed above, they deserve to be approached from a literary perspective and bear noticeable resemblances to the fictional traditions of pagan antiquity.

It is the aim of this review article to provide an overview of the publications which have explored the interconnections between the post-Nicene passions and these traditions. The indisputable starting point of such an overview is the already mentioned Delehaye, to whom I now turn.

1.1 The starting point: Hippolyte Delehaye and the epic passions

In 1921, Delehaye published his *Les passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires*. In this book, he deals with historic passions, panegyrics and post-Nicene passions. He has a low opinion of this last group of texts: they are '*constructions uniformes et sans style*', '*productions artificielles*' and the result of '*une décadence intellectuelle*'[8]. Whereas the earlier, historic passions rely on historical records and were written almost contemporary with the events they recount, Delehaye claims, the post-Nicene passions are based upon vague memories of the martyrs. Consequently, the authors of these texts had recourse to pagan fictional traditions to compensate for this lack of historical basis. He distinguishes two categories: the epic passions (*passions épiques*) and the novelistic passions (*passions romanesques*). As the names suggest, the first group of passions draws on classical epic and presents the martyr as an epic hero in magnified proportions[9], whereas the second group has affinities with the pagan novelistic tradition. Delehaye does not specify, however, how he interprets these affinities. Did the hagiographers read classical epic or the ancient novels, or were they influenced by these traditions through the common schoolsystem? Delehaye subdivides the novelistic passions in three subcategories: the adventure novel (*roman d'aventures*), the idyllic novel (*roman*

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it provides about the religious experience of fifth-century women); (1999) (on the role of the Roman post-Nicene passions in the consolidation of Roman episcopal authority) and (2005a) (on the *passio Eugeniae* as a source for the behaviour of women in late antiquity).

[8] Delehaye (1966[2]a), 171.

[9] On the epic passions and their characteristics, Delehaye (1966[2]a), 171-226. Delehaye mentions a very large amount of passions as examples of epic passions. I will list only a few: the *passio Tryphonis* (BHG 1856), the *passio Blasii* (BHG 276), the *passio Nestoris* (BHL 6068), the *passio Primi et Feliciani* (BHL 6922).

idyllique) and the didactic novel (*roman didactique*)[10]. He aligns the first two with the ancient Greek novel, focusing on travel and anagnorismos[11] in the first case and on the amorous component in the second[12]. He does not align the didactic novel, which mainly wants to convey a message, with a specific pagan model[13]. Delehaye separates the novelistic passions from their epic counterparts because in the novelistic passions, he argues, an inspiration can be detected 'which is not the inspiration of the epic passions'[14]. It is unclear, however, what he exactly means by this 'other inspiration'.

To be sure, in some of the post-Nicene passions the novelistic atmosphere is more noticeable than in others, yet the distinction is not that strict. The passions which Delehaye terms 'novelistic' also contain many characteristics from their epic counterparts (e.g. brave endurance of torture, bloodthirsty officials, heroic and didactic replies of the martyr,...). This is clearly indicated by the fact that Delehaye refers to some 'novelistic' passions in his overview of characteristics and components of the epic passions[15]. Furthermore, some of the passions which he mentions as examples of epic passions contain novelistic characteristics[16]. Although Delehaye's distinction between epic and novelistic passions was taken up by another pioneer of hagiographical study, René Aigrain[17], the difficult tenability of the distinction might be the reason why his two

[10] On the novelistic passions and their characteristics, Delehaye (1966²a), 227-230.

[11] He mentions the *passio Eustathii* (*Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca* (BHG) 641-643), the *pseudo-Clementines* and the *vita Xenophontis et Mariae* (BHG 1878-1879) as examples of the 'adventure novel'. It is unclear why he includes the *pseudo-Clementines* and the *vita,* since he explicitly said that he would be discussing passions.

[12] He mentions the *passio Adriani et Nataliae* (BHG 27-29), *passio Caeciliae* (BHL 1495) and *passio Galactionis et Epistemes* (BHG 665) as examples of the 'idyllic novel'.

[13] He mentions the *passio Nicephori* (BHG 1331-1334), *passio Bonifatii* (BHG 279-282) and *passio puerorum septem Ephesi dormientium* (BHG 1593-1599) as examples of the 'didactic novel'.

[14] Delehaye (1966²a), 227: '*une inspiration qui n'est pas celle des passions épiques*'.

[15] He refers e.g. to the *passio Eustathii*, which he put forward as an example of the adventure novel (cf. supra, note 11) while discussing torture in the epic passions (204), and the *passio Galactionis et Epistemes*, an example of the idyllic novel (cf. supra, note 12), is mentioned in the discussion of punishment of the persecutors in the epic passions (217-218).

[16] He mentions the *passio Timothei et Maurae* (BHG 1949) while discussing torture in the epic passions (203, 205 and 208). This passion features a couple, a characteristic which aligns it with the subcategory of idyllic novels. The *passio Nerei et Achillei* (BHL 6058-6066), which Delehaye mentions as an example of a group-passion among the epic passions (passions of different saints grouped around a well-known figure; 222) contains characteristics of the idyllic novels too (e.g. defence of chastity, unwanted marriage).

[17] Aigrain published his book '*L'hagiographie. Ses sources – ses méthodes – son histoire*' in 1953. Given the continuous relevance of the study, the book was republished by the Bollandists in 2000. In this book, Aigrain reformulates Delehaye's observations, with minor refinements and adjustments (2000², 140-155). He mainly identifies the same passions as Delehaye as novelistic, with some elaboration (he for instance elaborates on the novelistic features of the *passio Caeciliae*, cf. supra, note 12, i.e. the emphasis on chastity and the presence of a central couple). Aigrain also adds several passions to the subcategory of the didactic novel (a.o. *passio*

categories were not generally adopted in subsequent scholarship. Instead, his category of 'epic passions' gathered an important following – although objections to it were formulated too[18] - and acquired a slightly different meaning. 'Epic passions' became the general term for post-Nicene passions, which are characterized by a restricted historical basis and affinities with the fictional traditions of antiquity[19]. Delehaye's category of novelistic passions was thus subsumed into his category of epic passions[20].

When studying the interconnections between these post-Nicene or epic passions and the fictional traditions of antiquity, subsequent scholarship – perhaps surprisingly – passed by the epic tradition[21]. Instead, scholars focused on two other traditions: drama (both tragedy and comedy) and the novelistic tradition. I will discuss the interconnections with drama first, followed by the interconnections with the ancient novel.

1.2 The post-Nicene passions and the dramatic tradition

Attention has been drawn to the dramatic aspects of the post-Nicene passions. As Berschin puts it in 1986 in his first volume of *Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter*: 'The passions were no libretti for scenic performances, but staging is latently present in these texts. Many of the passions are dialogized to such an extent that merely

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Didymi et Theodorae (BHL 8072-8073)*; passio Genesii* (BHL 3304)). In her edition of the *passio Anastasiae,* Moretti (2006), also retains Delehaye's distinction between epic and novelistic passions (11-12), but nevertheless terms the *passio Anastasiae* an epic passion with '*una certa allure romanzesca*' (12).

[18] According to Berschin (1986), 96-97, the components and characteristics of the epic passions which Delehaye identifies are not specific enough: they are applicable to both authentic and fictional passions (*der echten wie der fiktiven*). Berschin emphasizes the narrative dimension of the passions from the third century onwards, and uses the term '*erzählende Passio*'(102, 105).

[19] For a definition of the epic passions in these terms, see e.g. Fontaine's contribution about martyrtexts to the *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike* (1989), 518; Philippart, Trigalet (2008), 118-119 and Lanéry's contribution about late antique Italian passions to the recent international history of Latin and vernacular hagiographical literature, published as a part of the *Corpus Christianorum* project (2010), 21, 54; Scorza Barcellona (2001) 40, emphasizes that the 'epic passions' indeed generally postdate the authentic passions, but that it is first and foremost a stylistic category: some authentic passions may contain characteristics from the epic passions.

[20] In his overview of Western hagiography, Van Uytfanghe (2007), 13-14; 19 also refrains from making a distinction: the post-Nicene passions can be called either epic or novelistic (*tantôt épiques, tantôt romanesques*).

[21] Goddard Elliott (1987) 26-41 identifies similarities in structure (e.g. the binary opposition between good and bad) between the epic passion of Vincent of Saragossa (BHL 8633) and epic, but focusses on medieval Old French epic (e.g. the *Chanson de Roland*).

some small adaptations are needed to turn them into a tragedy, or rather a comedy'[22]. Berschin discusses some of these 'theatrical' passions in detail[23]. He lists tragic elements (e.g. the loved ones of the martyrs who try to convince them to give up their faith and escape death) and spectacular elements (e.g. the apparition of angels) in the *passio Sebastiani* (BHL 7543), which he calls an '*Ersatz für die Arena*'[24]. The *passio Laurentii* (BHL 7811), in which the aspect of looking is emphasized (*Ecce…*!), contains several scenes which would fit well into a theatre play[25], and the *passio Agnetis* (BHL 156) gives evidence of dramatic elements too, as it includes a brothel scene, a resurrection account and an apparition *post mortem*[26]. Yet the passion which is most strikingly 'dramatic' is the *passio Genesii* (BHL 3315). This passion recounts the vicissitudes of an actor who wants to entertain the emperor Diocletian who is a member of the audience. He decides to impersonate a Christian who wants to die for his faith. But during the play, Genesius is truly converted to Christianity, and theatre becomes reality[27]. Apart from these 'theatrical' passions which he discusses in detail, Berschin lists a few other passions which give evidence of a theatrical-dramatic atmosphere[28].

Other scholars who focused on the affinities between the post-Nicene passions and the dramatic tradition drew attention to the same texts as Berschin. Huber-Rebenich identifies tragic scenes in the *passio Sebastiani* and a burlesque atmosphere in the *passio Agapae, Chioniae et Irenae* (BHL 118), which Berschin already termed '*Schwankhaftig*' (farcical). Indeed, as Huber-Rebenich remarks, the scene in which the Roman official Dulcitius starts hugging and kissing pots and pans instead of the three Christian women, reminds of burlesque comedy[29]. In order to underpin his thesis that it are mainly the epic passions which make evident the contiguity (*le contiguità sostanziali*) between hagiography and theatrical spectacle, Paoli also discusses the *passio Sebastiani*, the *passio*

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[22] Berschin (1986), 84: '*Die Passionen waren keine Libretti für szenische Aufführungen, aber latent steckte in ihnen die Inszenierung. Viele der Passiones sind so weitgehend dialogisiert, dass es eigentlich nur mehr einiger Retuschen bedurfte, um eine Tragödie oder vielmehr eine Komödie herzustellen.*' (my translation).

[23] With the exception of the *passio Agnetis*, the passions which he discusses in detail in his 1986 book are identical to those which he discussed in an earlier article (Berschin 1985), in which he identifies these passions as sources of inspiration for the *Book of Drama* of the 10th century German canoness Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim.

[24] Berschin (1986), 74-82. Quotation on p. 81.

[25] Berschin (1986), 82-84.

[26] Berschin (1986), 85-87.

[27] Berschin (1986), 108-109.

[28] The *passio Caeciliae* (BHL 1495), the *passio Luciae* (BHL 4992), the *passio Agathae* (BHL 133), the *passio Agapae, Chioniae et Irenae* (BHL 118; this passion is a part of the cycle around Anastasia) and the *passio Clementis* (BHL 1848): Berschin (1986), 107-108.

[29] Huber-Rebenich (1999), 196-197.

Anastasiae (which contains the *passio Agapae, Chioniae et Irenae*) and the *passio Genesii*[30]. In her detailed study of the Latin *passio Agnetis*, Lanéry draws attention to the theatrical atmosphere of this passion too and points out that it partly takes place in a theatre and stages different typical characters from both tragedy and comedy (e.g. a mournful father, a parasite, the crowd as chorus,...)[31].

1.3 The post-Nicene passions and the novelistic tradition

I now turn to the interconnections between the post-Nicene passions and the ancient novelistic tradition, a subject which received more attention in contemporary scholarship than the correspondences with the dramatic tradition. Yet as was the case with Delehaye's categories 'epic' and 'novelistic', it is not always easy to distinguish the 'dramatic' passions from the 'novelistic' ones. A text like the *passio Agnetis*, which Berschin termed a 'dramatic' passion, also has novelistic characteristics[32]. As Berschin remarks, the distinction between both groups of passions is 'fluctuating' (*fliessend*, 109).

Within the group of publications treating the interconnections between the post-Nicene passions and the novelistic tradition, two approaches can be identified. Either scholars started from the (mainly Greek) novels and researched which novelistic aspects (either a novelistic scene, a novelistic *topos* or the novelistic structure) could be detected in the passions, or they started from a specific passion and examined the text's correspondences to the novels. I will start with the first group of publications.

1.3.1 Starting from the novels

1.3.1.1 Novelistic scenes

It has often been pointed out that a few scenes from the Greek novels show resemblances to Christian martyr texts. Most often, the scene from Achilles Tatius' novel in which Leucippe belligerently defends herself against Thersander who lusts after her (Ach. Tat. 6, 21-22) has been mentioned in this context[33]. Yet two scenes from

[30] Paoli (2002). Quotation on p. 77.

[31] Lanéry (2008), 366.

[32] Cf. Berschin (1986), 87, where he terms the *passio Agnetis* '*romanhaft*'.

[33] This has been noted by Shaw (1993), 9 and very often thereafter.

Heliodorus' novel, namely the scene in which Theagenes is tortured for not giving in to the advances of Arsace (Hld. 8, 6, 4)[34] and the scene in which Chariclea is put on a pyre (Hld. 8, 9, 13)[35], have been called 'martyrological' too. Achilles Tatius' defence scene and the pyre scene from Heliodorus' novel have both been adduced to underpin the hypothesis that the novelists may have been influenced by contemporary martyr narratives[36]. But the observations concerning these scenes and martyrological texts seldom went beyond generalities; very rarely have the scenes been linked to specific passions[37] and even less to the post-Nicene passions which concern us here. Konstan and Ramelli draw attention to interconnections between the scene from Achilles Tatius and the Latin *passio Agapae, Chioniae et Irenae* (BHL 118, part of the cycle around Anastasia): like Irene, they contend, Leucippe gives evidence of personal autonomy[38]. Cataudella links the same novelistic scene to Greek versions of the *passio Eugeniae*, *passio Anastasiae* and *passio Domnae* and connects the pyre scene from Heliodorus' novel to the *passio Caeciliae*.[39] However, Cataudella does not specify to which version of the passions he refers. He often uses the *Patrologia Graeca*, which among other things includes the 10th century rewritings of the passions by Symeon the Metaphrast. Cataudella's limited attention for the distinction of different versions within the hagiographical dossiers as well as for chronological issues, is an example of the way in which the hagiographical tradition has often been approached in the past. It clearly highlights the need for more detailed and specific studies. On the other hand, the novelistic elements in the metaphrastic versions of the passions attest to continuation of the rich interactions between the novelistic traditions and Christian texts[40].

1.3.1.2 Novelistic *topoi*

Not only specific novelistic scenes have been connected to the post-Nicene passions. Attention has also been drawn to several novelistic *topoi* which occur in the passions. Once again, the focus lies on the Greek novels. I return to the already mentioned Cataudella. Spurred on by the lacuna in research on the interconnections between

[34] Noted by Goldhill (1995), 120; Ramelli (2001), 138.

[35] Noted by Bowersock (1994), 141; Ramelli (2001), 138-139.

[36] For Achilles Tatius, see Cataudella (1981), 952 and Ramelli (2001), 86-90; for Heliodorus, see Bowersock (1994), 141 and Ramelli (2001), 138-139.

[37] Both Achilles Tatius' defence scene and the pyre scene from Heliodorus have been linked to authentic, pre-Nicene passions: the former scene to the *passio Perpetuae et Felicitiatis* (BHL 6633), see Morales (2004), 205 and (King) 2012, 154; the latter to the *passio Polycarpi* (BHG 1556-1560), see Bowersock (1994), 141.

[38] See Konstan (2009), 118-119 and Konstan and Ramelli (2014), 186-187.

[39] Cataudella (1981), 952 (Achilles Tatius), 948 (Heliodorus).

[40] On medieval Greek romances such as e.g. the poem of *Digenis Akritis*, see Beaton (1996[2]).

hagiography and the Greek novel, he published an article in 1981 entitled '*Vite di Santi e romanzo*'. In this article, he lists *topoi* from the novels which are present in hagiographical texts (he does not distinguish between *vitae* and *passiones*) and thus underpins his claim that both groups of texts are directly connected. The correspondences which Cataudella indicates are not always convincing, his overview is far from complete, and as has been mentioned, he is very vague about the chronology of the texts he discusses (it is likely that he treats the metaphrastic version of the passions in many cases). But in spite of these shortcomings, Cataudella's article is an important contribution to the study of novelistic *topoi* in the post-Nicene passions. Firstly, the *topoi* which he identifies in (what often seem to be) the metaphrastic passions do frequently occur in the earlier versions of the passions as well, and secondly, despite some less convincing parallels, he draws attention to important overlaps between novelistic and hagiographical texts. With the exception of the scene from Achilles Tatius (which he reckons to be influenced by martyrological narratives, cf. supra), Cataudella does not pass judgment on the direction of influence (either from the novels to the hagiographical texts, or the other way around). I will first give a short overview of the novelistic topoi for which Cataudella adduces examples from the passions. Afterwards, I will list the *topoi* for which Cataudella does not list any examples from the passions (only from *vitae*) but which occur in the passions as well.

- Beauty of the heroes (934): *passio Anastasiae*, *passio Eugeniae* and *passio Barbarae*;
- *Topos* of Potiphar (cf. Gen. 39) (935-937): *passio Eugeniae*, where Melanthia tries to seduce Eugenia who is disguised as a man. When her advances are not answered, Melanthia brings Eugenia to court for attempted rape;
- Trial (937-938): *passio Eugeniae* (cf. the accusations of Melanthia). Of course, trial is fundamental to the plot of the post-Nicene passions;
- Magic (938-939): *passio Eugeniae* (the contest between the Christian Helenus and the magician Zereas);
- Dreams and visions (941-942): *passio Eugeniae* and *passio Acindyni et sociorum*[41];
- Disguise (943-944): The *topos* of a woman who dresses up like a man is more common in *vitae*, where women take on men's clothing in order to live as monks, but Cataudella refers to two passions too: the *passio Domnae* and the *passio Eugeniae* (cf. supra, *Topos* of Potiphar);
- Virgin in a brothel (944): *passio Domnae*, *passio Anastasiae* and *passio Luciae;*

[41] As already pointed out by Delehaye, visions and apparitions of angels and saints are common in the post-Nicene passions: Delehaye (1966²a), 213-217.

- Defence of chastity (944-946): *passio Anastasiae* (women pray to God in order to safeguard their chastity), *passio Galactionis et Epistemes* (Leucippe, Galaction's mother, fakes an illness in order to avoid sexual contact with her husband);
- Pyre (948): Has been discussed supra, with regard to the scene from Heliodorus' novel;
- Divine Judgment (949): Cataudella links the scenes in Achilles Tatius' novel in which it is ascertained if characters speak the truth by submitting them to 'natural' tests (Leucippe and the syrinx and the cave (Ach. Tat. 8, 6; 14), Melite and the water of the Styx (Ach Tat. 8, 12; 14)) to the *passio Eugeniae*, where the Christian Helenus survives the test of fire (he escapes unscathed), whereas the magician Zereas almost burns to death.

The novelistic *topoi* for which Cataudella lists no examples from the passions but which occur in the passions as well are the following: travel (933, indeed more prominent in the *vitae*, but also occurs for instance in the *passio Eustathii*); invasions of barbarians/abduction by pirates or robbers (939-941, also occurs e.g. in the *passio Eustathii*: Eustathius' wife is abducted by the owner of a ship); torture and imprisonment (946-947, Cataudella astonishingly does not include any reference to the passions where these elements are of course essential to the plot); tempest and shipwreck (947-948, also occurs e.g. in the *passio Nazarii et Celsi* (BHL 6039)); animals which do not attack the hero (948-949, also occurs e.g. in the *passio Martianae* (BHL 5259), *passio Juliani et Basilissae* (BHL 4529), *passio Priscae* (BHL 6926)).

In contrast to Cataudella, who discusses a large number of *topoi*, other scholars focused on one specific *topos* which the novels and the post-Nicene passions have in common[42]. These studies further develop elements which had already been mentioned by Cataudella. Rizzo Nervo treats the *topos* of the virgin in the brothel[43]. She discusses the presence of this *topos* in the novels and in hagiographical texts, among which three post-Nicene passions: the Greek *passio Agnetis* (BHG 45), the Greek *passio Luciae* (BHG 995) and the Latin *passio Anastasiae*. The passions adopted the *topos* from the novels, Rizzo Nervo argues, but partly changed its meaning and tailored it to the changing ideas and circumstances (the changing views on the legitimacy of suicide for the sake of virginity).

[42] Goddard Elliott (1987), who aligns the structure of the *vitae* with those of both the ancient and medieval novel, also provides an overview of different novelistic *topoi* but mainly focuses on *vitae*. She occasionally refers to a few post-Nicene passions (e.g. the *passio Eugeniae* (81, remarkable intelligence of the heroine) and *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae* (148-149, commanding wild animals) as she argues that these texts feature saints which achieve martyrdom but differ structurally from the traditional passion (12, 21). Of course, the division between *vitae* and *passiones* is not always that rigorous.

[43] Rizzo Nervo (1995).

Boulhol focuses on another *topos*, which is often intertwined with the *topos* of disguise mentioned by Cataudella: *anagnorismos*[44]. He treats 12 hagiographical texts, among which two post-Nicene passions: the Greek *passio Eustathii* and the Latin *passio Eugeniae* (BHL 2667). He provides a detailed analysis of recognition scenes in these texts against the background of classical epic, tragedy, New Comedy, the Bible and, first and foremost, the ancient novels. Many aspects are dealt with, such as the reasons for separation and reunion, when and where the recognition takes place, the objects and people involved etc. Boulhol also compares the situation of the heroes before and after the *anagnorismos* in the novels and hagiographical texts[45]. In the novels, he argues, the heroes revert to their former position in society after the *anagnorismos*, whereas in the hagiographical texts they permanently break the bonds with their former society and assume a higher position. Whereas the worldly *anagnorismos* is the aim of the novelistic heroes, this is not the case in the hagiographical texts: in these texts, it is only a step towards the ultimate, eschatological *anagnorismos* which is the Last Judgment.

Another *topos* which has been treated in detail is the importance of chastity. Chew discusses the concept and valuation of chastity in the Greek novels and late antique passions[46]. She refers to a larger study including 53 martyrs, but does not specify the exact texts nor the study she refers to. The passions mentioned in the article are the following: the Greek *passio Eugeniae* and *passio Menodorae, Metrodorae et Nymphodorae*, and the Latin *passio Agnetis* and *passio Didymi et Theodorae*[47]. Chew argues that in both the Greek novels and the passions the preservation of chastity is a choice of the heroine, and a means to an end. Both groups of women want to safeguard their chastity temporarily, until reunion with their lover. This temporary observance of chastity, Chew argues, might be the reason why the Greek passions favoured the most common novelistic chastity word, *σωφροσύνη*, over terms as *ἁγνεία* and *ἐγκράτεια*. By assimilating the vocabulary, she contends, Christianity wanted to appropriate the novelistic world. In the same year, Chew published another article which deals with the Greek novels and

[44] Boulhol (1996). The same author, in collaboration with I. Cochelin, published another study on late antique hagiography in which the rehabilitation of the eunuch (who enjoyed a bad reputation in contemporary society) is discussed. The authors argue that the only 'bad' eunuch in late antique hagiography can be found in the passion of Manuel, Sabel and Ismael (BHG 1023) and that this might be an adoption of the character type of the wicked oriental eunuch, as known from the Greek novels (see Boulhol, Cochelin (1992), 64-65).

[45] Boulhol (1996), 91-100.

[46] Chew (2003a).

[47] The chronology is unclear: Chew seems to use the metaphrastic passions in the case of the *passio Eugeniae* and *passio Menodorae, Metrodorae et Nymphodorae* (she refers to the edition from the *Patrologia Graeca*, which contains these metaphrastic passions), but she refers to the *Acta Sanctorum* edition for the two Latin passions (which contains much older texts).

martyr texts[48]. In this article, she discusses the violence and torture which both novelistic heroines and martyrs have to endure and focuses on sexual threats and torture. She refers to five martyrs (Agatha, Juliana, Euphemia, Anastasia and Menodora). Chew uses the metaphrastic versions of their passions but argues that these texts might well reflect a much older tradition ('at some point in the fourth century CE' (130)), as she assumes that the accounts did not change much over the centuries. Since a large importance was allotted to female (and not male) chastity in Greco-Roman society, Chew argues, both novelistic and hagiographical heroines have to endure sexual threats and torture: the women share a social vulnerability which makes them prone to attack.

1.3.1.3 Novelistic structure

Next to the links between the novelistic tradition and the post-Nicene passions in terms of specific scenes and *topoi*, it has also been argued that the structure of both groups of texts is similar. This common structure has briefly been pointed out by Cataudella: a hero and heroine are separated, undergo a lot of tribulations and testing and are reunited in the end, i.e. after death in the *vitae* and the *passiones*, before death in the novels[49]. Macalister advances a similar structure for both novels and passions, but draws on Bakhtin's analysis of the structure of the Greek novel[50]. Bakhtin identified three pivotal narrative points in the novels, which are in his view characterized by the so-called 'adventure chronotope': falling in love and departure - ordeals and tribulations - reunion. In a martyr's passion, Macalister contends, these three narrative units are similar: divine calling or conversion – confession, trials and torture – martyrdom. Between both structures, she argues, both similarities and differences can be identified. In both novels and passions the tribulations constitute the core of the narrative, and in both an external force (love in the novels, divine calling in the passions) provokes the action, i.e. leaving one's familiar surroundings. Yet there are important differences too. Firstly, in the novels the heroes undergo the tribulations without certainty about the outcome (which eventually turns out to be beneficial for the individual), whereas the martyrs undergo the torture in the certainty that the outcome will be beneficial for the faith (and for the martyr himself as well, of course). Secondly, whereas in the novels the ordeal time has no influence on the protagonist's personality or love[51], this is different in the passions: the ordeals shape the martyr and his or her love for God. With regard to

[48] Chew (2003b).

[49] See Cataudella (1981), 932. Chew (2003a, 206-207 and 2003b, 130-131) lists a similar structure and emphasizes the importance of the preservation of chastity during the tribulations.

[50] Macalister (1996), 98-100.

[51] For nuances of this view, see De Temmerman (2004), 174-178.

this last aspect, Moretti, who also analysed a post-Nicene passion (the Latin *passio Anastasiae*) against the background of the Bakhtinian 'adventure chronotope'[52], has a different opinion: she argues that the *passio Anastasiae* completely fits the novelistic 'adventure chronotope'. Like in the novels, she contends, the tribulations do not affect the characters, which she calls 'monolitic'[53]. Konstan and Ramelli disagree with both Bakhtin and Moretti, and argue that the loyalty and fidelity which the protagonists display in both novels and passion necessarily require a temporal dimension and therefore shape the characters[54].

1.3.2 Starting from the passions

I now turn to a second group of publications which treat the interconnections between the novels and the post-Nicene passions, namely studies of specific passions and their correspondences to the novels. As we will see, it concerns passions which have already been mentioned in this overview: time and again, the same passions are discussed in this context. A classical example is the Greek *passio Eustathii*. Delehaye mentioned this passion as an example of an 'adventure novel', but the correspondences between the *passio Eustathii* and the novels had already been pointed out earlier: in the beginning of the twentieth century, Monteverdi published a long article in which he argued that the Christian author of the *passio Eustathii* turned a pagan novel into a Christian one. Monteverdi lists the novelistic *topoi* which occur in the passion (a couple, travel, separation, abduction of the woman, tribulations, defence of chastity, *anagnorismos*) and discusses them against the background of both ancient Greek and Byzantine novels and the *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri*[55]. Another Greek passion which has frequently been linked to the novels is the *passio Galactionis et Epistemes*[56], once again a passion which Delehaye termed novelistic ('idyllic novel') in his *Les passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires*. The link between this passion and Achilles Tatius' novel is manifest, as the parents of the protagonist Galaction are called Leucippe and Cleitophon[57]. Moreover, Robiano argues, the passion is also linked to Heliodorus since it takes place in Emesa, hometown of the

[52] Moretti (2006), 13-15.

[53] Moretti (2006), 15: '*monolitici*'.

[54] Konstan, Ramelli (2014), 188-189.

[55] Monteverdi (1908-1911), 188-192. Similar observations about novelistic *topoi* in the *passio Eustathii* have been made by Delehaye (1966[2]a); Delehaye (1966[2]b) and Hägg (2004), 234-236.

[56] The dating of this text is unclear. Anne Alwis (2011), 8-10 points out that the text has been dated to the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries but dates it to the ninth century herself.

[57] This link has been indicated as early as 1905 by Brinkman (633) and many times thereafter: see e.g. Perry (1967), 101; Macalister (1996), 110-111; Moretti (2006), 13; Nilsson (2009), 256-257 and many others.

novelist[58]. Robiano contends that the link between the novelists and the *passio Galactionis et Epistemes* has to provide a Christian legitimacy for the two popular pagan works. The Coptic passion of saint Parthenope, which is possibly a translation from a lost Greek original[59], is linked to the novels in a unique way: Hägg listed many points of agreement between the novels and the passion and formulated the hypothesis that the novel of Metiochus and Parthenope functioned as a model for it. If this is the case, the passion can be used to reconstruct the novel, which has come down to us only fragmentarily[60].

Among the Latin post-Nicene passions too, several passions were linked to the novels. Lanéry drew attention to the novelistic elements in the *passio Eugeniae* and the *passio Agathae*. In the *passio Eugeniae*, she identifies the novelistic *topoi* which Cataudella had also pointed out (defence of chastity, disguise, magic) and mentions a few others (betrayal, *anagnorismos* and the separation of family members)[61]. In the *passio Agathae* (BHL 133), she points to the sexual lust of the governor, the first indications of the *topos* of the virgin in the brothel and an apparition[62]. Moretti provided an elaborate list of novelistic *topoi* which can be detected in the *passio Anastasiae*, although not all are equally convincing[63]. She lists the following *topoi*: unwanted amorous attention, a character who wants to convince the hero or heroine to comply with the amorous request, feigned acceptance of a marriage proposal and requested postponement, travel, nobility of the protagonists, accompanying servant, go-between[64], letters, parasite, miraculous deliverance, consultation between characters, shipwreck, an island as location for the action, virgin in the brothel. Another famous passion when it comes to interconnections with the novelistic tradition is the Latin *passio Agnetis*. It has often been remarked that this passion, which features a virgin who receives an unwanted marriage proposal and whose chastity is endangered by putting her in a brothel, reminds of the Greek novels[65] and the *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri*[66].

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[58] Robiano (2009). On Heliodorus' link with Emesa, see also Morgan (2009).

[59] See Hägg (2004), 238.

[60] Hägg (2004). See also Moretti (2006), 13-15; Tilg (2010), 95.

[61] Lanéry (2010), 136.

[62] Lanéry (2010), 284-285.

[63] Moretti (2006), 15-22. Lanéry (2010), 56 also lists a few of these *topoi* and refers to Moretti.

[64] The presence of this novelistic *topos* in the passion is also indicated by Konstan, Ramelli (2014), 188.

[65] See Huber-Rebenich (1999), 197 (beauty, lustful men, brothel, threats to chastity); Jones (2007), 127-128 (sexual threat, brothel); Lanéry (2008), 365-368 (unwanted amorous attention, lovesickness, trial, scenes with a crowd).

[66] See Kortekaas (1984), 105; 236-237 (note 582) and Kortekaas (2004), 21 (on lexical correspondences); Panayotakis (2002), 109-112 (virgin in the brothel); Panayotakis (2003), 143-157 (the lexical correspondence *roseo rubore perfundi* which has sexual connotations); Lanéry (2008), 366 (*topoi* of lovesickness, return from school, virgin in the brothel, final joy, and the lexical correspondence *apodixis artis magicae*).

Conclusion

Unlike the apocryphal acts of the apostles, the Gospels or Saints' Lives, the post-Nicene passions of the martyrs received little attention in research on the interactions between Christian narrative and the fictional traditions of antiquity. This is not to say that the interconnections between the passions and these traditions were not explored. The correspondences of (some) epic passions – a term which we owe to the hagiographical pioneer Delehaye – to both the dramatic and novelistic traditions of antiquity have been researched. Yet possibilities for further research in the field remain. Firstly, studies of the *passiones* not always distinguished the different versions which can be discerned within a hagiographical dossier, an approach which creates chronological problems. Secondly, this overview of previous research revealed that the same passions are time and again discussed, while many other texts remain unexplored. And thirdly, research often focuses on *topoi* and similarities, whereas the individual characteristics of the texts received little if any attention.

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Chapter 2

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Chapter 3

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Chapter 4

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Articles submitted for publication

Chapter 6

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Chapter 2 Steadfast and shrewd heroines: the defence of chastity in the Latin post-Nicene passions and the Greek novels

Introduction

Over the past decades, the disparaging opinion of the Greek 'ideal' novels which goes back to at least Rohde's pioneer modern study of 1876[1] has been abandoned: they are no longer viewed as literary inferior texts. Together with this renewed and favourable attention, research into the novels' interconnections with other ancient narrative texts increased. Unsurprisingly, the interplay with the Roman novel was explored. It has been argued that Petronius parodied the Greek novels[2] and attention has been drawn to thematic and structural correspondences between the Greek novels and both Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*[3] and the *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri*.[4] Whereas the Christian overtone in the latter work is debated,[5] the novels' interaction with clearly Christian narratives was

[1] Rohde 1876.

[2] This thesis was first raised by Heinze in 1899 and has received wide acceptance since, see e.g. Conte 1996, esp. 31-34 on his adaptation of Heinze's thesis. For objections against the thesis, see Morgan 2009a, 40-47.

[3] See e.g. the contributions of Brethes, Frangoulidis, Harrison and Smith to Paschalis, Frangoulidis, Harrison, Zimmerman 2007.

[4] See Schmeling 2003², 540-544 on both similarities and dissimilarities between the *Historia Apollonii (HA)* and the Greek novels, especially Xenophon of Ephesus' *Ephesiaca.*

[5] On the *HA* as a Christian product, see Kortekaas 1984, 101-106, 116-118 and 2004, 17-24, and Hexter 1988, 188. For objections against the Christian overtone, see Schmeling 2003², 531-537. On the Christian elements in the *HA,* see also Panayotakis' recent commentary, in which he argues that the Biblical and Christian Latin in the *HA* are not meant to be religious propaganda but rather underpin the wit and learning of the text (Panayotakis 2012, 7-8). For a discussion of the 'divided cloak' motif in the *HA* in a pagan and Christian intertextual context, see Panayotakis 2011.

explored as well.[6] Similarities have been indicated between the Greek novels and New Testament writings (both the Gospels and the canonical book of Acts[7]), and, especially, the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles.[8] The ancient Greek novel, then, is an important component of the fascinating network of ancient narrative texts. Many questions regarding the transfer of material and interconnections within this network remain, but the authors of all texts involved have a vital thing in common: they want to tell a good story.

In this article, I will focus on a group of Christian texts which deserve to be part of this network but whose interconnections with the Greek novel received far less attention: the late antique passions of the martyrs. From the fourth century onwards, the so-called post-Nicene or post-Constantinian[9] Greek and Latin passions of the martyrs were produced in large numbers. Although these passions claim to be the expression of the historical fortunes of the martyrs and were mainly studied by Church historians and specialists in the cult of the saints, they are in fact fictional texts which deserve literary attention. They share a number of *topoi* (noble descent and extreme beauty of the protagonists, shipwreck, emphasis on chastity, ...) with the Greek novel and rhetorical exercises.[10] I will focus on the Latin post-Nicene passions in this article.

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[6] For a recent overview of the interconnections between the Greek and Roman novels and different kinds of early Christian narratives, see Konstan, Ramelli 2014.

[7] On the Gospels and the canonical Acts in the context of the ancient Greek novels, see e.g. Pervo 1987; Alexander 1995 (both on the canonical book of Acts); Brant 1998 (Gospel of John), Fullmer 2007 (Gospel of Mark); for the opposite view, namely the Greek novels as influenced by the Gospels and the canonical book of Acts, see e.g. Bowersock 1994, 99-143; Ramelli 2001, 23-142 (both on the Gospels and the book of Acts), Reimer 2005 (Gospels).

[8] The bibliography is extensive. The seminal study is Söder 1932. For an overview of the Apocryphal Acts in the context of the novels, see Pervo 1994 and 2003[2], 691-706 and Bremmer 1998. See also numerous contributions to the recent volume by Futre Pinheiro, Perkins, Pervo 2012, i.e. the papers by Eyl, Greene, Spittler, Andújar and Hirschberger. Unlike the others, Andújar posits influence from the Apocryphal Acts on the novels, namely of the Acts of Paul and Thecla on Heliodorus' novel; for a similar thesis, see Maguire 2005. On the *pseudo-Clementines*, the atypical Apocrypyhal Acts about the missionary activities of Petrus in the form of a Christian family-novel, see Edwards 1992 and Bremmer 2010.

[9] On the use of both terms, see Scorza Barcellona 2001, 39-40.

[10] For the *topoi* of the novel, see Létoublon 1993. On the similarities in subject matter and *topoi* between the Greek novels and school exercises, as known from Seneca the Elder's *controversiae* and Pseudo-Quintilian's *declamationes minores*, see Webb 2007, 527, with further references. On novelistic *topoi* in the passions, see Monteverdi (1908-1911), 188-192, Delehaye 1966[2]b and Hägg 2004 (Greek *passio Eustathii*); Delehaye 1966[2]a, 227-230 (late antique passions in general); Cataudella 1981 (Greek and Latin texts, without distinction between *vitae* and passions); Goddard Elliott 1987 (mainly *vitae* but occasional reference to a small number of Greek and Latin passions); Rizzo Nervo 1995 (*topos* of the virgin in the brothel in Greek *passio Agnetis* and *passio Luciae* and Latin *passio Anastasiae*); Boulhol 1996 (*topos* of *anagnorismos* in the Greek *passio Eustathii* and the Latin *passio Eugeniae*); Huber-Rebenich 1999, 198, Panayotakis 2002, 109-112, Jones 2007, 127-128 and Lanéry 2008, 365-368 (Latin *passio Agnetis*); Aigrain 2000[2], 148-151 (late antique passions in general); Moretti 2006, 15-22, Lanéry

When studying the interconnections with the Greek novel, this might seem an odd choice. Further research into the interconnections between the Greek post-Nicene passions and the Greek novel will certainly be rewarding,[11] but I limit myself to the Latin ones due to chronological issues: whereas the Greek post-Nicene passions are not dated, for the Latin ones a dating is available, albeit sometimes tentative.[12] Besides, the Greek and Latin post-Nicene passions are no worlds apart. Claudia Rapp identified three channels through which Greek hagiographical material reached the Latin West.[13] Firstly, stories about the saints were disseminated orally by pilgrims, travellers and traders: the late antique Mediterranean world, Rapp argues, shared a 'common hagiographical koine' that transcended linguistic barriers. Secondly, so-called 'cultural translators' wrote down their experiences as pilgrims and thus made hagiographical stories accessible to Western Christians. Only the third pathway in the travel of hagiographical material from East to West, formal translation, required a thorough knowledge of Greek. Some Latin post-Nicene passions are indeed translations from a Greek original.[14] It is possible, then, that the Latin post-Nicene passions were influenced by the Greek novel via their Greek counterparts.[15] The Greek passions, in their turn, may have inherited the novelistic themes and literary techniques either directly from the novels[16] or via the

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2010, 56 and Konstan, Ramelli, 2014 (Latin *passio Anastasiae*); Lanéry 2010, 136 (Latin *passio Eugeniae*), 284-285 (Latin *passio Agathae*).

[11] Kathryn Chew has researched these interconnections: Chew 2003b discusses the representation of violence in the novels and five Greek passions (Agatha, Juliana, Euphemia, Anastasia, Menodora) and Chew 2003a discusses the concept and valuation of chastity in the Greek novels and late antique passions. In this article, Chew refers to a larger study including 53 martyrs, but the exact passions are not mentioned; those mentioned are the Greek *passio Eugeniae* and *passio Menodorae, Metrodorae and Nymphodorae* and the Latin *passio Agnetis* and *passio Didymi et Theodorae*.

[12] Datings of the Latin post-Nicene passions can be found in the *clavis patrum latinorum* (Dekkers, Gaar 1995); Gryson, Frede 2007; Lanéry 2010.

[13] Rapp 2004, 1250-1279.

[14] E.g. *passio Julianae Nicomedensis* (cf. Lanéry 2010, 19, note 8), *passio Didymi et Theodorae* (cf. Lanéry 2004, 24-32), *passio Luciae* (cf. Lanéry 2010, 278).

[15] The Catholic Roman Church, however, did not encourage the dissemination of all post-Nicene passions: the passions of Cyricus and Julitta and of George (all three Eastern martyrs) were explicitly condemned by the *Decretum Gelasianum* (6th century). On the ambiguous reception of the post-Nicene passions in Italy, see Philippart, Trigalet 2008, 119-121.

[16] It has been argued that Byzantine Christians read the novels of Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus and that the novels thus influenced Greek passions: see Robiano 2009, 148, with further references. Robiano argues that the passion of Galaction and Episteme (BHG 665) is specifically linked to both novels in order to provide a Christian legitimacy for the two popular pagan works. He argues that the reputation as Christians which Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus enjoyed (on this, see also Ramelli 2009) has the same aim. For allegorical interpretations of Heliodorus' novel in Byzantine circles in order to make it acceptable for a Christian readership, see Macalister 1996, 108-109 and for direct quotations from both Achilles Tatius' and Heliodorus' novel in Byzantine works see Macalasiter 1996, 110. In his lecture at the *Classical Association Conference* 2014,

Apocryphal Acts.[17] Another possibility is that the authors of the Latin passions were directly inspired by the Greek novels and the Apocryphal Acts.[18] Novelistic themes and literary techniques were certainly known in Latin Christian circles by the end of the fourth century, when Rufinus of Aquileia translated the Greek *Recognitiones* into Latin.[19] The transfer of material within the intricate network of pagan and Christian narrative remains a complex phenomenon, and lies beyond the scope of this article. For our purposes, it suffices that (in)direct interconnections between the Greek novels and the Latin post-Nicene passions are at least possible.

In this article, I will consider one aspect of these interconnections: the *topos* of the defence of chastity and the related themes of love, marriage, and fidelity. It has often been pointed out that Leucippe's belligerent self-defence against Thersander who lusts after her (Ach. Tat. 6, 21-22) is reminiscent of Christian martyr texts.[20] I will argue in this article that the correspondences between the Greek novels and the Latin post-Nicene passions within this thematic realm are not confined to this specific scene but can be detected more widely.

Stephen Trzaskoma (University of New Hampshire) also drew attention to similar verbal quotations of Achilles Tatius' novel in Christian works until the 10th century, among which the 10th century *passio S. Romani* (BHG 1600z).

[17] In an article on novelistic literary techniques in the 5th century *Life and Miracles of Thecla*, Johnson claims that late antique Greek saints' lives inherited the literary techniques of the Greek novel via the Apocryphal Acts (Johnson 2006, 190).

[18] As suggested by Cooper 1996, 117: 'In creating these heroes and heroines, the Gesta [i.e. the Roman post-Nicene passions] wove together narrative strands from the ancient romances and the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles around historical personages who were partly or entirely imaginary'.

[19] On the *pseudo-Clementines*, see note 8.

[20] First noted by Shaw 1993, 9. See also Goldhill 1995, 117; Shaw 1996, 269-270; Ramelli 2001, 86-90 and 2009, 153; Chew 2003b, 138 and 2003b, 205-206; Lalanne 2006, 273; Brethes 2007a, 256. The novelistic scene was linked to specific martyrological scenes by Cataudella 1981, 952 (Greek passions of Eugenia, of Anastasia and of Domna); Morales 2004, 199-206 (Prudentius' version of the passions of Eulalia and of Agnes and the *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*); King 2012 (4 Maccabees and *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*). Konstan 2009, 118-119 and Konstan, Ramelli 2014 linked the novelistic scene to the Latin post-Nicene *passio Anastasiae*.

2.1 The defence of chastity in the Latin post-Nicene passions and the Greek novels

To enable an analysis of the *topos* of the defence of chastity in the passions against the background of the Greek novels,[21] I selected the Latin post-Nicene passions that contain this theme. I included passions that have been dated to the time span of the 4th till 6th centuries, but the dating of many texts is still under debate. The list of 20 selected passions, with the corresponding *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina* (BHL) numbers as well as text editions, suggested datings, provenance and an indication of the length of the texts can be found in appendix II.[22] All texts feature women: the defence of chastity is mainly an issue female martyrs have to deal with. Although in Christian milieux chastity was important for men too, the male martyrs in the passions generally only face physical and no sexual testing.[23] According to Chew, the social worth and power which Greco-Roman culture allotted to female (and not male) chastity accounts for this gender difference.[24] The 20 texts feature 28 women – all but two are virgins[25] - whose chastity is endangered. Three of them are technically speaking not martyrs[26] but are included since they are presented as heroines of the passion. Almost all women are of noble descent[27]

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[21] I use the following text editions of novels. For Chariton, Goold 1995; for Xenophon of Ephesus, Henderson 2009; for Achilles Tatius, Garnaud 1995[2]; for Heliodorus, Rattenbury, Lumb and Maillon (1994[3], 1960[2], and 1991[3]); all translations are from Reardon, 2008. Longus' novel is not represented in this article. This tunes in with the fact that Chloe nowhere in the novel intentionally defends her chastity.

