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My Flesh Is Meat Indeed

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A Nonsacramental Reading of John 6:51-58

Meredith J. C. Warren

Fortress Press
Minneapolis

MY FLESH IS MEAT INDEED

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*With gratitude to my loving grandparents,
Joan and Ed Neale,
and in memory of Ellen Aitken.*

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Preface

This book is a revised version of my doctoral dissertation, which was prepared for McGill University (2013) under the supervision of the late Professor Ellen Bradshaw Aitken. Based on the advice from my committee, the section analyzing in detail many specific instances of epiphany in the romance novels has been removed and will be published as a separate paper. New to this version is the analysis of antagonism in John (chapter four), which was first presented as “The Cup Which the Father has Given: Divine–Mortal Antagonism and the Christological Implications of Genre” at The Gospel of John as Genre Mosaic Conference, June 23–26, 2014, in Aarhus, Denmark, and takes into account some of the feedback I received during that presentation.

I could not have completed this book without the careful eyes and the warm friendship of my Writing Group. Sara Parks and Shayna Sheinfeld have read this work almost as many times as I have and were invaluable to me, not only in pointing out flaws in logic or spelling, but also in being my constant cheerleaders and bosom friends.

I owe considerable appreciation to many teachers and colleagues for their help. Among them, Lawrence Wills made his careful and insightful comments on a previous version of this manuscript. Ian

Henderson, Gerbern Oegema, and Patricia Kirkpatrick provided helpful feedback on the content. Lynn Kozak was also generous in her evaluation of my sources and argument. Of course, the mistakes that remain in this book are wholly mine.

I am especially grateful for the insights I received from Ellen Aitken, who was a font of support and wisdom for the many years leading up to this project, and I am grateful that I was able to share the news of this book with her before her untimely passing. Her encouragement, criticism, and expertise have been incredibly valuable in all of my scholarship. Words cannot express my gratitude for her mentorship or the scope of my grief at her recent loss. I count myself as fortunate to have been her friend and student.

To my husband Mike goes the final expression of gratitude. I thank him for his patience and his love, which he could not help but give.

Introduction

Aim

The aim of the present study is to argue that Jesus' divinity is made explicit in John 6:51c-58¹ and thereby to present this scene as christological rather than eucharistic. I propose that this pericope makes claims about Jesus' divinity because of the ways in which the Gospel of John participates in the literary world of the ancient Mediterranean: the author's use of genres and his characteristic manipulation of common tropes makes finding affinities between John and other Hellenistic literature useful for understanding the multivalency of John's Gospel. In particular, I show how John's Gospel makes use of the established trope of the relationship between an extraordinary mortal and an antagonistic deity, which is most readily seen in the Homeric epics but is also preserved in the Greek

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

romance novels² from around John's era—that is, from the first to the fourth centuries CE.³

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

2. The four romances I will be examining in this project are Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Xenophon of Ephesus's *An Ephesian Tale*, Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon*, and Heliodorus's *An Ethiopian Story*. Editions used will be as follows, unless otherwise indicated: Chariton, *Callirhoe*, trans. G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1932); Xenophon of Ephesus, *Anthia and Habrocomes*, trans. Jeffrey Henderson, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); *Achilles Tatius*, trans. S. Gaselee, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921); Heliodorus, *Les Éthiopiennes (Théagène et Chariclée)*, ed. and trans. R. M. Rattenbury et al. (Paris: Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres, 1935) for Greek text; and Heliodorus, *An Ethiopian Story*, in *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, trans. J. R. Morgan, ed. Bryan P. Reardon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 349–588 for the English, as there is currently no Loeb edition of Heliodorus's tale.
3. For convenience, I will refer to the author of the Fourth Gospel by the name John, as is customary. On John's authorship, please see, among others, Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1990), 244–72.