[22] The edition used is marked in bold in the appendix; all translations are my own. I have numbered the passions using Roman numerals. When referring to a character, I will mention the number of the corresponding passion between brackets.

[23] This observation is in agreement with Chew's findings in her corpus of 53 Latin and Greek passions (Chew 2003a, 218). See also Constantinou 1995, 21-23 for similar observations with regard to Greek late antique passions. Occasionally, a male martyr does face sexual testing: in the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae,* Chrysanthus' chastity is endangered when the beautiful Daria is set on him to seduce him. Yet Chrysanthus' testing differs from the testing of the female martyrs, since the enemy is situated *within* himself. On this difference, see Paoli 2006, 715-716. A famous martyr narrative (albeit not a passion) which thematizes the sexual testing of a male martyr can be found in Jerome's *Vita Pauli*, §3, 2-4. On this scene, see Coppieters, Praet, Bossu, Taveirne (2014).

[24] Chew, 2003b.

[25] Anastasia and Theodota (III) had sexual intercourse in the past. On Anastasia as a model for married women in order to raise their self-esteem, see Cooper 1994. More generally on martyrs as *exempla* for the faithful and for *matronae* in particular, see Cooper 2007, 214-229.

[26] Theodora (IX), Constantia (XI) and Petronilla (XVI): Theodora's and Constantia's deaths are not recounted, Petronilla dies peacefully after asking God for death (cf. infra).

[27] Of the 28 women, only four are not explicitly said to be of noble descent: Columba (VIII), Petronilla (XVI), Felicula (XVI) and Serapia (XIX). In Petronilla's case, this can be explained by the fact that she is identified as the apostle Peter's daughter, who was known as a fisherman (cf. Mt. 4:18); Felicula is presented as Petronilla's

and the lion's share of them are very beautiful:[28] these characteristics already hint at affinity with the heroines of the Greek novel.[29] But the most striking resemblance between the novels and the passions is the erotic atmosphere, although the love involved is of an entirely different order. Whereas the novels celebrate worldly love and feature a heroine who wants to remain chaste for the hero, the passions are about spiritual love: the women want to keep their chastity for Christ.[30] Half of them explicitly commend their chastity to Him[31] and are called *virgo Christi*, *virgo Dei* or *virgo Deo devota*.[32] By combining dying for Christ with sexual asceticism, the women mix bloody and bloodless martyrdom[33] and will obtain a double crown after death.[34] Yet the spiritual relationship in the passions is nonetheless experienced just as erotic as the worldly love is in the novels. Half of the women use marital and erotic language to describe their

collactanea. Serapia's social statute is unclear: she is a citizen of Antiochia but also a servant of the widow Sabina. The noble descent of the women tunes in with the finding that the post-Nicene passions mark the beginning of the evolution towards the medieval *Adelsheilige*; see Van Uytfanghe 2001, 210-211.

[28] It is unclear why the beauty-*topos* is absent in some of the passions. In the case of Anastasia and Theodota (III), the women's earlier marriage may account for its absence (they do not comply with the beautiful virgin martyr stereotype), but a similar explanation does not apply to other women.

[29] On noble descent and beauty of the novelistic heroines, see Létoublon 1993, 119-124. On beauty as a characteristic of both novelistic heroines and martyrs, see Cataudella 1981, 934. In the case of Aurea (IV), her beauty incites everyone to love her. For similar novelistic scenes, see e.g. Chariton 4,1,9; 5,1,8.

[30] Eugenia (X) is an exception: she practices chastity and refuses marriage *before* she is a Christian; when she comes across the story of Thecla later on (p. 391, l. 42-43), she is converted to Christianity and subsequently keeps her virginity for Christ (p. 395, l. 22). On Thecla as a model for Eugenia in this passion, see Cooper 2005, 18-23. Domitilla (XVI) can be seen as Eugenia's counterexample: she is a Christian but aspires to marriage. Only when her eunuchs have elaborated on the superiority of virginity, she decides to remain a virgin for Christ. On similarities between hagiographical heroes and heroines (both in *vitae* and *passiones*) keeping their chastity for Christ and novelistic heroes and heroines keeping chaste for their beloved, see also Cataudella, 1981, 945-946.

[31] E.g. Susanna (XX), p. 553, l. 53-54: *pudiciciam Domino Iesu Christi exhiberem* [For citations from the passions, I adopt the spelling of the edition used]. See also Agnes (II) §10; Irene (III) §17; Bonosa (V) §3, §10; Caecilia (VI) §3; Theodora (IX) §6; Basilla (X) p. 397, l. 1; Constantia (XI) p. 570, l. 22-25; Felicula (XVI) §16; Rufina (XVII) §4. In three cases, the women ritually dedicate their virginity to Christ, either by receiving the veil of virginity (*velamen virginitatis:* Daria (VII) §14; Domitilla (XVI) §9) or by dedicating a lock of hair (Victoria (XVIII) §17). On consecrated virgins as brides of Christ, see Brown 1988, 259-284.

[32] The women who are called thus are often the same ones as those who explicitly commend their chastity to Christ, but not always: Agatha (I), Agnes (II), Bonosa (V), Daria (VII), Columba (VIII), Constantia (XI), Juliana (XII), Lucia (XIII), Marciana (XIV), Secunda (XV), Felicula (XVI), Rufina (XVII), Secunda (XVII), Serapia (XIX).

[33] See Consolino 1984; Paoli 2006, 711-722; Cooper 1996, 116-143.

[34] The symbolism of the double crown (one for virginity and one for martyrdom) occurs in the *passio Didymi et Theodorae*, §10; *passio Eugeniae*, p. 396, l. 30-31; *passio Luciae*, p. 108, l. 42; *passio Saturnini, Dativi et soc.,* §17. The same symbolism can for instance be found in Prudentius' account of Agnes' martyrdom (*Peristephanon* XIV).

relationship with Christ:[35] they call Him their betrothed (*sponsus*),[36] husband (*vir*)[37] or lover (*amator*),[38] mention the love they experience (*amor*[39] or the verb *diligo*[40]) and even refer to the heavenly marriage bed (*thalamus*).[41] If one also includes the use of a similar language by either the narrator or other characters in the story, the presence of erotic language is even more striking: three quarters of the passions contain such language.[42]

The application of the language of worldly love to a spiritual relationship aligns the passions with the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: in the Apocryphal Acts too, scholars have argued, the worldly love of the Greek novels is converted into spiritual love.[43] But there is a difference as well. Whereas in the Apocryphal Acts the apostle acts as a mediator between the women and Christ and thus constitutes the object of the women's love, such a mediator is absent in the passions. The martyrs aim their love directly at Christ: the love in the passions is even more spiritualized. It has been pointed out that the novelistic adulterous love triangle is inverted in the Apocryphal Acts: whereas the legitimate husband is the hero in the novels, he is turned into the antagonist in the Acts. The worldly legitimate marriage which is the ultimate aim of the novelistic heroines becomes a repugnant state of affairs for Thecla and her companions; the love for one's legitimate husband or fiancé is no longer the true love.[44] The same applies to the heroines of the passions. The lion's share of them receive a marriage proposal a novelistic heroine would be very happy with: highly placed men offer them a

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[35] This is in line with Chew's observations: three-fifths of the martyrs in her corpus use such language (Chew 2003a, 217).

[36] Agnes (II) §4; Aurea (IV) §3; Bonosa (V) §4, §11; Basilla (X) p. 396, l. 55-56; Secunda (XV) §4; Domitilla (XVI) §21.

[37] Aurea (IV) §16.

[38] Agnes (II) §3; Felicula (XVI) §16; Caecilia (VI) §4 calls the angel who watches over her virginity her *amator*.

[39] Agnes (II) §3, §6; Anastasia (III) §7, §21, §26; Theodora (IX) §1; Eugenia (X) p. 396, l. 39; Basilla (X) p. 396, l. 58; p. 397, l. 6; Constantia (XI) p. 570, l. 10, l. 25; Felicula (XVI) §16; Domitilla (XVI) §21; Rufina (XVII) §4; Secunda (XVII) §6.

[40] Anastasia (III) §27.

[41] Agnes (II) §3; Constantia (XI) p. 570, l. 26; Domitilla (XVI) §21.

[42] Martyr called *sponsa Christi* by the narrator: *passio Agnetis* (§12), *passio Marcianae* (§3); reference to Christ as *sponsus* or *coniunx*: *passio Bonosae* (§11), *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae* (§8), *passio Nerei, Achillei et soc.* (§1, §9; in §8, Christ is presented as the *sponsus* of the Church and not of an individual martyr, for a similar symbolism, see *Ephesians* 5: 21-33), *passio Susannae* (p. 556, l. 47); reference to love (*amor*, *diligo*) between martyr and Christ: *passio Caeciliae* (§3), *passio Eugeniae* (p. 396, l. 8, 18; p. 397, l. 13, 24), *passio Maximae, Secundae, Donatillae* (§4), *passio Nerei, Achillei et soc.* (§9); reference to the heavenly marriage bed: *passio Aureae* (§5), *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae* (§8), *passio Nerei, Achillei et soc.* (§8: marriage bed of Christ and the Church), *passio Rufinae et Secundae* (§10).

[43] See Söder 1932, 119-148; Van Uytfanghe 1992; on erotic discourse in the ancient novels, Christian writings (Apocryphal Acts, *vitae*, passions, Church Fathers) and Byzantine novels, see Nilsson 2009.

[44] See Söder 1932, 125-126; Hirschberger 2012.

comfortable married life in accordance with their social standing. This marriage proposal of a – in the view of the pagans at least - honourable suitor occurs either before or after the martyr's arrest.[45] Yet unlike their novelistic counterparts, the martyrs do not consider a marriage which perpetuates the established social order a 'happy ending': they desire death and the subversion of that order.[46] In a way, they also desire marriage, yet not a worldly marriage but a mystical reunion with Christ after death.[47] Although the novels and the passions share the erotic atmosphere and the preservation of chastity, the narrative teleology of both genres differs remarkably.

In the following sections, I will discuss the different ways in which the martyrs safeguard their chastity for Christ. Firstly, I will focus on the way in which the women avoid the unwanted marriage.[48] They have recourse to two approaches which are equally common within the corpus: willingness to suffer and the employment of ruse. Secondly, in the fourth section, I will discuss what happens next: in half of the cases, the women's chastity is endangered a second time and this time more violently. Both in their defence against marriage and in their defence against rape, I argue, the behaviour of the martyrs bears remarkable resemblances to that of the novelistic heroines in similar situations. While the worldly love of the novels may be turned into spiritual love in the passions, the way in which both novelistic and hagiographical heroines fight for their love is very similar.

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[45] Constantia (XI) and Petronilla (XVI) are an exception: they are not arrested. If the proposal occurs before the arrest, different scenarios can be distinguished: a pagan falls in love with the woman and proposes (Agnes (II), Constantia (XI), Petronilla (XVI), Felicula (XVI), Susanna (XX); in Susanna's case, the father of the future groom insists on the marriage), the woman's parents urge their daughter to marry (Eugenia (X), Secunda (XV)), or, most frequently, the future martyr already has a fiancé who wants to celebrate the marriage (Caecilia (VI), Basilla (X), Juliana (XII), Lucia (XIII), Domitilla (XVI), Rufina (XVII), Secunda (XVII), Victoria (XVIII); in the case of Caecilia and Victoria, their respective parents try to force them into marrying their fiancé). If the marriage proposal takes place after the martyr's arrest (Anastasia (III), Theodota (III), Aurea (IV), Bonosa (V)), the proposal is combined with an exhortation to sacrifice to the pagan gods and to enjoy a luxurious life. The exhortation to enjoy a luxurious life is of a different order as the first two: whereas the martyr will never marry or sacrifice, they lead a comfortable life before their arrest: cf. supra, note 27.

[46] On the consolidation of the social order in the novels versus its subversion in early Christian narrative and on the different ideas of a 'happy ending', see Perkins 1995, 25-75 and Cooper 1996, 20-67.

[47] Chew 2003a argues that since the martyrs aspire to a marriage with Christ, their observance of chastity is - just as in the novels - temporary; this might explain why the Greek passions favour the most common novelistic chastity word, *σωφροσύνη*, over terms as *ἁγνεία* and *ἐγκράτεια*.

[48] Caecilia (VI) and Daria (VII) actually do marry but turn the marriage into a spiritual one. For the origin, evolution and consequences of the phenomenon of spiritual marriage, as well as its heretical connotations, see Brown 1988, 83-102 and Elliott 1993, 16-93.

2.2 Avoiding marriage in the Latin post-Nicene passions and the Greek novel

2.2.1 Willingness to suffer for the beloved

2.2.1.1 Suffering for the heavenly beloved

When confronted with an undesired marriage proposal, many martyrs reject it and are prepared to endure the consequential severe suffering and death. Within the selected corpus, ten martyrs adopt this approach.[49] In most cases, the women face physical torture. When the emperor exhorts Aurea (IV) to accept a husband with whom she can enjoy the joys of life, she answers that she already has a heavenly fiancé and adds that no man will be able to separate her from her love for him.[50] The emperor thereupon threatens to torture and kill her (§3 *a diversis poenis te faciam interire*). He thus expects to submit the woman to his will, in which he does not succeed. Aurea points out that she is not afraid of his threats and repeats that his terrors will not separate her from the love for her Lord Jesus Christ.[51] She is thereupon hoisted upon a wooden rack and flogged and is eventually drowned. The martyrs' determination makes time for reflection futile. Anastasia (III) is given three days to make up her mind: either she agrees to marry the pontifex Ulpianus or she will be tortured. She does not need time to consider the matter. As far as she is concerned, the three days are already over: she prefers torture over marriage, since torture allows her to reach her lover.[52] A similar eagerness for torture can be found in the passio Rufinae et Secundae. The sisters Rufina and Secunda (XVII) refuse to sacrifice and to marry their pagan fiancés. Hoping to deter Secunda, the prefect has Rufina flogged in her presence. Yet the action does not have the desired effect. Secunda is angry that the prefect honours her sister and dishonours her, and

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[49] Anastasia (III), Aurea (IV), Bonosa (V), Basilla (X), Secunda (XV), Domitilla (XVI), Felicula (XVI), Rufina (XVII), Secunda (XVII), and Victoria (XVIII).

[50] *Passio Aureae et aliorum*, §3: *ego habeo jam caelestem sponsum, a cujus amore nullus hominum me separare potest*. A similar utterance occurs in the *passio Bonosae*, §4. Like Aurea, Bonosa is prepared to be physically tortured.

[51] *Passio Aureae*, §3: *Semel dixi, caesar, quia nec minas tuas timeo, nec terrores tui me separant a caritate Domini mei Jesu Christi.*

[52] *Passio Anastasiae,* §27 *iam puta quia fluxit tertius dies: scias me supplicia magis eligere, per quae vadam ad eum quem diligo.* The element of time for reflection can be found in early, so-called 'authentic' passions as well. In these early passions, however, marriage and sexuality are not rejected as intrinsically bad: only in times of crisis, the martyr chooses the heavenly over the earthly realm. In the post-Nicene passions things are remarkably different: these texts radically repudiate sex and marriage. On this difference between both groups of texts, see Praet 2003.

points out that every wound of the whip earns her an eternal crown.[53] In the *passio Nerei et Achillei*, Felicula (XVI) presents the torture she has to endure as her debt to Christ who suffered for her: 'I do not desert my lover, who because of me was fed with gall and quenched with vinegar, crowned with thorns and crucified'.[54] In Felicula's case, torture is not the only method to which the pagans have recourse in order to persuade her. Before she is tortured, the wives of the guards try to convince her to accept the comes Flaccus' marriage proposal by enumerating his credentials: he is noble, rich, young, elegant and powerful. Unsurprisingly, Felicula is not impressed and replies: 'I am a virgin of Christ and accept absolutely nobody else'.[55] A variation on the motif of female mediators occurs in the *passio Agathae*. The beautiful virgin Agatha (I) is the target of governor Quintinianus: he lusts after her and her possessions, and wants to affirm his power and hate for the Christians. He hands Agatha over to Aphrodisia, a wicked women with a telling name, and her nine wicked daughters. The women have to dissuade Agatha from her Christian beliefs. Although it is not explicitly mentioned, one can suppose that they also exhort her to give in to the governor's sexual desires. Unsurprisingly, Agatha stands firm in her faith, whether the women enumerate rewards or utter threats: she desires to suffer various torments for Christ (§3 *concupiscit … diversa pro Christi nomine supplicia sustinere*).

Not all women are confronted with physical torture: some endure other tribulations. Domitilla's (XVI) rejected fiancé deports her to an island (§10) and has her eunuchs and friends executed (§§ 18-19). As these ordeals do not persuade her to marry him, in this case too female mediators are called in. But this is of no use either: Domitilla converts the women. A similar course of events occurs in the *passio Eugeniae*: when her rejected fiancé sends a group of matronae to Basilla to talk her into marrying him, she manages to convert them. When the emperor thereupon decrees that she has to choose between

[53] *Passio Rufinae et Secundae,* §§4-5: *Quid est, quod sororem meam glorificas et me exhonoras? … tot computat coronas perpetuas, quot temporalia susceperit vulnera flagellorum.*

[54] *Ego non nego amatorem meum, qui propter me felle cibatus, aceto potatus, spinis coronatus, et cruci affixus est*. For the corresponding passages in the Gospels, see Mt. 27: 27, 34-35; Mc. 15: 17, 23-24; Lc. 23: 33, 36; Joh. 19: 2, 17, 29. In one edition of the *passio Margaritae* (BHL 5303; edition Mombritius, 1910[2], p. 191, l.29-30), a similar utterance occurs: Margarita too refers to Christ's death for our sake and states that she will not hesitate to die for Him (*Christus semet ipsum pro nobis tradidit in mortem et ego pro ipso mori non dubitabo*). The utterance is absent, however, in the *Acta Sanctorum*-edition of the passion. Moreover, the passion's dating is very doubtful: Amat 1985, 338 calls the passion '*entièrement romanesques, mais relativement anciens*'. The martyrs' ordeals are linked to Christ's tribulations in the *passio Maximae, Secundae et Donatillae,* §3, when the proconsul orders to give Maxima and Donatilla gall (*fel*) and vinegar (*acetum*).

[55] *Passio Nerei, Achillei et Domitillae,* § 16: *Accipe virum nobilem, divitem, juvenem, elegantem, Comitem et amicum Imperatoris. Audiens hęc Felicula, nullum sermonis objiciebat omnino responsum, nisi hoc: Virgo Christi sum et praeter ipsum nullum omnino accipio.*

marriage or beheading, Basilla is not put out of her countenance and bravely heads for decapitation.

Further variation within the corpus can be detected. Two martyrs have recourse to a specific approach when confronted with an unwanted marriage proposal: they try to commit suicide. This is remarkable, since at the time the post-Nicene passions were written, suicide was problematized within catholic circles.[56] In *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine condemns suicide in general (I, 26) and specifically points out that one should not resort to suicide in order to save one's chastity (I, 28). In Donatist circles, however, suicide was accepted.[57] It comes as no surprise, then, that the two suicidal martyrs can be found in Donatist passions. Victoria (XVIII) jumps out of a window so as to avoid the marriage her parents urge on her but is miraculously saved by the winds in order to suffer for Christ afterwards (§17). In the *passio Maximae, Secundae et Donatillae*, the twelve year old Secunda behaves remarkably similar: she jumps from a balcony because she wants to avoid marriage and wishes to join the martyrs Maxima and Donatilla (§4).[58] We are not told, however, that she is saved by the winds; she simply joins the other women. It is possible, then, that the balcony is not that high and that we should not consider Secunda's jump a suicide attempt. It is remarkable that Maxima and Donatilla try to dissuade Secunda from joining them. They urge her to have pity on her old father and not to desert him and remind her of her young age and the weakness this age entails. As we have seen in other passions, this is the kind of behaviour one expects from pagans who are tied to earthly things, not from Christian women who are on the verge of changing the earthly for the heavenly realm.

2.2.1.2 Suffering for the worldly beloved

Although their specific tribulations differ, the martyrs I have discussed all give evidence of remarkable steadfastness in their loyalty to their lover, Christ. In the Greek novels, one comes across a similar tenacity. The novelistic heroines are also prepared to suffer in order to remain loyal to their beloved, whether they receive a marriage proposal or a less honourable offer from another man. Achilles Tatius' Leucippe proves how she has been maltreated by Sosthenes because she refused to submit to his sexual advances (5,17,4-6), and in a letter to her lover Cleitophon she explicitly enumerates the tortures

[56] On suicide within Christianity and the link with the condemnation of voluntary martyrdom, see Van Hooff 1990, 194-197 and 1991; Bowersock 1995, 59-74.

[57] On Augustine's vehement rejection of suicide as spurred on by his controversies with the Donatists, see Van Hooff 1990, 196 and 1991, 368-369; Bowersock 1995, 73-74.

[58] On the similarities between both scenes and the Donatist context, see Dalvit 2009, 26-31; Scorza Barcellona 2009, 214-216.

she has endured in order to remain chaste (5,18,4). Like the martyrs, Leucippe is indifferent to more peaceful attempts at changing her mind too: when Sosthenes tries to convince her to accept Thersander as a lover by enumerating his qualities (he is noble, powerful, rich, virtuous and young)[59], she points out that these are irrelevant to her.[60] In Chariton's novel, a messenger tells Callirhoe that the leader of the army (who actually is her husband Chaereas, but she is unaware of this) wants to marry her. Callirhoe is clear in her answer (7,6,8): 'Slay me, but do not make me such a promise! Marriage I cannot endure – I pray rather for death! They can torture me – goads and fire will not make me rise from here; this spot is my tomb!'.[61] Anthia behaves similarly in Xenophon of Ephesus' novel. When she has been taken prisoner by brigands and one of them tries to seduce her (4,5,1-3), she refuses everything. Nothing puts her out of countenance: not the cave where she is held, not her handcuffs nor the bandit's threats. She saves herself for Habrocomes and wants to remain only Habrocomes' wife, even if this means that she has to die or undergo terrible suffering (4,5,3). It comes as no surprise that also Heliodorus' Chariclea gives evidence of tenacity in her loyalty to her beloved, as she is the protagonist of the Greek novel in which chastity (and more specifically virginity) is elevated to a more spiritual level.[62] When she has received a marriage proposal from another man, she ensures her lover Theagenes that not a single force will induce her to compromise her virginity (1,25,4).

The novelistic heroines are not only willing to suffer physical torture in order to safeguard their chastity. If necessary, they also adopt the discourse of suicide. In pagan milieux too suicide was most often regarded as honourable[63] and the view on suicide thus aligns the novels with the Donatist passions. When Chariclea realizes that the

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[59] These qualities largely match the qualities which the guards' wives list when trying to convince Felicula, cf. supra note 55.

[60] Ach. Tat. 6,12,5: τί μοι καταλέγεις σωρὸν ἀλλοτρίων ἐγκωμίων; Why this recital of irrelevant virtues?

[61] φόνευσόν με μᾶλλον ἢ ταῦτα ἐπαγγέλλου. γάμον οὐχ ὑπομενῶ· θάνατον εὔχομαι. κεντείτωσαν καὶ καέτωσαν· ἐντεῦθεν οὐκ ἀναστήσομαι·τάφος ἐμός ἐστιν οὗτος ὁ τόπος. Another scene in which Callirhoe prefers torture to the loss of her chastity is Chariton 6,7,7-9: an eunuch of the Persian king gives her the choice: either she agrees to be the king's mistress or she will suffer terribly as his enemy. Callirhoe is not impressed and points out that she already suffered terribly in the past. She does not believe that the king can come up with something worse.

[62] On the importance of virginity in Heliodorus, see e.g. Fusillo 1989, 233 and Brethes 2007b, 226. For a discussion of the unique nature of Chariclea's commitment to virginity, see Maguire 2005, 47-50, and for a contextualization within both pagan and Christian literary and cultural traditions, 76-163.

[63] See Van Hooff 1990, 131. Suicide is understood as a deed to preserve one's dignity; on suicide for the sake of chastity in these terms, see Van Hooff 1990, 117-118. On the positive view on suicide in the novels when one can no longer fulfil one's assigned role in life, see Perkins 1995, 98-103; on suicide in the novels in comparison to martyrdom as a form of suicide in the Apocryphal Acts, see Macalister 1996, 88-97; on the denotation of suicide as 'polluted' (*ἐναγὲς*) in Heliod. 8,8,4 and a possible Christian background, see Ramelli 2009, 164.

brigand Trachinus is in love with her and wants to marry her, she decides that she shall cheat him of his desires by taking her own life (Heliod. 5,29,4). Anthia too prefers taking her own life to marrying another man and decides to drink a death potion (X. Eph. 3,6). But her situation differs from Chariclea's. Anthia thinks that Habrocomes is dead and believes that she will be reunited with him after death, a belief which aligns her with the martyrs. Moreover, Anthia points out that she refuses to wrong Habrocomes, the one she loves and the one who died for her (X. Eph. 3,6,3 *τὸν διὰ σὲ τεθνηκότα*). This statement strikingly reminds of the utterances of the martyrs Felicula and Margarita who also point out that they do not want to desert Christ who sacrificed himself for them.[64]

2.2.1.3 Suffering for the beloved in the post-Nicene passions and the Greek novels: concluding remarks

As the discussed scenes reveal, the hagiographical and novelistic heroines defend their chastity in a remarkably similar way. Their approach characterizes them as steadfast women who are prepared to suffer in order to remain chaste for their beloved. Unflinching fidelity grants them power and prevents their adversaries from subjecting them to their will. Yet although the similar tenacity is remarkable, dissimilarities can also be detected. Firstly, the objective of both groups of heroines differs. The novelistic heroines do not really want to suffer or die: they merely choose the lesser of two evils. Moreover, the reader knows in advance that they will see their lover again in this life. The martyrs, on the contrary, very much want to suffer and die. They consider their suffering a blessing as it earns them glory and reunion with their lover, Christ. In the passions, it is a generic necessity that the martyrs die in the end. Secondly, the novels' and the passions' approach to chastity does not run entirely parallel. Whereas chastity is presented as a straightforward ideal in the passions, it has been pointed out that the novels' treatment of chastity contains a non negligible amount of irony, humour and ambiguity.[65]

The perseverant behaviour of the heroines in both groups of texts does not necessarily suggest a direct link between the novels and the passions for such behaviour fits in with the general upgrading of the virtue of endurance in the first centuries AD and the power which this passive resistance yields.[66] A similar approach can be found in the Apocryphal Acts. Thecla is sentenced to the stake because she is an encratite

[64] Cf. supra, note 54.

[65] See Goldhill 1995. For a recent discussion of ambiguous elements in the depiction of the novelistic heroines' chastity, which undermine their allegedly ideal nature, see De Temmerman 2014.

[66] See Shaw 1996; Perkins 1995, 104-123; Burrus 2004, 55.

Christian and therefore refuses to marry her fiancé (Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla, §§20-21), and Agrippa's concubines who refrain from sharing Agrippa's bed accept to endure all the torture he threatens to submit them to (Apocryphal Acts of Peter, §33).[67] Furthermore, a steadfast and enduring approach is hardly surprising in a martyr narrative. Since the word 'martyr' itself hints at suffering and death for the sake of one's faith,[68] one does not need to resort to a possible influence from the novels to account for the presence of such behaviour in the passions.

2.2.2 The employment of ruse

2.2.2.1 Inventive heroines

Endurance is not the only approach which the women in the post-Nicene passions adopt when confronted with an unwanted marriage proposal. Another way of avoiding an undesired marriage is equally common in the selected corpus: the employment of ruse.

In the *passio Caeciliae* and *passio Anastasiae*, one comes across a variation on the theme: Caecilia (VI) and Anastasia (III) do not use a ruse to avoid marriage, but to prevent its (further) consummation. Caecilia cleverly lures her fiancé into a spiritual marriage on their wedding night: like Callirhoe in Chariton's novel (Chariton 3,2,4), she has a hidden agenda and makes him swear an oath in a marriage-context.[69] Anastasia feigns an illness to avoid sexual intercourse with her legitimate husband and thus uses the same ruse as Anthia when she ends up in a brothel (X. Eph. 5,7,4). Most often, however, the women in the passions use a ruse to prevent worldly marriage. These ruses can take different forms. Agnes (II) lets her suitor believe that she already has a worldly fiancé, but is actually referring to Christ. Susanna (XX) subtly eroticizes the familial kiss her uncle wants to give her and makes his access to such kiss conditional upon baptism. Since Claudius is sent to convince her to marry, his conversion entails postponement of the marriage.[70] Lucia (XIII) is betrothed to a pagan fiancé, but persuades her mother to spend her dowry supporting those in need. She thus pleases her real fiancé, Christ. When her worldly fiancé finds out that she is selling her possessions, Lucia's nurse first manages to keep him happy with an excuse (she tells him that Lucia plans to buy an interesting property for him). But when almost all Lucia's possessions are sold, he finds

[67] In his translation of the Apocryphal Acts of Peter, Poupon remarks that the concubines' determination has been linked to a similar behaviour in the Greek novels (Poupon 1997, 1107).

[68] For the connotation of suffering and death in conjunction with the more general signification of 'witness' in the earliest martyr texts, see Dehandschutter 1991.

[69] On Caecilia's astute rhetorical behaviour, see Bossu, De Temmerman, Praet, *Mnemosyne* forthcoming.

[70] On Susanna's approach, see Bossu, Praet, De Temmerman, *Latomus* forthcoming.

out how the matter stands and impeaches her for being a Christian. Unlike the other women in the corpus, then, Lucia does not have to reject her fiancé: as she is no longer a wealthy bride, he is no longer interested in marrying her. By selling her possessions, she kills two birds with one stone: she pleases her heavenly fiancé and gets rid of her worldly one. For she can suppose that the man's greed - greed is a stereotypical characteristic of the pagans in the post-Nicene passions[71] - will make him abandon his marriage plans.

The most common ruse to avoid marriage in the passions once again aligns the hagiographical heroines with the heroines of the Greek novel: like the novelistic heroines, the women in the passions resort to feigned consent and requested postponement. This is a ruse the novelistic heroines are famous for: Anthia agrees to marry Perilaus, but comes up with an excuse to postpone the marriage (X. Eph. 2,13,8), and she fools Psammis into believing that she is dedicated to Isis until she is of marriageable age and that there is still a year before that time comes (X. Eph. 3,11,4). Chariclea feigns to be happy to marry Thyamis but claims that she has to resign from her priestly office first, preferably in Memphis (Heliod. 1,22,5-7). The novelistic heroines not only postpone marriage with clever schemes, they also admit doing so: Anthia points out that she has practised every device of chastity (X. Eph. 5,14,2 *πᾶσαν σωφροσύνης μηχανὴν*) and Chariclea admits that she managed to fend off a marriage by various artifices (Heliod. 6,9,6 *διεκρουσάμην ἐπινοίαις*). Five women in the selected corpus use the same ruse: they also feign acceptance and use schemes to gain time when confronted with an undesired marriage proposal.[72]

The *comes* Leucadius wants to marry the Christian Theodota (III),[73] who ran away from her hometown in Bithynia and is brought before the emperor in Pannonia. Leucadius promises the emperor that he will convince Theodota to sacrifice to the pagan gods; if not, he will kill her. Theodota tells Leucadius that if he aspires marriage in order to gain possession over her goods, she invites him to go to her hometown and seize all she possesses. Theodota thus appeals to Leucadius' greed; once again, greed is foregrounded as a stereotypical characteristic of the pagans.[74] Upon his return,

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[71] For the stereotypical depiction of pagans as greedy people, see also *passio Agathae* §2, *passio Anastasiae* §23, §26, §32, *passio Aureae seu Chryses* §17, *passio Caeciliae* §22.

[72] This observation nuances Goddard Elliott's statements about the post-Nicene passions: 'The world of hagiography as depicted in the passions is black and white. Words mean what they say; what men say corresponds to what they do' and 'only villains attempt (unsuccessfully) to lie' (Goddard Elliott 1987, 34-35).

[73] Moretti 2006, 17 briefly notes that Theodota's approach resembles Anthia's when dealing with Psammis as well as Constantia's in the *passio Gallicani, Johannis et Pauli*. On this passion, cf. infra.

[74] Cf. supra, note 71.

Theodota continues, she will marry him. This ruse buys her time: Leucadius has to go from Pannonia to Bithynia and back.

Petronilla (XVI) employs the same ruse. Her story in the *passio Nerei et Achillei* is a rewriting of a passage from the Apocryphal Acts of Peter.[75] Accompanied by his soldiers (*cum militibus*), the *comes* Flaccus visits Petronilla and wants to marry her. She gives him to understand that sending soldiers to an unarmed girl is improper; if he wants to marry her, he has to send *matronae* and *virgines honestae* in three days time. These women will then escort her to his house. During the three days of postponement, Petronilla fasts and prays and on the third day, she dies after having received the sacrament of Christ. Although the content of Petronilla's prayers is not recorded, it is likely that she prays Christ for death. Such a request would align the scene with the Apocryphal Acts of John[76] and the passions of Agatha and of Chrysanthus and Daria[77], and would tune in with the extensive glorification of virginity in the passion: virginity is presented as the queen of all virtues (§6 *sicut Reginae persona*). The repudiation of sex is so extreme that the Christian God is presented as a godhead who lets a woman die in order to prevent her from having sexual intercourse.[78] If Petronilla indeed asks the Lord for death, her promise to Flaccus qualifies as a ruse to buy her time. The combination of a ruse to gain time with the choice of death when that extra time has passed, reminds of Anthia's approach when she is forced to marry Perilaus: when the delay which she has obtained with an excuse has passed, Anthia asks a physician for a death potion (X. Eph. 3,5,7). For both Petronilla and Anthia, then, losing their chastity is not an option. But the contexts of both scenes differ substantially: whereas Anthia's behaviour fits in with a story which glorifies love and sexual intercourse within legitimate marriage, Petronilla's approach gives evidence of an extreme repudiation of sex.

Juliana (XII) also has recourse to the ruse of feigned acceptance and request for postponement. When her fiancé wants to marry her, Juliana answers that she cannot marry him as long as he does not hold the office of prefect (§1). This undoubtedly qualifies as a ruse: as a Christian, Juliana attaches no importance to worldly offices. As a friend of the emperor, her fiancé has little trouble to become a prefect and again

[75] It concerns a passage which has been passed down in Coptic, cf. Poupon's translation 1997, 1049-1052. Vouaux 1922, 157-158 lists the differences between the version of the story in the passion and in the Apocryphal Acts.

[76] In the Apocryphal Acts of John (§§63-65) Drusiana convinced her husband to agree upon a spiritual marriage when another man falls in love with her and tries to seduce her. Upset about the passion she arouses, she asks God for death.

[77] In both passions, a female martyr asks God for death, albeit not in a marriage context. Agatha (I, §12) implores God to receive her spirit since she has suffered enough; in the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae* (VII, §21), Hilaria prays Christ for death when she is about to be arrested.

[78] In the story's original version God paralyzes Peter's daughter to the same end.

exhorts Juliana to marry him. Juliana now answers that she is willing to marry on the condition that he is converted to Christianity. Juliana's second condition makes it likely that her first request was not randomly chosen. For as a Christian prefect, her fiancé will not survive for a long time. Unsurprisingly, he refuses to give in to Juliana's request out of fear of death: if he is converted, he rightly points out, the emperor will hear about it and will chop off his head (§3 *caput meum gladio amputabit*). In the *passio Iulianae Nicomedenis*, then, we once again come across an extreme repudiation of sex: Juliana asks for her fiancé's death in order to safeguard her virginity.

Another example of the same ruse can be found in the *passio Gallicani, Johannis et Pauli*. The story goes as follows. Gallicanus is a commander in the Roman army and has subjugated the Persians. As a reward, he asks for the emperor Constantine's daughter Constantia's hand in marriage. This poses a problem: Gallicanus' request cannot very well be refused (the emperor needs him to fight the Scythians) but Constantia has commended her chastity to Christ. Constantia herself comes up with the solution: she tells her father to grant Gallicanus' request but to ask him two favours for the sake of the engagement. Firstly, Gallicanus has to allow his two daughters from an earlier marriage to stay with Constantia until the day of the marriage. Secondly, Constantia's two servants Johannes and Paulus are to accompany Gallicanus on his expedition. That way, Gallicanus and Constantia will learn to know each other indirectly. Unsurprisingly, this is a ruse: Constantia converts Gallicanus' daughters and Johannes and Paulus convert Gallicanus. Gallicanus' conversion entails the solution to the problem as he abandons his marriage plans. That it is a woman (Constantia) who tells a man (her father) how to solve the problem with a ruse, is not insignificant: it once again reminds of the Greek novel. In the novels, the heroes also employ rhetorical ruse, yet it is telling that in most cases the heroines are the instigators of their husbands' rhetorical manipulation. An example can be found in Heliodorus' novel (7,21-26): when Theagenes has to deal with Arsace, a powerful woman who is in love with him, Chariclea advises him to feign acceptance (7,21,4 *πλάττου τὸ συγκατατίθεσθαι*) of her advances and to keep her happy (and therefore harmless) with promises and postponements.[79] The advice which Chariclea gives Theagenes strikingly fits Constantia's approach in the passion.

The fifth and final example of the ruse of feigned acceptance occurs in the *passio Eugeniae, Prothi et Hyacinthi*. When her father asks Eugenia to accept consul Aquilinus' son as her husband, she answers that one should select a husband not on the basis of noble birth (p. 391, l. 40 *natalibus*) but on the basis of nobility of character (*honestate*). She thus implies that Aquilinus' son does not have a noble character but that she is

[79] On the scene, see De Temmerman 2014, 269-277. Similar ideas about keeping a powerful opponent happy by feigning compliance to advances can be found in Heliod. 1,26,3-4 and Ach. Tat. 4,8,5-6.

willing to marry a man who has. Yet in the following sentence, we are told that she rejects a large number of other suitors as her mind is set on chastity (*animo castitatis*). It seems, then, that Eugenia uses the focus on nobility of character as an excuse to postpone marriage.

2.2.2.2 Employing ruse in the post-Nicene passions and the Greek novels: concluding remarks.

Like the novelistic heroines, the women in the passions not only resort to steadfast endurance but have recourse to ruse too in order to defend their chastity. It is remarkable that the ruse which is most commonly used in the passions is the famous novelistic ruse of feigned consent and requested postponement. This similarity between the novels and the passions suggests – more forcibly than in the case of the common steadfast approach – a direct link between both groups of texts. Firstly, this specific ruse does not occur in the Apocryphal Acts,[80] nor in the Latin novels. Secondly, whereas one does not need to posit a possible influence from the novels to account for the presence of steadfastness and endurance in a martyr narrative - these are straightforward traits which one is likely to encounter in such a narrative - this is different in the case of the women's recourse to the ruse of feigned consent. Feigning consent qualifies as an ambiguous approach. This is explicitly thematized in Heliodorus' novel. Both Chariclea and Theagenes raise moral objections when they are urged to pretend to accept the advances of another lover (Heliod. 4,13,4 and 7,21,5).[81] It has been pointed out that these objections echo Aristotelian guidelines, which hint at the inextricable connection between speech and intention and between saying and doing.[82] In Christian circles too, the ruse of feigned consent may have raised questions. In *De Mendacio*, Augustine points out that bodily purity does not exist without mental integrity and that one inevitably loses the former if one loses the latter. One should therefore not corrupt one's mental integrity with a lie on behalf of the body.[83] If feigning consent to a marriage proposal is not unproblematic, why, then, do the women resort to this ruse? In the case of the novelistic heroines, the answer is clear: the ruse increases the chance that they achieve

[80] Ruses to avoid sexual intercourse are used in the Apocryphal Acts, but not the ruse of feigned consent and requested postponement. In the Apocryphal Acts of Andrew (§17), a burlesque scene can be found: Maximilla lets a slave girl take her place in the marital bed in order to avoid sexual contact with her husband; in the *pseudo-Clementines*, Mattidia invents a dream to get away from her brother-in-law who is in love with her.

[81] For detailed analyses of both scenes, see De Temmerman 2014, 259-277.

[82] See Brethes 2007b, 239-249 on Ari. *Rh.* 2,6,21-22 and Ari. *Int.* 1.

[83] Aug. *De Mendacio*, 10: *... facile responderi potest nullam esse pudicitiam corporis, nisi ab integritate animi pendeat; quia disrupta cadat necesse est, etiamsi intacta videatur; ... Nullo modo igitur animus se mendacio corrumpat pro corpore suo* (edition Combes 1937).

their aim, namely reunion with their worldly lover as chaste women. Yet this explanation does not hold true for the hagiographical heroines who are not interested in keeping themselves chaste for a worldly lover. Why, then, do they not adopt the steadfast approach, which earns them glory and, in the case of the martyrs, precipitates their reunion with their heavenly lover?

In a few cases, one can think of an explanation. Theodota (III) takes advantage of the time she gains to take care of the imprisoned Christian saints; Constantia's ruse (XI) brings about Gallicanus' conversion and access to the eternal life.[84] Furthermore, many of Gallicanus' soldiers follow his example. Yet benefit for the good Christian cause[85] does not explain all instances of feigned consent. This is self-evident in Eugenia's case, as she is not yet a Christian when she uses the ruse, but also Juliana's and Felicula's ruses entail no advantage for the Christian faith. Unlike in the novels, then, the ruse of feigned consent and requested postponement does not always seem to have a reason in the passions – except, of course, enhancing the suspense and entertainment value of the texts. The absence of a plot-related reason for the insertion of this ruse into the passions as well as the observation that this specific ruse does not occur in the Apocryphal Acts nor the Latin novels, suggest that the Latin post-Nicene passions might have adopted this element from the Greek novel.[86] One could however also hypothesize that the presence of the ruse of feigned consent in the passions stems from social reality: their vulnerable position in society might have required women to adopt a similar approach.

2.3 Defending chastity in the event of rape in the Latin post-Nicene passions and the Greek novel

Once the hagiographical heroines have avoided the undesired marriage, for many of them the danger has not been averted yet. Half of the women subsequently face a more

[84] A similar benefit for the 'victim' of the ruse occurs in the *passio Caeciliae*: Caecilia sends her fiancé on his way to baptism and the eternal life.

[85] According to Augustine (*De Mendacio*, 11), converting people is no justification for lying either.

[86] One of Hägg's arguments for claiming that the Coptic passion of St. Parthenope was modeled after the (fragmentarily preserved) novel of Metiochus and Parthenope is the untypical death of the heroine (Hägg 2004, 246-247; 258): Parthenope does not publicly declare her faith but feigns to accept a marriage, asks for respite to rest and throws herself on a fire in her bedroom. Apart from the striking link with Felicula's story, Hägg's argument suggests that the absence or postponement of the typical steadfastness in the passions can have a novelistic origin.

violent threat: rape. Two scenarios can be distinguished. In a few cases the rejected fiancé can no longer control his desire,[87] but more frequently the woman is submitted to violation as a legal punishment for not sacrificing to the pagan gods.[88] Most often she is put in a brothel. To this last group, we can add 5 extra cases[89] of women who were not confronted with an unwanted marriage proposal but are also submitted to rape for not sacrificing, or in the case of Marciana (XIV), for demolishing a statue of a pagan god. In the *passio Anastasiae*, the sisters Agape, Chionia and Irene are in danger of being raped: the praeses Dulcitius is overcome with a filthy desire (§12 *turpissimus spiritus*) and visits them in prison. The vicissitudes of the sisters are also handed down in an pre-Nicene Greek passion (BHG 34).[90] Unlike the post-Nicene text, this earlier version of the martyrdom does not contain the scene in which Dulcitius wants to rape the women. The inclusion of this passage in the later passion indicates both the heightened anti-sexual atmosphere of the post-Nicene passions as well as their greater emphasis on excitement. The threat of rape which many martyrs face indeed adds to the suspense and erotic flavour of the texts and underpins the observation that the post-Nicene passions go to the trouble of meeting their public's need of entertainment.[91]

While it goes without saying that the sexual threat never persuades the women to renounce Christ or their faith, different reactions can be identified. In an article which treats the theme of virgins in a brothel, Rizzo Nervo distinguishes between two: either the martyr implores Christ for help or she points out that chastity is a matter of intention.[92] To be sure, both reactions are present in the selected corpus, but the larger amount of studied passions reveals more variations on the theme.[93] As Rizzo Nervo points out, some martyrs implore Christ for support. Serapia (XIX) faces violation by two lecherous young men because she refuses to renounce her faith and claims to be the temple of God (§4 *templum Dei*).[94] If she is raped, the praeses reasons, she will no longer qualify as God's temple. When faced with the sexual threat, Serapia implores Christ for help: 'Help me now, I beg you, and have mercy upon me, your wandering servant

[87] Domitilla (XVI), Anastasia (III), and Susanna (XX).

[88] Agnes (II), Theodota (III), Bonosa (V), Theodora (IX), Lucia (XIII), Rufina (XVII), and Secunda (XVII). In the *passio Didymi et Theodorae* (§2) the judge explicitly refers to the emperors' decision that virgins have to sacrifice to the pagan gods or will be put in a brothel. In §5, he stresses that he is not willing to violate this imperial regulation.

[89] Irene (II), Daria (VI), Columba (VII), Marciana (XIII), and Serapia (XVIII).

[90] On the relation of the *passio Anastasiae* to the earlier Greek passion, see Moretti 2006, 40-41.

[91] On entertainment in Christian texts, see Huber-Rebenich 1999, 187-190; on entertainment in the passions, see Chew 2003b, 137-138.

[92] Rizzo Nervo 1995.

[93] Rizzo Nervo refers to the Greek *passio Agnetis* and *passio Luciae* and the Latin *passio Anastasiae.*

[94] For the faithful as the temple of God, cf. I Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19; II Cor. 6:16.

Serapia, and free me of the filthy intentions of these young men'.[95] In other passions, one can suppose that the woman asks Christ for help, as the exact words of her prayer are not recorded.[96] Imploring the godhead for support when faced with the threat of rape is an approach which can be found in Xenophon of Ephesus' novel as well. When Anthia is in danger of being raped by Polyidus, she becomes a suppliant (*ἱκέτις*) of the goddess Isis, who has saved her before (4,3,3) and implores her to be her saviour once more: 'Let Polyidus spare me as well, since I am keeping myself chaste for Habrocomes, thanks to you'.[97] The same approach occurs in the Apocryphal Acts of Thomas too (§98): when Charisius is about to rape his wife Mygdonia (§98), she implores Christ for help and deliverance before she flees from the room, wrapped in the bedroom curtain. A variation on the approach of imploring the godhead for support is the expression of the certainty that Christ will indeed provide protection. When the prefect threatens to put Agnes (II) in a brothel if she refuses to sacrifice to the pagan gods, she replies as follows: 'Since I know the power of my Lord Jesus Christ, I absolutely scorn your threats in the belief that I will neither sacrifice to your idols, nor be defiled by filthy practices. For an angel of the Lord accompanies me and guards my body. The only-begotten son of God, whom you do not know, is an impenetrable wall for me, a guardian who never sleeps and a defender who never lets me down'.[98] A similar confidence in the support of the godhead can be found in Achilles Tatius' novel. When Thersander threatens to rape her, Leucippe points out that Artemis will protect her (6,21,2): 'Tell me, have you no fear of your own patroness Artemis, that you would ravish a virgin in the city of a virgin? Lady goddess, where are your arrows?'.[99]

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[95] *Passio Serapiae et Sabinae,* §5: *Adesto nunc, precor, et mihi miserere peregrinae ancillae tuae Serapiae, et libera me a sordida cogitatione juvenum istorum.* Serapia's designation as 'wandering' (*peregrina*) can have two explanations: either it refers to the fact that she, a citizen of Antiochia, ended up in the North-Italian town of Vindena, or, more likely, it refers to her pilgrimage on earth before she reaches the eternal life; for Biblical passages expressing this idea, see Heb. 11, 13-16 and 1 Pe. 2, 11.

[96] Susanna (XX, p. 558, l. 14-16) and Daria (VII, §22) are very likely to ask Christ for support in their prayers as they both know that they are in danger of being raped. In the case of Anastasia (III, §§27-28), and Agape, Chionia and Irene (III, §13) this is less clear: the women are already praying when a lustful pagan arrives.

[97] X. Eph. 5,4,6 *φεισάσθω μου καὶ Πολύιδος τῆς διὰ σὲ σώφρονος Ἀβροκόμῃ τηρουμένης.*

[98] *Passio Agnetis et Emerentianae*, §7: *Unde ego quia novi virtutem Domini mei Iesu Christi, secura cōtemno minas tuas, credens quod neque sacrificem idolis tuis, neque polluar sordibus alienis. Mecum enim habeo custodem corporis mei Angelum Domini. Nam unigenitus Dei filius, quem ignoras, murus mihi est impenetrabilis et custos mihi est numquam dormiens et defensor mihi est numquam deficiens.* Columba (VIII) §4 and Marciana (XIV) §3 express themselves similarly. Bonosa seems certain of Christ's support too (§10): when the *praeses* decides to put her in a brothel, she simply states that she will never give up her virginity which she consecrated to Christ, and is thereupon saved by a miracle.

[99] Ach. Tat. 6,21,2 *οὐδὲ τὴν Ἄρτεμιν, εἰπέ μοι, τὴν σὴν φοβῇ, ἀλλὰ βιάζῃ παρθένον ἐν πόλει παρθένου; δέσποινα, ποῦ σου τὰ τόξα;*

The second reaction Rizzo Nervo identifies is the most remarkable: the woman points out that even if she would be sexually assaulted, this would not compromise her fidelity to Christ. Quite on the contrary: since Christ judges from intention, rape only adds to her glory. Irene (III), Theodora (IX),[100] Lucia (XII), and the sisters Rufina and Secunda (XVII) adopt this approach. When the judge threatens to put her in a brothel, Lucia replies: 'A body cannot be defiled, unless the mind agrees ... For He judges from thoughts and free will. ... If you have me violated against my will, my chastity will be doubled when I receive the crown'.[101] Rizzo Nervo links this distinction between corporeal and spiritual virginity to the contemporary problematization of suicide for the sake of chastity in catholic circles.[102] Augustine's condemnation of suicide in order to safeguard one's chastity in *De Doctrina Christiana* indeed reminds of Lucia's words: ' ... to some of the sufferers it may have appeared that continence is to be counted as a good among bodily goods and that it is present just so long as the body has not been subject to anyone's lustful tampering. They may not have understood that the sanctity of both body and spirit depend on strength of will alone divinely assisted and that it is one of those goods that cannot be taken away, as long as the mind refuses consent'.[103] The distinction between corporeal and spiritual virginity and the idea that violation only adds to their glory incite the martyrs to some of the most defiant replies in the corpus of the Latin post-Nicene passions. Both Lucia (XIII) and Rufina (XVII) reply exceedingly provocative: 'Behold, my body is ready for every torment. What are you waiting for? Start and submit me to the punishments you long for, son of the devil' (Lucia)[104] and 'Bring fire, swords, whips, stones, sticks and rods: every punishment you submit me to, I will add to the glory of our martyrdom' (Rufina).[105] These defiant utterances strikingly remind of Leucippe's reply when she is threatened to be raped by Thersander: 'Bring on the instruments of torture: the wheel – here, take my arms and stretch them; the whips

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[100] Theodora combines this approach (§2) with a declaration that Christ will protect her (§§3,6) and a prayer to Christ for support when she is put in the brothel (§7).

[101] *Passio Luciae,* p. 108, r. 38-42 : *Numquam inquinatur corpus nisi de consensu mentis. ... Nam sic de sensibus et voluntatibus iudicat [i.e. Deus]. ... Nam si me invitam violari feceris: castitas mihi duplicabitur ad coronam*. For the double crown (of virginity and of martyrdom), cf. supra, note 34.

[102] Rizzo Nervo 1995, 94-97, with references to Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*.

[103] Augustine, *De civitate Dei,* I, 28. *... quibusdam, quae ista perpessae sunt, potuit videri continentiae bonum in bonis corporalibus deputandum et tunc manere, si nullius libidine corpus adtrectaretur; non autem esse positum in solo adiuto diuinitus robore uoluntatis, ut sit sanctum et corpus et spiritus; nec tale bonum esse quod inuito animo non possit auferri* (text and translation Page, Capps, Rouse, Post, Warmington, McCracken 1966[2]). Similar ideas can be found in Augustine's *De Mendacio*, 10 (cf. supra note 83).

[104] *Passio Luciae,* p. 108, 44-46: *Ecce, corpus meum paratum est ad omne supplicium. Quid moraris? Incipe desyderia poenarum tuarum in me exercere, fili diaboli!*

[105] *Passio Rufinae et Secundae*, §6 *Applica ignes, gladios, flagella, saxa, fustes et virgas: quot tu poenas intuleris, per tot ego gloriam martyrii nostri numerabo*.

– here is my back, lash away; the hot irons – here is my body for burning; bring the axe as well – here is my neck, slice through! Watch a new contest: a single woman competes with all the engines of torture and wins every round (Ach. Tat. 6,21,1-2) .... Arm yourself, then; take up the whips against me, the rack, the fire, the sword (Ach. Tat. 6,22,4)'.[106]

Not all martyrs actually react to the threat of rape: some women are miraculously rescued without saying or doing anything that is directly related to the sexual threat. Domitilla's fiancé who locked her up in order to rape her cannot stop dancing and eventually drops dead (XVI §23) and the man who has to escort Theodota to a brothel gets punched in the face by a figure who stands next to her (III §31). A similar miracle saves the women in three quarters of the cases: the pagans cannot move them, walls miraculously pop up to screen them off, angels or wild animals appear out of nowhere, the assaulter is blinded or gets possessed by the devil, ... In two cases, the pagans' plan to rape the martyr is forestalled in a more cunning way. Theodora (IX) is visited in the brothel by a Christian man who changes clothes with her. In the man's clothes, she can leave the brothel and escapes rape. It is striking that the instigator of the ruse is identified as none other than God himself (BHL 8072, §11: *Deus me misit ut hoc facerem*). Irene (III), in her turn, is rescued by two fake soldiers; it is unclear if these are angels or other Christians (§18). In only one case the pagan abandons his plan to have the martyr raped: once Rufina (XVI) has explained that chastity is a matter of intention and will not compromise their fidelity to Christ, he submits her and her sister to physical and no sexual torture.

Conclusion

As texts which not only aim to edify their audience but want to tell a good story too, the Latin post-Nicene passions qualify as an interesting component of the network of ancient narrative texts. In this article, I analyzed the passions' handling of the literary *topos* of the defence of chastity and highlighted the variation which can be detected within the topical elaboration. I focused on the passions' interconnections with the Greek novel within this thematic realm. Like the Apocryphal Acts, the passions tailor

[106]Ach. Tat. 6,21,1-2 *τὰς βασάνους παράστησον. φερέτω τροχόν· ἰδοὺ χεῖρες, τεινέτω. φερέτω καὶ μάστιγας· ἰδοὺ νῶτος, τυπτέτω. κομιζέτω πῦρ· ἰδοὺ σῶμα, καιέτω. φερέτω καὶ σίδηρον· ἰδοὺ δέρη, σφαζέτω. ἀγῶνα θεάσασθε καινόν· πρὸς πάσας τὰς βασάνους ἀγωνίζεται μία γυνὴ καὶ πάντα νικᾷ ...* Ach. Tat. 6,22,4 *ὁπλίζου τοίνυν, ἤδη λάμβανε κατ' ἐμοῦ τὰς μάστιγας, τὸν τροχόν, τὸ πῦρ, τὸν σίδηρον·* On the correspondences between Leucippe's utterance and other Christian martyr texts, see supra, note 20.

the novelistic erotic atmosphere to their Christian environment: whereas the novelistic heroines safeguard their chastity for their worldly lover, the heroines of the passions want to remain chaste for Christ. In their defence of this chastity, the women behave strikingly alike, whether they face an undesired marriage proposal or the threat of rape. They share some approaches with other heroines within the network of ancient narrative texts. Steadfast endurance of tribulations or imploring the godhead for support qualify as examples. Similar correspondences indicate that the Greek novelists and the hagiographers of the Latin passions shared a common literary culture. Other approaches, like the ruse of feigned consent and requested postponement, set the novelistic and hagiographical heroines apart from other heroines within the network and might hint at direct influence of the novels on the passions. Novelistic heroines, it seems, do not disappear as soon as the novels themselves do after Heliodorus; instead, they live on in the heroines of the post-Nicene passions.

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Chapter 3 The saint as an astute heroine: rhetoric and characterization in the *passio Caeciliae*

Introduction[1]

The late antique *passio Caeciliae* (BHL 1495 – 1495a – 1496)[2]) recounts the vicissitudes of the Roman martyr Caecilia and her companions Valerianus and Tiburtius. Today, Caecilia is famous as the patron saint of music,[3]) but not every reader is equally familiar with her passion, which can be dated to the fifth century AD and was probably written in Rome by an anonymous author.[4]) This article focuses on characterization of different

[1] The doctoral research of Annelies Bossu is financed by the FWO (Research Foundation Flanders)-project G.0633.10N, entitled "Sacred Fiction. A narratological-rhetorical analysis of novelistic topicality and generic specificity in late antique hagiography", supervised by Prof. Dr. Danny Praet and Prof. Dr. Koen De Temmerman. The authors would like to thank Mnemosyne's anonymous referee for helpful comments and suggestions.

[2] The differences between *BHL* 1495 en *BHL* 1495a are minimal: in *BHL* 1495a, a part of the prologue is missing. *BHL* 1496 is a shorter version of *BHL* 1495. Both *BHL* 1495a and *BHL* 1496 have not been edited. *BHL* 1495 can be found in the following editions: Mombritius, eds. monachi Solesmenses, [2]1910, vol. I, 332-41 (this text has been reedited and translated into Italian: Caraffa and Massone, 1996, 32-83); Delehaye, 1936, 194-220 ; Fábrega Grau, 1955, 25-40; and Upchurch, 2007, 172-217 (with an English translation). The texts of the four editions differ only slightly. We will use the most recent edition (Upchurch) in this paper; translations are our own. Paragraph numbers of Upchurch's edition correspond to those of Delehaye's edition. The *passio Caeciliae* has been translated into Greek as well (cf. *BHG* 283; Laderchius, 1723, 229-60).

[3] Since the 16th century Caecilia is best known as the patron saint of musicians, see Farmer, 2011, col. 83-4 for further references. This is based upon a single sentence in the passion which recounts that Caecilia sung in her heart to the Lord when the organs were playing at her wedding feast (§3): *Et cantantibus organis, illa in corde suo soli Domino decantabat.*

[4] It has never been disputed that the *passio Caeciliae* was written in Rome: the whole passion takes place there and the main locations are accurately described (cf. Lanéry, 2009, 536). On the other hand, the dating of the text as well as its authorship have been debated. A sixth century dating was long assumed and underpinned by similarities with Victor Vitensis' *Historia persecutionis Africanae provinciae* (written ca. 488). Recently however,

characters in this story, but it will be useful to summarize the passion's storyline first. The young and beautiful Caecilia is secretly a Christian and denounces marriage. Her parents compel her to marry her pagan fiancé Valerianus. On their wedding night, Caecilia is able to convince Valerianus not to have sex with her and to accept baptism. Thereupon, the couple persuades the brother of Valerianus, called Tiburtius, to be baptized too. As Christians, Valerianus and Tiburtius come into conflict with the prefect of the city and are beheaded. Caecilia is brought before the prefect as well, and uses her rhetorical and dialectical ability to convert a large number of pagans. Eventually, she is tortured and dies a martyr's death.

3.1 Previous research and new approach

Most previous scholarship about this passion takes a historical and/or philological perspective. The date of the martyrdom, the location of Caecilia's burial site and her cult all received ample attention.[5]) Nevertheless, the historical basis for the passion remains uncertain and there is no indisputable proof of the historical existence of a martyr named Caecilia;[6]) in fact, she may very well have been not a martyr but the founder of a Roman titulus.[7]) Lanéry has recently offered an elaborate analysis of the linguistic, stylistic and ideological characteristics of the passion as part of her argument that identifies its author as the fifth-century monk Arnobius the Younger.[8]) Source-critical work has drawn attention to several quotations from Scripture,[9]) Tertullian,

Lanéry has contested this and has identified the fifth century monk Arnobius the Younger as the author of the passion, cf. Lanéry, 2009, 536-50.

[5] The most recent bibliography about the passion can be found in Lanéry, 2010, 87-88. One could add Götz, 1999 and Connolly, 1994. Connolly's book provides some additional bibliography and an overview of scholarship about the cult and the problems involved.

[6] Cf. Connolly, 1994, 24-5.

[7] Cf. Delehaye (1936, 73-96), who lists historical contradictions in the passion and elaborates on the probability of Caecilia being the founder of a *titulus*. The male martyrs of the passion, on the other hand, are authentic martyrs, but seem to have no link to Caecilia. Local folklore or the hagiographer might have integrated these male martyrs into the passion.

[8] Cf. supra, note 4.

[9] Connolly, 1994, 60-78.

Augustine[10]) and other (Roman) passions.[11]) The Bollandist Delehaye included this passion in the category of the 'passions romanesques', thus highlighting the importance of fictional traditions in the presentation and organization of its material.[12])

In this article, we will pay detailed attention to characterization in the *passio Caeciliae*. Of course, our modern term 'character' can denote different things and its use in this article requires some clarification. Firstly, 'a character' (with the article) refers to a person or humanlike figure as represented in a literary work. A recent definition restricts this meaning to *'fictive* persons or *fictional* analoga to human beings'[13]) (our italics) but in fact literary characters do not need to be fictive; indeed, we do not even know whether Caecilia is or is not fictive (as we have just seen, her actual, historical existence is debated) but she obviously is a character in the eponymous passion and can be analyzed as such. Secondly, our term 'character' (without the article) usually refers to the totality of relatively stable or abiding mental, moral, social, cognitive and personal qualities that pertain to an individual[14]) and in this sense it is often used to refer to such qualities of a character in a literary work. Of course, to a modern readership this term (of which no ancient term offers an unproblematic equivalent) comes with a number of connotations (such as distinctiveness, idiosyncracy and permanence) and it has been pointed out that these cannot be unproblematically mapped onto an ancient context.[15]) It is therefore important to mention from the start

[10] Lanéry, 2009, note 32 (Augustine) and note 46 (Augustine and Tertullian), and Caponi, 2005, 28. Lanéry and Caponi do not list exactly the same parallels. For Victor Vitensis' *Historia persecutionis Africanae provinciae*, we refer to note 4.

[11] By Roman passions, we mean passions that were written in Rome and not necessarily passions that recount the vicissitudes of martyrs who died in Rome. Caponi (2005) lists thematic, stylistic and lexical correspondences to the *passio Anastasiae* (*BHL* 1795-118-8093-401), *passio Agnetis* (*BHL* 156) and *passio Eugeniae* (*BHL* 2667). Lanéry (2010) identifies the passion as a source of inspiration for the authors of the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae* (BHL 1787), *passio Eugeniae* and *passio Susannae* (*BHL* 7937) (84), and argues that the *passio Anastasiae* was used by the author of the *passio Caeciliae* (55). For textual parallels between the *passio Anastasiae* and *passio Caeciliae*, see Moretti's edition of the former (Moretti, 2006).

[12] See Delehaye, [2]1966, 229 (specifically on the *passio Caeciliae*) and the refinement by Aigrain ([2]2000, 149-50). Following Delehaye, Van Uytfanghe (2007, 18) refers to the *passio Caeciliae* as a classic example of a 'roman hagiographique'. For the 'passions romanesques' in general, see Delehaye, [2]1966, 227-30 and Aigrain, [2]2000, 148-50. Just as the 'passions épiques' (Delehaye, [2]1966, 171-226), Delehaye argues, the 'passions romanesques' compensate for the lack of historical basis by falling back on existing fictional traditions. For the *passio Caeciliae*, Aigrain ([2]2000, 149-50) mentions the presence of a central couple and the preservation of virginity as motifs resembling those in ancient erotic novels.

[13] Eder, Jannidis, Schneider, 2010, 7, who identify this as a widespread definition of literary characters.

[14]See, for example, *ODE*, s.v. *character*. On the conceptualization of character in this sense, and the question of whether or not the notion of distinctiveness is culturally determined rather than readily applicable to an ancient context, see De Temmerman, 2014, 5-6.

[15] See, among others, Gill, 2006, xiv; Halliwell, 1990, 33; and Pelling, 1990, 253.

that in this article we will be primarily concerned with a number of mental and cognitive traits as they are observable in characters through their rhetorical performance. A third meaning, finally, is the rhetorical, Aristotelian one that is conveyed by the Greek word '*ēthos*', which is one of three techniques of persuasion and designates intellectually and morally positive self-portrayal through speech.[16]) In this article, we will use the term 'character' in its first two meanings: we will analyze the ascription of certain, specific traits and qualities (meaning 2) to characters (meaning 1) in the passio Caeciliae (i.e. their characterization).

The few scholars who have dealt with characterization in the so-called post-Nicene[17]) passions agree that the characters are mostly shaped by repetition and stereotypes.[18]) Stelladoro concludes that it is "hard to distinguish one martyr from another".[19]) Even if typification is arguably important in this text as well as in other ancient literary works, we aim to demonstrate that in the *passio Caeciliae* things are subtler and more complex.[20]) We argue that not just typification but also individuation can be seen to inform certain characters. More specifically, we will show, such notions are explored and tested in the thematic area of rhetorical ability. In our reading, rhetorical ability allows for the intratextual individuation of characters: it sets apart characters from each other within this story (and not necessarily from characters in other post-Nicene passions). Furthermore, we argue that the realm of rhetorical ability also explores notions of change: rhetorical ability is presented as a skill that can be learned.

The remarkable interest in rhetoric in the passio Caeciliae points to an educated author, who had received the traditional education prevalent in late antiquity. Although

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[16] Ari. *Rh*. 1.2.3-6, 2.1.1-6.

[17] The date of the Council of Nicea (325 AD) provides a conventional dividing line between earlier, so-called 'authentic' passions and later ones. The reign of Constantine is often used as a dividing line as well, resulting in the terms 'pre- and post-Constantinian'. On the use of these terms, see Scorza Barcellona, 2001, 39-40.

[18] See, for example, Delehaye, [2]1966, 171-173 and Aigrain, 142: "… bien monotone, en effet, l'idée qu'ils se forment du héros, qui, plutôt qu'un personnage nettement individualisé, devient 'le martyr' en général … ".

[19] Stelladoro, 2005, 66: "… diventa impresa ardua cercare di distinguere un martire da un altro". Moretti, 2006, 23, talks about a "caratterizzazione manichea dei personaggi". The assessment of the literary value of the pre-Nicene passions is generally more positive. Delehaye's comparison between both groups is telling in this respect: "Il y a, entre les actes historiques écrits sous la dictée des événements et les récits de martyre qui leur ont succédé, la différence que nous mettons entre l'œuvre d'un maître et un produit industriel." (Delehaye, [2]1966, 171).

[20] See De Temmerman, 2014, 8-14, who points out that although conformity to pre-existing character types is arguably important for realistic characterization in ancient literature and is tied in with the ethical conception of character, this does not preclude the possibility of character individuation.

Christians often felt uncomfortable about it,[21]) Christian and pagan members of the literate elite received the same rhetorical education from more or less the same teachers.[22]) The material and techniques that were taught by grammaticus and rhetor thus inevitably also influenced Christian hagiography.[23])

3.2 Caecilia: an astute hagiographical heroine

The *passio Caeciliae* begins with the heroine's marriage to Valerianus. Caecilia renounces sex even within legitimate marriage, which brings her close to the sexual teachings of some of the best known Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles.[24]) In her very first words, addressed to her husband at their wedding night, she immediately establishes control over him. The context of the bridal chamber establishes certain amorous and intimate expectations which are perfectly compatible with the oath of secrecy she makes her husband swear: 'Most sweet and most beloved young man, there is a mystery that I will reveal to you, if only you swear to keep it to yourself with all reverence'.[25]) As soon as Valerianus has sworn the oath (*iuravit*, §4), she reveals something that seems to fit into the erotic context, but which is certainly not what her husband was expecting. She confesses that she has a lover (*amatorem ... habeo*), a messenger or angel of God (*angelum Dei*) who zealously protects her body and who will unleash a furor against Valerianus if he has sex with her. If, on the other hand, Valerianus' love is sincere and immaculate (*sincero et immaculato amore*) and he keeps her virginity intact, the angelus will show him his gratitude (*ostendet tibi gratiam suam*).

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[21] Cf. for instance the famous passage in Jerome's letter (*Epist*. 22.30.2) where it is held against him in his own dream that he is a Ciceronian (*ciceronianus*) instead of a Christian (*Christianus*). On the difficult balance between Christianity and pagan literature and rhetoric, cf. also Kaster, 70- 95, and esp. 81 on Jerome's dream.

[22] On classical rhetoric and pagan literature as justifiable parts of Christian education, see e.g. Clem. Al. *Strom.* 1.5.29.9-10; Tert. *idol.* 10, 4-7, Bas. *leg. lib. gent*. On the interplay between Christianity and pagan education, cf. Marrou, [2]1981, 127-47; Beavis, 2000; Rappe, 2001.

[23] For the tendency of rhetoric to shift focus from speech to literature (and thus from primary to secondary rhetoric), cf. Kennedy, 1999, 2-3; for rhetoric and its influence on Christian literature, cf. Cameron, 1991, 111-112.

[24] See Tissot 1981, 116-118 for a nuanced discussion of encratite elements in the Apocryphal Acts of Andrew and Thomas (where marriages are disrupted), and sexual asceticism in the Acts of Peter, of John and of Paul and Thecla.

[25] *Passio Caeciliae*, §4: *O dulcissime atque amantissme iuvenis, est mysterium quod tibi confitear si modo tu iuratus asseras tota te illud observantia custodire.*

Caecilia's words raise all sorts of expectations, both in Valerianus and the reader. By uttering the word *amator*, and thus suggesting adultery, Caecilia obviously endangers herself. Does she want to make her husband jealous? Will Valerianus fly into a rage because of this confession? For a Christian public, the word *angelus* is not ambiguous, but the pagan husband can very well be expected to understand this *amator-angelus* to be a mortal messenger of God. His reaction to Caecilia's confession is not surprising: he threatens to use violence if the *amator* turns out to be another man, and to kill both her and her lover with a sword. From a literary point of view, the word *amator* activates the well-known *topos* of the adulterous love triangle,[26]) while the erotic context evokes genres such as the ancient erotic novel or love poetry. The opening scene, for example, staging a husband who threatens to kill his wife on the suspicion of adultery, is reminiscent of the beginning of Chariton's novel (1.4.12), where the male protagonist kicks his wife into a coma and apparently kills her because he believes her to be unfaithful. But then again, the evocations of both the erotic love triangle and the ancient novel are immediately destabilized – even subverted.[27]) First and foremost, while in fact it is Valerianus who, as Caecilia's legitimate husband, would be entitled to harm the adulterer, Caecilia outrageously subverts this common scenario by threatening her husband that her lover will 'unleash his furor against him' if he has sex with her.[28]) This blatantly redesigns the traditional love triangle, both by casting Valerianus in the role of the adulterer who risks being physically harmed or even killed by the legitimate husband and, vice versa, by presenting the *amator* as Caecilia's only true husband. Furthermore, Caecilia's request is not for a real but a 'spiritual' marriage. This request has heretical connotations. It is not common in early martyr texts but becomes more prominent in the post-Nicene passions, which start to mix the concept of a real, bloody martyrdom with that of asceticism as a bloodless martyrdom (*martyrium sine cruore*).[29]) As Caecilia is forced to marry,[30]) convincing her husband is her only

[26] On this triangle in one of the Apocryphal Acts, see Schwartz, 2007.

[27] Similar titillating ambiguity and suspense certainly add to the observation that the post-Nicene passions, as literary texts, go to the trouble of meeting their public's need of entertainment. Although Christians had an uncomfortable relationship with entertainment, which constituted a major reason for excluding texts from literary canons (cf. e. g. Pervo, 2012, xvi), Huber-Rebenich (1999, 187-90) points out that Christian writers were also aware of the fact that entertainment could help them to efficiently convey their message to their heterogeneous public. For the audience of the post-Nicene passions, cf. Van Uytfanghe, 2001, esp. 206-11, where he argues that the later passions were tailored to both literate and illiterate audiences.

[28] We thank the anonymous referee of *Mnemosyne* for drawing our attention to this point.

[29] On the different attitudes towards marriage and sexuality in the pre- and post-Nicene passions, see Praet, 2003 and 2011.

option to obtain a 'spiritual' marriage. On the one hand, this reminds us of the social vulnerability of women in marriage,[31]) which chimes with the evocation of other traditional gender roles in the opening scene of this story. Caecilia, for example, stays at home and does not accompany her husband when he sets out to meet the pope in the following episode. But on the other hand, as we will see, such gender roles are also destabilized by the story: Caecilia succeeds in finding her own space and even becomes the dominant force in the marriage through rhetorical agency.

Caecilia's entire speech on her wedding night is a good example of this agency. When Valerianus asks for visual proof (*ostende michi ipsum angelum*, §5) in order to verify whether this lover is really an angel of God, she makes his access to such proof conditional upon baptism: he will only be able to see the angel when he is cleansed by an eternal spring (*purificari fonte perhenni*) by someone whom she describes as 'an old man who can cleanse people so they deserve to see the angel of God' (*senior qui novit purificare homines ut mereantur videre angelum Dei*). This *antonomasia*, which will later turn out to refer to pope Urbanus, has a double rhetorical function. First, as becomes clear a little later, the name of Urbanus can scare pagans who associate Christianity with persecution. When Valerianus, in turn, intends to take his brother Tiburtius to Urbanus to be baptized (§11), Urbanus' name alarms Tiburtius, who is afraid of being burned alive if found in his company. As a result, he even wants to abandon his baptism altogether. Caecilia cleverly avoids this initial reaction in Valerianus, although, to be sure, she does mention Urbanus' name eventually (Valerianus has to be able to find him after all), when she slips it into the instructions with which she sends Valerianus on his way after he has agreed to go. The second function of the *antonomasia* is to communicate a positive emotional appeal to Valerianus' merits (*mereantur*). As a result, he is immediately interested in finding the pope and is sent on his way with the promise that, upon his return in the bedroom, he will see the angel and 'will obtain what he asks from him' (*ea que ab eo poposceris, impetrabis*) – a promise easily understood as ambiguous by Valerianus and the reader given the obvious expectation of sexual contact at their wedding night. Caecilia thus succeeds not only in preventing Valerianus from having sex with her but also sets her husband on his way to conversion.

Caecilia's rhetorical agency is further highlighted by Urbanus in his speech to Valerianus. Urbanus uses sexual metaphors that connect the baptism to the bedroom scene (*seminator, seminum, fructus, seminasti*, §6) but he also praises Jesus as the 'good

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[30] See §3, where it is said that her parents' insistence and fiancé's incitement made it impossible for her to reveal the true object of her love (*Parentum enim tanta vis et hortatus sponsi circa illam erat exestuans ut non posset amorem sui cordis ostendere*).

[31] This has also been pointed out by Elliott (1993, 65) who sees this as an indication of the fact that fictional texts as the *passio Caeciliae* are nevertheless culturally 'true'.

shepherd' (*pastor bone*) and Caecilia as an *ovis* or *apes argumentosa*[32], who turns her husband from 'a wild lion' into the tamest lamb. The reading *ovis argumentosa* presents the baptism through another sexual metaphor. The shepherd and his sheep are opposed to the lion ready to devour the sheep: chaste Christianity is opposed to the savage danger of carnal consummation, even within marriage. In the case of Caecilia, rhetoric is thus presented as an escape route from the dangers of sex towards the salvation of Christianity. Although it is not mentioned in the passion that Caecilia has received a rhetorical education,[33]) the conspicuously rhetorical term *argumentosa* marks Caecilia as someone possessing a *copia* of rhetorical proof or *argumentum*.[34]) *Argumentosus* can have a range of meanings in this context, ranging from 'capable in argument'[35]) over 'clever'[36]) and 'diligent'[37]) to the morally more ambiguous 'cunning'.[38]) Rhetorical aptitude can indeed be viewed as a dubious skill, which is traditionally associated with moral ambivalence.[39]) It is highly unlikely, however, that the intended readers of this text will have conceived Caecilia's rhetorical ability as morally ambiguous. They will have welcomed both Valerianus' conversion and martyrdom and Caecilia's preservation of her chastity as desirable outcomes at this stage of the story and will have admired Caecilia's rhetorical aptitude that secures all of this so efficiently. Given the unqualified positive intentions and ends, which, according to some sources, legitimized the use of rhetoric in Christian circles,[40]) Caecilia turns this traditionally ambivalent art into an

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[32] Upchurch (2007, §6) gives the reading *apes* in his text and lists *ovis* as an alternative reading. In his edition, Delehaye (1936, §6) gives the reading *ovis* in the text, and lists *apis* as an alternative reading.

[33] The only reference to Caecilia's education can be found in §13, where she states that she was trained in the Christian doctrine since childhood (*ab ipsis cunabulis*) (for the passage, cf. infra). It is unclear, then, if Caecilia has received a rhetorical education. This sets her apart from other heroines in the post-Nicene passions, such as Susanna (*BHL* 7937) or Eugenia (*BHL* 2667), who are said explicitly to have been trained in the worldly *artes*.

[34] Quint. *Inst.* 5.10.10, for example, uses the adjective in his discussion of different kinds of arguments, all related to types of proof.

[35] Cf. Souter, 1949, s.v. *argumentosus*.

[36] This meaning (*ingeniosus*) is mentioned by Du Cange et al. (1883-1887, s.v. *argumentosus*) with reference to the liturgical text of Caecilia's saints' day, which refers to Caecilia as an *apis argumentosa*. This use of *apis argumentosa* in the liturgy is also mentioned by Caraffa and Massone (1996, 24, 40). Also Arnaldi, Smiraglia, Celentano, De Prisco, Nazzaro, Polara, Turriani ([2]2001, s.v. *argumentosus*) list the meaning *ingeniosus* for *argumentosus* with reference to this exact passage in the *passio Caeciliae*.

[37] Cf. Sleumer, [5]2011, s.v. *argumentosus*.

[38] Cf. Blaise, 1954-1967, Tombeur, 2005, s.v. *argumentosus*; Blaise, 1975, s.v. *argumentosus*, and Du Cange et al., 1883-1887, s.v. *argumentosus*.

[39] See, for example, Connolly, 2007, 88 on rhetoric as a skill 'that bleeds into the realm of manipulation and cunning'. The long discussion about the moral acceptability of rhetorical manipulation reaches back at least to the Sophists and Plato.

[40] On the legitimacy of the use of rhetoric for the good Christian cause, see e.g. Aug. *doctr. christ.* 4.3 and Hier. *Epist. LXX.2*.

unambiguous virtue. Instead of detracting from her position as a perfect saint, her rhetorical cleverness enhances it.

3.3 Caecilia and Valerianus: unequal partners in proselytism

The first episode of the narrative already hints at the fact that Caecilia displays more rhetorical competence than Valerianus and uses this competence in order to convert others to Christianity. Unlike Valerianus, she anticipates the reaction of her addressee and adapts her speech to her audience.[41]) To be sure, on the most overt level the text presents both protagonists as proselytizing: an angel states that Christ will recruit Tiburtius through Valerianus (*per te*) just as he has recruited Valerianus through Caecilia (*per … Ceciliam*) (§8). But at the same time, a good deal of asymmetry creeps into the rhetorical competences of the central couple, as can further be observed when they set out to convert Tiburtius. Caecilia will turn out to be most efficient. Tiburtius is introduced into the story when he arrives at Caecilia's and Valerianus' house. At this point, Caecilia and Valerianus have received heavenly crowns of roses and lilies (common symbols of their martyrdom and virginity respectively).[42]) To the unbaptized Tiburtius the crowns remain invisible. Although Caecilia later became the patron saint of music, visual imagery is much more prominent in this passion. The motifs of blindness to the truth and seeing what is real run through the entire narrative, and may very well constitute a play on the etymology of her name, which has obviously been connected with blindness (*caecus*, blind) among other things.[43]) This etymology, in turn, picks up the *topos* of the blind seer, who does not see the directly observable but only the transcendental, true reality. This *topos* is inverted in the introduction of Tiburtius, who does not see the symbolically charged, Christian truth but only the directly observable, trivial reality. When Tiburtius wonders where the odor of flowers comes from at this time of year, Valerianus answers that it is because of his own intervention (*me interpellante* §9) that Tiburtius has deserved it (*meruisti*) to smell the flowers. So it is by the intercession of Valerianus, who acknowledges Tiburtius' merits, that the latter is able, or more precisely allowed, to perceive the flowers by the sense of smell. Valerianus

[41] An important rhetorical guideline, of course. See, for example, Cic. *Orat*. 70-1.

[42] For this symbolism, cf. Paoli, 2006, 721-2.

[43] Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea* mentions '*a way for blind men*' as one of the possible etymologies of Caecilia's name (cf. Maggioni, 1998, vol. II, 1180).

further specifies that Tiburtius will even see them if he adopts the Christian faith (*te credente*). His emphasis on his interlocutor's merits (*meruisti*) echo a similar emphasis in Caecilia's words earlier in the story and suggest that he may be imitating Caecilia's rhetorical strategy. In any case, his efforts seem somewhat misguided. Unlike Caecilia, he is not considerate of his interlocutor's specific worldview and does not mould his speech accordingly. Whereas Tiburtius' trivial comments about the flowers characterize him from the start as a pagan, unable to see the supernatural, Valerianus addresses a speech to him profoundly rooted in Christian doctrine: he refers to Christ as one 'whose blood begins to blossom (*florescit*) in the roses and whose body becomes white (*albescit*) in the lilies' and talks about crowns that Tiburtius cannot yet see. Of course, this does not mean anything to Tiburtius, who simply wonders whether he hears all this in a dream (*in somnis*) or in reality (*in veritate*). When Tiburtius thereupon asks Valerianus how he knows the pagan gods are *demonia*, Valerianus only uses an argument of authority: an angel of the Lord (*angelus Dei*) has taught him. As a result, Tiburtius is not at all inclined to promise that he will renounce the pagan gods, as Valerianus requires. Instead, he answers that he does not understand why Valerianus says those things (*non intelligo qua intentione ista prosequeris* §9).

Caecilia, for her part, uses a kind of rhetoric very different from her husband's when she addresses Tiburtius (§10). She uses realistic and everyday images to which Tiburtius can relate. She ridicules idolatry by calling the pagan gods statues made of various materials and visualizing how they are often covered in cobwebs, bird excrement and bird nests. Her approach is topical, as she criticizes the people who produce the statues (convicts), the material the statues are made of (both precious and cheap), and what the finished product (the statues) are or are not capable of doing. The arguments within her invective take the form of an enthymeme, as here: [44])

> '... Convicts (*damnaticii*) are sent to all kinds of mines, because of their crimes. So how can statues, made by convicts, either be gods, or be thought or believed to be gods? ...'.

Of the two premises, the *maior* is that statues are made of metal, and the *minor* that metal is unearthed in mines by convicts. Hence the metal for the statues of the gods is produced by convicts. How, then, can these statues be or thought to be true gods? The rhetorical question Caecilia uses here invites her interlocutor to participate in the logic behind her argument.[45]) She combines it with an implied *a maiore ad minus* argument: if

[44] Cf. Arist. *Rh.* 1.2.13, 2.22.1-3; Quint. *Inst.* 5.14.24.

[45] Cf. Quint. *Inst.* 9.2.8. Similar rhetorical questions can be found in §11 with regard to the eternal life: 'Why should we fear to lose this life, given that we can gain a far better life through this loss?', and in §12 with regard to the Holy Trinity.

the metal statues cannot be gods, the other statues made of 'lesser' materials, such as wood or terracotta, most certainly cannot be gods.[46]) Thereupon, she attacks the passivity of the statues with yet another realistic image. She had already suggested that these so-called gods cannot protect themselves against spiders, bird excrement or bird nests, but now she compares the statues to dead people: both have all their body parts, and cannot use them. But at least dead people have used their body parts in the past, while statues never have. A similar comparison based on accessible imagery can be found in §12, where Caecilia compares the Holy Trinity to the three constituents of the human faculty of reason (*sapientia*): natural disposition (*ingenium*), memory (*memoria*) and intelligence (*intellectus*).[47]) This time, she uses an *a minore ad maius* argument: since we accept that the one faculty of reason (*sapientia*) in a mortal man has these three aspects, we should conclude that the one, almighty God combines three persons in one godhead (*in una deitate*).

In short, Caecilia clearly adapts her speech to her addressee in drawing upon imagery taken from daily life that she can reasonably expect him to understand. In addition, she substantiates her point with rhetorical arguments. As indicated by Tiburtius' response to Caecilia's speech, her rhetoric is more efficient than her husband's. Whereas Tiburtius was explicit in his response to Valerianus that he did not understand what he was talking about, he is completely persuaded by Caecilia. He concludes that 'Who does not believe this, is a sheep (*pecus*)'[48]) (§10) and even falls prostrate and says that he does not suppose a human was speaking (*humana lingua*) but rather an angel of the lord (*angelus Dei*) (§12).

The contrast between Caecilia's and Valerianus' rhetorical aptitude is further highlighted by what happens next. Tiburtius points out that Caecilia's expositions about God are sufficient for him (*satis michi factum esse* §12), but he wants an answer to one last question. He turns to his brother for it (*conversus ad fratrem suum*), but Caecilia intervenes and characterizes herself explicitly as better qualified to respond (*de his mecum loquere* §13), as she arguably does not want Valerianus to endanger Tiburtius' conversion a second time. She refers to her long acquaintance with the Christian faith, trained as she is in the Christian doctrine since childhood (*ab ipsis cunabulis* §13), and contrasts it with Valerianus' recent initiation (*tirocinii tempus … prohibet dare responsum*). After this statement, Valerianus remains present but silent for the remainder of

[46] Cf. Quint. *Inst.* 5.10.87.

[47] This psychological proof of the Trinity sounds very Augustinian, but the exact combination of *ingenium*, *memoria* and *intellectus* as proof of the Trinity can only be found in Augustine, *sermo* 52 '*De Trinitate*' (20-21). We thank Dr. Anthony Dupont of the Catholic University of Leuven for this reference.

[48] Mombritius' edition has a different reading (*reus* (guilty) instead of *pecus*), whereas the *ASS* edition as well as Fabréga Grau also have *pecus*.

Tiburtius' conversion scene. Tiburtius, for his part, addresses his question about the eternal life no longer to him but to Caecilia (*dicit ei*): *Quis inde huc veniens aliam vobis quam predicatis vitam ostenderit?* 'Who has returned here from there and has shown you this other life that you proclaim?'[49]) (§13). In her answer, Caecilia draws upon another technique of persuasion famously discussed by Aristotle: an example, here in the form of a parable.[50]) She recounts a story about Christ, who, like herself, talks to people about the eternal life. In her story, the listeners ask Christ a question very similar to the one Tiburtius asks Caecilia: *Audientes hec increduli populi omnes una voce dixerunt: 'Et quis ibi fuit qui inde veniens potuit docere vera esse que asseris?*' 'When they heard this [i.e. talking about the eternal life], the incredulous crowd said with one voice: 'Who has been there and has returned from there who could thus show that it is true what you contend?'' Christ silences them by resuscitating a number of dead people.[51]) In this embedded narrative, the unbelievers (*increduli populi*) obviously function as a deterrent model for Tiburtius.[52]) Just as they do not believe Christ when he talks about the eternal life, Tiburtius does not believe Caecilia. However, the incredulous crowd are proved wrong in their disbelief and the *exemplum* thus urges Tiburtius in a comprehensible way not to be *incredulus* himself but to believe Caecilia's assertions. Moreover, by communicating the example as an elaborated story rather than, say, a short allusion,[53]) Caecilia ensures that the story is understandable for her interlocutor.[54]) As a result, Tiburtius is persuaded and implores (*obsecro*) his brother to take him to Urbanus to be baptized (§16). His earlier fear to be caught in Urbanus' presence has completely disappeared thanks to Caecilia's rhetorical skills.

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[49] Tiburtius has already asked the question a first time in §12, in slightly different terms: *Et quis ibi fuit et inde huc veniens vobis hoc potuit indicare ut merito possimus ista vobis asserentibus credere?* 'And who has been there and has returned here from there who could disclose this to you so that we may rightly believe you when you claim this?'

[50] Cf. Arist. *Rh.* 1.2.13, 2.20.1-3; Quint. *Inst.* 5.11.6. For a parable as example, see Lausberg, 1998, §414.

[51] We do not know this story from the Gospels. A very similar story, however, is mentioned in the apocryphal *virtutes Johannis* (6th century), cap. 6, 55-60: 'But our Lord and Teacher endorsed these words with examples of his virtues. For when they asked him: 'Who comes hither from there so that we can believe him?' (*Quis inde huc venit ut credamus ei?*), he answered: 'Bring your dead hither'. When they brought him a dead young man, he was resuscitated by the Lord as from his sleep, and all were convinced by his words' (edition Junod and Kaestli, 1983, 818, our translation).

[52] On this function of *exempla*, see Demoen, 1997, 130.

[53] On literary forms of *exempla*, see Demoen, 1997, 141-3.

[54] Since the *exemplum* does not concern, as far as we know, a well-known story (cf. supra, note 51), it could also have been beneficial for the public of the passion to hear the story in an elaborate version. This version, then, is important both on the level of the argument-function (i.e. its significance for the characters, in this case Tiburtius) and key-function (i.e. its significance for the readers/listeners of the passion). On these two functions, see De Jong, Nünlist, Bowie, 2004, XV-XVI.

3.4 Caecilia: a teacher of rhetoric?

So far, we have argued that Caecilia's rhetoric is more effective than Valerianus'. In contrast to her husband, her rhetorical aptitude enables her to obtain her goal (conversion). However, we will now argue that Valerianus' performance changes in this domain: he too will be acknowledged for his rhetorical aptitude by the pagan prefect. Valerianus will not succeed in converting this specific pagan. That the judge remains unconvinced is a generic necessity for a passion and one could argue that he did achieve another goal: martyrdom. Just like Caecilia, Valerianus eventually takes into account the identity and qualities of his interlocutors. Moreover, the fact that he uses the same rhetorical techniques as Caecilia redefines his position towards Caecilia as one of imitation.

After his failed rhetorical interventions in Tiburtius' conversion, Valerianus addresses a speech to the prefect Almachius, who has arrested him and his brother, in which he uses an *exemplum*. Almachius laughs (*ridens* §18) at the rejection by the two brothers of the joys and delights of this life, whereupon Valerianus, like Caecilia, answers with a story: a fable about hard-working people and merrymakers, similar to the well-known Aesopian fable of the grasshopper and the ants.[55]) By using this *exemplum*, he imitates Caecilia's rhetoric in many aspects. The function of his *exemplum* is similar to Caecilia's: Valerianus presents the merrymakers as a comprehensible deterrent model for Almachius. Just as the merrymakers ridicule the hard-working people because they do not enjoy earthly pleasures, Almachius ridicules the brothers. But of course, the merrymakers repent of their attitude afterwards. The form of the *exemplum* too is identical to that of Caecilia's *exemplum*: an elaborated story, easily understandable for an interlocutor who is not familiar with it. Like Caecilia, Valerianus implicitly aligns his interlocutor with characters in the *exemplum* by adopting verbal echoes that highlight the similarity between the attitude of the *illustrans* (in this case the merrymakers) and the *illustrandum* (the prefect).[56]) And again, the reaction of the interlocutor indicates the speech's success: the prefect judges that Valerianus has spoken wisely (*Sapienter video prosecutum* §19), which contrasts sharply with his reaction to Tiburtius' earlier speech to the prefect. In this speech, Tiburtius uses abstract language that the prefect cannot understand[57]) and from which he concludes that

[55] Cf. the Aesopian fable in Chambry, 1927, 146.

[56] See §18: *ridens prefectus* and *ridentes, irridere, risu, habuimus in derisum, risimus*. For the terms *illustrans* and *illustrandum*, see Demoen, 1997, 126-7.

[57] E.g. §17: *quod videtur esse et non est* (what seems to exist but does not); *...eius quem in visceribus mee mentis accepi* (... of Him whom I have received in the innermost parts of my mind).

Tiburtius is insane (*non est sani capitis*). Tiburtius, in other words, makes exactly the same rhetorical mistake as his brother when he attempted to convert him. Valerianus, on the other hand, in his speech to the prefect, arguably decides to adopt Caecilia's approach: he employs imagery from daily life and other rhetorical arguments. Caecilia, then, not only emerges as a more competent speaker than her husband, but also acts as his teacher of rhetoric.[58])

3.5 Caecilia: a successful orator

So far Caecilia's rhetorical achievements have been situated on an interpersonal level in their bedroom and house respectively. But her rhetorical ability is not limited to this context. In two scenes of the passion, she also appears as a successful orator addressing a large group of people in a public context. In the first episode (§23), she addresses a clerk (*cornicularius*) named Maximus, his household and the executioners of the two brothers. All have just been baptized. She exhorts them, as soldiers of Christ (*Eia, milites Christi*), to hold on to their faith and to become martyrs of the Christian church. This time, she does use abstract language, rooted in the Christian doctrine.[59]) Since her audience is initiated into the Christian faith, they have no problem understanding it. In the second episode (§§ 25-26), Caecilia addresses a number of servants who have been sent to her house by the prefect to convince her to sacrifice to the pagan gods. She immediately presents herself as favourably disposed towards her audience, thus enhancing her persuasiveness as a speaker by paying attention to the construction of *ēthos* (one of Aristotle's three *pisteis* or techniques of persuasion):[60]) she expresses sympathy with the servants (*doleo*) as they carry out the orders of the unjust prefect without worrying about it (*sine sollicitudine*). Her audience starts to weep and deplores the fact that such an elegant, wise, noble, honorable and beautiful girl chooses to die.

[58] Interestingly, Tiburtius also starts to use understandable images when talking to a clerk in §22, after his earlier rhetorical failures before the prefect. Due to textual contradictions, it is unclear if Tiburtius is present during Valerianus' interrogation by the prefect. If he is present, he witnesses Valerianus' rhetorical technique being more effective than his own, which would suggest that he, in turn, imitates Valerianus in his conversation with the clerk.

[59] She says that they should cast off the works of darkness (*opera tenebrarum*), put on the weapons of light (*arma lucis*) and head towards the crown of life (*coronam vitae*).

[60] Cf. Arist. *Rh.* 2.1.5-7: the three qualities which Aristotle deems necessary for positive *ēthos* construction are intelligence, virtue and goodwill.

Caecilia then gives further evidence of her rhetorical skills. Firstly, she again lists a number of comparisons that consist of images which are easily understandable for the servants. She argues that dying does not mean losing your youth (*perdere*), but only changing it (*mutare*), just as one exchanges mud for gold, or a cheap and small house for an expensive and spacious one. Secondly, she uses an argument of analogy and invites her audience to consider the following hypothesis: if someone would offer them to change their pennies into gold coins, would they not hurry to accept and urge their relatives to do the same? And would they not laugh at the people who weep (*lacrimis*) and try to stop them from accepting? Would they not deem these people ignorant and ill-informed (*ignaros et nescios*)? They would indeed be very happy to receive as many gold coins as they possess pennies (*pondus ad pondus*). Caecilia presents the weeping people who try to stop (*revocarent*) the others from turning their cheap change into gold as a deterrent model for the servants, who are also weeping (*dabant fletus*) while trying to stop Caecilia from holding on to her faith (*rogabant … ne amitteret, nec … versaret*). The rhetorical questions then cast the servants in the paradoxical situation of being encouraged to laugh at themselves if they kept Caecilia from holding on to her faith. She thus urges the servants in a comprehensible way to avoid being laughed at and being considered 'ignorant' and 'ill-informed'. Caecilia ends her speech with a connection between what her audience accepts in daily life and what they should accept about the eternal life. She leaves it to her interlocutors to draw the appropriate conclusion: if they agree they would be happy with an exchange rate *pondus ad pondus*, they should be even more happy when God donates a hundred times the amount that one receives (*centuplum*), plus the eternal life.

After this speech, Caecilia asks if her audience believes her. All are converted at once: they say in one voice that they believe Christ, with a servant like Caecilia (*talem famulam*), is the true God. It is significant that her audience is completely convinced by Caecilia's speech and does not demand any further proof. This is a clear contrast with a scene a bit earlier in the passion. In §§ 22-23, Tiburtius manages to convert Maximus, again thanks to the use of understandable comparisons. The soul, he says, is covered by the body just as a body is covered by clothes, and the resurrection of the body can be compared to the resurrection of a phoenix.[61]) In this case, Maximus is converted only on the condition that he will get proof.[62]) Caecilia's audience, on the other hand, is immediately persuaded by her rhetorical skills.

[61] Again, this use of understandable images contrasts with Tiburtius' use of abstract language in his conversation with the prefect. For a possible change in Tiburtius' rhetorical attitude, cf. also supra note 58.

[62] Maximus gets visual proof, as promised: he sees the souls of Valerianus and Tiburtius ascend to heaven (§24).

Conclusion

The *passio Caeciliae* develops the interconnections between rhetoric and characterization in an interesting way. Rhetorical performance distinguishes one martyr from another. Although Caecilia is determined by traditional gender patterns (forced marriage), her elaborate rhetorical skills allow her both to obtain a position of control in the marriage and to achieve the two aims central to her self-definition: the preservation of her virginity and the conversion of her audience. Caecilia's rhetorical ability becomes apparent from the very beginning of the passion: in the bedroom scene she cleverly responds to all sorts of erotic expectations in both Valerianus and the reader, only to disrupt these expectations instantly. Her rhetorical approach thus adds to the suspense of the text. Although rhetoric can be seen as a traditionally ambiguous skill, Caecilia surpasses this ambiguity as she puts her rhetorical aptitude to use for what the Christian audience of the text will undoubtedly have considered a uniformly good cause. Characters also change in this passion. At the outset, Valerianus emerges as an incompetent speaker in comparison to his wife. Yet his rhetorical skills improve in the course of the passion and he becomes more successful with his speech. We have argued that this change can be added to Caecilia's record of achievements, since Valerianus seems to be imitating her rhetorical approach.

With our analysis we hope to have illustrated that the *passio Caeciliae* is a literarily more interesting text than is usually assumed. The continued emphasis on the stereotypical nature and repetitiveness of this as well as other late antique passions, we believe, does not do justice to its subtlety as a literary creation.

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Chapter 4 Erotic persuasion and characterization in late antique hagiography: the *passio Caeciliae* and *passio Susannae*

Introduction[1]

Between the fourth and the sixth centuries an impressive number of Latin passions of the martyrs were produced. However, they have received little or no attention from literary scholars. They were - and still are - studied mainly by Church historians and specialists in the cult of the saints and continue to suffer from a bad reputation. Classicists generally know little about this important corpus of sources and/or think of them as repetitive, badly written texts with stock characters: interesting documents for the religious history of Late Antiquity perhaps, but totally lacking in literary quality and originality. For an extensive study of the literary aspects of the late antique *acta martyrum and passiones*, one has to go as far back in time as the Belgian Bollandist Hippolyte Delehaye[2]; and significantly, his verdict was that "one has the impression of constantly turning the pages of the same book"[3]. In line with this theme of monotony,

[1] The doctoral research of Annelies Bossu is financed by the FWO (Research Foundation Flanders)-project G.0633.10N, entitled "Sacred Fiction. A narratological-rhetorical analysis of novelistic topicality and generic specificity in late antique hagiography", supervised by Prof. Dr. Danny Praet and Prof. Dr. Koen De Temmerman. The authors would like to thank Latomus' anonymous referees for helpful comments and suggestions.

[2] An analysis of a small number of late antique passions as literary documents, however, can be found in W. BERSCHIN, *Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter, I: Von der Passio Perpetuae zu den Dialogi Gregors des Grossen*, Stuttgart, 1986, p. 66-87, 94-110.

[3] H. DELEHAYE, *Étude sur le légendier romain. Les saints de novembre et de décembre*, Brussels, 1936, p. 18-19 : "... on a l'impression de tourner sans cesse les pages d'un même livre" [our translation]. Cf. also H. DELEHAYE, *Les passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires*, Brussels, 1966[2], p. 171-226. Similar thoughts are formulated by M.

scholars have argued that some passions are mere copies of others. In this paper, we will discuss one such purported couple of model and copy: the *passio Caeciliae* and the *passio Susannae*. We hope to demonstrate that things are more complex and more interesting from a literary point of view than is usually assumed.

4.1 Previous Research on the *Passio Caeciliae* and *Passio Susannae*

The summaries of these two passions will perhaps not inspire much confidence in their literary qualities. Moreover, the parallels which can be observed between them have been used to argue that the *passio Susannae* was a copy of the *passio Caeciliae*. The latter passion (BHL 1495 - 1495a - 1496)[4] recounts the vicissitudes of the Christian virgin Caecilia, who is pressured by her father into marrying the pagan Valerianus. On their wedding night, she converts Valerianus to Christianity and persuades him not to consummate their marriage. Subsequently, Valerianus' brother Tiburtius is converted as well. The brothers come into conflict with the prefect of Rome and are beheaded. A few months later, Caecilia herself is brought before the prefect and also dies a martyr's death. The *passio Susannae* (BHL 7937 – 7937b)[5] recounts the vicissitudes of the Christian virgin Susanna, who refuses to marry the son of the emperor Diocletian. Diocletian sends two brothers, Claudius and Maximus, relatives of Susanna, to talk her and her

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STELLADORO, *Agata, la martire*, Milan, 2005, p. 66-67; V. MILAZZO, *La Sicilia: Agata e Lucia* in A. TILATTI and G. B. F. TROLESE (eds.) *Giustina e le altre. Sante e culti femminili in Italia settentrionale dalla prima età cristiana al secolo XII*, Rome, 2009, p. 243-270, and many others.

[4]The differences between BHL 1495 and BHL 1495a are minimal: in BHL 1495a, a part of the prologue is missing. BHL 1496 is a shorter version of BHL 1495. We will use the most recent edition of BHL 1495 (R. UPCHURCH (ed.), *Aelfric's Lives of the Virgin Spouses*, Exeter, 2007 (with English translation)) in this article, but we will also occasionally refer to the Delehaye edition (DELEHAYE, *Étude* [n. 3], p. 194-220). The two editions betray only minor differences. Translations of the passages from the passion are our own.

[5] The differences between BHL 7937 and 7937b are minimal and the latter has not been edited. We use the Mombritius edition of BHL 7937 (MONACHI SOLESMENSES (eds.), *B. Mombritius, Sanctuarium seu Vitae Sanctorum* (1480), Paris, 1910[2], vol. I, p. 553-559), as Lanéry considers this the oldest and most widespread edition (C. LANÉRY, *Hagiographie d'Italie (300-550): les passions*, in G. PHILIPPART (ed.), *Corpus Christianorum: Hagiographies V*, Turnhout, 2010, p. 1-369, esp. 150-151). When relevant, we will also include references to the edition of the *Acta Sanctorum*: J. BOLLANDUS and G. HENSCHENIUS (eds.), *Acta Sanctorum Februarii*, Antwerp, 1658, volume III, p. 61-64 (first part of the passion) and J.–B. DU SOLLIER, J. PIEN, G. CUYPERS and P. VAN DEN BOSSCHE (eds.), *Acta Sanctorum Augusti,* Antwerp, 1735, volume II, p. 631-632 (second part of the passion). Susanna's passion is divided into two parts in the *ASS* edition because, according to the passion, her fellow martyrs died earlier.

father Gabinius into the marriage. But Claudius and Maximus are not successful, being instead converted to Christianity. In the end, Claudius, Maximus and Susanna all die as martyrs.

As early as 1925, Francesco Lanzoni called the *passio Susannae* an "evident copy" of the *passio Caeciliae*[6].The position that the latter functioned as a model for the former is still held: in the recent international history of Latin and vernacular hagiographical literature, published as part of the *Corpus Christianorum* project, Cécile Lanéry refers to Lanzoni's view and identifies the *passio Caeciliae* as the "illustrious model" and "guideline" for the author of the *passio Susannae*[7]. She also sets out to explain why Susanna's hagiographer turned to the *passio Caeciliae* for inspiration[8]. To underpin their thesis - which is plausible both from a chronological[9]and a geographical[10] point of view - Lanzoni and Lanéry provide a list of thematic parallels between the two passions. However, none of these parallels necessarily indicates a one-to-one relationship between the two texts. Rather, they consist of common hagiographical themes. Both Lanzoni and Lanéry identify the element of the *martyrium* in one's own home, for instance, as an element shared by the *passio Caeciliae* and the *passio Susannae*, thus indicating direct influence. But as Delehaye has argued, the *passio Caeciliae* contains a large number of *loci communes* and the house theme also occurs in the *passio Eugeniae* and the *passio Gallicani, Johannis et Pauli*[11]. The two passions have many more details in

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[6] "copia evidente", cf. F. LANZONI, *I titoli presbiterali di Roma antica nella storia e nella leggenda* in *RAC* 2, 1925, p. 195-257, esp. 231.

[7] "illustre modèle", "fil conducteur", cf. LANERY, *Hagiographie d'Italie* [n. 5], p. 151.

[8] LANÉRY, *Hagiographie d'Italie* [n. 5], p. 152. She suggests that Susanna's hagiographer may have been inspired by the erroneous inclusion of Caecilia in the *Martyrologium Hiëronymianum* (ca. 450) on the same date as Susanna.

[9] The *passio Caeciliae* is dated to the fifth century AD (cf. C. LANERY, *Nouvelles recherches d'hagiographie arnobienne: la passion de Cécile* in M. GOULLET (ed.) *Parva pro magnis munera: études de littérature tardo-antique et médiévale offerts à François Dolbeau par ses élèves*, Turnhout, 2009, p. 533-559); the *passio Susannae* is dated between 450 and 550 AD, with the *Martyrologium Hiëronymianum* (ca. 450) acting as a *terminus post quem* (cf. L. DUCHESNE, *Les légendes d'Alta Semita* in *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 36, 1916, p. 27-56, esp. 36-39) and the second version of the *Liber Pontificalis* (ca. 550) as a *terminus ante quem* (cf. LANÉRY, *Hagiographie d'Italie* [n. 5], p. 153).

[10] Both passions contain clear references to Roman topography and are thought to have been written in Rome. Lanéry has suggested that the author of the *passio Susannae* was a clerk of the Roman *titulus Gai*, where Susanna was venerated (cf. LANÉRY, *Hagiographie d'Italie* [n. 5], p. 152) and has identified Arnobius the Younger as the author of the *passio Caeciliae* (cf. LANÉRY, *Nouvelles recherches* [n. 9], p. 536-550), but one cannot say anything with certainty about the passions' anonymous authors.

[11] Cf. DELEHAYE, *Étude* [n. 3], p. 78-80, esp. 79. The *passio Eugeniae* (BHL 2667) can be dated to the 5th century (cf. R. GRYSON and H. FREDE, *Répertoire général des auteurs ecclésiastiques latins de l'Antiquité et du Haut Moyen Âge,* Freiburg, 2007, p. 62; LANERY, *Hagiographie d'Italie* [n. 5], p. 134-135). In this passion, Basilla is martyred in her own house. The *passio Gallicani, Johannis et Pauli* (BHL 3236 + 3238) can be dated to the 5th or 6th century (GRYSON

common (virginity, dabbing of blood, a character called Maximus, the pope, the conversion of two brothers) which we will discuss below. As we will see, none of these parallels individually constitutes irrefutable evidence for a direct dependence of the *passio Susannae* on the *passio Caeciliae*. Rather, it is the combination of so many common themes in a similar structure which is remarkable. We argue that, even if it seems probable that the author of the *passio Susannae* did indeed know and used the *passio Caeciliae*, this does not imply that he turned his text into an exact copy of it. Although he was probably inspired not just by the hagiographical tradition generally but also by Caecilia's hagiographer in particular, he created his own literary text, thereby rehearsing the traditional, literary practice of imitation as creative rewriting[12]. In what follows, we will discuss the common themes put forward by Lanzoni and Lanéry and elucidate how the author of the *passio Susannae* – to a greater or lesser extent – transforms them into elements of his own literary creation.

Firstly, Lanzoni draws attention to the dedication to virginity, which is a recurrent theme in the late antique passions[13]. Indeed, both Caecilia and Susanna display such dedication, but there is a crucial difference: Susanna declines a marriage proposal from the pagan emperor, whereas Caecilia assents to marry her pagan fiancé Valerianus, albeit with the intention to convert him to Christianity and never to consummate the marriage. Secondly, Lanzoni and Lanéry draw attention to the fact that in both the *passio Caeciliae* and the *passio Susannae* devoted disciples dab up the blood of the heroine with cloth. Yet once again, there is a difference: Caecilia's hagiographer does not mention to what end the bloodstained cloth is put, whereas the *passio Susannae* relates that Serena puts it in a silver box and prays next to it day and night. The dabbing of blood is not a very common theme in the late antique passions[14], but in an article that

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and FREDE, *Répertoire* [n. 11], p. 67 state 5th or 6th (?) century, LANÉRY, *Hagiographie d'Italie* [n. 5], p. 212-214 claims between 514 and 550); in this passion too, Johannes and Paulus are martyred in their own house.

[12]On imitation as a literary practice, see A. CIZEK, *Imitatio et tractatio. Die literarisch-rhetorischen Grundlagen der Nachahmung in Antike und Mittelalter*, Tübingen, 1994; and on literary imitation in a hagiographical context in particular, K. JAZDZEWSKA, *Hagiographic Invention and Imitation: Niketas' Life of Theoktiste and its Literary Models* in GRBS 49, 2009, p. 257–279.

[13] See e.g. DELEHAYE, *Étude* [n. 3], p. 80. This theme can also be found, for instance, in the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae*, which is mentioned in the *Martyrologium Hiëronymianum* on the same date as both Caecilia and Susanna. From the 4th century onwards, sexual abstinence, as a bloodless martyrdom, or *martyrium sine cruore,* becomes an important theme in the late antique, 'bloody' passions, cf. F. E. CONSOLINO, *Modelli di santità femminile nelle più antiche passioni romane* in *Augustinianum* 24, 1984, p. 83-113.

[14] Interest in the blood of a martyr as a relic is, however, mentioned in the 6th century passion of Genesius of Arles (BHL 3304, cf. GRYSON and FREDE, *Répertoire* [n. 11], p. 68): one city keeps the remains of Genesius' blood (§5 *consecrati cruoris uestigia*, edition S. CAVALLIN, *Saint Genès le notaire* in *Eranos* 43, 1945, p. 160-164, esp. 164) whereas another city receives his body. In the 7th century passion of Felix of Girona (BHL 2864, cf. GRYSON and FREDE, *Répertoire* [n. 11], p. 65) the blood of the martyr is also considered a relic (§22: *de eius cruore … reliquias*

upholds the existence of a cult of martyr blood in different regions of the early Christian world, Fasola[15] mentions several passages from other texts that attest the custom of collecting and venerating the blood of martyrs[16]. While Fasola adduces several instances that illustrate the preservation and veneration of blood[17], of special interest for our purposes are those passages that treat the way in which the blood is obtained. Fasola lists three passages which contain, or might contain, a reference to the collection of martyr blood with cloth[18]: a passage from the acts of Cyprian[19] and two passages from Prudentius' *Peristephanon Liber*. Prudentius' first passage concerns the martyr Vincent of Saragossa (BHL 8627-8655)[20], the second the martyr Hippolytus (BHL 3960-3963)[21]. The passage with regard to Vincent of Saragossa is particularly interesting for our purposes, as it mentions the veneration of the martyr's blood after it has been dabbed up with

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nobiscum detulimus, edition A. FÁBREGA GRAU, *Pasionario hispánico, siglos VII-XI*, volume II, Madrid, 1955, p. 327-328).

[15] U. M. FASOLA, *Il culto del sangue dei martiri nella chiesa primitiva e deviazioni devozionistiche nell'epoca della riscoperta delle catacombe* in F. VATTIONI (ed.), *Sangue e antropologia nella letteratura cristiana*, vol. III, Rome, 1983, p. 1473-1489.

[16] Next to these passages, whose evidential value he nuances, Fasola also adduces archeological proof to underpin the existence of a cult of martyr blood. This archeological proof consists of three inscriptions (4th-6th century) and several ampoules. Cf. FASOLA, *Il culto del sangue* [n. 15], p. 1486-1489.

[17] The passages adduced by Fasola that attest the preservation and veneration of martyr blood are the following (cf. FASOLA, *Il culto del sangue* [n. 15], p. 1478, 1480-1486): GAUDENTIUS, *Tractatus XVII,* 12; *De miraculis Sancti Stephani protomartyris*, I, 1; GREGORY OF TOURS, *Liber in Gloria martyrum*, I, 33; *Epistulae Imperatorum Pontificum aliorum inde ab A. CCCLXVII usque ad A. DLIII datae, epistula II,* edition O. GÜNTHER (ed.), *Epistulae Imperatorum Pontificum aliorum,* vol. I, Berlin, 1895 (Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum 35), p. 13; *Liber Pontificialis*, edition L. DUCHESNE, *Liber Pontificalis*, vol. II, Paris, 1892, p. 56.

[18] Other passages which refer to the collection of martyr blood, yet not by means of cloth, include the *passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis* (dated between 202 and 210, cf. GRYSON and FREDE, *Répertoire* [n. 11], p. 81) and Gregory of Tours' *Liber miraculorum in gloria martyrum*, I, 11.

[19] When Cyprian was about to be beheaded, his followers spread many cloths and napkins (*linteamina et manualia*) in front of him, edition MUSURILLO, *The acts of the Christian martyrs*, Oxford, 1972, p 174. It is not made explicit, however, that they mean to dab up the blood. The acts of Cyprian can be dated to 258, cf. GRYSON and FREDE, *Répertoire* [n. 11], p. 60.

[20] PRUDENTIUS, *Peristephanon Liber*, V, 341-344: *plerique uestem linteam stillante tingunt sanguine, tutamen ut sacrum suis domi reseruent posteris* (edition T. E. PAGE, E. CAPPS, W. H. D. ROUSE, L. A. POST, E. H. WARMINGTON and H. J. THOMSON, *Prudentius*. Vol. II. Text established by T. P., E. C., W. R., L. P., E. W. and translated by H. T., London, Cambridge (MA), Loeb Classical Library, 1961). The passion of Vincent also exists in an anonymous version (edition J. BOLLANDUS and G. HENSCHENIUS, (eds.) *Acta Sanctorum Ianuarii*, Antwerp, 1643, vol. II, p. 394-97 (BHL 8630)), which also mentions the act of dabbing up the martyr's blood with cloth: *uideres circumstantium frequentiam… sanguinem linteis excipere, sacra ueneratione posteris profuturum*. The anonymous passion can be dated to the 5th - 7th centuries (cf. GRYSON and FREDE, *Répertoire* [n. 11], p. 90-91).

[21] PRUDENTIUS *Peristephanon Liber*, XI, 141-144: *palliolis etiam bibulae siccantur harenae, ne quis in infecto puluere ros maneat. Si quis et in sudibus recalenti aspergine sanguis insidet, hunc omnem spongia pressa rapit.* (PAGE, CAPPS, ROUSE, POST, WARMINGTON and THOMSON, *Prudentius* [n. 20]).

cloth. The fact that the *passio Susannae* explicitly relates the veneration of Susanna's blood, then, puts the text on a par not with the *passio Caeciliae* but with Prudentius' account of Vincent of Saragossa's passion. As a third parallel between the two passions, Lanéry notes that both stage a character with the rather common name of Maximus[22]. However, the two Maximi do not play the same role in the two *martyria*: in the *passio Caeciliae*, Maximus is the *cornicularius* who is converted by the brothers Valerianus and Tiburtius, whereas in the *passio Susannae*, he is one of the brothers. Fourthly, Lanéry also argues that the role of Pope Gaius in Susanna's passion echoes that of Pope Urbanus in Caecilia's. However, Gaius occupies a more important position in the narrative than does Urbanus. It is Gaius, for example, who converts one of the two brothers, Maximus, with only limited help from Susanna, whereas in the other passion the driving force for the conversion of each of the two brothers is none other than Caecilia herself. As a last parallel between the two passions[23], Lanéry points to the consecutive conversions of two brothers (Valerianus and Tiburtius, and Claudius and Maximus respectively)[24]. Again, however, the author of the *passio Susannae* has transformed this theme, Susanna's contribution to the second conversion being much more limited than Caecilia's.

This overview illustrates, then, that the author of the *passio Susannae* did not simply copy several themes from the *passio Caeciliae*, but revised and adjusted them to suit his own literary purposes. Yet the clearest indication of the creative input of Susanna's hagiographer, we argue, can be found in an aspect which is fundamental to the narrative architecture of his text but insufficiently studied by hagiography scholars: characterization. The rhetorical and literary characterization of the martyrs in the conversion scenes, we contend, differs markedly. The historical and cultural background of the conversions may run parallel in the two texts, but the ways in which Caecilia and Susanna secure them are strikingly dissimilar. More specifically, Caecilia is characterized both as a speaker with astute and manipulative rhetorical skills and as a teacher. Susanna, on the other hand, is neither: as we will see, she is characterized by

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[22] The BHL mentions ten 'Maximi', martyrs as well as clergy, and the *Prosopographia imperii romani saec. I, II, III* (Pars V, L. PETERSEN, (ed.), Berlin, 1983) lists more than 200.

[23] It should be noted that Lanéry not only sees the *passio Caeciliae* as the model and guideline of the *passio Susannae* but also argues that Susanna's hagiographer knew the *passio Sebastiani* (BHL 7543), which depicts Pope Gaius as contemporary with the persecution under Diocletian, cf. LANÉRY, *Hagiographie d'Italie* [n. 5], p. 151. It is doubtful, however, that the hagiographer of the *passio Susannae* adopted this element from the *passio Sebastiani*: firstly, it is well known that chronological accuracy is not a characteristic of the late antique passions, and secondly, as Lanéry herself suggests, the location of Susanna's titulus next to Diocletian's baths (as indicated in one manuscript of the *Martyrologium Hiëronymianum*) might have inspired the hagiographer of Susanna's passion to make Gaius and the others relatives of Diocletian, cf. LANÉRY, *Hagiographie d'Italie* [n. 5], p. 152.

[24] This theme goes back at least as far as the Gospels, as Christ called pairs of brothers: Simon and Andrew, James and John, cf. Mt. 4, 18-22; Mt. 10, 1-4; Mc. 3, 13-19; Lc. 6, 12-16; Joh. 1, 40.

her actions rather than by speech[25]. They both manage to convert the men in their environment but, as our analysis will show, the author of the *passio Susannae* does not turn his heroine and her companions into mere copies of their counterparts in the *passio Caeciliae*.

4.2 Rhetorical Manipulation and Characterization in the *Passio Caeciliae*

The main theme of both the *passio Caeciliae* and the *passio Susannae* is Christian, spiritual love (*caritas*, *ἀγάπη*). More specifically, the two texts address the tension between such love and pagan, worldly love (*amor, ἔρως*)[26]. Both Caecilia and Susanna prefer a spiritual marriage with Christ to a sexual marriage with a mortal man. Caecilia, who loves only Christ (*solum Christum diligeret*, §3) and commends her chastity to him (*suam Domino pudicitiam commendantem*), refuses to consummate her marriage, whereas Susanna, who likewise commends her chastity to Christ (*pudiciciam domino Iesu Christo exhiberem*, p. 553, line 54), declines the imperial marriage proposal altogether[27].

The tension between worldly and spiritual love functions as the framework for the first conversion in both passions: that of Valerianus in the *passio Caeciliae* and that of Claudius in the *passio Susannae*. In the *passio Caeciliae*, Caecilia's proselytic abilities are

[25] On speech and action as two techniques of characterization in ancient narrative, see K. De Temmerman, *Ancient Rhetoric as a Hermeneutical Tool for the Analysis of Characterization in Narrative Literature* in *Rhetorica* 28, 2010 (1), 23-51, specifically 33-38, and K. De Temmerman, *Crafting Characters. Heroes and Heroines in the Ancient Greek Novel,* Oxford, 2014, 37-39.

[26] For an extensive discussion of both pagan and Christian love, we refer to the recent lemma in the *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*: R. Kany, art. *Nächstenliebe und Gottesliebe* in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum,* Lfg. 194/201, 2013, col. 652-720.

[27] A marriage without sexual intercourse as in the case of Caecilia is not common and had heretical connotations. For the origin, evolution and consequences of the phenomenon of such as 'spiritual marriage', as well as its heretical connotations, we refer to H. Achelis, *Virgines subintroductae. Ein Beitrag zum 7. Kapittel des 1. Korinthierbriefs,* Leipzig, 1902; P. Brown, *The Body and Society. Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity,* New York, 1988, p. 83-102; D. Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage. Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock*, Princeton, 1993, p. 16-93 and A. Alwis, *Celibate Marriages in Late-Antique and Byzantine Hagiography: The Lives of Saints Julian and Basilissa, Saints Andronikos and Athanasia and Saints Galaktion and Episteme,* London, 2011. For the focus on virginity in late antique passions, cf. Consolino, *Modelli di santità femminile* [n. 13], and K. Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride. Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/ London, 1996, p. 116-143. For the spiritual love of God in terms of traditional worldly love, cf. K. Thraede, art. *Kuss* in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, XXII, 2008, col. 545-576, esp. 569-573 (Liebesmystik).

repeatedly connected with her rhetorical achievements[28]; the conversion of her husband Valerianus (§§4-5) clearly indicates why. Valerianus, newly wed, wants to consummate his marriage. As a pagan, he is oriented towards worldly love. The Christian virgin Caecilia, however, turns his worldly desire against him in order to lure him, step by step, into conversion to Christianity. This religious persuasion is based upon an elaborate rhetorical strategy that casts Caecilia as somewhat manipulative. She first seems to respond to her husband's (and the readers') expectations about what might take place in their bedroom on their wedding night by addressing him with sweet, amorous words[29]. Subsequently, and still in line with such expectations about erotic interaction between newlyweds, she makes her husband swear an oath of secrecy about a mystery (*mysterium*, §4) that she will reveal to him[30]. It is only when Valerianus has taken this oath that Caecilia brings such expectations into question by revealing that there is an angel (*angelus*) who watches over her as a lover (*amatorem*). The whole honeymoon setting and her sweet words trigger an emotional response from Valerianus: he naturally interprets the word *amator* in the worldly sense as an erotic rival. Caecilia's ambivalent disclosure of unfaithfulness is part of a rhetorical strategy that aims to use his amorous emotions as motivational steps in his initiation into Christianity and a chaste marriage. He demands to see this angel but, since he has sworn the oath, he first has to obey her instructions. Caecilia is very selective in the information that she discloses. She sends Valerianus to pope Urbanus in order to be baptized but carefully avoids mentioning his name or ecclesiastical function. Instead, she uses an *antonomasia* and refers to Urbanus as a senior "who knows how to purify people so that they deserve to see the angel of God"[31]. The use of this *antonomasia* underlines her astuteness in two ways. First, its craftiness becomes clear in §11, where Tiburtius nearly abandons his baptism out of fear just because he hears the name of Urbanus when it is mentioned by his brother. Caecilia's *antonomasia* avoids such a

[28] Cf. §6: Urbanus characterizes her as an *ouis* or *apes argumentosa* (depending on the reading) who transforms her husband from a wild lion into a gentle lamb. *Argumentosa* is of course a conspicuously rhetorical term that denotes wealth of rhetorical proof or *argumentum* (QUINTILIAN, *Institutio Oratoria* V, 10, 10, for example, uses the adjective in a discussion of different kinds of arguments); §8: an angel specifies that Christ has won Valerianus over (*lucratus est*) thanks to his servant Caecilia. For a more detailed analysis of Caecilia's rhetorical skills, see A. BOSSU, K. DE TEMMERMAN, D. PRAET, *The Saint as an Astute Heroine: Rhetoric and Characterization in the passio Caeciliae*, Mnemosyne, forthcoming.

[29] *O dulcissime atque amantissime iuvenis,...*(§4).

[30] An example of a similar scene (a heroine makes a man swear a love oath in a marriage context) can be found in Chariton's novel *Callirhoe* III, 2, 5. And, of course, the concept of mystery is a well-known metaphor for sex and sexual initiation in ancient narrative (see, for example, Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* I, 10, 5; I, 18, 3; V, 15, 6, etc.).

[31] Cf. §5: *Est senior qui nouit purificare homines ut mereantur uidere angelum Dei.*

reaction on the part of Valerianus. And second, her words also appeal to Valerianus' own merits (*mereantur*) and are psychologically efficient: he is immediately interested in finding the man and is sent on his way with the promise that, upon his return to the bedroom, he will see the angel and will obtain 'what he asks from him' (*ea que ab eo poposceris impetrabis*) – a promise again easily understood ambiguously by the reader given Valerianus' obvious expectation of sexual contact on their wedding night.

Eventually, Valerianus heads off to Urbanus, becomes initiated into the Christian faith, is baptized and then sees the true nature of the *amator*. Only then does the contemplation of heavenly love make him accept a spiritual marriage as he embraces Christian *caritas*. In this conversion scene, then, Valerianus' carnal desire to consummate his marriage, motivated as it is by worldly *amor*, is turned by Caecilia to her own advantage through her rhetorical astuteness: *caritas* has made a good sophist! Not only does this characterization of Caecilia align her with a number of other late antique hagiographic heroines, all known for their rhetorical versatility[32]; but it also recycles, and christianizes, a trope well-known in ancient narrative that fuses erotic desire and rhetorical performance[33]. In the *passio Caeciliae*, not the profane love, or *ἔρως* but Christian *caritas* becomes the power through which rhetorical performance is delivered.

Caecilia's rhetorical ability manifests itself not only in her astuteness. She also appears authoritatively as a teacher, who has mastered the skill of adapting her speech to her addressees. In order to convert Tiburtius, for example, she gives extensive expositions about different aspects of Christianity and makes use of a whole set of rhetorical techniques[34]. Moreover, she uses accessible images and language so that he easily understands her message. At the end of her long conversation with Tiburtius, which takes up five paragraphs of the passion[35], she clearly refers to her own position as a teacher: "I have explained (*explicaui*) things to you in a nutshell. If you have a need for more clarification, please ask (*quere*)"[36].

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[32] Other examples are the female saints documented in the passion of Chrysanthus and Daria and the Life of Saint Helia. On the latter text, see V. BURRUS and M. CONTI, *The Life of Saint Helia. Critical Edition, Translation, Introduction, and Commentary*, Oxford, 2013, esp. p. 1-2.

[33] See, for example, R. WEBB, *Rhetoric and the Novel: Sex, Lies and Sophistic*, in I. Worthington (ed.) *A Companion to Greek Rhetoric*. Malden, MA - Oxford – Carlton, 2007, p. 526-541; and G. ANDERSON, *Eros Sophistes - Ancient Novelists at Play*, Chico, CA, 1982.

[34] She uses an enthymeme, an *a minore ad maius* argument and *a maiore ad minus* argument, an *exemplum*, different comparisons, a *captatio benevolentiae* and rhetorical questions (§§ 9-16). See BOSSU, DE TEMMERMAN, PRAET [n.28] for a more detailed discussion.

[35] Cf. *passio Caeciliae*, §§ 10-15.

[36] *Hec breviter explicaui [tibi]; si quid tibi deesse consideras, quere.* Other references to Caecilia's position as a teacher include §28: *... tu ignoras cuius sis potestatis. Nam ego si me interrogas de tua potestate, ueris tibi assertionibus*

4.3 The Christian Kiss and Conversion in the *Passio Susannae*

Although we are told that Susanna is schooled in rhetoric[37], an examination of the *passio Susannae* shows that it centres on actions rather than words. In this passion, it is not conjugal love but *caritas* between family members which constitutes the background to the first conversion scene, although just as in the *passio Caeciliae*, we see the interest of a pagan man in worldly love turned against him by a Christian woman who converts him.

Susanna's relative Claudius, probably her uncle[38], has been sent by Diocletian to talk both Susanna and her father Gabinius into the proposed marriage. When Claudius sees his niece, he moves to hug and kiss her (*amplecti et osculari*, p. 554, lines 30-31). In itself, this intention is not at all odd: the combination of the verbs *amplecti* and *osculari* was widespread in Roman discourse in the context of a greeting[39], and the Greco-Roman world often associated kissing with familial relations[40]. Relatives were actually expected to kiss each other, a right referred to as the *ius osculi*[41]. This kiss between family members, which most often was a kiss on the lips[42], was a sign of familial unity and was assumed to have no erotic connotations[43]. However, Roman history offers at least one famous example that shows the ideological slipperiness of the concept. In his *Life of Claudius*, Suetonius recounts how Agrippina uses the *ius osculi* to seduce her uncle Claudius, the brother of her father Germanicus, into entering an incestuous relationship with her[44]. This story is confirmed in the *Annals* of Tacitus, who, although he does not explicitly mention the *ius osculi*, states that Agrippina seduces Claudius under the cloak

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manifestabo (Caecilia to the prefect Almachius) §30 *... iterum docebo te falsissime prosecutum* and *... disce saxum esse, si uidendo non nosti* and *Ex quo os aperuisti, non fuit sermo quem non probarim iniustum, stultum et uanum* (Caecilia to the prefect Almachius). Delehaye's edition contains even more similar references, cf. §30 *Doce* (the prefect Almachius to Caecilia); §31 *... non cessauit omnes quos nutrierat et quos docuerat in fide dominica confortare* (narrator about Caecilia).

[37] The passion mentions that Susanna is schooled in the worldly *artes* (p. 553, lines 14-15).

[38] In both editions of the *passio Susannae*, it is unclear whether Claudius is Susanna's uncle or cousin, due to the obscured use of terms as *consobrinus* and *germanus* throughout the passion. Lanéry (cf. LANÉRY, *Hagiographie d'Italie* [n. 5], p. 148) considers Claudius to be Gabinius' brother and thus Susanna's uncle. Since Claudius calls Susanna his niece (*neptis mea*, cf. infra), this is indeed plausible. Yet one cannot be sure; in his article, Duchesne (cf. DUCHESNE, *Les légendes d'Alta Semita* [n. 9], p. 33) keeps more options open.

[39] Cf. THRAEDE, art. *Kuss* [n. 27], col. 548.

[40] Cf. THRAEDE, art. *Kuss* [n. 27], col. 549; M. PENN, *Performing Family: Ritual Kissing and the Construction of Early Christian Kinship* in *JECS* 10, 2002 (2), p. 151-174, esp. 159.

[41] PENN, *Performing Family* [n. 40], p. 159, lists ancient references to the *ius osculi*.

[42] PENN, *Performing Family* [n. 40], p. 159.

[43] THRAEDE, art. *Kuss* [n. 27], 553-554.

[44] SUETONIUS, *De vita caesarum* V, 26, 3, 5.

of their close relationship (*necessitudo*)[45]. Although in the passion Claudius is probably the brother of Susanna's father[46] and thus stands in the same relationship to her as the emperor to Agrippina, the name is too common to call to mind an inversion of the historical relationship. Nevertheless, the episode does thematize the erotic and transgressive potential of such a kiss[47].

In Susanna's passion, the hagiographer specifies that Claudius wants to hug and kiss Susanna because of his love (*caritas*) for her as a relative (*proximus*). Susanna, however, tells him not to foul (*contaminare*) her mouth (*os*) which, she continues, her Lord Jesus Christ knows that no man has ever touched. Even when Claudius explicitly states that he wants to kiss her because of his feeling of love for her (*secundum caritatis affectus*) as his niece (*neptem meam*)[48], Susanna does not yield. She answers that she rejects (*recuso*)[49] his kiss because his mouth is soiled (*pollutum est*) by sacrifices to idols.

It may seem that Susanna's refusal to be kissed by Claudius can be straightforwardly connected to her Christian background. But in our view, her motivations are more subtle. In Christian communities, kisses, given mostly on the lips[50], underlined one's position within the community as a new kind of family member[51] and were only allowed between those who had been baptized[52]. One could therefore assume that Susanna rejects the secular *ius osculi* for the benefit of a Christian one[53]; that she has replaced her former, secular family ties and the *ius osculi* of relatives by a Christian family and a love kiss that is exchanged only between spiritual brothers and sisters. But the scene is actually more complex. Susanna's claim that her mouth has never been polluted is ambiguous: it can mean either that no idolater has ever kissed her (the implicit

[45] TACITUS, *Annals* XII, 3, 1.

[46] Cf. supra note 38.

[47] See THRAEDE, art. *Kuss* [n. 27], col. 554 and PENN, *Performing Family* [n. 40], p. 159 for other attestations of incestuous relationships.

[48] The fact that Claudius here calls Susanna his niece, is in favour of the scenario that regards him as her uncle. Cf. supra note 38.

[49] The ASS edition has *recusabo* instead of *recuso*.

[50] Cf. PENN, *Performing Family* [n. 40], p. 157.

[51] Cf. PENN, *Performing Family* [n.40], p. 161-166: Creating a Christian Family.

[52] Cf. THRAEDE, art. *Kuss* [n. 27], col. 563-564. For an overview of references to the Christian kiss from the New Testament to Ambrose, we refer to THRAEDE, art. *Kuss* [n.27], col. 557-574.

[53] Similar attestations of the violation of the worldly *ius osculi* for the benefit of a Christian one, and the resulting creation of a new in- and out-group, can be found elsewhere as well: PENN, *Performing Family* [n. 40], p. 166-169 mentions Gregory of Nazianz' reference to his mother Nonna, who refuses to kiss pagan relatives (GREGORY OF NAZIANZ, *Orations* 18, 10), and Maximilla's refusal to be kissed by her husband Aegeates in the *Apocryphal Acts of Andrew.* Cf. also THRAEDE, art. *Kuss* [n. 27], col. 573-574. In the *passio Caeciliae*, the fact that Caecilia's brother-in-law Tiburtius kisses her before he is converted (§9), whereas Caecilia herself kisses him afterwards (§10), can probably be seen in the same light.

assumption being that only an idolater's kiss pollutes one's mouth), or that no one at all, pagan or Christian, has ever kissed her. Thus the religious divide is immediately destabilized by a sexual one: Susanna is explicit that no man (*uir*)[54] has ever touched her mouth. She does not even mention female idolaters (as if no such idolaters exist), the implication being that no male (pagan or Christian) has ever kissed her. It turns out, then, that the criterion that Susanna adopts to decide who can kiss her and who cannot is not religion or family (worldly or spiritual) but sex. Susanna simply refuses any kiss from any man, however innocent, be it from a pagan relative or from a fellow Christian[55]. She thus adopts an attitude which in fact, and paradoxically, eroticizes every physical contact between herself and a man. When Susanna claims she does not want the idolater Claudius to foul her mouth since Christ knows that no man has ever touched it, she subtly blends, like Caecilia, Christianity as the rejection of paganism (i.e. of kisses by pagans) with the rejection of any bodily contact whatsoever. Her refusal of any kiss fuses Christianity with virginity.

This reading of Susanna's eroticizing refusal of Claudius' kiss is the only way in which we can understand his subsequent reaction. Previous scholarship, as early as Le Nain de Tillemont (1637-1698), has been puzzled by this reaction and the motivation for his sudden conversion[56]. Claudius wants to kiss his relative so badly that he is prepared to do anything: when he asks what he should do in order to purify his mouth (*purificetur os meum ab immundicia*, p. 554, line 37), Susanna answers that he has to repent and needs to be baptized. Claudius immediately agrees and asks Pope Gaius to purify him 'if a pure man, who rather believes in Christ than in the gods, is better'[57]. The conversion of Claudius, then, is caused by no more than the refusal of a simple kiss from a family member. This refusal motivates him in such a way that one wonders whether his longing for a kiss is motivated by something more than mere *caritas* between worldly family members. Just as Susanna's refusal eroticizes any kiss from any man, his motivation to be in contact with the young woman seems to be based on a longing with erotic undertones. Whatever his initial motivation to kiss Susanna may have been, it is transformed into the urge to belong to her spiritual family.

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[54]*Noli contaminare os meum quia Dominus meus Iesus Christus nouit quia numquam os ancillae suae tetigit uir* (p. 554, lines 32-33).

[55] From the third century onwards, sources mention attempts to prohibit the exchange of kisses between Christian men and women (cf. PENN, *Performing Family* [n. 40], p. 157-158).

[56]L.-S, LE NAIN DE TILLEMONT, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique des six premiers siècles, justifiés par les citations des auteurs originaux avec une chronologie où l'on fait un abrégé de l'histoire ecclésiastique et avec notes pour éclaircir les difficultés des faits et de la chronologie*, IV, Paris, 1701², p. 761. Unlike de Tillemont, Daniel Farlatus, who also published a commentary on the passion half a century later (*Illyricum Sacrum*, II, Venice, 1753, p. 574-617), feverishly tries to underline the plausibility of the abrupt conversion.

[57]*Si melius est homo mundus qui credit in Christo quam in deos quos colui* (p. 554, lines 40-41).

The passion does not tell us whether they eventually kiss after Claudius' baptism. Probably they do not, however paradoxical this might seem, since Susanna rejects kisses categorically. For Claudius, his desire to kiss her is so strong that it motivates him, again paradoxically, to enter a spiritual family where even an innocent kiss has become taboo and to sublimate his desire. The rejection of secular *caritas* between family members eroticizes innocent physical contact such as a kiss between relatives; the virgin Susanna uses such a rejection as a tool to convert a family member to Christianity, i.e. to make him part of a spiritual family in which every type of physical contact is rejected because it has been pan-eroticized.

Just like Caecilia, then, Susanna displays astuteness that is fleshed out through her rejection of erotically charged assumptions. She is the one who brings about the conversion of Claudius, as is repeated many times throughout the passion[58]. Yet the approaches adopted by the two women differ. Caecilia manipulates Valerianus by means of rhetoric; Susanna manipulates Claudius by means of her action. A similar manipulation through action can also be seen in the second kissing scene in the *passio Susannae*. In this scene, the pagan Maximus, Claudius' brother, kisses Susanna's hand (*osculatus est manus eius*, p. 556, line 28). Although Susanna frowns on this action (*contemnebat hoc fieri*), she still lets it happen. Apparently, a kiss on the hand is less harmful than one on the lips, which would proclaim Maximus her relative in the faith[59] and at the same time would have erotic connotations. And yet it is after Susanna's reaction to his kissing her hand, that in all probability he perceives, that Maximus is easily converted by Pope Gaius. Thus the possibility is raised that Maximus' desire to turn Susanna's disdain into approval made him more susceptible to Gaius' efforts at conversion.

[58] In a speech after Susanna's conversation with Claudius, Gaius says that the Lord wants to deliver Claudius *per puelle* (i.e. Susanna) *petitionem* (p. 554, line 43-44). Susanna's contribution to the conversion is hinted at three more times throughout the passion: Claudius relates to his wife how he has reached the grace of the Lord through the request of his niece (*per petitionem puellae neptis suae*, p. 555, line 16); he repeats it when his wife asks who has given him this advice (*puella virgo praecipua in omnibus*, p. 555, lines 19-20); and to his brother Maximus, Claudius reaffirms that his sins have been forgiven thanks to Susanna (*per quam redemptus sum a peccatis meis*, p. 556, lines 8-9).

[59] A similar interaction can be found in the *Apocryphal Acts of Andrew* (cf. n.53), where Maximilla lets her husband kiss her hand but prevents him from kissing her mouth.

Conclusion

In this article, we have argued that Caecilia's ability to proselytize converge on her rhetorical abilities, which manifest themselves both in her astuteness and (self-) presentation as a teacher. This characterization contrasts sharply with Susanna's, whose speeches in the passion are very concise and without rhetorical techniques. Unlike Caecilia, Susanna nowhere gives any explanation about the faith. Moreover, she quite brusquely interrupts the encounter between Claudius and Gaius (p. 555, lines 5-6), who does in fact inform Claudius about some essential elements of Christianity when he baptizes him[60]: when Gaius has just ensured Claudius that all his sins will be forgiven if he proves a loyal servant, Susanna throws herself at Gaius' feet and implores him, for the love of Christ, not to dawdle over Claudius' baptism, but to deliver him.

Consequently, the purported role of the *passio Caeciliae* as an evident model for the *passio Susannae* should be nuanced. It is probable that Susanna's hagiographer, working in Rome, was inspired by the *passio Caeciliae*: the combination of so many thematic parallels in a similarly structured story makes it impossible to reject this scenario with certainty. However, even if we accept that the author of the *passio Susannae* knew and used the *passio Caeciliae*, this does not mean that he turned his own passion into an exact copy of Caecilia's. Although it is impossible to identify the authors and the social and intellectual milieux in which they worked, the two authors clearly differ, for instance in their views on the position of women in Christianity, as is clear from Caecilia's degree of intellectual independence compared to Susanna's. The author of the *passio Susannae* adjusted and revised well-known hagiographical themes to suit his own literary creation. When one considers the characterization of the martyrs in the two passions, the creative input of Susanna's hagiographer becomes evident. Both Caecilia and Susanna make use of the topical subject of the tension between secular and Christian love in order to astutely convert pagans. But although both women bend male desire to obtain their goals, the way in which this is elaborated in the two passions differs markedly. Caecilia manipulates with words, Susanna with action. This difference in characterization clearly reveals that Susanna's hagiographer gave an individual touch to his creation. At the same time, he inscribes himself in the classical tradition of imitation, thereby proving that this concept remains important in the literature of Late Antiquity. Rather than repeatedly emphasizing the seriality and lack of creativity of the late

[60] Gaius says: *Frater Claudi, audi me. Bonum est quod te admoueo†....* He then underlines the seriousness of the crime of idolatry, and gives some information on the life of Christ. He also includes quotes from the Gospels (p. 554, lines 42-58; p. 555, lines 1-5).

antique passions, then, we believe that it is time to acknowledge and start exploring their originality and creativity.

Chapter 5 A marriage of equals? Characterization in the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae*

Introduction[1]

Between the fourth and sixth centuries, Latin late antique or post-Nicene[2] passions of the martyrs were produced in large numbers. Rejected by historians as unreliable sources for the persecutions, literary scholars do not usually hold these fictional stories about the vicissitudes of the Christian martyrs in high esteem either, due to their repetitiveness and monotony. The Bollandist Hippolyte Delehaye, who provided a rare, extensive literary study of both Latin and Greek post-Nicene passions[3], wrote in 1921 that the texts reminded him of 'uniform constructions lacking style, made of stones imported from the same quarry and assembled according to the same pattern'[4] and the appraisal has not really changed since then: in the recent international history of Latin and vernacular hagiographical literature, published as a part of the *Corpus Christianorum*

[1] The doctoral research of Annelies Bossu is financed by the FWO (Research Foundation Flanders)-project G.0633.10N, entitled "Sacred Fiction. A narratological-rhetorical analysis of novelistic topicality and generic specificity in late antique hagiography", supervised by Prof. Dr. Danny Praet and Prof. Dr. Koen De Temmerman, whom the authors would like to thank for helful comments on this article. The authors would also like to thank Philologus' anonymous referee for helpful comments and suggestions.

[2] Besides 'post-Nicene', the late antique passions are also termed 'post-Constantinian'. On the use of both terms, cf. Scorza Barcellona (2001) 39-40.

[3] Berschin (1986) 66-87 also analyzed a number of Latin late antique passions as literary documents. Forthcoming literary studies of specific passions are Bossu, De Temmerman, Praet (Mnemosyne, forthcoming) and Bossu, Praet, De Temmerman (Latomus, forthcoming).

[4] Delehaye (1966[2]) 171: '... elles font penser à des constructions uniformes et sans style, dont les pierres, provenant d'une même carrière, seraient assemblées sur un plan uniforme'. Delehaye formulated a similar verdict in Delehaye (1936) 18-19: '... on a l'impression de tourner sans cesse les pages d'un même livre' ('One has the impression of constantly turning the pages of the same book').

project, Cécile Lanéry refers to the 'literary and narrative homogeneity' of the Italian post-Nicene passions[5]. As a result, literary analyses of these texts are scarce and often focus on the apparent affinities between different passions. This article sets out to claim that this unfavorable assessment does not always hold true and that at least some of these passions deserve to be studied as literary creations in their own right. We will analyze one Latin post-Nicene passion to underpin this claim: the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae* (*Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina* 1787-1787a-1788)[6]. The text was written in Rome[7] and can perhaps be dated to the fifth century[8], although the fictional authors, Virinus and Armenius, two brothers and priests, would have the readers believe the text was written in the third century[9]. The passion recounts the vicissitudes of Chrysanthus, a pagan who converts to an ascetic form of Christianity. His father Polemius is very annoyed by this conversion and tries to put him off his new faith by setting women on him to seduce him. Yet to no avail. On the contrary, Chrysanthus manages to convert one of the women, the Vestal virgin Daria, and they agree upon a spiritual marriage. They convert a large number of pagans, are extensively tortured and eventually die as martyrs. Although the summary of the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae* arguably reveals standard *topoi* which can also be found in abundance in other post-Nicene passions (e.g. the rejection of sex, numerous conversions and the martyr holding firm in his/her

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[5] Lanéry (2010) 22: 'homogénéité littéraire et narrative'. See e.g. also Stelladoro (2005) 66-67 on the late antique passions in general.

[6] We will analyze the Latin version of the passion, but the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae* (hence *passio C&D*) also exists in a Greek version (*Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca* 313-313b-313e, edited next to the Latin text in the Bollandist Bossue's Acta Sanctorum edition (Bossue, 1864, 469-487)). Yet it is now generally acknowledged that the Latin version is the original one, cf. Noret (1972) 109-117, De Strycker (1972) 33 and Lanéry (2010) 141-142. The differences between *BHL* 1787 and *BHL* 1787a are minimal: *BHL* 1787a differs only in the final paragraph (unlike *BHL* 1787, *BHL* 1787a does not mention the (fictional) authors of the passion) and has not been edited. *BHL* 1788 is an epitome, only half a page long (edited by Bossue, 1864, 487-488). *BHL* 1787 can be found in the following editions: Mombritius (1910[2]) vol. I, 271-278; Bossue (1864) 437-487; Floss (1869) 156-170; Upchurch (2007) 218-249 (with English translation). The texts of the four editions differ only slightly. We will use the most recent edition (Upchurch) in this paper; translations are our own. Paragraph numbers of Upchurch's edition correspond to those of Bossue's edition.

[7] The whole passion takes place in Rome and the Roman sanctuary of the martyrs is accurately described, Cf. Lanéry (2010) 142.

[8] The dating of the text is discussed in detail by Lanéry (2010) 145-147. The *passio Sebastiani* (*BHL* 7543, dated ca. 430) acts as a *terminus post quem* and according to Franchi de' Cavalieri (Franchi de' Cavalieri 1953, 3-4) the beginning of the 6th century acts as a *terminus ante quem*, since the prison in the passion is still called *carcer Tullianus*, whereas it is called *custodia Mamertini* from the 6th century onwards.

[9] *Passio C&D,* §28: *Haec omnia sicut gesta sunt scripsimus Uirinus et Armenius fratres, a sancto Stephano papa Romano in sede apostolica facti presbiteri, …* – We, the brothers Virinus and Armenius, made priests in the apostolic church by the holy Stephen, pope of Rome, have written down all these events, just as they took place…. We will refer to the author of the passion as 'the hagiographer'. On the historical unreliability, see already Bossue (1864) 443 and, more recently, Delehaye and Moss in note 11.

faith), we will contend that this passion gives evidence of more literary subtlety than these texts usually get credit for. This becomes apparent from the characterization of the protagonists, which reveals how the passion explores the issue of sexual symmetry in interesting ways.

5.1 Previous research on the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae* and new approach

Previous scholarship about the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae* and its saints[10] often adopted a historical perspective. Topics like the date of the martyrdom and the martyrs' burial site were elaborately discussed. Yet there is no proof that the martyrs Chrysanthus and Daria ever existed in the first place. In her recent book on the persecutions, Candida Moss presents the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae* as a classic example of an invented martyrdom story: 'romantic, exciting, interesting and completely untrue'[11]. Analysis of the passion from a literary perspective has drawn attention to lexical and thematic resemblances to other Latin passions and the *Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla*[12] and some scholars have claimed that the text even contains quotations from classical literary works[13]. The reception of both Christian and pagan traditions in the *passio*

[10] We refer to Lanéry for the most recent bibliography on the passion: Lanéry (2010), 147-148. An additional publication is Alwis (2013) 167-183.

[11] Moss (2013) 85. Delehaye also draws attention to the passion's historical inaccuracy by pointing out that several martyrs from other locations have been integrated into the *passio C&D* (cf. Delehaye 1936, 35).

[12] Lanéry notes lexical correspondences to the *passio Sebastiani* (cf. supra, note 8) and thematic ones to the *passio Caeciliae* (*BHL* 1495) (cf. infra, note 57), *passio Eugeniae* (*BHL* 2667), *passio Theodorae* (*BHL* 8072-8073), *passio Marcianae* (*BHL* 5256), *passio Irenae* (*BHL* 118) and *passio Agnetis* (*BHL* 156). Cf. Lanéry (2010) 145-146. For the thematic affinity with the *Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla*, cf. infra, note 101.

[13] Siegmund (1949) 198 and Lanéry (2010) 142 claim that the *passio C&D* contains quotations from such authors like Virgil, Ovid, Martial, Plautus and Pliny. These claims seem to go back to Floss' references to these authors in his edition of the passion (cf. supra, note 6), but with the exception of the quotation from Virgil (cf. infra note 64, this quotation is the most significant for our purposes), we find the purported quotations rather unconvincing. With regard to the passion's use of *falcifer* as an epithet for Saturn (*passio C&D,* §10), Floss refers to Mart. *Ep.* 5, 16 and Ov. *Fast.* 5, 627, where the same epithet is used. A single word, a fortiori an epithet of a god, can hardly be seen as a direct quotation from a classical writer. Concerning Mercury's offering of a pig's liver, fattened on figs (*passio C&D,* §11: *porcinum ficatum*), Floss refers to Plin. *HN*. 8, 77, where Plinius explains how pigs' livers can be fattened on figs, yet literal correspondences are lacking. Lanéry (2010) 142 also claims that the passion contains quotations from Plautus but does not identify them. Floss does not mention Plautus and we have been unable to locate these quotations.

Chrysanthi et Dariae is important for our purposes too, as we shift focus in this article to the characterization of the passion's main characters Chrysanthus and Daria. As our analysis will reveal, biblical themes, ancient rhetoric and Virgil play a part in the character construction in this late antique text. By 'characterization', we mean the ascribing of relatively stable or abiding mental, cognitive, social, moral and personal traits[14] to literary characters. In the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae*, we will focus on the ascription of such traits in two thematic realms: the intellectual and the sexual. In both realms one detects an interesting evolution towards sexual symmetry: the protagonists seem to become equals. Our reading of the text thus differs from Anne Alwis', who contends that Chrysanthus remains the dominant partner throughout the text and retains authority over his wife[15].

The evolution from asymmetry to symmetry in the passion is consistent with the alleged evolution in the imperial period towards symmetry in sexual and familial relations[16]. The equality of the male and female protagonists in the ancient Greek novel, for instance, has been put forward as an indication of this shift[17]. This evolution towards symmetry extends into the late antique period and into Christian narrative texts, such as the Apocryphal Acts[18]. In the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae*, we contend, the evolution towards symmetry can first be detected in the intellectual realm, and is thereupon confirmed in the sexual sphere: Chrysanthus and Daria conclude a spiritual marriage. Since the renunciation of sex disrupted the traditional patriarchal supremacy and thus allowed women a certain amount of freedom in early Christianity, this celibate marriage fitly underlines the equality between the spouses[19]. Once we have illustrated the

[14] For 'character' as a the totality of these traits, see, for example, Stevenson (2010) s.v. *character.* On the conceptualization of 'character' in this sense, and the question of whether or not the connotation of distinctiveness with which the modern term is burdened is culturally determined rather than readily applicable to an ancient context, see De Temmerman (2014) 5-6.

[15] Alwis (2013).

[16] The work of Michel Foucault has been influential in this respect: cf. Foucault (1984). On the topic, see also Veyne (1978), Blok, Mason (1987) and Brown (1988).

[17] Cf. Foucault (1984) 262-266; Konstan (1994).

[18] On women's liberation from the patriarchal order in the *Apocryphal Acts*, see Burrus (1986) and (1987). Thecla is the best-known example, on her position in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, see e.g. Bremmer (1996) and Greene (2012). For objections against the idea of the *Apocryphal Acts* advocating women's liberation, see Dunn (1993). On women's liberation through martyrdom, see Magnani (2009).

[19] On the advantages of sexual renunciation for women in early Christianity, see Drijvers (1987) 265-268. Yet one should always keep in mind that a liberating effect of seuxal renunciation only held true for elite women, on this see e.g. Cooper (1994), 119-120. On spiritual marriage and the potential endangerment of the husband's authority, see Elliott (1993) 55-63; Alwis (2013) 168-170; Cooper (1996) 104-108. For the origin, evolution and consequences of the phenomenon of spiritual marriage, as well as its heretical connotations, see, among others, Brown (1988) 83-10; Consolino (1998) 159-195; Alwis (2011).

evolution towards symmetry, we will conclude this article by drawing attention to a difference in characterization between both martyrs and argue that this difference again undermines the relation of symmetry that has earlier been established. It turns out, then, that the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae* takes different, ambiguous approaches to traditional gender roles.

5.2 Evolution towards sexual symmetry in the characterization of the protagonists

The traits which define the character of Chrysanthus in the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae* can be grouped within two thematic realms: the intellectual and the sexual. This division is not absolute and connections are suggested in the text[20], but it helps to illustrate the evolution towards symmetry in Chrysanthus' relation with women. We will start with the intellectual realm. From the very beginning of the passion, Chrysanthus is presented as a young man with an ardent intellect (§2 *ardens ingenium*). His intelligence is intertwined with his education: he remembers everything the orators and philosophers taught him[21]. Chrysanthus is also explicitly characterized as *curious* (§2 *curiosus, curiositatis suae cursum*): he eagerly investigates every book he comes across. This curiosity is not presented as a negative trait since it directs him towards the study of Christianity and not towards magic. The association between curiosity and magic is implied by Polemius' friend in §7, who supposes that Chrysanthus has learned magic (*artem magicam*) from the Christians (cf. infra). The combination of these themes might well echo the link between *curiositas* and magic in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*[22]. The moment Chrysanthus recognizes the superiority of Christianity is presented as the

[20] The passion claims that Chrysanthus' intellectual capacities made him realize that Christianity is the superior religion. Instruction in the divine scriptures thereupon makes him realize that sexual abstinence is the highest form of the Christian lifestyle.

[21] Cf. *Passio C&D*, §2: *Erat enim ardentis ingenii, ita ut omnia quecumque ei ab oratoribus aut a philosophis fuissent tradita capaci animo fortiter retineret* – Chrysanthus' intelligence was so ardent that he vigorously stored in his receptive mind everything the orators and philosophers taught him.

[22] We thank the anonymous referee of *Philologus* for drawing our attention to this point. In the *Metamorphoses*, curiosity and magic are inextricably linked, see e.g. Walsh (1988), esp. 75-78 and DeFilippo (1990), with further references. Interestingly, a comparable link between eagerness for knowledge and magic occurs in the Christian novel the *pseudo-Clementines*. In *Homilies* I, 5, Clemens considers resorting to necromancy in order to find an answer to the questions about the immortality of the soul and the hereafter which preoccupy him. However, a friend advises him against it and soon after, he hears about Christianity.

clearest indication of his intelligence[23] and the culmination of his education[24]. Coming across the Gospels (§2 *evangelicos*), he realizes that he has found the light of truth (*lumen … veritatis*) and that it would be unwise to return from light to darkness (*ad tenebras*). He looks for a teacher who can explain the divine scriptures to him (§3 *litterarum divinarum expositor*) and is subsequently instructed (*omnibus divinis litteris imbutus*) by the holy Carpoforus. Chrysanthus' noble descent[25] too has a role to play in the intellectual realm: as we will see, the passion clearly associates high descent with both intelligence and education. With regard to the sexual realm, Chrysanthus sees sexual desire as a wicked beast (§5 *bestia maligna*)[26] and renounces sex. The irreconcilability of Christianity and sex, even within legitimate marriage[27], is an important theme in this passion. It fits in with the general tendency in the late antique passions to mix real, bloody martyrdom with sexual asceticism as a form of symbolic, bloodless martyrdom[28].

Chrysanthus' father Polemius desperately tries to lure his son away from his new faith[29]. At first, he tries punishing his son by locking him up in a dark and squalid place with little or no food, but one of his advisers explains to him that Christians actually relish punishment and that he should distract his son from his illegal religion with pleasure. Polemius selects five beautiful virgins (*virgines*) among his female slaves (*ex ancillis*), adorns them with fine clothes and ornaments and orders them to seduce his son. But the relation between Chrysanthus and the *ancillae* is undeniably asymmetrical, both in the intellectual and the sexual realm. When it comes to intelligence, education and descent, the slaves are no match for him. There is an equally important difference on the sexual level. Although it is remarkable that the women are designated as '*virgines*' rather than '*puellae*' (one can wonder how many female slaves were still virgins in the

[23] *Passio C&D,* §2: *Cuius prudentiae cuiusque fuerit intelligentiae rerum exitus docet* – Yet the further course of events really revealed his understanding and intelligence.

[24] Compare with the *topos* of conversion to Christianity as the end of an intellectual journey, see already Just. Mart. *dial.* 2-3, and for further references, see Nock (1933) 107-109.

[25] Cf. *Passio C&D,* §2: Chrysanthus' father, a *vir inlustrissimus … honoratus et primus*, is a Roman senator.

[26] On Chrysanthus' battle against desire and the differences between men and women with regard to this battle, see Paoli (2006) 715-716.

[27] The rejection of sex within legitimate marriage aligns the passion with some *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles.* See Tissot (1981) 116-118 for a nuanced discussion of encratite elements in the Apocryphal Acts of Andrew and Thomas (where marriages are disrupted), and sexual asceticism in the Acts of Peter, of John and of Paul and Thecla (where the apostles prevent marriage).

[28] Cf. Consolino (1984) 85-86. A spiritual marriage was not common in early martyr texts. On the different attitudes towards marriage and sexuality in the early martyr texts and the post-Nicene passions, see Praet (2003) and Praet (2011).

[29] The fact that Chrysanthus is Polemius' only son adds to the drama: by converting to ascetic Christianity, Chrysanthus destroys his father's hope for the future. On the theme of saints often being only children, see Goddard Elliott (1987) 78-81.

technical sense)[30], their virginity is clearly not motivated by an intentional rejection of sex. When the women make advances, Chrysanthus makes no effort to talk to them, but 'receives the girls' embraces and kisses like shots of arrows with his shield of faith'[31]. He prays the Lord for help, using the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife as an *exemplum* in his prayer[32], and asks that the women would fall asleep in his presence. His request is granted at once. In the view of Polemius' friend, who hears about the (non-)event, Chrysanthus easily overcame the girls with his magic since they are very simple (§7 *simplicissimae*). Polemius should try to marry his son off to a very elegant and intelligent girl (§4 *elegantissima puella atque prudentissima*): if he learns to be a husband, he will forget that he is a Christian[33].

The friend surprisingly suggests the Vestal Daria as a suitable candidate and lists her qualities: she is beautiful, elegant and so wise that not even orators argue with her[34]. As soon as Daria is introduced into the story, then, her credentials are well-established for the reader, who will also be reminded of Chrysanthus' exceptional intelligence as a youth. Polemius and his friend reach an agreement (*consensus*) with the woman: by leading him away from his new faith, she will restore Chrysanthus as a son to Polemius and accept him as a husband for herself[35]. Daria pays Chrysanthus a visit and, just like the slaves, tries to seduce him. She turns up elaborately adorned, as we are told that she

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[30] For slaves being subordinate to their master, also sexually, cf. Nathan (2000) 177-180 and Brown (1988) 23.

[31] *Passio C&D*, §5: *... amplexus earum et oscula quasi sagittarum ictus scuto suae fidei excipiens, clamabat*. The hagiographer evokes a Pauline image here, cf. Paul, *Eph.* 6:16 (*in omnibus sumentes* scutum fidei *in quo possitis omnia tela nequissimi ignea extinguere*). The weapons in the Pauline letter do not have a primary erotic connotation, but the allusion to the wiles of the devil connects the embraces and kisses of the *ancillae* to the 'fiery' (*ignea*) weapons in Paul, which now become a common sexual metaphor. This is in line with the primacy of sexual ethics in the type of Christianity promoted by this and many other late antique passions.

[32] The reception of the biblical story in the passion reveals how the hagiographer transforms traditional material into elements of his own literary creation: whereas the biblical Joseph is in danger of committing adultery, Chrysanthus would be legally entitled to have sex with his father's slaves (cf. supra, note 30). The hagiographer thus stresses the importance of sexual asceticism.

[33] *Passio C&D,* §4: *... cum didicerit esse maritus, obliviscatur esse Christianus*. Polemius was advised to marry his son off to an intelligent girl before he set the slaves on him. His action, then, did not tally completely with the given advice: a slave cannot make Chrysanthus a husband and does not qualify as a *puella prudentissima*.

[34] §7: *... ita sapiens ut illi nec ipsi oratores occurant*; the Greek version is more explicit about Daria's rhetorical capacities: *πᾶσαν ῥητορικὴν πεπαιδευμένη* (§7).

[35] From a historical perspective, the whole situation is of course totally absurd: it is unthinkable that Polemius and his friend could convince a Vestal to marry and sacrifice her virginity, since this implies certain death (cf. Moss 2013, 85-86). Moss also points out that it is nevertheless clever from a literary perspective: Daria is buried alive for *not* having sex while this was supposed to be the punishment for Vestals who *lost* their virginity. In this respect, it is significant that burying alive is very rare in the post-Nicene passions: usually martyrs are beheaded. Moreover, Chrysanthus and Daria are buried on a location (viz. the *Via Salaria*) near to the *Campus Sceleratus* where the Vestal virgins were traditionally buried alive (cf. Steinby 1993, s.v. *Campus Sceleratus*), cf. also Bossue (1864) 477-479.

is sparkling with gems and gold (§8 *gemmis et auro*) and shining like the sun. The embellishment not only links her to the *ancillae*, but also to Potiphar's wife, the notorious temptress mentioned in Chrysanthus' earlier *exemplum*: in the passion, Potiphar's wife too wears ornaments and has her head covered with gold and gems (§6 *auro et gemmis*)[36]. Moreover, the hagiographer puts the seductive slaves and Daria on a par as he paradoxically identifies them as virgins[37] and at the same time terms their actions arrows (*sagittae*) against which Chrysanthus defends himself with his shield of faith (*scuto fidei*)[38].

Yet Daria also differs from the *ancillae* in important respects. Unlike the slaves, she is a Vestal and therefore an intentional virgin, although this does not keep her from trying to seduce Chrysanthus[39]. Secondly, Daria is of noble birth[40] and gives evidence of more intelligence and education than the slaves. She approaches Chrysanthus in a subtler way, whereas the *ancillae* simply rush onto him with embraces and kisses. Daria, for her part, plays her cards close to her chest and visits Chrysanthus 'under the pretense of consolation' (§8 *quasi sub specie consolationis*). The passion does not mention why Chrysanthus needs comfort. Is he depressed, or does he need to unburden his heart to someone? Does he need comfort because of the troubles with his father or is it simply a way to put Daria into the realm of rhetoric and philosophy? The text does not elucidate the need for consolation. It is possible that the hagiographer drew inspiration for this addition from the apocryphal *Testament of Joseph*: in the *Testament*, we are told that Potiphar's wife visits Joseph at night under the pretense of visitation (III. 6 *λόγῳ ἐπισκέψεως*[41]). This pretense makes sense in the *Testament*, since Joseph is fasting while asking the Lord for support in resisting the woman, and *ἐπίσκεψις* can generally refer to 'visitation of the sick and the needy'[42]. If the author of the passion was indeed inspired by the *Testament of Joseph* to add this element to his text, this aligns Daria even more with the notorious temptress. In any case, the pretense of consolation is a clever move

[36] This element is not directly adopted from the Biblical story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife: in Gen. 39, the embellishment of the woman is not mentioned. Yet in the apocryphal *Testament of Joseph* (circa 2nd century AD), which provides a more elaborate account of the story, it is recounted that Potiphar's wife is splendidly adorned for Joseph's deception (IX. 5): *μάλιστα κοσμουμένη πρὸς ἀπάτησίν μου* (edition De Jonge 1978, 155).

[37] Daria is termed a virgin several times, cf. §7: *inter virgines*, *virgo*, *virginis* and §8: *virgo*.

[38] *Passio C&D*, §8: *Sed Chrisantus Domini fretus auxilio* sagittas diaboli scuto *suae* fidei *repellebat*. For Chrysanthus' defence against the slaves in the same terms, and the reference to Paul, cf. supra note 31.

[39] Seeing Daria's behaviour during her visit to Chrysanthus, we do not agree with Alwis (2013) 172, who is of the opinion that Daria's position as a Vestal 'subdues any fear that she embodies a sexual threat'.

[40] It is pointed out that she is a fitting wife for a nobleman (§7 *nobilis*) and this is in agreement with the custom of selecting Vestals from the finest families of Rome.

[41] Edition De Jonge (1978) 147.

[42] Lampe (1976) s. v. ἐπίσκεψις.

of Daria: by pretending to console him, she has a good chance of making Chrysanthus favorably disposed towards her. Moreover, she supplements her fine appearance with rhetorical skill, as she throws so much elegant speech (§8 *elegantia sermonis*) and intelligent skillfulness (*ars ingenii*) into the fray that 'had he been harder than iron, he would have become softer than a feather'[43]. The play with harder and softer can be taken as a sexual innuendo[44] and evokes the contradictory gender values in pagan society and Christian ascetic circles. Had Chrysanthus been persuaded by Daria and thus become weaker, he would have acted as a normal man is supposed to and would have married her. But he is in fact confident in God's help against her words (§8 *Domini fretus auxilio*) and remains firm, which in the sexual implication of ancient Christian gender roles paradoxically means that he will remain chaste. Daria's behaviour during her visit, then, reveals her as a more worthy opponent for Chrysanthus than the *ancillae*.

Chrysanthus seems to realize this, as he tries to persuade her to further preserve her virginity, but now for Christ. He appeals to her pursuit of benefit: he points out that if she pursues Christ as an immortal (§8 *inmortalis*) rather than a mortal (*mortalis*) husband, her benefits will be greater[45]. Whereas Chrysanthus seemingly thought that any attempt at converting the slaves would be pointless, he clearly is of the opinion that Daria might be receptive to his arguments. Although Daria constitutes a danger for his chastity (he asks the Holy Spirit to stand between him and her), he still deems it worth trying. Chrysanthus' assumption that Daria only wants to seduce him and capture him as a husband, is not surprising. Unlike the reader, he does not know about the agreement between Daria and his father, and the higher purpose which her actions serve. Neither does Daria say anything about her true intentions, quite on the contrary: she visits him 'under the pretense of consolation'. Upon hearing Chrysanthus' speech, Daria is goaded (§9 *compuncta*) and retorts that she was not drawn to him out of wantonness (*anima petulans*, the Greek version has *ἔρως*) but because she felt sorry for his father's tears. She says she wants to reunite father and son and call him back to the worship of the gods[46]. It appears, then, that Chrysanthus has underestimated Daria. He realizes that she is an intelligent woman, but he misjudges the motivation for her actions. Whereas the slaves'

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[43] *Passio C&D*, §8: *… tanta eum elegantia sermonis alloquitur tantamque ingenii artem interserit ut si esset ferro durior, pluma mollior redderetur*.

[44] We thank the anonymous referee of *Philologus* for this suggestive remark.

[45] The greater benefit which one obtains when pursuing Christ as an immortal husband is also referred to in the *Passio Domitillae, Nerei et Achillei* (*BHL* 6058-6066), §2 and the *Passio Eugeniae, Prothi et Hyacinthi* (*BHL* 2667), p. 396, l. 55-56 (edition Mombritius (1910[2]), vol. II, 391-397).

[46] *Passio C&D*, §9: *Ad haec Daria compuncta respondit, 'Nulla me, O iuvenis, petulantis animi cum his vestibus ad te signa perduxerunt, sed patris tui lacrimis miserata, cupio te et patri reddere et deorum revocare culturae.* Daria's reference to her clothes (*cum his vestibus*) hints at seduction.

actions were inspired by fear for their lives[47], Daria is not motivated by her own benefits: her actions serve a higher purpose. By upholding the authority of both the family (Chrysanthus' father)[48] and the gods, Daria manages to emphasize her *pietas*: as a trained speaker, she succeeds in constructing a positive *ēthos*[49]. As a result, Chrysanthus thinks more highly of her and proposes to hold a debate (§9 *alterna disputatio*) about the pagan and Christian faith, based on genuine reasoning (*ratio*)[50]. He thus considers Daria capable of rationality. At the end of the debate, Daria is converted to Christianity.

One would expect that Chrysanthus will appear as the superior interlocutor in this debate. Since he defends the Christian faith, he is likely to hold the authoritative position and skillfully outargue the pagan Daria[51]. Anne Alwis indeed argues that Chrysanthus 'assumes the mantle of power in this debate by the length and number of his sermonizing speeches', whereas Daria is allotted only twenty sentences of rebuttal before she is converted, and that he is 'the authoritative figure who speaks with the weight of divine knowledge'[52]. Cécile Lanéry similarly argues that the hagiographer 'sets up Chrysanthus as an icon of real wisdom'[53]. We contend, however, that Chrysanthus' characterization is slightly more complex than that: he does not convincingly appear as intellectually superior to Daria in the debate. Rather, he underestimates his interlocutor, as before, and only gradually realizes that they are intellectually well-matched.

Daria initiates the debate and points out that she is aware of nothing as useful and important as worshipping the godhead (§9 *divinitatem excolere*) and avoiding to rouse the divine powers (*supernas vires deorum*) to anger. Chrysanthus thereupon immediately proves himself a trained speaker, as he starts his question with a reference to Daria's intellect: 'Most intelligent virgin[54], which kind of worship do you think we show the

[47] When he ordered the girls to seduce his son, Chrysanthus' father made it clear that they will be killed with various tortures (§5 *diversis ... suppliciis*) if they fail.

[48] On Daria upholding familial authority, cf. also Alwis (2013) 172.

[49] Cf. Arist. *Rh.* 2. 1. 5-7.

[50] This debate might once again hint at the *Testament of Joseph:* in the *Testament* (IV. 4-5), Potiphar's wife visits Joseph under the pretense of instruction (*λόγῳ κατηχήσεως*) and promises him that she will depart from the idols (*εἴδωλα*) and will convince her husband to depart from them too, if Joseph yields to her request (edition De Jonge 1978, 148).

[51] See August. *doct. christ.* 4.3 for the legitimacy of using rhetoric for the good cause, i.e. the defense of the truth (Christianity) against evil (paganism).

[52] Alwis (2013) 172-173.

[53] Lanéry (2010) 145: '... il [i.e. the hagiographer] érige Chrysanthe en icône de la vraie sagesse'.

[54] For flattering a narratee as one of the four ways to make a hearer well-disposed, cf. e.g. *Rhet. Her.* 1. 8.

idols?' Daria answers: 'Such worship that makes them our guardians'[55]. Chrysanthus then asks how the idols can be our guardians, seeing that they get stolen if not guarded by dogs, and knocked down if not held in place with chains[56]. With these questions, Chrysanthus invites Daria to participate in the logic behind his argument. The argument - the inability of statues of the pagan gods to protect themselves – is topical: it is often used by martyrs to put pagans in the wrong[57]. Yet here it does not turn out to be the most appropriate choice. Daria answers that displaying images of the gods would be unnecessary (§9 *nulla necessitas*) if the low-born common people (*vulgus ignobile*) would be able to believe in the power of the gods and acknowledge their holiness without the images (*absque his imaginibus*). She implies that she herself does not need a similar aid and distances herself from the *vulgus ignobile*. Although Chrysanthus cleverly alluded to Daria's intelligence earlier, he clearly underestimates her now. By putting forward a simple argument that might convince common people – and possibly the audience of the passion[58] - but not his learned interlocutor[59], he might even have offended her. Chrysanthus thus fails to adapt his speech to his narratee and violates the rhetorical technique of *pathos*[60].

Chrysanthus now wants to find out who the gods behind the images are, and whether they deserve to be worshipped (§9 *merito honorem … exhibere culturae*). He gives an impressive list of vices of the pagan gods: Saturnus' infanticide and mutilation of his father (§10 *falcifer*), Jupiter's bisexual adulterous escapades and Mercury's deceptive nature are only a few of the references to pagan mythology that are passed in review.

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[55] *Passio C&D*, §9: *Chrisantus ad haec ait: 'O virgo prudentissima, quam putas nos idolis exhibere culturam?' Respondit Daria, 'Hanc quae nobis faciat esse custodes'.*

[56] *Passio C&D*, §9: *'Quomodo', inquit, 'nobis possunt esse custodes, qui nisi custoditi fuerint a canibus, nocte rapiuntur a furibus? Et ne ab aliquo deiciantur impulsu, vinculis ferreis coartantur et plumbo?'.*

[57] An interesting parallel passage can be found in the *passio Caeciliae*. Since Lanéry argues that the *passio C&D* adopts a motif from the *passio Caeciliae* (namely spiritual marriage, cf. Lanéry (2010) 146), the *passio Caeciliae* provides interesting material for comparison. In this passion, Caecilia converts her brother-in-law Tiburtius to Christianity and uses an argument very similar to the argument Chrysanthus uses here (she emphasizes that the statues of the idols are covered in bird shit and bird nests). The argument turns out to be an important step in Tiburtius' conversion. For an analysis of Caecilia's able use of rhetoric, see Bossu, De Temmerman, Praet (Mnemosyne, forthcoming).

[58] On the post-Nicene passions as texts tailored to both literate and illiterate audiences, see Van Uytfanghe (2001a) 206-211. On the martyr's speech as a form of conversion preaching directed at the passion's audience, see Cooper (2005b) 40.

[59] The argument might be convincing on the level of the key-function (i.e. its significance for the readers/listeners of the passion), but it is not on the level of the argument-function (i.e. its significance for the characters, in this case Daria). On these two functions, see De Jong, Nünlist, Bowie (2004) XV-XVI. On a similar function of martyrs' speech on two levels, see Goddard Elliott (1987) 25.

[60] Cf. Arist. *Rh.* 1. 2. 5.

That Chrysanthus bases his discussion on the pagan tradition is explicitly referred to three times: once with regard to Saturnus' devouring his own children[61], once with regard to the vices of Jupiter[62] and once with regard to the judgment of Paris[63]. The reference to the judgment of Paris and the 'outrage to Juno's slighted beauty' is a quote from the *Aeneid*[64]. Chrysanthus' knowledge of pagan mythology and Virgil are in agreement with his former education. Moreover, the inclusion of the Virgilian quote proves the literary refinement of this passion: when Paris had to choose between Venus (carnal love), Juno (power and goddess of marriage) and Minerva (intellect and skill in war), he chose carnal love. Unlike Paris, *Pius* Aeneas chose duty over Dido. As a Roman Christian, Chrysanthus' piety is of a different nature: he rejects all the gods, and disdains all physical beauty. He will opt for intellect and a chaste marriage which is neither the field of Venus, Juno or Minerva, but only of the one true God. With his list of vices, Chrysanthus wants to convince Daria that the major pagan gods have no claim to divinity. For, as he contended at the beginning of his speech, 'a god cannot be valued nor believed unless he surpasses all holiness and greatness'[65]. He thereupon refutes the divinity of the lesser gods (§11 *minores*) too by means of an *a maiore ad minus* argument[66]: if the more important gods are so miserable (*miseri*), then how much more miserable are their inferiors? Yet Chrysanthus' impressive refutation of the pagan gods (§§ 10-11) is only persuasive if Daria does indeed give credence to the pagan tradition about them. And this turns out not to be the case: she unambiguously refers to the writings of the poets as 'inventions' (§12 *figmenta*, the Greek version has *πλάσματα*), and proposes to consider the philosophers' allegorical interpretations (*allegorica interpretatio*) of the gods instead. Once again, then, Chrysanthus underestimates Daria's perspicacity. In this

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[61] *Passio C&D*, §10: *Saturnus... qui proprios filios quotienscumque nascebantur occidit – ut non dicam comedit sicut eius cultores scribunt?* (Saturnus ... who murdered his sons whenever they were born – not to say consumed them, as his worshippers write?).

[62] *Passio C&D*, §10: *Hunc (i.e. Jupiter) tu talem esse non credas si non de eo ista scripta sunt* (You would not believe him (i.e. Jupiter) to be like this, if these things had not been written about him).

[63] *Passio C&D, §11*: *Clamant omnium poetarum et oratorum et historiographorum scripta iudicium Paridis spreteque iniuriam formae* (The writings of all the poets and orators and historiographers cry out about Paris' judgment and the injustice to her despised beauty).

[64] The quote is the second part of the sentence recorded in note 63 (*iudicium Paridis spretaeque iniuria formae* = Virg. *Aen.* I, 26-27). The presence of this quote from Virgil has been adduced as an argument to underpin the primordiality of the Latin version of the passion (cf. supra, note 6). Translation of the Virgilian quote from Fairclough and Goold (1999), 265.

[65] *Passio C&D*, §9: *Deus enim non potest nec estimari nec credi nisi qui omnem sanctitatem omnemque supergreditur majestatem*. As a premise this definition holds true only for the Christian God. Chrysanthus thus uses a false analogy: since the Christian god surpasses all holiness and greatness, the same must apply to all other gods too.

[66] Cf. Quint. *Inst.* 5. 10. 87.

context, his statement about Jupiter being so vicious that one would not believe it if these things had not been written about him (cf. supra), gets an ironic overtone. As was the case with Chrysanthus' first argument, one has the impression that his discussion is rather aimed at the audience of the passion than at his interlocutor in the text.

Daria explains how the pagan gods can be seen as allegorical representations of the elements of nature (§12): 'Juno' equals 'air', 'Vesta' equals 'fire', 'Mater Magna' equals 'earth'[67] etc. In his reply, Chrysanthus gives more evidence of his rhetorical education. He first uses a syllogism[68]:

> *Maior*: It is the custom to represent by some image a likeness of those things that can be absent. *Minor*: The earth cannot be absent, fire is always present and the air is patently evident to everyone's eyes. *Conclusion*: the elements cannot justifiably be worshipped by means of some likeness or another[69].

Thereupon, he formulates a question which contains a comparison[70] in order to underpin his statement that he cannot understand why an image (*imago*) should be worshipped instead of the real element (*veritas*): 'Is there someone among kings and judges who would give the command to ignore himself and to venerate his image instead?'[71]. Once again, Chrysanthus communicates an appeal to Daria's rational capacities as he implies that no genuine reasoning (§12 *nulla ... ratio*) would approve (*patitur*) of such a scenario[72]. By combining a deductive (syllogism) and inductive (comparison) method of proof, Chrysanthus proves that he is capable of setting up a

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[67] Lanéry (2010) 145 identifies literal resemblances between this discussion of the allegorical interpretations of the pagan gods and Tertullian's *Contra Marcionem* I, 13.4 (e.g. *Passio C&D,* §12: *...* Iovem *vero* substantiam fervidam, Iunonem aerem *vocant,* Vestam ignem*...*). Lanéry sees this as an example of Chrysanthus' subtle critique of the pagan cults, inspired by Tertullian. Yet it actually is Daria who seems inspired by Tertullian here, since she is the one who amplifies on the allegorical interpretations. This might be an adumbration of Daria's future role as a Christian martyr. Similar arguments (but no literal resemblances) about the pagan gods as allegorical interpretations of the elements can be found in Firmicus Maternus, *De errore profanarum religionum*, I-V.

[68] Cf. Arist. *Rh.* 2. 22. 1-3; Quint. *Inst.* 5. 14. 24-25.

[69] *Passio C&D*, §12: *Illorum... effigies per simulachrum aliquod representari solet qui possunt aliquando non esse presentes. Terra vero, quae absens esse numquam potest, et ignis, qui in presenti semper est, et aer, qui aperte omnium oculis patet, cur per nescio quas effigies coli iuste putentur ignoro*.

[70] Arist. *Rh.* 2. 20. 3-4 ; Quint. *Inst.* 5. 11. 22-23.

[71] *Passio C&D*, §9: *Numquid est in regibus aut in judicibus, qui se ipsum iubeat derelinqui et suam imaginem venerari?*

[72] *Passio C&D*, §12: *Quod si nulla hoc ratio patitur, restat ut istae effigies non sint elementorum, potius sed defunctorum et mortuorum magis hominum quam deorum imagines comprobentur* (And if no genuine reasoning will approve of this (a statement that Chrysanthus expects Daria to agree upon), the observation still remains that these likenesses are not the likenesses of the elements, but rather of deceased people and that they are proven to be images rather of dead people than of gods).

logical rhetorical argumentatio[73]. Yet the problem lies in the proposition he wants to prove with it: if one considers – as he himself does not, of course - the pagan gods to be representations of the elements of nature, one should not worship the images, but the elements themselves. As we have seen, Daria has explained in the beginning of the debate that the only reason why the images exist is to help the *vulgus ignobile* to worship the gods. The fact that she considers the pagan gods to be allegorical interpretations of the elements does not change much to that. As a consequence, Chrysanthus' discussion here constitutes an *argumentatio* for what Daria herself has suggested earlier in the debate. Daria is explicit about this in her reply (§13): 'Your assertion gave proof (*probamentum*)[74] to my words. For you have taught that if the unlearned worship images, then we must worship the very elements whose images they worship, and we must honour the greatness of every element more wisely than the others'[75]. Yet although Daria thus implies that Chrysanthus provides no new insights, he indicates not to grasp the redundancy of his intervention. On the contrary, he sets himself up as a pleased teacher as he congratulates Daria on her apt conclusion of his explanation[76]. He does not seem to realize that Daria in fact repeats her own earlier thesis.

Chrysanthus then evokes two stories in which he confronts worshippers of elements (the earth in the first story and the sea in the second) with someone who denies the elements the status of divinity (§13). The former (supposedly) refuse to plough the earth or violate the sea with his nets: they venerate the elements in the passive hope of obtaining blessings. The latter cultivates the earth and goes fishing. Who of the two, Chrysanthus asks, will do better? Definitely the latter. Although Chrysanthus clearly exaggerates the pagan sacralization of nature, his stories are consistent with the Biblical idea of man's dominion over the earth, and all the plants and animals it contains[77]. Chrysanthus inductively concludes that the same holds true for the remaining elements (§13 *hoc etiam de ceteris elementis credendum est*). The explanation is that the elements are themselves under divine command. Consequently, one should not thank the elements through which the benefits are provided, but rather God who provides them, as is only reasonable (*digna ratione*). Once again, then, Chrysanthus alludes to the rational aspect

[73] For deduction and induction as the methods of proof to obtain artificial proofs in the *argumentatio*, cf. Arist. *Rh*. 1. 2. 13.

[74] *Probamentum* is a postclassical derivation of *probare*, the function of the *argumentatio* (Cf. e.g. Souter (1949) s.v. *probamentum*).

[75] *Passio C&D*, §13: *Dictis meis assertio tua probamentum exhibuit. Docuisti enim ut si imperiti imagines colunt, nos ipsas res quorum illi colunt imagines adoremus et unicuique honorem maiestatis suae sapientius quam alii exhibent praebeamus.*

[76] *Passio C&D*, §13: *Optime ... ad clausulam definitionis attingis.*

[77] Cf. Gen. 1. 28-29; Gen. 2. 15-16; Gen. 3. 23.

of his discussion. He adduces two other comparisons to underline his second conclusion: pupils do not thank the books but the teacher, healed people do not thank the medication but the physician. With this discussion, Chrysanthus at last manages to convert Daria (*credidit*).

Why does he only succeed then, after several failed attempts? For the first time in the debate, Chrysanthus refutes Daria's actual belief in the pagan gods whereas before he only adduced arguments to counter beliefs that Daria did not hold. In the course of the discussion, then, Chrysanthus gradually realizes that he is dealing with an intelligent and educated interlocutor and learns to adapt his speech to her[78]. If Chrysanthus would have assessed Daria rightly from the beginning, he could have spared himself the trouble of firing simple arguments at her and the passion would have been a lot shorter. It is likely, however, that Chrysanthus' expositions benefit the passion's audience[79]. It is true that his speeches are a lot longer than Daria's, but we do not think that he therefore assumes the mantle of power[80]. One rather has the impression that the debate reveals to Chrysanthus that Daria is his equal in the intellectual realm. Unlike the reader, who is informed about Daria's abilities upon her introduction in the story, Chrysanthus is not aware of his interlocutor's qualities beforehand and only finds out about them during the debate.

The movement towards symmetry which one detects between both protagonists in the intellectual realm is subsequently underlined when Daria becomes Chrysanthus' equal in the sexual realm, or rather the asexual realm, as well: when he has converted her, we are told that they both persevere in awe for god (§14 *in Dei timore*) and the glory of chastity (*gloria castitatis*)[81]. Daria, who is already intentionally chaste as a Vestal, now embraces eternal Christian chastity: while she first preserved her chastity for a false goddess, who by the way represents one of the elements, she now preserves it for the true God, who created the elements. Although to a Christian public the temporary chastity of a Vestal is of course incomparable to the eternal chastity of a Christian virgin[82], both positions are compatible to a certain extent: the sacred symbolism of

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[78] An important rhetorical guideline, cf. e.g. Cic. *Orat.* 70-71.

[79] On the martyr's speech as a form of conversion preaching directed at the passion's, cf. supra note 58.

[80] Chrysanthus' conversion of Daria contrasts sharply with Caecilia's conversion of Tiburtius in the *passio Caeciliae* (cf. supra, note 57). In the debate with Tiburtius, Caecilia emerges as a competent teacher who ably adapts her speech to her narratee and thus little by little leads both him and the passion's audience straight to conversion.

[81] Daria's position as a Christian virgin is further emphasized in §14: *sacratissima virgo Christi*, *sanctae virginitatis suae velamen sanctitatis aptaret*.

[82] The fact that Daria seems prepared to give up her virginity and sets out to seduce Chrysanthus, illustrates that the chastity of the Vestals is not held in high esteem in this passion. For a negative Christian assessment of the temporary chastity of the Vestals, cf. Ambrose, *De Virginibus* I, 4. 15 (edition Duckers, 2009), who points

virginity applies to both[83], and both positions allow for a certain amount of freedom[84]. The symmetry between Chrysanthus and Daria creates a synergy which leads to their joint decision to take up the pretense of marriage[85]. According to James Scott's classification of the discourses of dominated populations[86], Chrysanthus' and Daria's pretended marriage falls into the category of the trickster approach: they give the impression of conforming to the wishes of the dominating force (here especially Chrysanthus' father) but in fact they do not[87]. The trickery earns them more freedom of action, and the control over Polemius' fortune after his death[88]. It is unclear which of the two spouses came up with the idea of a pretended marriage. One could hypothesize that it was Daria, since she already gave evidence of her ability to use false pretenses when she visited Chrysanthus. As noted earlier, we do not know why Chrysanthus needs comfort, but the hagiographer clearly states that Daria uses consolation as a pretext for her visit (§8 *quasi sub specie consolationis*). Chrysanthus does not display a similar proclivity for deception. Quite on the contrary: after his baptism, he publicly (§3 *voce publica*) proclaims his faith and thus puts himself in danger[89]. Yet one could also argue that it is unlikely that the newly converted Daria would come up with the idea of a marriage without sex, since this is fundamentally at odds with the pagan view on

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out that the Vestals sell their chastity for privileges and should not be considered chaste (*Conferuntur immunitates, offeruntur pretia, quasi non hoc maximum petulantiae sit indicium castitatem vendere*); their chastity is promised for a price and given up for a price (*quod pretio promittitur, pretio solvitur…*). For the privileges of the Vestals, cf. Duckers (2009) 125-127. In the Christian polemic about the Vestals, the temporary virgins are thus presented as a kind of prostitutes. This aligns Daria even more with the *ancillae* who try to seduce Chrysanthus in exchange for personal benefit (the preservation of their life). Moreover, in this respect, it is significant that Daria is put in a brothel later in the passion.

[83] On the perpetuation of the pagan sacred symbolism of virginity in Christian circles, cf. Cooper (1996) 76-77. Yet on the important differences between pagan virgins and Christian virgins, cf. Brown (1988) 8-9.

[84] On the independence of the Vestals, cf. supra, note 82, on the Christian virgin, cf. supra, note 19.

[85] *Passio C&D*, §14: *Et quasi simulata voluntate inter se et Chrysanthum habens consilium, nomen coniugii assumpserunt*. Although Chrysanthus and Daria conclude a marriage, their interpersonal bond is not further explored, in contrast to other accounts of spiritual marriages, such as the *passio Juliani et Basilissae*: see Alwis (2013).

[86] Cf. Scott (1990) 18-19. Daniel Boyarin uses Scott's terminology in his study about the interactions between nascent Christianity and nascent Judaism in late antiquity (see Boyarin 1999, 42-66).

[87] Due to the subversive aspect of a spiritual marriage, it was usually kept secret: see Alwis (2013) 169; Alwis (2011) 88-90; Elliott (1993) 65.

[88] *Passio C&D,* §14: *… et ubi Chrysanthus libenter ministerium paternae voluntatis accepit* (… and when Chrysanthus accepted with pleasure the guardianship of his fathers' will…). Consolino (1984) 95 states that Chrysanthus contracts a fictitious marriage in order to inherit his fortune.

[89] Polemius' friends warn him for his son's 'foolish outbursts' which endanger his father's fortune and life: *Passio C&D,* §4: *Periculo patrimonii tui et capitis tui iste iuvenis contra deos deasque nostras vociferat clamoribus vanis*. Chrysanthus' action reminds one of the practice of voluntary martyrdom, of which a rather extreme example can be found in the *Acts of Euplus*, cf. Musurillo (1972) 314-319.

marriage. From this viewpoint, it is probable that the celibate marriage was Chrysanthus' idea. The symmetry between both protagonists, which is confirmed by the spiritual marriage, is subsequently further underlined by their similar proselytizing activity[90] and eventually by their death[91].

5.3 Evolution towards symmetry?

The characterization of the passion's protagonists reveals, we have argued, an evolution towards sexual symmetry. When Chrysanthus and Daria have been arrested, however, instances of asymmetry can again be detected. The *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae*, it turns out, takes different approaches to traditional gender roles. After their arrest by the pagan authorities, the couple is tortured and miraculously saved. Yet the kinds of torture differ and confirm to their gender roles: whereas Chrysanthus is physically tortured (§16 he is bound up, showered with urine, covered with animal skin,...), Daria is put in a brothel (§22)[92]. During their tortures, both martyrs manage to convert their assaulters – again an indication of symmetry. But their behaviour during and after conversion differs remarkably.

We will start with Chrysanthus. After he has been tortured, he is brought before the tribune and states offensively that the pagan idols are no gods. Thereupon, the tribune orders him to be beaten but the sticks become soft as feathers (§17 *quasi plume*

[90] *Passio C&D*, §14: *Et tam per Chrysantum multitudo virorum quam per Dariam feminae innumerabiles ad Christi gratiam confluebant* (And just as a great mass of men reached the grace of Christ through Chrysanthus, so did uncountable women through Daria). In §15, riots break out because Chrysanthus and Daria convinced people to give up sex. Here too, symmetry is retained: *Iuvenes clamabant, 'Sponsas nostras per Dariam amittimus'... Mulieres clamabant, 'Maritos amisimus per Chrysantum...'* (The young men shouted: 'We lose our fiancees because of Daria'... The women shouted: 'We lost our husbands because of Chrysanthus'). Similar descriptions of unrest in a city due to Christian exhortation to give up sex can be found in the *Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla* (§§9-15) and the *Apocryphal Acts of Thomas* (§86-87, 101), but the symmetry in causing the unrest is more prominent in the *Passio C&D* than in the *Apocryphal Acts*.

[91] They are put in one pit as if in one bed and endure in one will: *Passio C&D*, §26: *... quasi in uno lectulo ita in una fovea in una voluntate durantes.* Since '*lectulus'* can refer to the nuptial bed, Chrysanthus' and Daria's marriage is emphasized by their death. Of course, their death earns them the eternal life (§26 *sine fine viventes*). On marriage which transcends death in this passion, see Elliott (1993) 70.

[92] The brothel is referred to as a kind of torture: *Passio C&D*, §22: *Interea Chrysantum iussit ... retineri ... ut simul cum Daria diversis tormentorum generibus ageretur. ... In hanc ergo habitationem ferro vinctus Chrysanthus mittitur nudus. Daria vero ponitur in publico contubernio meretricum* (Meanwhile he (i.e. the emperor Numerian) ordered Chrysanthus to be locked up so that he might experience different kinds of torture together with Daria. ... So Chrysanthus was thrown into this dwelling, naked and handcuffed, but Daria was put in a public brothel).

mollescere)[93]. This miracle proves to be the deciding factor for the tribune: he decides that he wants to worship the god 'who makes his worshippers victorious in every fight'[94] (§18). Although he states that the rational truth (§18 *rationabilis veritas*) is confirmed by Chrysanthus' very words[95], the miracle was necessary to convince him of this: after all, he had Chrysanthus beaten after his speech. The miracle, then, serves as a ratification of Chrysanthus' words[96]. When the tribune subsequently asks Chrysanthus to initiate him in the knowledge of his God and his cult[97], Chrysanthus is reluctant. Apparently, he doubts the sincerity of the tribune's conversion as it is rather based on the display of power (the miracle) than on rational understanding of the Christian truth. He points out that one does not reach knowledge about the worship of God with one's feet, but with one's heart (§18 *non pedibus ... sed corde*) and that God is only near to people who pursue Him with a faithful mind (*fides mentis*) and a pure heart (*cordis integritas*)[98]. As becomes clear from this scene, Chrysanthus attaches great importance to the rational understanding of the Christian faith. This is in keeping with Daria's conversion earlier, which involved no miracles but only rational argumentation: Chrysanthus' repeated appeals to Daria's rational capacities confirm that he deems understanding important as motivation for conversion. Yet understanding and knowledge also remain of importance to Chrysanthus after people have been converted: as we are told in §19, he instructs the converted tribune and his retinue[99] in the Christian teachings for several days[100].

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[93] This wording contains an echo of an earlier scene: in §8, Daria throws so much trumps into the fray that 'had Chrysanthus been harder than iron, he would have become *softer than a feather*' (*... si esset ferro durior,* pluma mollior *redderetur*), cf. supra, note 43.

[94] *Passio C&D*, §18. *rogemus ut nos quoque talem Deum faciat colere qui cultores suos in omni faciat pugna vincentes*. The utterance reminds one of the famous vision of Constantine, which divulged to him that he would win in the sign of the cross (*τούτῳ νίκα*), as recounted in Eusebius' *De vita Constantini*, 1. 28.

[95] *Passio C&D*, §18: *in verbo etiam ipso rationabilis veritas conprobatur*.

[96] For a similar mix of words and miracles in the realization of conversion in the *Passio Sebastiani*, cf. Cooper (2005b) 37.

[97] *Passio C&D*, §18: *Peto itaque ut facias me cognoscere eum et ad notitiam culturę eius aliqua ratione pertingere*.

[98] For a similar warning in the *Passio Sebastiani,* cf. Cooper (2005b) 39.

[99] The tribune converts together with his wife, children, friends and acquaintances (§19). For the importance of social pressure in conversion, see Cooper (2005b) 30-34 who draws on the work of Rodney Stark. For a similar group conversion in the *Passio Sebastiani*, see Cooper (2005b) 38.

[100] *Passio C&D*, §19: *Per singulos dies a sancto Chrisanto eruditionem veritatis desiderantissime audiebant...* (For some days, they eagerly listened to saint Chrysanthus' knowledge of the truth....) After Daria's conversion and baptism, she also gains more in-depth knowledge about the faith by studying the divine scriptures (§14). It is unclear, however, if she does so at the instance of Chrysanthus.

Let us now turn to Daria. While she is praying in the brothel, Christ sends a lion to her aid, a motif which links this passion to the *Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla*[101]. The animal miraculously obeys the martyr's orders[102]: when a young man enters the room, the lion pounces on him and looks to Daria as if to ask (*quasi interrogans*) what her command will be (*quid de eo iuberet*). Daria asks the animal not to harm the man but to allow him to listen to what she has to say. Daria points out that even a fierce lion (§24 *ferocitas leonis*) respects the name of Christ, but he, a rational being (*homo rationalis*), commits so many crimes. Unsurprisingly, the youth thereupon falls at her feet and asks her to allow him to leave unharmed so that he may proclaim that Christ is the only true God. Daria orders the lion to let him go, and he starts shouting throughout the city that Daria is a goddess (*Sciatis omnes Dariam deam esse!*)[103]. Like the tribune in the earlier scene, then, the youth is converted to Christianity after observing the power of God in the form of a miracle. Yet whereas Chrysanthus attaches great importance to understanding and knowledge of the faith to complement this display of power, this is of no concern to Daria: she is content with any conversion. That the young man is indeed very poorly informed about his newly acquired faith becomes apparent when he wrongly identifies Daria as a goddess. The man's mistake hints at an often heard concern with regard to conversion as a result of display of miraculous power[104]: the convert does not understand that the saint as a *vir Dei* or *mulier Dei* remains human and can only work miracles thanks to God's power[105]. Instead, he adds the saint to his polytheistic pantheon[106].

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[101] See Lanéry 2010, 146. For the scene of Thecla and the lion, see the *Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla,* §33. The helping lion is a recurrent theme in hagiography, see Goddard Elliott (1987) 144-167, esp. 148-149 on the lion in the *Passio C&D*.

[102] Since Adam was in command of the animals before the Fall (cf. Gen. 1.28), Daria's command of the lion might allude to a return to paradise thanks to her position as a Christian saint: see Goddard Elliott (1987) 165-167. On the other hand, associations with Diana as *Potnia theron* might also be possible.

[103] Unlike Bossue's and Floss' editions, Mombritius' edition has '*Daream Dei esse ancillam'* and thus probably corrected the inappropriate statement.

[104] For adhesion rather than conversion based upon miracles, see Praet (1992-1993) 25-26. For the limited knowledge about the Christian faith as an object of concern in Christian circles, cf. Cooper (2005b) 33-34, with reference to Augustine's *De catechizandis rudibus.*

[105] See Van Uytfanghe (2001b) 1341-1342.

[106] Similar scenes of people who consider the performer of a miracle a god include Acts 14. 11-12 (Paul and Barnabas) and 28. 6 (Peter). On the subject, see MacMullen (1983) 178-179. For Augustine's efforts in refuting Faustus of Milevis' accusation that the cult of the martyrs had taken the place of the pagan idols, see Den Boeft (1989) 117.

In this context, it is interesting to compare the brothel scene of the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae* to similar scenes in other Latin post-Nicene passions[107]. As discussed, Daria is in command of the lion and is thus easily mistaken for a goddess. None of the other Christian virgins who end up in a brothel is allotted so much power: Agnes (BHL 156), Irene (BHL 118), Lucia (BHL 4992), Marciana (BHL 5259), Serapia (BHL 7586), Bonosa (BHL 1425) and Theodora (BHL 8072)[108] are all very happy with the miracle that prevents them from being raped, but none of them makes use of the miraculous power to obtain conversion. Sometimes the assaulters are converted, but due to the miracle they have perceived and not thanks to the active intervention of the martyr[109]. The only martyr who adopts an approach remarkably similar to Daria's, is Columba in her 6th or 7th century passion (BHL 1893)[110]. Columba is helped by a bear (*ursa*) instead of a lion, blackmails her audience more explicitly (*aut promitte te christianum fieri, aut, si nolueris, devorabit te fera*) and is not called a goddess, but apart from these variations, she and Daria behave strikingly alike[111]. Yet this observation only underlines the exceptional nature of Daria's approach, as the *passio Columbae* makes use of the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae*[112]. It seems, then, that the hagiographers of the other post-Nicene passions were more reluctant in attributing direct power to their heroines, as this could bring the audience to inappropriate conclusions. As we pointed out with regard to the tribune's conversion, Chrysanthus not only attaches great importance to the understanding of the Christian faith as a motivation for conversion; after conversion too, he provides the tribune and his entourage with more in-depth knowledge of Christianity as he instructs them in the Christian teachings. A similar instruction is totally lacking in the brothel scene: Daria is not concerned with the youth's knowledge of the Christian faith, neither before nor after conversion. This is confirmed when she uses the same approach a second time: when people set out to catch the lion, the animal puts them all unharmed at Daria's feet. She points out that they can leave unharmed if they promise to believe in Christ. Unsurprisingly, they all leave the brothel shouting that Christ is the only God. These people do not make the same mistake as the youth earlier, but once again Daria is not concerned with the instruction of the newly converted.

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[107] The theme of the virgin in the brothel is a *topos* which can be found in both pagan and Christian narrative, see Rizzo Nervo (1995) 91-99.

[108] Lanéry notes that the brothel passage constitutes a thematic similarity between the *passio C&D* and the *passio Irenae, passio Theodorae, passio Marcianae* and *passio Agnetis* (cf. supra, note 12).

[109] This is the case for Agnes and Marciana.

[110] Cf. Beaujard (2000), 226-227. Gryson, Frede (2007) 58 call the passion 'precarolingian'.

[111] Edition Fabréga Grau (1955) 116-118.

[112] Cf. Beaujard (2000), 226-227 and Gryson, Frede (2007) 58.

Daria's neglect of knowledge of and instruction in the faith is remarkable, seeing the emphasis on her intellectual capacities in the earlier *disputatio*. The intellectual equality between the protagonists which we detected in the debate has vanished: Daria makes no efforts to convince her addressees with rational arguments or to instruct them in the faith. This reestablishing of the traditional gender roles is in agreement with the views on female teachers within early Christianity. Although they could teach in a familial context[113] and in monasteries[114], public teaching was forbidden for women in the early Church[115]. Consequently, it comes as no surprise that Thecla, who was famously exhorted by Paul to go and preach the word of God[116], was a controversial figure[117]: female leaders and teachers were condemned as heretical[118]. In the conversion scenes after their arrest, then, Chrysanthus and Daria adopt the male and female roles prevailing in the early Church.

Conclusion

Analysis of the characterization of the protagonists in the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae*, this paper argues, reveals an interesting play with gender roles. On the one hand, one detects a movement towards sexual symmetry: both in the intellectual and in the sexual realm, Chrysanthus and Daria become equals. Unlike the reader, Chrysanthus is not informed about Daria's intellectual capacities at their initial encounter and he assumes that she holds an inferior position, in accordance with her gender role. As she proves, in

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[113] See Kraemer (1992) 188 and (2005) 22-29, who puts forward Gregory of Nyssa's sister Macrina as an example.

[114] See Cox Miller (2005) 19-22, who puts forward Melania The Younger as an example. On Melania The Younger, see also Clark (1984).

[115] This prohibition was based on Paul's First Epistle to Timothy 2:12, which was followed by the Fathers: see Cox Miller (2005) 30. In the earliest days of Christianity, however, women could hold leadership roles and function as teachers. On this change, see Cox Miller (2005) 5-8 and Sawyer (1996) 108-109, 146-157. Daria's exhortation of women to renounce sex (cf. supra, note 90) constitutes no problematic situation: a problem occurred when a woman teaches men (and thus establishes authority over them), see Kraemer (1992) 188.

[116] *Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla*, §41, 6: *Ὑπαγε καὶ δίδασκε τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ.*

[117] Thecla's example was sometimes seen as a license for women's teaching and baptizing: see Tert. *De bapt.* 17, who vehemently disapproves of this. On Thecla's role as a teacher in the *Apocryphal Acts* and the contradictions with Paul's I Tim 2:12 (cf. supra note 115), see Kraemer (1992) 150-156. On the fluctuating esteem in which the Thecla figure was held, as detectable from the different versions of the *Passio Eugeniae*, see Cooper (2005a) 19.

[118] See Kraemer (1992) 157-190.

the course of the *disputatio*, to be a very intelligent and educated woman, he little by little realizes that she is his equal. The symmetry which is established in the intellectual realm is subsequently confirmed by the spiritual marriage which the couple concludes: just as Chrysanthus, Daria adopts eternal Christian chastity. By eliminating sex and thus disrupting the traditional male and female roles, the celibate marriage underlines the equality between both partners. On the other hand, however, the movement towards sexual symmetry does not preclude the evocation of traditional gender roles in this passion. This can be observed, we contend, in the spouses' behaviour during and after conversion. Whereas Chrysanthus attaches great importance to the understanding of the Christian faith and appears as a teacher, Daria pays no attention to the instruction of the newly converted. The earlier emphasis on Daria's intellectual capacities has vanished: when it comes to instruction in the faith, the accepted gender roles prevail.

This analysis of character construction in the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae* hopes to have shown that the post-Nicene passions give evidence of more literary subtlety than is usually argued. Whereas previous research again and again emphasized the repetitiveness and monotony of these texts, we believe they deserve to be approached as literary creations in their own right.

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Chapter 6 An entertaining martyr: Characterization in the Latin *passio Agnetis* (BHL 156)

Introduction

Agnes is a preeminent saint of the Roman Church. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, she is 'one of the most famous of the early Roman martyrs'.[1] This popularity becomes apparent from the attestations of her cult[2] and the numerous accounts of her vicissitudes. At the end of the fourth century, Damasus, Ambrose and Prudentius all immortalized Agnes' tribulations as a virgin martyr of the Christian Church. Pope Damasus put up an epigram in her honour in her Roman basilica on the *Via Nomentana*,[3] Ambrose lauds Agnes in his *De Virginibus* and possibly in a hymn too,[4] and Prudentius

[1] D. H. Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* Oxford 2011, 6.

[2] On Agnes' cult, see L. Grig, *Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity*, London 2004, 79-81 and L. Grig, *Portraits, Pontiffs and the Christianization of fourth century Rome,* Papers of the British School at Rome 72, 2004, 203-230, esp. 219-221 on Agnes' presence on fourth-century Roman gold glass (a design in gold leaf between two layers of glass), and the very recent volume edited by the *École française de Rome*: *Le culte de sainte Agnès à place Navone entre antiquité et moyen âge,* Mélanges de l'École française de Rome 126 (1), 2014. On Agnes' iconography from the fourth century until modern times, see B. Baert, *More than an Image. Agnes of Rome: Virginity and Visual Memory*, in J. Leemans (ed.), *More than a Memory: The Discourse of Martyrdom and the Construction of Christian Identity in the History of Christianity*, Leuven-Dudley 2005, 145-168. On the episcopal interest in Agnes' cult, see H. Jones, *Agnes and Constantia: Domesticity and Cult Patronage in the Passion of Agnes*, in K. Cooper, J. Hillner (eds.) *Religion, Dynasty and Patronage in Early Christian Rome*, Cambridge 2007, 115-139, esp. 122-123.

[3] The inscription has been edited by A. Ferrua, *Epigrammata Damasiana*, Roma 1942, n. 37.

[4] Ambr., *virg*. 1,2,5-9; recently edited by P. Duckers (ed.), *De Virginibus – Über die Jungfrauen*, Turnhout 2009, 104-113. The attribution of the hymn has been disputed; see the introduction to the edition of J. Fontaine, J.-L. Charlet, S. Deléani, Y.-M. Duval, A. Goulon, M.-H. Jullien, J. de Montgolfier, G. Nauroy, M. Perrin, H. Savon (eds.), *Ambroise de Milan. Hymnes,* Paris 1992, 363-374.

dedicates one of the poems of his *Peristephanon* to the famous martyr.[5] Apart from these accounts, Agnes' life and death constitute the subject matter of several anonymous late antique passions. Four texts have been passed down, two in Greek (BHG 45 and BHG 46), one in Latin (BHL 156 – 156a – 156b - 157[6]) and one in Syriac (BHO 34). All these accounts are interrelated, and actually go back to two original passions, namely BHG 45 and BHL 156.[7] In this article, I will focus on the Latin passion (BHL 156), which received less attention in contemporary scholarship than the accounts by Damasus, Ambrose and Prudentius.[8] Before proceeding to the article's main argument, however, it will be useful to briefly discuss the other, older accounts of Agnes' martyrdom.

6.1 Agnes' martyrdom in the accounts by Damasus, Ambrose, Prudentius and in BHG 45

In all the accounts of her martyrdom, except for BHG 45 where she is a young woman, Agnes is a young girl. The circumstances of her arrest differ, but in all texts she appears as a steadfast martyr who bravely stands firm in her faith. In Damasus' epigram, for a start, it is recounted how she 'immediately (*subito*) left the lap of her wet nurse when she heard the trumpet's lugubrious sounds' and 'spontaneously (*sponte*) trampled on the

[5] Prud., *perist.*14; edition T. E. Page, E. Capps, W. H. D. Rouse, L. A. Post, E. H. Warmington, H. J Thomson (eds.), *Prudentius*. Vol. II, London-Cambridge (MA) 1961, 228-345.

[6] BHL 156a and BHL 156b only differ from BHL 156 in the final paragraph, and are not edited. BHL 157 is the *recensio brevior*, which is not edited either. The last part of Agnes' passion, i.e. the account of the vicissitudes of Agnes' foster-sister Emerentiana, is also passed down separately as BHL 2527 and BHL 2527a. The separation was due to liturgical circumstances (cf. C. Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan, hagiographe*, Turnhout 2008, 350). BHL 2527 and BHL 2527a differ only in the first paragraph.

[7] BHO 34 is a translation of BHG 45 (cf. H. Delehaye, *Les passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires,* Bruxelles 1966[2], 224; the Syriac text has been edited by P. Bedjan (ed.), *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum*, Paris 1894, 116-123), whereas BHG 46 is a translation from BHL 156, as can be deduced from the many Latinisms in BHG 46, as well as mistakes in the Greek text which can be accounted for by a wrong interpretation of the Latin wording, see P. Franchi de'Cavalieri, *S. Agnese nella tradizione e nella leggenda,* in P. Franchi de'Cavalieri, *Scritti Agiografici.* Vol. I, Città del Vaticano 1962[2], 328-332. In the same work, Franchi de'Cavalieri also edited both Greek passions: BHG 45 (355-360) and BHG 46 (361-379). The relation of BHL 156 to BHG 45 has been thoroughly debated. Lanéry recently argued that BHG 45 represents an older tradition. She posits that BHL 156 was influenced by the accounts of Damasus and Ambrose and by BHG 45. See Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 362-365 with references to the views of Franchi de'Cavalieri and Delehaye on the matter.

[8] See L. Grig, *The Paradoxical Body of St. Agnes,* in A. Hopkins and M. Wyke (eds.), *Roman Bodies – Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century*, London 2005, note 20: 'The passio Agnetis ... has yet to receive contemporary critical attention'.

threats and anger of a savage tyrant'.[9] A similar eagerness for arrest and martyr death occurs in the Ambrosian hymn, where Agnes is locked up by her parents, but faith unbars the doors and she eagerly heads for martyrdom.[10] In Ambrose's eulogy on Agnes in *De Virginibus*, it is less clear if Agnes spontaneously presents herself for martyrdom. According to Fontaine,[11] she does, because Ambrose refers to the fact that she is too young to be legally persecuted by the imperial authorities.[12] In any case, *De Virginibus* contains no indication that Agnes tries to postpone or escape arrest. Neither does such an indication occur in Prudentius' account of Agnes' martyrdom: Agnes is said to enjoy the glory of dying by her own will (v. 9 *gloria liberae mortis*).[13] As to the reason for her arrest, it is recounted how she 'bravely withstood godless commands, refusing to make herself over to idols and desert her holy faith'.[14] Thereupon, she is brought to court. The Agnes of BHG 45 is a bit different from the 'Agnesses' in the other accounts. As has been said, she is a young woman instead of a girl. Moreover, the Agnes of BHG 45 acts as a teacher: many high-born women visit her (*ἐφοίτουν*)[15] because they admire her way of life. They benefit from her teaching and imitate her piety. Since Agnes remains a virgin for Christ and incites the women to do the same, her teachings provoke the anger of the authorities.[16] Thereupon, her pupils urge her to renounce her faith (*ἀφίστασθαι αὐτῆς τὴν πίστιν τοῦ Χριστοῦ*) or at least to go into hiding (*λανθάνειν*). She refuses both. Quite on the contrary: she teaches even more openly (*ἔτι φανερώτερον*), and overtly

[9] Lines 1-4: *Fama refert sanctos dudum retulisse parentes / Agnen cum lugubres cantus tuba concrepuisset / nutricis gremium subito liquisse puellam / sponte trucis calcasse minas rabiemque tyranni* (edition Ferrua, *Epigrammata* cit., my own translation). According to Ferrua, *Epigrammata* cit., 176, the trumpet refers to the criers who announced the edicts which prescribed the persecution of the Christians.

[10] Stanzas 3-4: *Metu parentes territi / claustrum pudoris auxerant / solvit fores custodiae / fides teneri nescia / Prodire quis nuptum putet / sic laeta vultu ducitur* (edition Fontaine et al., *Ambroise de Milan* cit.) *Her parents, paralyzed by fear, reinforced her purity's defense. - But faith, which recognized no bonds, unbarred the doors that guarded her. You'd think she came forth to be wed, so glad she looked when led away* (translations of the hymn are taken from P.G. Walsh, C. Husch, *One Hundred Latin Hymns. Ambrose to Aquinas*, Cambridge (MA) - London 2012). On the marriage symbolism, cf. infra, on the *topos* of the young imprisoned girl who escapes in order to be reunited with her lover, here in the context of the mystical marriage between Agnes and Christ, and for resemblances to the martyrium of Pelagia and Eulalia, see Fontaine et al., *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 387-388.

[11] Fontaine et al, *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 387.

[12] Cf. Ambr., *virg.* 1,2,8: *Novum martyrii genus: nondum idonea poenae et iam matura victoriae – A new type of martyrdom: still too young to undergo the punishment, but already of the proper age for victory.* (edition Duckers, *De Virginibus* cit., my own translation). On the protection of *minores* (younger than 25) in a judicial context, see Duckers, *De Virginibus* cit., note 38.

[13] Edition Page, Capps, Rouse, Post, Warmington, Thomson, *Prudentius* cit.

[14] v. 12-14 [*aiunt*] *... fortiter inpiis / iussis renisam, quo minus idolis / addicta sacram desereret fidem* (text and translation Page, Capps, Rouse, Post, Warmington, Thomson, *Prudentius* cit.).

[15] Edition Franchi de'Cavalieri, *S. Agnese* cit.

[16] Agnes' actions thus resemble Thecla's, on this, see F. Di Marco, *Undressed: The Naked Female Body as a Sign of Holiness in Apocryphal and Hagiographical Literature*, Studia Patristica 44, 2010, 499-508, esp. 499-503.

(φανερῶς) and with a great outspokenness (*μετὰ πολλῆς παρρησίας*) urges her pupils to reflect on their sins and to learn to know Christ. As a result, she is immediately arrested.

In all accounts of the martyrdom, Agnes' virginity (*ἁγνή*, 'the Pure') is emphasized.[17] Agnes wants to die as a virgin and become the bride of Christ. Christ as lover or bridegroom was a popular and well-known metaphor: either the Church or the soul of an individual Christian can act as the fiancée or bride of Christ. Virgins in particular are often called 'brides of Christ'.[18] Except for Damasus' epigram, all accounts of the martyrdom contain this metaphor. In the Ambrosian hymn, Agnes looks so glad when led away for martyrdom, 'you'd think she came forth to be wed, ... bearing fresh riches to her man; her dowry was the wealth of her blood'.[19] In the *Peristephanon*, Agnes calls herself the bride of Christ (v. 79 *nupta Christo*) and she is called thus by the author of BHG 45 (p. 360 *νύμφη ἁγνὴ ἁγνῷ νυμφίῳ Χριστῷ*). In Ambrose's *De Virginibus*, Agnes receives marriage proposals from many men after her arrest (1, 2, 9 *quantorum vota ut sibi ad nuptias proveniret!*), but replies: "It is unfair to my bridegroom (*sponsus*) if I keep him waiting for the girl who will please him. The one who first selected me, will obtain me."[20] Although Agnes does not specify that she refers to Christ here, it is clear for her audience since she utters these words after she has been arrested as a Christian. The marriage proposals in *De Virginibus* constitute the only reference to worldly marriage in the older accounts of Agnes' martyrdom. As we will see, a worldly marriage proposal becomes a major theme in the Latin passion.

The emphasis on Agnes' virginity and the mystical marriage is intertwined with another characteristic feature of her martyrdom accounts: eroticism. To a greater or lesser extent, the descriptions of Agnes' tortures and death are notably erotic in all the versions of her martyrdom. This titillating atmosphere adds to the entertainment value

[17] The link between Agnes' name and her virginity is referred to by Ambrose in his *De Virginibus* (1,2,6) and by the author of BHG 45 (p.365).

[18] But widows, married women and even men could be called 'brides of Christ' as well. For the Biblical basis of the metaphor (especially the Song of Songs and Psalm 45 are important in this respect; on the Song of Songs, cf. infra) and its elaboration in exegetic works, see J. Schmid, *Brautschaft, heilige,* in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, II, Stuttgart 1954, 528-564, esp. 560-561 (where he refers to Agnes' passion as an example of the virgin as bride of Christ), K. S. Frank, *Hoheslied,* in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum,* XVI, Stuttgart 1994, 58-87 and E. Clark, *The Celibate Bridegroom and his Virginal Brides: Metaphor and the Marriage of Jesus in Early Christian Ascetic Exegesis*, Church History 77, 2008, 1-25. Clark also elaborates on the paradoxes and interpretational problems which the metaphor caused.

[19] Stanza 3: *Prodire quis nuptum putet / sic laeta vultu ducitur/ novas viro ferens opes / dotata censu sanguinis. You'd think she came forth to be wed, so glad she looked when led away, bearing fresh riches to her man; her dowry was the wealth of her blood.*

[20] *Et haec sponsi iniuria est expectare placituram. Qui me sibi prior elegit accipiet.* These two sentences, followed by a short exhortation of the executioner and an utterance of depreciation of her physical body and the attention it gets (*Quid, percussor, moraris? Pereat corpus, quod amari potest oculis quibus nolo*), is the only direct speech which is allotted to Agnes in the complete account of Agnes' martyrdom in *De Virginibus*.

of the texts, and made Agnes a popular figure in research on gender and eroticism in early Christianity and in inquiries into the dynamics of the (male) gaze.[21] When she is put on the stake in Damasus' epigram, Agnes spreads her hair over her naked limbs (*nudaque profusum crinem per membra dedisse*) so that her body cannot be seen by a perishable person (*facies peritura*).[22] A similar concern for modesty characterizes Agnes in the Ambrosian hymn: already struck by the sword,[23] she drapes her clothes around herself (*veste se totam tegens*) so that no one might see her uncovered (*ne quis retectam cerneret*).[24] In *De Virginibus* too, Agnes is not keen on being looked at.[25] The emphasis on hiding from the gaze in these texts contrasts sharply with Agnes' behaviour in BHG 45, where she answers the magistrate who orders to undress her that she is not ashamed of her naked body, as it is the body which God the Creator made.[26] The most explicit sexually connoted torture occurs in Prudentius' *Peristephanon* and in BHG 45. In both texts, the magistrate threatens to submit Agnes to rape for not honouring the pagan gods. In BHG 45, she is put in a brothel, but the young man who wants to rape her drops dead. In Prudentius' account, she is exposed in a public square. Yet the crowd does not dare to look at her genitals (v. 42 *verendum locum*), except for one man, who is struck by lightning and blinded. Thereupon, the executioner is summoned and Agnes welcomes his 'naked sword' (v.68 *mucrone nudo*) in explicit sexual terms. Although she offers her breast, the man severes her neck. This relocation of the sword emphasizes Agnes' femininity and her sexual subordination[27]. In *De Virginibus* too, Agnes offers her whole body to the sexualized 'sword of the raging soldier' (1, 2, 7 *furentis mucroni militis*) [28].

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[21] Generally on virgins and the 'gaze', see e.g. E. A. Castelli, *Visions and Voyeurism: Holy Women and the Politics of Sight in Early Chrisitanity,* in C. Ocker (ed.), *Protocol of the Colloquy of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies. New Series. Vol II,* Berkeley 1995, 1-20, and K. Cooper, *The Virgin as Social Icon*, in M. Van Dijk, R. Nip (eds.), *Saints, Scholars and Politicians. Gender as a tool in Medieval Studies*, Turnhout 2005, 9-24 with further references.

[22] For an eschatological interpretation of this scene (Agnes pure body will resurrect in contrast to the perishable body of anyone watching the torture) and a discussion of the modesty theme, see Di Marco, *Undressed* cit., 504-507.

[23] The way in which Agnes dies differs in the different accounts of her martyrdom: in Damasus' epigram and in BHG 45 she dies on the stake, whereas in Ambrose's and Prudentius' texts, she is killed by the sword. Furthermore, the differences between the martyr's death in *De Virginibus* and Prudentius' account on the one hand (decapitation), and the Ambrosian hymn on the other (iugulation) stimulated further debate, cf. e.g. P. Franchi de' Cavalieri, *Intorno ad alcune reminiscenze classiche nelle leggende agiografiche del secolo IV*, in P. Franchi de'Cavalieri, *Hagiographica*, Roma 1908, 121-164, esp. 141-156.

[24] For a discussion of the modesty theme in this scene, see Fontaine et al., *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 399-402.

[25] Cf. supra, note 20.

[26] p. 503: σώματί σοι παρίσταμαι οἷόν μοι ὁ πλαστουργὸς καὶ Θεὸς διέπλασεν, καὶ οὐκ αἰσχύνομαι τὴν γύμνωσιν ταύτην. On the different approach of nakedness in this passion in comparison to Damasus', Ambrose's and Prudentius' accounts, and on the correspondences between Agnes' behaviour in BHG 45 and Thecla's in the *Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla*, see Di Marco, *Undressed* cit.

[27] For a discussion of the eroticism and gender issues in Prudentius' account, see V. Burrus, *Reading Agnes: The Rhetoric of Gender in Ambrose en Prudentius*, Journal of Early Christian Studies 3, 1995, 25-46, esp. 33-43; D.

6.2 Agnes' martyrdom in the Latin passion BHL 156

After this short overview of the way in which Damasus, Ambrose, Prudentius and the anonymous author of BHG 45 dealt with Agnes' vicissitudes, I now turn to the main subject of this article, the Latin passion BHL 156. The text can be dated to the 5th or the beginning of the 6th century[29] and was written in Rome.[30] The passion presents itself as a letter of Ambrose, who recounts Agnes' life and death to virgins who are dedicated to Christ (§1) in order to edify them and present them with a model for imitation (§17). For a long time Ambrosian authorship for the text was indeed assumed; an assumption which enhanced its popularity and broad dissemination.[31] Yet the passion bears only

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Boyarin, *Dying for God. Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism*, Stanford 1999, esp. 76-77 and 89-90 (drawing on Burrus, *Reading Agnes* cit.); Baert, *More than an Image* cit., 140-145 (drawing on both Burrus, *Reading Agnes* cit., and Boyarin, *Dying for God* cit.); D. Frankfurter, *Martyrology and the Prurient Gaze,* Journal of Early Christian Studies 17 (2), 2009, 224-225; Jones, *Agnes* cit., 132.

[28] On this scene in *De virginibus*, see V. Burrus, *Equipped for Victory: Ambrose and the Gendering of Orthodoxy,* Journal of Early Christian Studies 4, 1996, 461-475, esp. 471-472.

[29] In all probability, the *passio Gervasii et Protasii* (BHL 3514, first half of the 5th century) acts as a *terminus post quem* (on the similarities with BHL 156, cf. infra, note 32). The late antique sermon BHL 158, attributed to Maximus of Turin (ca. 350-415), functioned as the traditional *terminus ante quem* for quite some time, but the attribution is no longer accepted and the sermon is now dated after 550 (cf. Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 414-418). Other *termini ante quem* include the rewriting of the *passio Eugeniae* (BHL 2666, 2nd half of the 6th or the 7th century): cf. Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 380 and C. Lanéry, *Hagiographie d'Italie (300-550): les passions,* in G. Philippart (ed.), *Corpus Christianorum: Hagiographies* V, Turnhout 2010, 131-135, 200, and P. Tomea, *Corpore quidem iuvencula sed animo cana. La passio Agnetis BHL 156 e il topos della puella senex nell'agiografia mediolatina*, Analecta Bollandiana 2010, 27-29, and the works of Aldhelm of Malmesbury (639-709): cf. Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 361 and Lanéry, *Hagiographie d'Italie* cit., 200. Lanéry argues that BHL 156 can more precisely be dated to the pontificate of pope Symmachus (498-514): his renovation of Agnes' *basilica* created the suitable context for the redaction of the passion (cf. Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 361 and Lanéry, *Hagiographie d'Italie* cit., 201. In her contribution to the recent volume of the *École française de Rome* (*Le culte de sainte Agnès* cit.), Lanéry restates some of her observations from Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit. and Lanéry, *Hagiographie d'Italie* cit., cf. C. Lanéry, *La légende de sainte Agnès: quelques réflexions sur la genèse d'un dossier hagiographique (IVe-VIe s.)*, Mélanges de l'École française de Rome 126 (1) [on line: http://mefrm.revues.org], 2014.

[30] The passion contains clear references to Roman topography and liturgy, cf. Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 357-358 and *Hagiographie d'Italie* cit., 198.

[31] On the manuscript tradition, see Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit, 347-349 and *Hagiographie d'Italie* cit., 195. In their study of Latin hagiography in the 11th century, Philippart and Trigalet include Agnes' hagiographical dossier among '*les dossiers les mieux attestés au XIe siècle en chiffres absolus*' (G. Philippart, M. Trigalet, *L'hagiographie latine du XIe siècle dans la longue durée: données statistiques sur la production littéraire et sur l'édition medievale,* in M. W. Herren, C. McDonough, R. G. Arthur (eds.), *Latin Culture in the Eleventh Century. Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Medieval Studies. Cambridge, Sept. 9-12, 1998*, Turnhout 2002, 281-301, here 292). Due to its inclusion among Ambrose's works, the passion can be found in many more editions than is the case for other late antique passions. The editions are listed under BHL 156; I have consulted the following: Monachi Solesmenses (eds.), *Mombritius, B. Sanctuarium seu vitae sanctorum (1480),* vol. I, Paris 1910², 40-44; J. Bollandus, G. Henschenius (eds.), *Acta Sanctorum Ianuarii*, II, Antwerpen 1643, 350-354; D. Bartolini, *Gli atti del*

limited resemblances to Ambrose's writings about Agnes, whereas the text's likenesses to another pseudo-Ambrosian passion, the *passio Gervasii et Protasii* (BHL 3514), are remarkable.[32] Consequently, it is now generally accepted[33] that the passion was falsely attributed to the Milanese bishop in order to increase its legitimacy and credibility.[34]

As in the accounts by Damasus, Ambrose and Prudentius, Agnes is a young girl in the Latin passion. When she comes back from school, the prefect's son falls in love with her and proposes. But Agnes has no intention whatsoever to marry the young man because she is a virgin of Christ. Her refusal of the marriage proposal takes up a considerable part of the passion (2 paragraphs): the theme of worldly marriage is more prominent in this text than in the other, older accounts of the martyrdom. As we have seen, only in Ambrose's *De Virginibus* worldly marriage is briefly mentioned. Rejected, the young pagan is tortured by the pangs of love and his father has Agnes brought to court. Of course, she is not willing to give up her faith, and as his counterparts in the earlier accounts of the martyrdom, the prefect has recourse to sexually connoted torture. He orders to undress Agnes and to escort her to a brothel. The brothel episode aligns BHL 156 with Prudentius' account and, more cogently, with BHG 45.[35] On her way to the brothel, Agnes is protected from the gaze of the audience (both the audience in the passion and the audience of the passion) [36] by a miracle: her hair becomes so dense (*tantam densitatem*) that it covers her better than her clothes. The miracle of the hair is

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martirio della nobilissima vergine romana sant'Agnese, Roma 1858, 1-22 (with Italian translation). This work has been translated into French (cfr. E. J. Materne, *Bartolini, D. Actes du martyre de la très noble vierge romaine sainte Agnès et du martyre des nobles Abdon et Sennen. Traduit de l'Italien par E. J. Materne*, Paris 1864); F. Jubaru, *S^te^ Agnes, vierge et martyre de la voie Nomentane, d'après de nouvelles recherches,* Paris 1907, 358-363; A. Fabréga Grau (ed.), *Pasionario hispanico, siglos VII-XI,* vol. II, Madrid 1955, 176-182. These editions display only minor differences. I will use the AASS edition in this article, as this is the most widely used edition (cf. e.g. used by Jones, *Agnes and Constantia* cit., and Tomea, *Corpore* cit.) and is based on more manuscripts than the most recent edition (Fabréga Grau). On the manuscripts used for the AASS edition, see the introduction to the edition, §2.

[32] Cf. Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 355-356. The similarities to Ambrose's works are limited to Agnes' age and her death by the sword. As for the correspondences with BHL 3514: the *incipit* of both passions (*Ambrosius servus Christi*) is the same, and they share the epistolary form as well as a number of pseudepigraphic *topoi.*

[33] C. Saliou, *Du légendier au sermonaire: avatars de la Passio Sebastiani,* Revue des etudes augustiniennes 36, 1990, 286 still deems Ambrosian authorship not impossible, but Tomea is of the opinion that Lanéry's analysis of the passion as pseudo-ambrosian (cf. supra, note 32) '*sbarazza definitivamente il campo dalla plausibilità di simili tentazioni*' (Tomea, *Corpore* cit., 23).

[34] At the time Agnes' passion was written, the orthodoxy of the late antique anonymous passions was sometimes questioned, as mentioned in the *Decretum Gelasianum* 4,4 (cf. Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 355).

[35] On the differences between the brothel passage in BHL 156 and in Prudentius' *Peristephanon* and the apparent similarities between the brothel passages in BHL 156 and BHG 45, see Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 363. Unlike BHG 45, Lanéry argues, Prudentius' account did not influence BHL 156. Yet the similar erotic atmosphere is nonetheless apparent, and Jones, *Agnes and Constantia* cit., 132, is confident that the author of BHL 156 was familiar with the Prudentian traditions.

[36] On the gaze of different sets of spectators in the passion and the purification of the corrupt desire, see Jones, *Agnes and Constantia*, 130-132.

unique to the Latin passion, and might be a miraculous reworking of the episode in Damasus' epigram where Agnes spreads her hair over her naked limbs.[37] But not only Agnes' hair hides her from view. In the brothel, she is further protected by a bright light and a heavenly garment; the brothel is turned into a place of worship. Yet the bold son of the prefect nevertheless tries to rape Agnes and he drops dead. The prefect asks Agnes to revive his son. She resuscitates the young man and he starts shouting that the God of the Christians is the only true God. This causes an uprising, the prefect flees and Agnes is sent to the stake. Since the flames do not hurt her, her throat is eventually cut and she becomes the bride (§12 *sponsa*) and martyr of Christ. In contrast to the accounts in Ambroses' *De Virginibus* and Prudentius' Peristephanon, the description of Agnes' execution in the passion is not sexualized.[38]

After Agnes' tribulations, the passion recounts the martyr death of Agnes' foster-sister Emerentiana[39] and Agnes' apparition to her parents. Some years later (§15 *aliquantos annos*), Constantine's daughter Constantia is healed during a visit to Agnes' grave. Thereupon, she has a basilica built in honour of Agnes, adds a mausoleum for herself and founds a community of virgins. The buildings link the passion to historical reality: Constantine's daughter Constantina (and not Constantia, as she is wrongly called in the passion) indeed founded Agnes' basilica on the *via Nomentana* as well as the church now known as the *S. Costanza*.[40] As Constantina died in 354, this 5th or 6th century passion wants us to believe that the events it recounts took place some years before that date.

6.3 Previous research on the Latin *passio Agnetis* and new approach

As is the case for many late antique passions, a considerable part of the previous research on the largely fictional *passio Agnetis* adopted a historical perspective. The date of the martyrdom, the martyr's death and burial site and the cult received ample

[37] This is suggested by Jones, *Agnes and Constantia* cit, 130, and Di Marco, *Undressed* cit., 504.

[38] Jones, *Agnes and Constantia* cit., 127-132 discusses this difference and argues that desire is neutralized in the Latin passion and that Agnes is less eroticized in order to align her with the themes of civic and familial continuity.

[39] On the *passio Emerentianae,* see supra, note 6.

[40] On the founding of the buildings by Constantina and the confusion concerning her name, see Jones, *Agnes and Constantia* cit., 116-120.

attention.[41] The elaborate textual tradition concerning Agnes' vicissitudes constituted a challenge for this approach: scholars who sought to deduce historical information about Agnes were confronted with contradictory elements in the different accounts of the martyrdom.[42] Besides, the erotic elements in the passion encouraged inquiries into eroticism and the dynamics of the gaze, although Prudentius' account is more often quoted in this context.[43] From a textual perspective, the passion's relation to the other accounts of the martyrdom was discussed[44] and attention has been drawn to the text's literary qualities. Thanks to its literary sophistication, it has been argued that the *passio Agnetis* is 'far more entitled than other pseudo-Ambrosian passions to claim the Milanese bishop as its author'.[45] Whereas the late antique passions are usually regarded as simple and literarily inferior texts, this passion indeed gives evidence of a remarkable literary refinement.[46] To be sure, resemblances to other late antique passions can be detected,[47] but the *passio Agnetis* is a more highly rhetorical and theatrical text than its counterparts. Biblical, patristic and pagan citations and reminiscences can be identified,[48] and the passion's abundant use of figures of speech has been highlighted.[49] The text shares stock-characters and scenes with pagan genres such as the ancient novel and New Comedy (e.g. the parasite) and thus uses the entertaining potential of

[41] The most recent bibliography on the passion can be found in Lanéry, *Hagiographie d'Italie* cit., 203. An additional publication which tries to deduce historical information about Agnes is Bartolini, *Gli atti* cit., which has recently been reprinted by Nabu Press (2012).

[42]Agnes' death qualifies as a typical example, cf. supra, note 23. The combination of the stake and the sword in the Latin passion might be an attempt to reconcile the inconsistencies in the earlier accounts.

[43] For publications analyzing the accounts of Damasus, Ambrose and Prudentius from this point of view, see supra, part 6.1. Publications which discuss the erotic elements and the gaze in BHL 156 are G. Huber-Rebenich, *Hagiographic Fiction as Entertainment* in H. Hofmann (ed.), *Latin Fiction. The Latin Novel in Context*, London – New York 1999, 187-212, esp. 197; K. Chew, *The Representation of Violence in Greek Novels and Martyr Accounts,* in: S. Panayotakis, M. Zimmerman, W. Keulen (eds.) *The Ancient Novel and Beyond*, Leiden – Boston 2003, 217; Grig, *Making Martyrs* cit., 81-83; Grig, *The Paradoxical Body* cit.; Jones, *Agnes* cit, 127-132. S. Constantinou, *Female Corporeal Performances*, Uppsala 2005, 37-39 discusses the Greek translation of BHL 156 (BHG 46).

[44]Cf. supra, note 7.

[45] Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 370: '*La Passion d'Agnès constitue ainsi une pièce sans nul doute maniériste, mais beaucoup plus digne de prétendre au nom d'Ambroise que d'autres Passions pseudo-ambrosiennes'.*

[46] Given its exceptional literary quality, it is surprising that Thompson notes that the passion attains 'no great heights of sophistication or skill' (A. B. Thompson, *The Legend of St. Agnes: Improvisation and the Practice of Hagiography*, Exemplaria 13, 2001, 355-397, here 369).

[47] On these resemblances, see Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 365.

[48] See Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 365-371. Biblical reminiscences (no Biblical citations are found in the passion) include e.g. references to the Gospels, the Song of Songs and the book of Psalms, patristic reminiscences and citations include e.g. references to the works of Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine, pagan reminiscences and citations include e.g. references to the works of Horace, Propertius and Seneca.

[49] Figures of speech include e.g. alliterations, chiasmi, parallelisms, paradoxes and homoioteleuta: see W. Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter. I: Von der Passio Perpetuae zu den Dialogi Gregors des Grossen*, Stuttgart 1986, 85-87; Thompson, *The Legend of St. Agnes* cit., 366 and Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 370.

these genres for the benefit of the Christian cause.[50] Resemblances to the ancient novel are the most notable: the theme of the unwanted marriage proposal, the lovesickness of the rejected young man and Agnes' imperilled chastity are clear examples.[51]

In this article, I will focus on the characterization of the passion's protagonist Agnes. More specifically, I will analyze how she is characterized through her speech.[52] Unlike her actions, it has been pointed out,[53] Agnes' speech allows her to play an active role in the passion: whereas she is a passive victim when it comes to actions (things are done to her), she is an active moving force when it comes to discourse. By her speech, she can evoke emotions from her enemies while remaining serene herself. Yet Agnes' speech not only characterizes her as active and efficient. I will argue that her communication skills verge on cunning and manipulation. Agnes' speech, I will contend, characterizes her as a trickster. Furthermore, this characterization sets her apart from her counterparts in the earlier accounts of the martyrdom. My designation of Agnes as a trickster draws on James Scott's classification of the discourses of dominated populations[54] and Daniel Boyarin's application of Scott's ideas to the late antique context of Jewish and Christian resistance to Roman dominance.[55] Scott distinguishes four types of discourse which dominated populations can adopt: the public discourse (the dominated population accommodates to the dominators and adopts their discourse), the hidden transcript (the dominated express their own dissonant culture when they are out of reach of the dominators), the trickster approach (the dominated

[50] On entertainment in Christian texts, see Huber-Rebenich, *Hagiographic Fiction* cit., 187-190; on entertainment in the late antique passions, see Chew, *The Representation of Violence* cit., 137-138.

[51] On the similarities between the *passio Agnetis* and the ancient novels in general, see Huber-Rebenich, *Hagiographic Fiction* cit., 197, Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 365-368 (Lanéry also draws attention to the theatrical atmosphere of the passion) and Jones, *Agnes and Constantia* cit., 127-128. It has been argued that the (possibly Christianized) *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri* in particular shows likenesses to the passion, both thematic (e.g. the virgin in the brothel) and verbal: see S. Panayotakis, *The Tempel and the Brothel: Mothers and Daughters in Apollonius of Tyre*, in M. Paschalis, S. Frangoulidis (eds.), *Space in the Ancient Novel*, Groningen 2002, 98-117, esp. 109-112 (on the motif of the virgin in the brothel), S. Panayotakis, *Three Death Scenes in Apollonius of Tyre,* in S. Panayotakis, M. Zimmerman, W. Keulen (eds.) *The Ancient Novel and Beyond*, Leiden 2003, 143-157, esp. 155-156 (on the expression *roseo rubore perfundi* which occurs in both narratives and has sexual connotations), A. A. Kortekaas, *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri. Prolegomena, Text Edition of the Two Principal Latin Recensions, Bibliography, Indices and Appendices*, Groningen 1984, 105; 236-237 note 582, with references and A. A. Kortekaas, *The Story of Apollonius, King of Tyre. A Study of its Greek Origin and Edition of the Two Oldest Latin Recensions,* Leiden-Boston 2004, 21 (both on lexical correspondences); Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 366 (on both *topoi* and lexical correspondences).

[52] On speech as a technique of characterization in ancient narrative, see K. De Temmerman, *Ancient Rhetoric as a Hermeneutical Tool for the Analysis of Characterization in Narrative Literature,* Rhetorica 28, 2010, 34-38 and K. De Temmerman, *Crafting Characters. Heroes and Heroines in the Ancient Greek Novel,* Oxford 2014, 37-39.

[53] See Thompson, *The Legend of St. Agnes* cit., 366.

[54] J. C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance. Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven 1990, 18-19.

[55] Boyarin, *Dying for God* cit.

give the impression of complying with the discourse of the dominators but in fact encode their own, contrasting discourse (i.e. the hidden transcript) in a public one; folktales, songs, jokes, codes and euphemisms qualify as instances of such trickster discourse) and the discourse of open defiance (the hidden transcript is publicly expressed in a non-encoded way). In his work on nascent Christianity and nascent Judaism in late antiquity, Daniel Boyarin argues that whereas Judaism is not totally ill-disposed towards the trickster approach in resistance to an oppressor whose rule is illegitimate, Christianity deems only one approach acceptable: defiant resistance, which Boyarin terms 'martyr approach'.[56] Initial hesitation and attempts to avoid martyrdom, he points out, are not favourably received in Christian circles: one openly has to admit one's faith.[57] This is indeed what the 'Agnesses' in the older accounts of the martyrdom do: as we have seen, the accounts by Damasus, Ambrose and Prudentius and BHG 45 all stage a martyr who convincingly adopts the 'martyr approach'. I will argue that this is not what Agnes does in the Latin passion, or at least not from the beginning. In the first part of the passion, I contend, she adopts a trickster discourse.

6.4 Love on different levels

When Agnes returns from school, the son of the prefect falls in love with her and wants to marry her (§2).[58] Since Agnes has turned twelve, the legal marrying age for women,[59] this is a viable request. The young man approaches both Agnes and her parents and spares no efforts. He offers very much, promises even more (§2 *offere plurima et plura promittere*) and showers the girl with jewels. As is not uncommon for a suitor, he thus tries to win the favour of Agnes and her parents.[60] He also refers to the generous

[56] Boyarin, *Dying for God* cit., chapter 2, 42-66.

[57] Boyarin refers to the *Quo vadis?* sequence of the *Apocryphal Acts of Peter* (44-46), Polycarps' dream about his burning pillow after he has escaped martyrdom (51), the *libellatici* who had to be readmitted to the Church as penitents after the persecution (56) and the embarrassed tone that Christians adopt while attempting to defend escape from martyrdom. On the dislike in Christian circles of rhetorical tricks in particular, see J. Perkins, *Jesus was no Sophist: Education in Early Christian Fiction,* in: M. P. Futre Pinheiro, J. Perkins, R. Pervo (eds.), *The Ancient Novel and Early Christian and Jewish Narrative: Fictional Intersections,* Groningen 2013, 109-127.

[58] A motif from Livy, see Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 366, note 240.

[59] See J. Evans Grubbs, *Law and Family in Late Antiquity. The Emperor Constantine's Marriage Legislation*, Oxford 1995, 141.

[60] In Apul., *met.* 8,2, for instance, Thrasyllus also bestows lavish gifts on Charite's parents in order to convince them to let him marry their daughter. The same approach is adopted by Chloe's suitors in Longus' novel *Daphnis and Chloe*. (1,19; 3,25,1; 47). Thanks to the help of the nymphs, Daphnis can also approach Chloe's father

betrothal gifts she will receive once she has agreed (§2 *divitias, domos, possessiones, familias atque omnes mundi delicias*) and calls in go-betweens (§2 *et per seipsum, et per amicos et notos et affines coepit aures Virginis appellare*). But Agnes rejects his proposal and answers that he has to leave her alone because she already has a lover (§3 *ab alio iam amatore praeventa sum*). The Christian reader or listener of the passion already knows that Agnes is a virgin of Christ[61] and understands that she is referring to her heavenly lover. As discussed, Christ as lover or bridegroom was a popular and well-known metaphor.[62] Yet unlike the audience of the passion, the pagan youth is unaware of the girl's background and is unfamiliar with the Christian metaphor. As a result, he believes that she is referring to a mortal lover. And Agnes makes no efforts at all to enlighten him, quite on the contrary. She does not once mention Christ or Christianity in her speech, but uses a whole range of words and expressions which can be interpreted both ways: her words carry a double meaning throughout her reply.[63] The significance of her speech for the interlocutor or narratee in the passion (its so-called *argument-function*) and that for the audience of the passion (its *key-function*[64]) does not run parallel, and one has the impression that Agnes intentionally keeps it that way.

Agnes' use of the word *amator* for Christ reminds of the discussed passage in *De Virginibus* where Agnes refers to Christ as her '*sponsus*'.[65] Yet although the discourse which the martyrs use in both scenes is similar (both refer to Christ with a term which fits into a worldly marriage context), the contexts differ substantially. Whereas the Agnes in the passion keeps silent about her Christian faith and lets the young man believe that she really has a mortal fiancé, the Agnes in *De Virginibus* utters these words after she has been arrested as a Christian. Her pagan narratees, then, know that she is referring to Christ. In *De Virginibus*, the reference to Christ as bridegroom is part of the limited amount of direct speech which is allotted to Agnes.[66] In the passion, as in

with a considerable sum of money (3,27-29). The nymphs thus help Daphnis to capture Chloe as his wife in a socially conventionalized way: see De Temmerman, *Crafting Characters* cit., 240-241. Unlike Agnes' parents in the passion or Charité's parents in the *Metamorphoses*, Chloe's parents are immediately convinced by the money and promise Daphnis their daughter in marriage. As pointed out by J. Morgan (ed.) *Longus. Daphnis and Chloe*, Oxford 2004, 220, this is an indication of Chloe's parents 'narrow materialism'.

[61] This was mentioned by the narrator in the letter's introductory part: Agnes only loves 'the creator of life' (§1 *auctorem vitae*).

[62] Cf. supra, part 6.1.

[63] On this double meaning of Agnes' words, see also already Bartolini, *Gli atti* cit., 54 and Thompson, *The Legend of St. Agnes* cit., 367.

[64] On these two functions, see I. De Jong, R. Nünlist, A. Bowie (eds.), *Narrators, Narratees and Focalizers in Ancient Greek Literature*, Leiden - Boston 2004, XV-XVI.

[65] Cf. supra, part. 6.1.

[66] Cf. supra, note 20.

Prudentius' *Peristephanon*, Agnes is allotted much more direct speech: she appears as a far more active character than her counterpart in *De Virginibus*.

After she has mentioned the *amator*, a word which definitely suggests a mortal lover and evokes genres as the ancient novel and love poetry,[67] Agnes continues:

> *"[amator] ... qui mihi satis meliora te obtulit ornamenta et annulo fidei suae subarrhavit me, longe te nobilior et genere et dignitate. Ornavit inaestimabili dextrochirio dexteram meam et collum meum cinxit lapidibus pretiosis: tradidit auribus meis inaestimabiles margaritas et circumdedit me vernantibus atque coruscantibus gemmis. Posuit signum suum super faciem meam, ut nullum praeter ipsum amatorem admittam. Induit me cyclade auro texta, et immensis monilibus ornavit me. Ostendit mihi thesaurus incomparabiles, quos mihi se donaturum repromisit si ei perseveravero. (§3)"*

> *"[a lover] who has presented me with far nicer jewels than you and is engaged to me by giving the ring of his fidelity. He is a far more notable person than you, both in terms of descent and in terms of dignity. He adorned my right hand with an invaluable bracelet, my neck with precious stones, my ears with invaluable pearls and he surrounded me with brilliant and sparkling gems. He marked my face with his sign, so that I will accept no one as a lover except him. He put me in a gold embroidered gown and adorned me with uncountable jewels. He showed me treasures that cannot be equalled and promised that I will obtain them if I remain loyal to him."*[68]

This whole speech fits into a worldly engagement context. The verb *subarrhare*, getting engaged,[69] is related to the term *arr(h)a*, an earnest. In an engagement context, the *arr(h)ae sponsaliciae* were (often valuable) objects such as jewels, money or clothes, which a man gave to his fiancée. If he broke off the engagement, he would lose the objects; if the woman broke it off, she would have to pay him a multiple of the earnest's worth. From the fourth century onwards, specific laws were issued on the *arr(h)ae*

[67] A similar deliberate ambiguous use of the word *amator* occurs in the *passio Caeciliae* (BHL 1495). In this passion, Caecilia calls the angel who watches over her virginity her *amator* and thus makes her husband Valerianus jealous. Valerianus' jealousy thereupon leads to his baptism. On this scene and Caecilia's astuteness in manipulating her husband, see A. Bossu, K. De Temmerman, D. Praet, *The Saint as an Astute Heroine: Rhetoric and Characterization in the passio Caeciliae*, Mnemosyne, forthcoming.

[68] All translations of the passion are my own. For an Italian and French translation of the text, cf. supra, note 31.

[69] The verb can refer to either a worldly or a mystical engagement, cf. A. Blaise (ed.), P. Tombeur (revised), *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*, Turnhout 2005^2, s.v. *subarrho.*

sponsaliciae, which indicates that the giving of such *arr(h)ae* was an established custom.[70] The invaluable objects that Agnes says to have received from her fiancé, then, are consistent with the custom of the *arr(h)ae sponsaliciae*. Moreover, the gifts which she enumerates are similar to the betrothal gifts which Junia Fadilla received from the emperor Maximian, as recounted in the Historia Augusta, Maximinus Duo, 27, 7. Junia Fadilla receives the following presents: "a necklace of nine pearls, a net-work cap with eleven emeralds, a bracelet with a row of four sapphires, and besides these, gowns worked with gold, all of them royal, and other betrothal pledges".[71] This correspondence further underpins that there is no reason for the young man to suspect that the gifts which Agnes mentions are anything else but real betrothal gifts. The incomparable treasures which Agnes' fiancé promised her can then be interpreted as future gifts from a husband to his wife.[72]

But not only the verb *subarrhare* and the gifts are in keeping with a worldly engagement from the young man's point of view. Agnes also mentions an engagement ring (*annulo fidei suae*), which a man generally gave to his fiancée as a pledge of his intentions and fidelity (*fides*),[73] and points out that her fiancé has marked her face with his sign (*signum*). This *signum*, a visible mark, may metaphorically refer to a kiss which he gave her, and with which he marked her as his: a *signum* was a mark that indicated ownership.[74] This interpretation is in agreement with Agnes' addition, as she points out that her fiancé's *signum* sees to it that she will accept no other lover. The utterance *Posuit signum suum super faciem meam* reminds of a passage in the Song of Songs:[75] in Ct. 8,6 the woman asks her lover to place her like a mark or a seal (*signaculum*) on his heart

[70] On the *arr(h)ae sponsaliciae,* see M. Di Ciano, *Le arrhae sponsaliciae in diritto romano e comparato*, Ferrara 2008 (Ph.D.diss). On the laws on the *arr(h)ae sponsaliciae* in the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries, see Di Ciano, *Le arrhae sponsaliciae* cit., 91-119. Theodosius was the first to include the term *arr(h)ae* in Roman legislation, but Constantinian laws on betrothal gifts have been considered the first appearance in Roman law of what later became the *arr(h)ae sponsaliciae*. On this Constantinian legislation, see Evans Grubbs, *Law and Family* cit., 156-171.

[71] *monolinum de albis novem, reticulum cum prasinis undecim, dextrocherium cum costula de hyacinthis quattuor. Praeter vestes auratas et omnes regias ceteraque insignia sponsaliorum* (text and translation G. P. Goold, D. Magie (eds.), *Historia Augusta*[6]*,* vol. II, London – Cambridge (MA) 1993).

[72] On gifts between husband and wife, see S. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage. Iusti Conjuges from the time of Cicero to the time of Ulpian*, Oxford 1991, 371-374.

[73] The engagement ring has its origins in the ring which ratified a commercial agreement. On the custom of the engagement ring and its ancient attestations, see Treggiari, *Roman Marriage* cit., 148-149. For a detailed discussion, see L. Anné, *Les rites de fiançailles et la donation pour cause de marriage sous le bas-empire*, Louvain 1941, 5-62.

[74] A *signum* was applied to both objects and persons: slaves received such a mark, and from late antiquity onwards, soldiers as well. People who were sentenced to penal servitude received a *signum* in the face, until Constantine prohibited this practice: see L. Wenger, *Signum,* in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, IIA, Stuttgart 1923, 2365-2366 (slaves), 2368 (soldiers) and 2369 (mark in the face).

[75] This is indicated by Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 369.

and on his arm.[76] As in the passion, this can be interpreted as an attempt, in this case the woman's, to claim her lover as hers.[77] A reminiscence of the Song of Songs nicely fits into the context of the *passio Agnetis*, since for the Song of Songs a double meaning has been claimed too: on the one hand the work has been looked upon as a celebration of human erotic love, whereas on the other it has been interpreted as the allegorical representation of the love between Christ and the Church or between Christ and the soul of the individual Christian.[78] The same holds true for the passion: although Agnes' speech is consistent with a worldly engagement context, this is not all there is to it.

In Christian circles, the elements which Agnes mentions have other meanings too. The *arr(h)a* in *subarrhare* can refer to the Holy Spirit, which Christ gave to us as an earnest of the eternal life. As Augustine puts it (*sermo* 378): 'The earnest (*arrham*) Christ has given us is the Holy Spirit. And the one who could not possibly cheat us has all the same given us security, when he gave us this earnest; even if he hadn't given it, he would most certainly grant us what he has promised. What has he promised us? Eternal life, as the earnest of which he has given us the Holy Spirit. Eternal life is the possession of those who have reached home; the earnest is the reassurance of those who are still on the way there.'[79] The symbolism has its origins in the New Testament in Paul's letters Eph 1,14, II Cor 1,22 and II Cor 5,5: there too the Holy Spirit is presented as an earnest (*ἀρραβών*)[80] which the faithful receive as a guaranty of future salvation. The ring, *annulus*, is often presented as the symbol of the Christian faith (*fides*), and God uses it as a seal ring to mark the faithful.[81] Those marked with the *signum* will obtain salvation on

[76] The Vulgate has *pone me ut signaculum super cor tuum ut signaculum super brachium tuum*. All quotations from the Vulgate are taken from the edition of R. Weber, R. Gryson (eds.), *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem*, Stuttgart 2007[5]. I will not include the reading of the Septuagint if it does not differ from the Vulgate.

[77] For an interpretation of the passage in the Song of Songs in these terms, see L. Ryken, J. C. Wilhoit, T. Longman (eds.), *Dictionary of Biblical* Imagery, Downers Grove (Ill.) – Leicester 1998, s.v. *seal*.

[78] On the Song of Songs and its double meaning, see Frank, *Hoheslied* cit. and A. Brenner, *The Song of Solomon,* in J. Barton, J. Muddiman (eds.), *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, Oxford 2000, 429-433.

[79] Aug., *serm.* 378: PL 38. *Arrham nobis dedit Christus Spiritum Sanctum: et qui fallere nos non possit, securos tamen fecit, quando arrham dedit, quam etsi non daret, sine dubio quod promiserat exhiberet. Quid promisit? Vitam aeternam, cuius arrham Spiritum Sanctum dedit. Vita aeterna possessio habitandum: arrha consolatio est peregrinantium.* Translation J. E. Rotelle (ed.), E. O. P. Hill (trans., notes), *Sermons III/10 (341-400), On Various Subjects* (The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century), Hyde Park - New York 1995, 353.

[80] Cf. Edition of the Greek New Testament: E. Nestle, E. Nestle (eds.), B. Aland, K. Aland, J. Karavidopoulos, C. M. Martini, B. M. Metzger (reedited), *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Stuttgart 2013[28]. ἀρραβών was translated as *pignus* in the Vulgate, but the signification of the Holy Spirit is more in keeping with the term *arrha* (earnest) than with the term *pignus* (pledge): we are not supposed to give the Holy Spirit back once we reach the eternal life. On this, see Aug., *serm.* 23 and *serm.* 378; see also Di Ciano, *Le arrhae sponsaliciae* cit., 21-22.

[81] Both significations occur in Ambrose's exegesis of the parable of the prodigal son (Lc 15,11-32). He identifies the ring which the father gives to his son upon his return as the 'sign of a pure faith' and the 'expression of truth' (*Anulus quid est aliud, nisi sincerae fidei signaculum et expressio veritatis?*) and refers to the fact that our hearts and deeds are marked with the imprint of this ring (*... anuli istius... signaculum, quo cordis interiora*

the Day of Redemption, as mentioned in the Book of Revelation (Apc. 9,3-4): "And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth; and unto them was given power, as the scorpions on the earth have power. And it was commanded to them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only those men who have not the seal of God (*signum Dei*) in their foreheads (*in frontibus*)."[82]

In this context, Agnes' speech to her suitor gets a different signification. She received the Christian faith from Christ and is marked by it, and the *arrha* of their agreement is the Holy Spirit, symbolised in the precious gifts. If Agnes remains faithful to Christ and the faith, she will receive the eternal life, the *thesaurus incomparabiles*.[83] This is, Anné argues, how we have to interpret Agnes' expression *annulo fidei suae subharravit me*.[84] In order to underpin this interpretation, he refers to a passage from *De situ civitatis Mediolani*,[85] which recounts how mothers report their own daughters to the authorities because they are 'engaged to Christ by means of the ring of the Christian faith' (29 *... filias, quascumque fidei Christianae annulo subarrhatas noverant*).[86] In this passage, Anné argues, it is beyond doubt that the ring should be interpreted as the symbol of the Christian faith (*Christianae fidei*). Yet in the passion, he admits, the expression is less clear ('*plus vague*'), since the addition Christianae is lacking. Nonetheless, Anné argues, the *annulus* should be interpreted as the symbol of the Christian faith in the passion too. This is underpinned, firstly, by the frequent occurrence of this symbolism in the Christian tradition and secondly, by the context of the scene: in her reply to the judge later in the passion (§10), Agnes points out that her body has been consecrated to Christ since childhood (*... corpus meum, quod ab ipsis cunabulis Christo consecratum est et oblatum*). Of course, the *annulus fidei suae* is indeed meant to refer to the Christian faith in the eyes of the Christian audience of the passion. But it is telling that Agnes does not specify the *fides* as is the case in *De situ civitatis Mediolani*. Since specification is lacking, one needs

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factorumque nostrorum ministeria signantur) (Ambr., *in Luc.* 7,231; edition G. Tissot (ed.), *Ambroise de Milan. Traité sur l'évangile de S. Luc*, tome II, livres VII-X, Paris 1958). For a discussion of the symbolism and other examples in the works of e.g. Zeno of Verona, Prudentius and Gregory the Great, see Anné, *Les rites des fiançailles* cit., 41-44.

[82] Vulgate: *Et de fumo exierunt locustæ in terram, et data est illis potestas, sicut habent potestatem scorpiones terræ. et præceptum est illis ne læderent faenum terræ, neque omne viride, neque omnem arborem: nisi tantum homines, qui non habent signum Dei in frontibus*. Translations of the Vulgate are taken from the 21st Century King James Version (KJ21) 1994 (www.biblegateway.com).

[83] As remarked by Bartolini, *Gli atti* cit., 55, this could be an allusion to the heavenly treasures which should be preferred to earthly ones, as mentioned in Mt 6,19-20.

[84] Anné, *Les rites des fiançailles* cit., 49-52.

[85] The work contains a laudation of the city of Milan and the recounting of its apostolic foundation as well as the *vitae* of Milan's first bishops. The dating is unclear: it has long been dated to the 8th century, but P. Tomea, *Le suggestioni dell'antico: Qualche riflessione sull'epistola proemiale del De situ Mediolani e sulle sue fonti*, Aevum 63, 1989, 172-185, dates it between the last decades of the 10th century and 1081.

[86] Edition A. Biraghus (ed.), *Datiana Historia. Ecclesiae Mediolanensis ab anno Christi LI ad CCCIV*, Mediolani 1848, 86.

acquaintance with the Christian tradition to fully understand the meaning of her speech. And this is precisely what Agnes' narratee in the passion, the young pagan, lacks.

Agnes continues her speech as follows:

> *"Non ergo potero ad contumeliam prioris amatoris vel adspicere alium, et illum derelinquere, cum quo sum caritate devincta: cuius est generositas celsior, possibilitas fortior, adspectus pulchrior, amor suavior et omni gratia elegantior: a quo mihi iam thalamus colocatus est, cuius mihi organa modulatis vocibus resonant, cuius mihi virgines iustissimis vocibus cantant. Iam mel et lac ex ore eius suscepi: iam amplexibus eius castis adstricta sum: iam corpus eius corpori meo sociatum est et sanguis eius ornavit genas meas. (§3)"*

> *"Therefore I cannot insult my first lover by looking at another man or by leaving him, the man to whom I am tied by a bond of love. His generosity is bigger, his power stronger, his appearance more beautiful and his love more sweet and more elegant than any grace. He already prepared the marriage chamber for me, his instruments resound for me in harmonious tones, his maidens sing for me with sweet-sounding voices. I already received honey and milk from his mouth, he already embraced me with chaste caresses, his body is already united with mine and his blood has given colour to my cheeks."*

In this passage, Agnes' speech is again in keeping with a worldly engagement context. She once more mentions her *amator* and explains that leaving him would be an insult – a scenario which certainly holds true for a human fiancé. On the other hand, the word that she uses to describe her bond with her lover is *caritas*, the word for Christian spiritual love, and not *amor*, pagan worldly love.[87] This could have been a small hint for the young man, but two elements suggest that it is not surprising that it does not enlighten him. Firstly, *caritas* was used to describe affection in pagan circles, albeit between relatives,[88] and secondly, Agnes uses *amor* to describe her lover's love for her later in the passage. This *amor* is better than the young man's, as is her *amator's* generosity, power and appearance. Of course, the youth cannot compete with Christ, as the Christian audience of the passion understands, but for the young man this list of qualities must be very disheartening. After the enumeration of the qualities of her lover,

[87] For a discussion of both pagan and Christian love, see R. Kany, *Nächstenliebe und Gottesliebe*, in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum,* lfg. 194/201, Stuttgart 2013, 652-720.

[88] An example can be found in the *passio Susannae* (BHL 7937), where Susanna's uncle Claudius says that he wants to kiss her because of his feeling of love for her (*secundum caritatis affectus*) as his niece (p. 554, edition Monachi Solesmenses, *Mombritius* cit.).

Agnes takes a look into the future. She describes her spiritual marriage with Christ as a worldly one, with references to the marriage chamber and nuptial music.[89] In this respect, it is interesting to compare Agnes' description to the description of the virgin martyr Caecilia's marriage in the *passio Caeciliae* (BHL 1495): "The day came in which the marriage chamber (*thalamus*) was prepared (*collocatus est*). And while the instruments (*organis*) played (*cantantibus*), she sang in her heart to God alone…".[90] Caecilia's marriage is an (of course unwanted) worldly marriage, while Agnes' marriage is a spiritual one, but both descriptions run remarkably parallel. The Christian audience of the passio Agnetis will interpret the mentioning of the marriage chamber, *thalamus*, as the deepest understanding of the faith or as the eternal life, two common significations of *thalamus* in the Christian tradition.[91] The young man, however, cannot but gather it to be a real marriage chamber, as he has received no clues to believe otherwise.

After mentioning the nuptial music, Agnes continues her description of her future marriage in fairly erotic terms as she refers to the kisses and embraces of her lover and the union of his body to hers. Honey and milk, which she claims to have received from her lover's mouth, have a rich symbolical meaning. The young pagan will interpret milk and honey in this context as references to sweetness and pleasantness. Quintilian (inst. 2,4,5), for instance, urges teachers to provide the 'milk of the more pleasant studies' (*iucundioris disciplinae lacte*) as 'softer food' (*nutricum mollius*) for young pupils,[92] and *mel* has similar connotations, often in an amorous context. Like the English word 'honey', it is frequently used to refer to the loved one (*mel meum*),[93] and in Plautus' comedy *Casina* (Cas. Act. II, scene 8), kissing is said to be 'like licking honey' (*quia te tango, mel mihi videor lingere*).[94] Moreover, milk and honey hint at a paradisiacal, bucolical environment, as

[89] As already observed by Bartolini, *Gli atti* cit., 54.

[90] *Venit dies in qua thalamus collocatus est. Et cantantibus organis, illa in corde suo soli Domino decantabat…* Text and translation R. Upchurch (ed.), *Aelfric's Lives of the Virgin Spouses. With Modern English Parallel-text Translations*, Exeter 2007, 174-175.

[91] On both significations within the Christian tradition, see J. Schmid, *Brautsgemach,* in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum,* II, Stuttgart 1954, 524-528. According to Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 369, the mentioning of *thalamus* is again a reminiscence of Ct. 1,4 (Vulgate: *introduxit me rex in cellaria sua*; Septuagint: εἰσήνεγκέν με ὁ βασιλεὺς εἰς τὸ ταμιεῖον αὐτοῦ (edition A. Rahlfs, R. Hanhart (eds.), *Septuaginta. Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes*, Stuttgart 2006[2])). In his exegesis of the Song of Songs (5,3), Origen interprets this chamber as '*ipse Christi arcanus et reconditus sensus*' – *the secret and hidden thoughts of Christ himself* (edition L. Brésard, H. Crouzel, M. Borret (eds.). *Origène. Commentaire sur le Cantique des Cantiques,* vol. I, Paris 1991). On the merging of the *thalamus* with the Last Judgment, see Clark, *The Celibate Bridegroom* cit., 12.

[92] Edition D. A. Russel (ed.), *Quintilian. The Orator's education. Books 1-2,* Cambridge (MA) – London, 2001.

[93] Examples can for instance be found in Plautus: *Curc.* Act. I, scene 3; *Poen.* Act. I, scene 2; *Trin.* Act. II, scene 1.

[94] Edition W. De Melo, *Plautus. II. Casina, Casket Comedy, Curculio, Epidicus, Two Menaechmuses,* Cambridge (MA) – London, 2011.

they are linked to the *Aetas Aurea*.[95] Both liquids were also used as libations and are thus related to the gods.[96]

But milk and honey not only have a symbolical meaning in pagan circles. For Christians and Jews too, they have many significations. Firstly, they are linked to kissing and sweetness as well: in Prv 5,3 it is said that the lips of a harlot drip of honey[97] and in Ct. 4,11, a passage which is again strikingly similar to the passage in the passion,[98] the man recounts how the lips of his bride drop sweetness as the honeycomb and points out that milk and honey can be found under her tongue.[99] As in pagan environments, the combination of milk and honey refers to a paradisiacal setting too: the Promised Land.[100] Besides, the link between the two liquids and religion is further underpinned by the ritual of baptism: a mixture of milk and honey was drunk by the newly baptized at their first Eucharist.[101] This practice was encouraged by the fact that honey and milk both symbolize wisdom and the Word of God.[102] Once again, then, Agnes' narratee in the passion will have understood her utterance differently from the audience of the passion. The same goes for Agnes' mentioning of her unity with her lover's body and his blood which colours her cheeks: while this can refer to sexual intercourse and the blushing of a woman in love, the mentioning of Christ's body and blood can also be read as a reference to the Eucharist.[103]

In the last part of her monologue, Agnes adopts a slightly different approach:

> *"Cuius mater virgo est, cuius pater feminam nescit. Cui Angeli serviunt, cuius pulchritudinem sol et luna mirantur: cuius odore reviviscunt mortui, cuius tactu foventur infirmi: cuius opes numquam deficient, cuius divitiae non decrescunt. Ipsi soli servo fidem.*

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[95] Cf. e.g. Ov., *met*. 1,111 and Hor., *epod*. 16,47-50. On this symbolism, see A. C. Stewart, *Milch*, in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, XXIV, Stuttgart 2012, 784-803, here 790-791.

[96] See Stewart, *Milch* cit., 788-789.

[97] Vulgate: *favus enim stillans labia meretricis.*

[98] The reminiscence of Ct. 4,11 has been indicated by Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 369.

[99] Vulgate: *favus distillans labia tua sponsa mel et lac sub lingua tua.*

[100] This metaphor is very common in the Bible. Cf. e.g. Ex 3,8; 3,17; 13,5; 33,3; Lv 20,24; Nm 13,27; 14,18; 16,13-14. See also Stewart, *Milch* cit., 800-801.

[101] On the practice, see Stewart, *Milch* cit., 793-795. The practice is mentioned by Tertullian (Tert., *coron*. 3) and an example can be found in the *passio Susannae* (BHL 7937) (p. 555, l. 40-41, edition Monachi Solesmenses, *Mombritius* cit.).

[102] Cf. For honey, cf. Prv 24,13, for milk, cf. I Pt. 2,2. On honey and milk as symbols of wisdom in the Song of Songs, see E. Kingsmill, *The Song of Songs and the eros of God,* Oxford 2009, 61-64. On the symbolism and the link with the Eucharist (a.o. as present in the work of Clement of Alexandria and Irenaeus of Lyon), see Stewart, *Milch* cit., 797-800. The link between milk and blood can account for the fact that some martyrs bleed milk (Stewart, *Milch* cit., 801-802).

[103] As suggested by Bartolini, *Gli atti* cit., 54. For the biblical basis for the Eucharist as the body and blood of Christ, see Mt 26,26-28; Mc 14,22-24; I Cor 10,16. See also C. Leonhard, B. Eckhardt, *Mahl V (Kultmahl)*, in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, XXIII, Stuttgart 2008, 1012-1105, esp. 1099-1101.

> *Ipsa me tota devotione committo. Quem cum amavero, casta sum; cum tetigero, munda sum; cum accepero, virgo sum. Nec deerunt post nuptias filii, ubi partus sine dolore succedit et foecunditas quotidiana cumulatur. (§3)"*

> *"His mother is a virgin, his father does not know a woman. Angels serve him, the sun and the moon admire his beauty. His scent revives the dead, his touch encourages the sick. His power never fails, his wealth does not decrease. I remain faithful to him alone. I commend myself to him with total devotion. When I love him, I am chaste; when I touch him, I am pure; when I receive him, I am a virgin. Children will not be lacking after the marriage, where the delivery takes place without pain and where fecundity increases every day."*

In this tailpiece of her speech, Agnes no longer takes pains to completely fit her exposition in a worldly engagement context. She quite openly describes Christ with an *antonomasia*. For any Christian, it is abundantly clear that she refers to Christ: the references to the Virgin Mary, God, the angels who serve him[104] and his superhuman capacities,[105] power and wealth do not lack clarity. The same goes for the paradoxical statements with which Agnes ends her speech: these clearly refer to a spiritual marriage. But all this does not enlighten the hapless youth, who is tortured by the pangs of unrequited love and takes to his bed after her reply.[106] One wonders why he does not realize that Agnes is not talking about a human lover when he hears this final part of her speech. Of course, he is not acquainted with the Bible and can therefore not deduce that Agnes is talking about Christ, but she mentions superhuman powers and paradoxes. Yet by the time the young man reaches this final part, he already patiently listened to the elaborate first part of Agnes' speech, which thoroughly convinced him that he is in competition with a human rival. He has taken Agnes' allegorical references to the wedding ring, the gifts, her lover's qualities and the upcoming marriage literally, since he had no reason to believe otherwise. When he hears this tailpiece of her speech, then, it is highly probable that he ironically interprets the paradoxes and superhuman powers

[104] On the angels who accompany Christ, see O. Nussbaum, *Geleit,* in *Reallexikon für Antike und* Christentum, IX, Stuttgart 1976, 1012-1105, esp. 1038-1039.

[105] For Christ reviving the dead, see e.g. Lc 7,13-15 (son of a widow), Mt 9,25; Mc 5,41-42; Lc 8,53-55 (little girl), Io 11,43-44 (Lazarus); for Christ healing the sick, see e.g. Mt 8,1-4; Mc 1,40-45; Lc 5,12-15 (leper), Mt 9, 2-8; Mc 2,3-12; Lc 5, 17-26 (paralytic).

[106] §4 *Audiens haec insanus iuvenis, amore carpitur caeco et inter angustias et animi et corporis, anhelo cruciatur spiritu. Inter haec lecto prosternitur...* Lovesickness is a novelistic topos, cf. supra, note 51, and F. Létoublon, *Les lieux communs du roman: stereotypes grecs d'aventure et d'amour*, Leiden – New York - Köln 1993, 145-148.

of Christ as hyperbolic utterances of a woman in love, who in his view ends her speech with a last clear allusion to worldly marriage when she mentions her future children.[107]

In her reply to her suitor, then, Agnes aptly manages to provide a speech which functions on two levels. On the one hand, she lets her narratee in the passion believe that she has a mortal lover. She actively encourages such an interpretation, as she refrains from inserting any explicit mentioning of her Christian background and consistently aligns her speech with a human engagement context. By the end of her speech, the young man is so thoroughly convinced of being in competition with a mortal rival that he tragically misinterprets the most explicit hints of her talk. On the other hand, Agnes communicates a different message to the external narratees. As Christians, they grasp the real meaning of her speech and can decode her reply. In her answer to the young man, then, Agnes is characterized as a trickster. She encodes the hidden transcript, keeping her virginity for Christ, in a public one, namely an engagement to another mortal fiancé. She does not lie,[108] but she also does not adopt the typical martyr discourse. Instead, she resorts to a trickster approach which verges on manipulation and cunning, and entertains the Christian audience of the passion.

Agnes holds on to this approach after her speech to her young suitor. When the prefect's son has taken to his bed, the doctors conclude from his deep sighs (§4 alta *suspiria*) that he suffers from lovesickness. The young man's father hears the diagnosis and also urges Agnes to marry his son. But Agnes refuses yet again: on no account would she violate the agreement with her first fiancé (§4 *nullo pacto prioris sponsi foedera violare*). Once again, then, Agnes' adopts the trickster approach: like the son, she also lets the father believe that she has a mortal fiancé. Thereupon, the father feverishly (*vehementer*) tries to find out who this fiancé might be: after all, he himself holds the high office of prefect and will be in no way inferior to that man, as illustrious as he may be (§4 *sibi, quamvis illustrissimum, minime debere praeferre*).[109] In the eyes of the passion's audience this of course qualifies as a quite humorous statement. *Illustris* was a title which was officially accorded in Late Antiquity to the highest class of senators,[110] but Agnes' fiancé obviously holds a far higher rank. And we remain in the comical sphere:

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[107] For the faithful as children of God, see e.g. I Io 3,1-2; 3,10; 5,2; *Rm* 8,16-17; 9,8.

[108] For martyrs who do lie in order to safeguard their virginity for Christ, see A. Bossu, *Steadfast and Shrewd Heroines. The Defence of Chastity in the Latin post-Nicene passions and the Greek Novels,* Ancient Narrative, forthcoming.

[109] By way of comparison, a passage from the *Apocryphal Acts of Thomas* is interesting. In this passage (116-117), Charisius, the husband of Mygdonia who has chosen to follow the precepts of Thomas, also states that he is more beautiful, rich and honourable than Thomas. Yet unlike Agnes, Mygdonia thereupon clearly explains to her husband that his beauty, wealth and dignity are transient, whereas the qualities of her lover Christ are eternal.

[110] See H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602: a Social, Economic and Administrative Survey*. Vol II, Oxford 1964, 528-530.

one of the father's parasites (§4 *quidam ex parasitis eius*), a character which cogently reminds of New Comedy,[111] finally reveals to the prefect that Agnes is a Christian and calls Christ her fiancé (§4 *Christum sponsum suum esse*). Thereupon, the prefect has her brought to court. Agnes, then, does not procure her own arrest, but is denounced as a Christian by someone else. Her trickster approach allowed her a temporary escape.

Once she has been arrested, however, Agnes abandons the trickster approach. She now openly and defiantly declares her faith and thus adopts the typical martyr discourse. She refers to Christ (e.g. §6 *causa amoris Christi*; §7 *virtutem Domini mei Jesu Christi…*) and to God (e.g. §6 *summus Deus, Deus omnipotens*, …), offends the pagan gods[112] and defies them,[113] and predicts that their worshippers will be burned in a ceaseless fire (§7 *perpetuo incendio conflabuntur*). One wonders how this change in Agnes' behaviour can be accounted for. Why does she abandon the trickster approach and heads straight for a martyr's death? The public context of her interrogation could be the key: once she has been arrested, Agnes holds a public position as a future Christian martyr and behaves accordingly. Furthermore, it is a generic necessity that the protagonist of a passion dies a martyr's death, and the martyr approach guarantees such an ending. Dying for her faith is indeed what Agnes desires, as becomes clear at the end of the passion. When she is put on the stake (§11), she utters the following words: 'Look, I already see what I believed, I already hold what I hoped, I embrace what I desired.... Look, I come to you, only true God'.[114] Why, then, does she try to escape or postpone her arrest earlier by letting her pagan suitor and his father believe that she has a human fiancé? What is the purpose of adopting the trickster discourse before her arrest? In this respect, it is interesting to compare Agnes' approach in the *passio Agnetis* to Chrysanthus' and Daria's in the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae* (BHL 1787). In this passion, Chrysanthus and Daria pretend to conclude a regular marriage and thus give the impression of complying with the public discourse, but in fact enter into a celibate

[111] Cf. Lanéry, *Ambroise de Milan* cit., 366.

[112] E.g. §6: she calls the pagan gods 'dumb and deaf and senseless and soulless idols' (*idola muta et surda et sine sensu et sine anima'* and 'idle stones' (*vanis lapidibus*); §7: the idols made of copper, Agnes argues, would better be remelted into useful kettles, whereas the stone idols should be used as step stones in order to avoid the dirt in the streets (*dii autem tui, aut aerei sunt, ex quibus cucumae melius fiunt ad usus hominum; aut lapidei, ex quibus plateae ad evadendum lutum melius sternuntur*).

[113] §6: 'Let them (i.e. the pagan gods) be angry, let them speak for themselves, let them give orders to me themselves, let them command me to worship them themselves, let them command me to adore them themselves'. (*… ipsos irasci permitte: ipsi loquantur, ipsi hoc mihi praecipiant, ipsi iubeant se coli, ipsi iubeant se adorari*).

[114] *Ecce iam quod credidi, video; quod speravi, iam teneo, quod concupivi, complector. … Ecce ad te venio, unum et verum Deum…*

marriage.[115] They thus encode the hidden transcript in a public one, and this earns them more freedom of action which they use to convert others. In Boyarin's discussion of the trickster and martyr approach in early Judaism and early Christianity, he points out that escaping martyrdom (only temporarily, in the case of Christianity) is indeed often justified by the opportunity which the extra time offers to do the work of the Lord and to teach the Faith.[116] But in the *passio Agnetis*, it is nowhere alluded to that Agnes spreads the faith during the time she gains with her trickery. Nonetheless, the text contains no indication that her trickery is disapproved of.

Apart from avoiding an unwanted marriage, the reason for Agnes' approach – except for the opportunity for the hagiographer to show off his literary capacities – seems to be to ridicule the pagans, and by doing so, entertain the Christian audience of the passion. Agnes masterly manages to depict the prefect and his son as fools: it is as if she wants to stage them as the protagonists of an inside joke between her and the Christian audience, who are acquainted with the hidden transcript. In this respect, a passage of the Song of Songs might again be meaningful. As indicated, reminiscences of the Song of Songs can quite often be detected in the passion. Moreover, the Song of Songs with its double meaning functions as a suitable intertext for Agnes' speech. One of the passages which is referred to in the passion is the passage from the eighth chapter which recounts how the woman asks the man to place her like a mark on his heart and his arm (Ct. 8,6 cf. supra). The remainder of Ct. 8,6 and 8,7 goes as follows: "For love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave. The coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it. If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, he would utterly be contemned.[117] The last sentence is significant for our purposes: *si dederit homo omnem substantiam domus suae pro dilectione quasi nihil despicient eum*. This is exactly what the young suitor in the passion did: he offered Agnes excessive worldly wealth in exchange for her love. But Agnes scorns his offer and makes the audience scorn him too by depicting him as the object of derision.

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[115] On this passion, see A. Bossu, D. Praet, *A Marriage of Equals? Characterization in the passio Chrysanthi et Dariae*, Philologus forthcoming.

[116] Boyarin, *Dying for God* cit., 50-66.

[117] Ct. 8,6: Vulg.: *Quia fortis est ut mors dilectio dura sicut inferus aemulatio lampades eius lampades ignis atque flammarum* 8,7: *aquae multae non poterunt extinguere caritatem nec flumina obruent illam si dederit homo omnem substantiam domus suae pro dilectione quasi nihil dispicient eum.* As *eum* is the preferred reading in the edition of Weber, Gryson, *Biblia Sacra* cit., I adopted this reading. A different reading is *eam*, which would then refer to the substance (*substantiam*) being contemned. The reading in the Septuagint is ambiguous: αὐτόν can refer to either the man (ἀνὴρ) or his livelihood (βίος).

Conclusion

The Latin *passio Agnetis* gives evidence of a remarkable literary refinement. The hagiographer was acquainted with both pagan and Christian literature and traditions and made efforts to turn his passion into a sophisticated literary creation. This becomes apparent from the subtle characterization of the passion's protagonist, among other things. Agnes does not merely appear as a typical martyr who bravely and openly admits her faith. This is an approach which she does adopt, but only after her arrest. Her speech before her arrest, I have argued, characterizes her as a trickster: she encodes her Christian faith into a public discourse and thus obtains a temporary escape from martyrdom. This approach is not disapproved of in the text: the protagonist of the passio Agnetis nuances Daniel Boyarin's claim that defiant resistance is the only acceptable approach in early Christianity. Agnes' trickster discourse characterizes her as cunning and manipulative towards her pagan suitor and his father, but for the Christian audience of the passion, her approach first and foremost provides entertainment and the pleasure of knowing more than the characters in the text.

I have also contended that Agnes' trickster approach in the Latin passion sets her apart from her counterparts in the other accounts of the martyrdom: whereas the other 'Agnesses' adopt a martyr discourse from the beginning, Agnes in BHL 156 only adopts such a discourse after her arrest. By partly turning his protagonist into a trickster, then, the hagiographer of the Latin passio Agnetis gave a personal touch to his account of the life and death of one of the most famous Roman martyrs. Before Agnes takes up a public position as a future Christian martyr and the accompanying martyr discourse, he seemed to think, she might as well entertain the audience of the text with her trickster approach.

Conclusion

This dissertation set out to challenge the prevailing view in past and contemporary scholarship that the Latin post-Nicene passions are monotonous and repetitive texts, totally lacking in literary quality and subtlety. To be sure, the passions betray similarities, both between themselves, and to the fictional traditions of antiquity. An example of such a similarity has been discussed in chapter two: the *topos* of the defence of chastity which the passions share with the Greek novel. Yet analysis of the passions' handling of this *topos* revealed that variation can be detected within the topical elaboration. The martyrs are either confronted with an unwanted marriage proposal or with the threat of rape, or both; in some passions, a mediator is called in; the martyrs have recourse to different kinds of ruses ... and many more instances of variation can be listed. A second aim of this chapter was to establish the passions' relation to the Greek novels in this thematic realm. Both in their defence against an undesired marriage and in their defence against rape, I concluded, the martyrs' behaviour remarkably resembles that of the novelistic heroines. Some of the approaches which the women adopt also occur in other texts of the network of ancient narrative texts, but the specific ruse of feigned consent and requested postponement might hint at direct influence of the novels on the passions. Although the question of direct influence remains undecided, it is clear that the Greek novels and the post-Nicene passions shared a common literary culture and that the passions fully deserve to be approached as an interesting component of the intricate network of ancient narrative texts.

Next to the exploration of the topicality of the corpus texts, this dissertation set out to provide an answer to a second research question. Do the Latin post-Nicene passions deserve to be studied as literary creations in their own right? The studies of the *passio Caeciliae*, *passio Susannae*, *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae* and *passio Agnetis et Emerentianae* demonstrated, I argue, that the answer to that question is a clear affirmative. In the following, I will briefly summarize the findings of the analyses.

The analysis of the *passio Caeciliae*, presented in chapter three, challenged the common assumption that character construction in the post-Nicene passions can correctly be described in terms of stereotypes. The passion individuates the different

characters of the story by documenting one specific area of their representation: rhetorical performance. Caecilia displays elaborate rhetorical aptitude which allows her to achieve her aims and to obtain the dominant position in the marriage. Caecilia's rhetorical skills set her apart from her husband Valerianus, who appears as an incompetent speaker. Traditional gender roles are thus destabilized in this passion. However, Valerianus' rhetorical skills improve in the course of the passion: the *passio Caeciliae* presents rhetorical ability as a skill that can be learned.

In chapter four, another current view was questioned, namely that some post-Nicene passions are mere copies of others. In the case of the *passio Caeciliae* and the *passio Susannae*, one such purported couple of model and copy, this judgment does not do justice to the literary subtlety of which the *passio Susannae* gives evidence. It is indeed probable that Susanna's hagiographer drew inspiration from the *passio Caeciliae*, but two findings indicate that he did not turn his passion into a Chinese copy of Caecilia's. Firstly, he adjusted and revised common hagiographic themes to fit his own literary creation. Secondly, he did not turn his heroine, Susanna, into a mere copy of Caecilia: the characterization of the two martyrs differs markedly. Both martyrs astutely manage to convert pagans by making use of the topical subject of the tension between Christian love and worldly love, but do so in a notably different way. Whereas Caecilia manipulates her husband with her rhetorical skills, Susanna manipulates through her action. Furthermore, Caecilia appears as a teacher who provides elaborate discussions about different aspects of Christianity, whereas Susanna does not give any explanation about the faith and even prevents others from providing similar discussions.

The characterization of the protagonists of the *passio Chrysanthi et Dariae*, studied in chapter five, reveals how the passion takes different, ambiguous approaches to traditional gender roles. On the one hand, a movement towards sexual symmetry can be detected. This symmetry is first established in the intellectual realm and is subsequently confirmed in the sexual realm by the continent marriage which Chrysanthus and Daria conclude. On the other hand, traditional gender roles are evoked as well in this passion. When it comes to conversion and instruction in the faith, the sexual symmetry has vanished. This re-establishing of the prevailing gender roles conforms with the negative view on female leaders and teachers in early Christianity. The fact that Caecilia does appear as a teacher, as we have seen in chapters three and four, once again hints at the variation of which the post-Nicene passions give evidence.

The final chapter provided an analysis of the *passio Agnetis*. This passion seems an exception in the corpus, since the text's literary qualities have been highlighted by others: by including many biblical, patristic and pagan citations and reminiscences and by abundantly making use of figures of speech, Agnes' hagiographer indeed made efforts to show off his literary capacities. It was argued in this chapter that the passion's literary refinement also becomes apparent from the subtle characterization of the text's protagonist. Agnes' speech not only characterizes her as a typical steadfast martyr, but

her communication skills also verge on manipulation and cunning. Agnes ridicules her pagan suitor and his father, and by doing so, entertains the Christian audience of the passion. Furthermore, Agnes' characterization as a trickster sets her apart from her counterparts in the other, earlier accounts of her martyrdom.

From the analyses of the four selected texts, it becomes clear that the *passio Agnetis* is not such an exceptional text within the corpus after all: the other passions give evidence of literary sensibility and refinement too. The Latin post-Nicene passions discussed in this dissertation are texts which display subtle characterization. Firstly, they individuate different characters, both inter- and intratextually: in these texts, it is indeed possible to distinguish one martyr from another. Secondly, the passions explore character development: in line with the Jewish-Christian linear conception of time, characters are subject to evolution. But the passions not only give evidence of subtle characterization. They also interact with other texts, explore gender roles and are rooted in their historical and cultural context. In short, they are texts which deserve more attention from literary scholars than they so far received. I hope that these analyses may contribute to a reappraisal of the Latin post-Nicene passions and may encourage others to approach these texts as they deserve to be approached: as fascinating literary creations of late antiquity.

I would like to end by going back to the beginning, to Delehaye's statement that when reading the roman post-Nicene passions, 'one has the impression of constantly turning the pages of the same book'. The findings of this dissertation indicate that this statement should be nuanced. To be sure, similarities between the passions are apparent and important, but this is not all there is to it. When reading the Latin post-Nicene passions, then, one has the impression of reading books which belong to the same shelf, perhaps, but definitely not the same book.

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Appendix I: List of Latin passions dated to the time span 4th until 6th century

Passio Acaunensium martyrum (BHL 5737)
CPL: work of Eucherius of Lyon (†450)
Beaujard (2000), 72: between 435 and 439 (Eucherius of Lyon)

Passio Adventoris, Octavii et Solutoris (BHL 85)
CPL: 5th century
GF: after 5th century
Lanéry (2010), 276-277: mid-sixth century

Passio Agathae (BHL 133)
CPL: probably 6th century (contemporaneous with *passio Luciae*)
GF: 6th century? (contemporaneous with *passio Luciae*)
Lanéry (2010), 284: before mid-fifth century

Passio Agnetis (BHL 156)
CPL: reference to Saliou (1990), 286, note 8, who does not deem Ambrosian authorship impossible.
GF: 5th century?
Lanéry (2010), 200-201: during the pontificate of pope Symmachus (498-514)

Passio Albani Verulamii (BHL 206)
GF: 515-540

Passio Alexandri Ep. Baccanensis (BHL 273)
CPL: 5th -6th century
GF: 5th -6th century
Lanéry (2010), 310-311: 8th century

Passio Alexandri Bergomensis (BHL 276)
CPL: 6th century
GF: 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 323: 8th – 9th century

Passio Alexandri, Eventii et soc. (BHL 266)
CPL: 6th century
GF: first half of the 5th century
Lanéry (2010), 301-303: 6th – 7th century

Passio Ambrosii Ferentinensis (BHL 375)
GF: 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 318-319: probably 9th century

Passio Anastasiae (BHL 1795 + 118 + 8093 + 401)
GF: 5th-6th century
Lanéry (2010), 51-60: first half of the 5th century

Passio Ansani et Maximae (BHL 515)
CPL: 6th century
GF: 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 306-307: 7th – 8th century

Passio Anthimi, Sisinii et soc. (BHL 561)
CPL: 6th century
GF: 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 314-315: probably not earlier than 8th century

Passio Arcadii (BHL 659)
CPL: probably 4th century
GF: work of Zeno of Verona († before 380)
Saxer (1994), 56: probably 4th century

Passio Aureae seu Chryses (BHL 808-809)
CPL: 6th century
GF: 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 317-8: presumably 9th century

Passio Basilidis et soc. (BHL 1020)
CPL: 6th- 8th century

GF: 6th- 8th century
Lanéry (2010), 327-328: 9th century

Passio Bonosae (BHL 1425)
CPL: 6th century?
GF: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 298: 12th century

Passio Caeciliae (BHL 1495)
CPL: after Victor Vitensis († after 489)
GF: 6th century: after Victor Vitensis
Lanéry (2009), 536-550: 5th century; Lanéry identifies the fifth-century monk Arnobius the Younger as the author of the passion.

Passio Innumerabilium Caesaraugustanorum martyrum (BHL 1505)
CPL: between 592 and 620
GF: between 592 and 620

Passio Caesarii et Juliani (BHL 1511)
CPL: 5th- 6th century
GF: 5th- 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 243: 5th century

Passio Caloceri et Parthenii (BHL 1534)
CPL: 5th – 6th century
GF: 5th – 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 303-305: 6th- 7th century

Passio Cantii, Cantiani et Cantianillae (BHL 1547)
CPL: possibly mid-fifth century
GF: possibly mid-fifth century
Lanéry (2010), 320: between end 6th and end 8th century

Passio Cassiani ludimagistri (BHL 1626)
CPL.: after Prudentius (°348- † after 405), before Beda († 735)
GF: after Prudentius (°348- † after 405), before Beda († 735)
Lanéry (2010), 321: 7th- 8th century

Passio Chrysanthi et Dariae (BHL 1787)
CPL: before Gregory of Tours († 593)

GF: before the *passio Anastasiae* and Gregory of Tours
Lanéry (2010), 141-6: 2nd half of the 5th century

Passio Claudii, Asterii et soc. (BHL 1829)
Scorza Barcellona (2001), 79-80: 4th century

Passio Clementis (BHL 1848)
CPL: before Gregory of Tours († 593)
GF: 6th century at the latest; possibly even 4th-5th century?
Lanéry (2010), 93: between 430 and 450

Passio Columbae (BHL 1893)
CPL: 6th century?
GF: before the 9th century
Beaujard (2000), 226-7: end of the 6th century, possibly 7th century

Passio Cornelii Papae (BHL 1958)
CPL: before Beda († 735)
GF: before Beda († 735), possibly 5th century?
Lanéry (2010), 109-112: around 450

Passio Coronatorum quattuor (BHL 1836)
CPL: 5th- 6th century
GF: 6th century at the latest, probably 5th century
Scorza Barcellona (2001), 67: possibly 6th century reworking of a text from Pannonia

Passio Cyriaci (Siriaci) et Paulae (BHL 2066)
Saxer (1994), 8-9; 52-53: 4th century

Passio Didymi et Theodorae (BHL 8072-8073)
Lanéry (2004), 20-23: 5th, possibly even end of the 4th century

Passio Domnini (BHL 2264)
CPL: possibly 6th century
GF: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 325, note 779: 9th century

Passio Donatiani et Rogatiani (BHL 2275)
Beaujard (2000), 153: possibly end 5th – beginning 6th century

Passio Donati et Hilariani (BHL 2289)
CPL: before Gregory the Great
GF: before Gregory the Great
Lanéry (2010), 307-308: 7th – 8th century

Passio Epipodii et Alexandri (BHL 2574-2575)
CPL: before Gregory of Tours (†593)
GF: before Gregory of Tours (†593)

Passio Eugeniae, Prothi et Hyacinthi (BHL 2667)
CPL: before Avitus of Vienne (†518)
GF: 5th century
Lanéry (2010), 130-137: 2nd half of the 5th century

Passio Eusebii, Pontiani et soc. (BHL 2742)
CPL: possibly 6th century
GF: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 296-297: around 865

Passio Euticii (BHL 2779)
CPL: 6th century
GF: 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 308-309: 8th century

Passio Fabii Vexilliferi (BHL 2818)
CPL: 4th- 5th century
GF: 4th- 5th century
Saxer (1994), 67: beginning of the 5th century

Passio Feliciani (BHL 2847)
CPL: 6th- 7th century
GF: 6th- 7th century

Passio Felicitatis cum VII filiis (BHL 2853)
CPL: 4th- 5th century
GF: before Petrus Chrysologus († ca. 450)
Lanéry (2010), 40-43: around 400

Passio Felicis et Adaucti (BHL 2878)
CPL: 6th- 7th century

GF: 6th- 7th century

Passio Felicis et Fortunati (BHL 2860)
CPL: 6th century
GF: 5th- 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 273-274: first half of the 5th century

Acta vitae et martyrii Felicis presb., Fortunati et Achillei (BHL 2896)
GF: reworking from the 6th century
Beaujard (2000), 164: reworking from the 6th century

Passio Ferreoli Tribuni (BHL 2911)
CPL: 5th century
GF: 5th century
Beaujard (2000), 135: 2nd half of the 5th century

Passio Ferreoli et Ferrucii (BHL 2903)
GF: before 500
Beaujard (2000), 164: reworking from the 6th century

Passio Firmi et Rustici (BHL 3020)
CPL: possibly 6th century
GF: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 322: 8th century

Passio Gallicani, Iohannis et Pauli (BHL 3236 + 3238)
GF: possibly 5th – 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 212-4: after 514, but before 550

Acta Gallonii
GF: late antique

Passio Genesii (BHL 3304)
CPL: 6th century
GF: 6th century
Beaujard (2000), 209: first decade of the 6th century

Passio Gervasii et Protasii (BHL 3514)
CPL: mid-fifth century
GF: possibly mid-fifth century

Lanéry (2010), 66: between 415 and 450

Passio Hedisti, Prisci et soc. (BHL 3765)
CPL: 5th- 6th century
GF: 5th- 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 312-313: 8th century?

Passio Hesychii (BHL 3861)
CPL: before codex Bernensis 289 (*martyrologium Hieronymianum*; shortly after 766)
GF: 5th-6th century

Passio Irenaei, Andochii et soc. (BHL 4457)
GF: beginning of the 6th century
Beaujard (2000), 222: 6th century

Passio Isacis et Maximiani (BHL 4473)
CPL: written by the Donatist bishop Macrobius (4th century)
GF: Donatist author; contemporaneous with Optatus of Milevis († before 400)

Passio Iulianae Nicomedensis (BHL 4524)
CPL: before Beda (†735)
GF: before Beda
Lanéry (2010), 19, note 8: translated from the Greek before the end of the 6th century.

Passio Iuliani et Basilissae (BHL 4529)
GF: possibly contemporaneous with Caesarius of Arles (†542)
De Gaiffier (1945), 49: Latin translation from the Greek before 7th – 8th century

Passio Iuliani Brivatensis (BHL 4540)
GF: 5th-6th century
Beaujard (2000), 136: reworking between 532 and 581

Passio Iusti Tergestini (BHL 4604)
CPL: 6th century
GF: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 324: probably 8th- 9th century

Passio Luciae (BHL 4992)
CPL: 6th century?
GF: possibly 6th century

Lanéry (2010), 286, note 615: between the 5th and the 7th century

Passio Luxorii (BHL 5092)
CPL: 6th century
GF: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 326-327: probably between the 7th and the 10the century

Passio Mammarii Presb. et soc. (BHL 5206)
CPL: partly pre-Nicene
GF: partly pre-Nicene
Saxer (1994), 57: 'L'entrée en matière est vivante et originale et semble refléter le rapport du témoin. Les séances devant le proconsul sont un tissu de lieux communs habituels aux Passions épiques et trahissent le remanieur'.

Passion Marcellini et Petri (BHL 5231)
CPL: 5th-6th century
GF: possibly 5th-6th century
Lanéry (2010), 291-292: beginning of the 7th century

Passio Marcelli et Apulei (BHL 5252b)
CPL: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 325-326: a bit before mid-ninth century

Passio Marcianae (BHL 5257 - 5259)
Saxer (1994), 69: presumably 5th century, possibly end of the 4th century.

Passio Marculi presb. (BHL 5271)
GF: around 350
Saxer (1994), 64-66: first half of 4th century

Passio Marii, Marthae et soc. (BHL 5543)
CPL: possibly 6th century
GF: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 254-256: 6th century, possibly around 550

Passio martyrum Graecorum (BHL 3970)
CPL: 5th-6th century
GF: 5th-6th century
Lanéry (2010), 293-295: 8th-9th century

Passio Maximae, Secundae et Donatillae (BHL 5809)
CPL: 4th century, with Donatist additions.
GF: 4th century with Donatist additions or even originally Donatist
Saxer (1994), 60-2: end of the 4th – beginning of the 5th century in a Donatist environment

Passio Mustiolae (BHL 4455)
CPL: 6th century
GF: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 309-310: around 743

Passio Naboris et Felicis (BHL 6028)
CPL: 5th century
GF: 5th century
Lanéry (2010), 258-260: first decades of the 5th century (based upon BHL 6029 as oldest version)

Passio Nazarii et Celsi (BHL 6039)
CPL: before Ennodius (†521)
GF: before Ennodius
Lanéry (2010), 266: between 422 and 450

Passio Nerei, Achillei et soc. (BHL 6058-6066)
CPL: apparently 6th century
GF: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 113-25: 2nd half of the 5th century

Passio Pancratii (BHL 6420)
CPL: 6th century
GF: 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 289: presumably end 6th century – beginning 7th century

Passio Pastoris (BHL 6470d)
GF: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 299: 12th century

Passio Patrocli (BHL 6520)
CPL: mid-sixth century
GF: mid-sixth century
Beaujard (2000), 223-224: between 540 and 580

Passio Peregrini (BHL 6623)
CPL: 6th century
GF: possibly 6th century

Passio Philippi ep. Heracleensis (BHL 6835)
GF: not later than 5th-6th century; reworking of a Greek text (not preserved)

Passio Pi(g)menii (BHL 6849-6849a)
CPL: possibly 6th century
GF: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 289: probably 2nd half of 6th century

Passio Pollionis (BHL 6869)
Scorza Barcellona (2001), 69: probably end 4th century

Passio Polochronii, Parmenii, Abdon et Sennes, Xysti, Felicissimi et Agapiti, Laurentii et soc. (BHL 6884 + 6+ 7801 + 3961)
CPL: 5th-6th century
GF: 5th-6th century
Lanéry (2010), 187-189: between 506 and 514

Passio Pontiani Spoletani (BHL 6891)
CPL: 5th-6th century
GF: 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 315: 8th-9th century

Passio Pontii Cimellensis (BHL 6896)
CPL: 6th century
GF: 6th century

Passio Primi et Feliciani (BHL 6922)
CPL: possibly 6th century
GF: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 249-250: 5th century

Passio Processi et Martiniani (BHL 6947)
CPL: 6th century
GF: 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 220-222: between 514 and 550

Passio Pudentianae et Praxedis (BHL 6988 + 6989)
CPL: 5th-6th century
GF: 5th-6th century
Lanéry (2010), 174-176: between 501 and 506

Passio Quiriaci (Cyriaci) Iudae (BHL 7022)
GF: before mid-sixth century translated from the Greek

Passio Quirini (BHL 7035)
CPL: beginning 4th century (under Galerius)
GF: beginning 4th century (under Galerius)
Scorza Barcellona (2001), 56-58: historic elements and later additions (end 4th century – beginning 5th century)

Passio Restituti (BHL 7197)
CPL: 6th century
GF: 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 313-314: end of the 8th century

Passio Rufinae et Secundae (BHL 7359)
CPL: mid-fifth century
GF: 2nd half of the 5th century
Lanéry (2010), 300: between 550 and 650

Passio Sabini ep. et soc. (BHL 7452)
CPL: 6th century
GF: 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 316: 8th-9th century

Passio Salsae (BHL 7467)
CPL: 4th-5th century
GF: first half 5th century
Saxer (1994), 69: probably 5th century, possibly end 4th century

Passio Saturnini ep. Tolosani (BHL 7495-7496)
CPL: before Gregory of Tours (†593)
GF: before Gregory of Tours (†593), possibly first half 5th century
Beaujard (2000), 212: 6th century

Passio Saturnini, Dativi et soc. (BHL 7492)
CPL: under Diocletian
GF: possibly beginning of the 5th century – Donatist additions
Saxer(1994), 61-62: Donatist redaction of the end of the 4th – beginning of the 5th century

Passio Sebastiani (BHL 7543)
CPL: 5th century
GF: 5th century
Lanéry (2010), 71-72: between 430 and 450; Lanéry identifies the fifth-century monk Arnobius the Younger as the author of the passion.

Passio Secundiani, Marcelliani et Verani (BHL 7550)
CPL: 5th-6th century
GF: 5th-6th century
Lanéry (2010), 319: 9th century

Passio Secundi (BHL 7558)
CPL: 6th century
GF: 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 319-320: 9th century

Passio Secundi Thebaei (BHL 7568)
CPL: 6th century
GF: 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 323-324: 8th-9th century

Passio Serapiae et Sabinae (BHL 7586 + 7407)
CPL: 5th - 6th century
GF: 5th – 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 305-6: presumably between the end of the 6th and the end of the 8th century

Passio Sereni (BHL 7595)
CPL: under Maximian (286-305)
GF: 4th century
Praet (2011), 559 sqq: the authenticity of the passion is untenable, the text dates from a later period

Passio Stephani Papae (BHL 7845)
CPL: possibly 6th century
GF: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 292-293: first half 7th century

Passio Susannae (BHL 7937)
CPL: 6th century?
GF: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 153: between 450 and 550

Passio Symphoriani Augustodunensis (BHL 7967)
CPL: beginning 5th century
GF: 5th century
Beaujard (2000), 137: 5th century

Passio Symphorosae et VII Filiorum (BHL 7971)
CPL: possibly 6th century
GF: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 238: before 6th century, possibly even first half 5th century

Passio trium geminorum: Speusippi, Meleusippi et Eleusippi (BHL 7828)
GF: 5th century; translation from the Greek
Beaujard (2000), 224-226: before end 6th century

Passio Torpetis (BHL 8307)
CPL: possibly 6th century
GF: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 301: 6th-7th century

Passio Typasii Ticavensis (BHL 8354)
CPL: under Diocletian
GF: first half 4th century
Saxer (1994), 68: not earlier than end 4th century, possibly beginning 5th century

Passio Urbani (BHL 8372)
CPL: possibly 6th century
GF: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 297: 9th century

Passio Valentini Anteramnensis (BHL 8460)
CPL: before Beda (†735)
GF: before Beda (†735)
Lanéry (2010), 300-301: 2nd half 6th century at the earliest, possibly 7th century

Passio Victoris Mauri (BHL 8580)
CPL: 5th century, but later than *Passio Naboris et Felicis*
GF: 5th century, but later than *Passio Naboris et Felicis*
Lanéry (2010), 263: 2nd quarter 5th century

Vita et passio Vigilii ep. Tridentini (BHL 8602)
CPL: 6th century or later
GF: 6th century or later
Lanéry (2010), 322: 7th-8th century

Passio Vincentii Aginnensis (BHL 8621)
CPL: apparently before Gregory of Tours (†593)
GF: before Gregory of Tours (†593)
Beaujard (2000), 227-229: end 6th century

Passio Vincentii Caesaraugustani (BHL 8628 + 8631)
CPL: possibly 4th century
GF: between 5th and 7th century

Passio Vitalis et Agricolae (BHL 8693)
CPL: possibly 5th century
GF: possibly 5th century
Lanéry (2010), 299: 9th century

Appendix II: List of Latin passions dated to the time span 4th until 6th century and featuring a woman who has to defend her chastity

The edition used in chapter 2 is marked in bold; the women whose chastity is endangered are underlined.

Passio Agathae (BHL 133) (I)

Edition:
Bollandus, J. (ed.) 1658. ASS Feb. I, 615-618.
Datings:
CPL: probably 6th century (contemporaneous with *passio Luciae*)
GF: 6th century? (contemporaneous with *passio Luciae*)
Lanéry (2010), 284: before mid-fifth century
Provenance:
CPL: Italy
GF: Italy
Lanéry (2010), 285: Catania
Length:
approx. 2130 words

Passio Agnetis et Emerentianae (BHL 156) (II)

Editions:
The *passio Agnetis et Emerentianae* appears in numerous editions, due to its attribution to Ambrose in the past. The passion can be found in many editions of Ambrose's works, which are listed under BHL 156. I have consulted the following editions of the passion: Mombritius, vol I, 40-44; **Bollandus, J., Henschenius, G. (eds.) 1643. ASS Ian. II, 350-354**; Bartolini (1858), 1-22 (with Italian translation); Jubaru (1907), 358-363; Fabréga Grau (1955), 176-182.
Datings:
CPL: reference to Saliou (1990), 286, note 8, who does not deem Ambrosian authorship impossible.

GF: 5th century?
Lanéry (2010), 200-201: during the pontificate of pope Symmachus (498-514)
Tomea (2010), 27-29: before the rewriting of the passio Eugeniae (BHL 2666), which can be dated to the 2nd half of the 6th or to the 7th century.
Provenance:
CPL: Italy
GF: Italy
Lanéry (2010), 198: Rome
Length:
approx. 2240 words

Passio Anastasiae (BHL 1795 + 118 + 8093 + 401) + Theodota + Agape, Chionia, Irene (III)

Editions:
Delehaye (1936), 221-249; **Moretti (2006).**
Datings:
CPL: no dating mentioned
GF: 5th-6th century
Lanéry (2010), 51-60: first half of the 5th century
Provenance:
CPL: Italy
GF: Rome
Lanéry (2010), 54-56: Rome
Length:
approx. 6330 words

Passio Aureae seu Chryses (BHL 809) (IV)

Editions:
Pinius, J. (ed.) 1739. ASS Aug. IV, 757-761.
Datings:
CPL: 6th century
GF: 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 317-318: presumably 9th century
Provenance:
CPL: Italy
GF: Italy
Lanéry (2010), 317-318: Ostia

Length:
approx. 3280 words

Passio Bonosae (BHL 1425) (V)

Edition:
Sollerius, J. (ed.) 1725. ASS Iul. IV, 21-23.
Datings:
CPL: 6th century?
GF: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 298: 12th century
Provenance:
CPL: Italy
GF: Italy
Lanéry (2010), 298: Rome
Length:
approx. 1750 words

Passio Caeciliae (BHL 1495) (VI)

Editions:
Mombritius, vol. I, 332-341; Delehaye (1936), 194-220; Fabréga Grau (1955), 25-40; **Upchurch (2007), 172-217.**
Datings:
CPL: after Victor Vitensis († after 489)
GF: 6th century: after Victor Vitensis
Lanéry (2009), 536-550: 5th century; Lanéry identifies the fifth-century monk Arnobius the Younger as the author of the passion.
Provenance:
CPL: Italy
GF: Rome
Lanéry (2009), 536: Rome
Length:
approx. 6320 words

Passio Chrysanthi & Dariae (BHL 1787) (VII)

Editions:
Mombritius, vol. I, 271-278; Bossue, B. (ed.) 1864. ASS Oct. XI, 437-487; Floss (1869), 156-170; **Upchurch (2007), 218-249.**
Datings:
CPL: before Gregory of Tours († 593)
GF: before the *passio Anastasiae* and Gregory of Tours
Lanéry (2010), 141-6: 2nd half of the 5th century
Provenance:
CPL: Italy
GF: no location mentioned
Lanéry (2010), 142: Rome
Length:
approx. 4645 words

Passio Columbae (BHL 1893) (VIII)

Edition:
Fabréga Grau (1955), 116-118
Datings:
CPL: 6th century?
GF: before the 9th century
Beaujard (2000), 226-7: end of the 6th century, possibly 7th century
Provenance:
CPL: Gaul or Germania
GF: no location mentioned
Beaujard (2000), 226-227: Gaul
Length:
approx. 840 words

Passio Didymi & Theodorae (BHL 8072/8073) (IX)

Editions:
Papebrochius, D. (ed.). 1675. ASS April. III, 572-574 ; **Lanéry (2004), 34-49.**
Datings:
Lanéry (2004), 20-23: 5th, possibly even end of the 4th century
Provenance:
Lanéry (2004), 22-23: BHL 8073: Italy, probably northern Italy; BHL 8072: Italy?

Length:
approx. 1530 words

Passio Eugeniae, Prothi & Hyacinthi (BHL 2667) + Basilla (X)

Edition:
Mombritius, Vol. II, 391-397.
Datings:
CPL: before Avitus of Vienne (†518)
GF: 5th century
Lanéry (2010), 130-137: 2nd half of the 5th century
Provenance:
CPL: Italy
GF: Italy
Lanéry (2010), 135: Rome
Length:
approx. 4475 words

Passio Gallicani, Iohannis & Pauli (BHL 3236 + 3238) Constantia (XI)

Edition:
Mombritius, Vol. I, 569-572. (the only edition which combines BHL 3236 and BHL 3238)
Datings:
CPL: no dating mentioned
GF: possibly 5th – 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 212-214: after 514, but before 550
Provenance:
CPL: Italy
GF: Rome
Lanéry (2010), 211-212: Rome
Length:
approx. 2170 words

Passio Julianae Nicomedensis (BHL 4524) (XII)

Editions:
Mombritius, vol. II, 77-80; **Bollandus, J. (ed.) 1658. ASS Feb. II, 873-877.**
Datings:
CPL: before Beda (†735)
GF: before Beda
Lanéry (2010), 19, note 8: translated from the Greek before the end of the 6th century.
Provenance:
CPL: Italy
GF: Italy
Lanéry (2010), 19, note 8: Campania
Length:
approx. 2865 words

Passio Luciae (BHL 4992) (XIII)

Edition:
Mombritius, Vol. II, 107-109.
Datings:
CPL: 6th century?
GF: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 286, note 615: between the 5th and the 7th century
Provenance:
CPL: Italy
GF: Italy
Lanéry (2010), 285-286: Syracuse
Length:
approx. 1500 words

Passio Marcianae (BHL 5257-5259) (XIV)

Editions:
Mombritius, vol. II, 256-257 (= BHL 5259); **Bollandus, J., Henschenius, G. (eds.) 1643. ASS Ian. I, 569** (= BHL 5257). BHL 5257 and BHL 5259 betray only minor differences; the plotlines are very similar.
Datings:
Saxer (1994), 69: presumably 5th century, possibly end of the 4th century.
Provenance:

Saxer (1994), 69: Caesarea in Mauretania (present Cherchel in Algeria)
Length:
approx. 770 words

Passio Maximae, Donatillae et Secundae (BHL 5809) (XV)

Edition:
De Smedt (1890), 110-116.
Datings:
CPL: 4th century, with Donatist additions.
GF: 4th century with Donatist additions or even originally Donatist
Saxer (1994), 60-62: end of the 4th – beginning of the 5th century in a Donatist environment
Provenance:
CPL: Africa
GF: no location mentioned
Saxer (1994), 61-64: Africa
Length:
approx. 1255 words

Passio Nerei, Achillei & soc. (BHL 6058-6066) Domitilla, Petronilla, Felicula (XVI)

Edition:
Henschenius, G. (ed.) 1680. AASS Mai III, 6-13. (the only edition which combines all BHL numbers)
Datings:
CPL: apparently 6th century
GF: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 123-124: 2nd half of the 5th century
Provenance:
CPL: Italy
GF: Rome
Lanéry (2010), 119: Rome
Length:
approx. 4340 words

Passio Rufinae & Secundae (BHL 7359) (XVII)

Editions:
Mombritius, vol. II, 444-445; **Pinius, J. (ed.). 1723. AASS Iul. III, 30-31**
Datings:
CPL: mid-fifth century
GF: 2nd half of the 5th century
Lanéry (2010), 300: between 550 and 650
Provenance:
CPL: Italy
GF: Italy
Lanéry (2010), 300: Silva Candida
Length:
approx. 1000 words

Passio Saturnini, Dativi & soc. (BHL 7492) Victoria (XVIII)

Editions:
Franchi de' Cavalieri (1935), 49-71; **Maier (1987), 57-92.**
Datings:
CPL: under Diocletian
GF: possibly beginning of the 5th century – Donatist additions
Saxer(1994), 61-62: Donatist redaction of the end of the 4th – beginning of the 5th century
Provenance:
CPL: Africa
GF: Abitinae, Africa
Saxer (1994), 61-62: Abitinae, Africa
Length:
approx. 4700 words

Passio Serapiae & Sabinae (BHL 7586 + 7407) (XIX)

Edition:
Stiltingus, J. (ed.). 1743. ASS Aug. VI, 500-504 (only edition which combines the BHL numbers)
Datings:
CPL: 5th - 6th century
GF: 5th – 6th century

Lanéry (2010), 305-6: presumably between the end of the 6th and the end of the 8th century
Provenance:
CPL: Italy
GF: Italy
Lanéry (2010), 305-306: close to Terni
Length:
approx. 2245 words

Passio Susannae (BHL 7937) (XX)

Editions:
Mombritius, Vol. II, 553-559; Bollandus, J. (ed.) 1658. ASS Febr. III, 61-64 (first part of the passion) and Cuperus, G. (ed.) 1735. ASS Aug. II, 631-632 (second part of the passion) Susanna's passion is divided into two parts in the ASS edition because, according to the passion, her fellow martyrs died earlier.
Datings:
CPL: 6th century?
GF: possibly 6th century
Lanéry (2010), 153: between 450 and 550
Provenance:
CPL: Italy
GF: Italy
Lanéry (2010), 152: Rome
Length:
3630 words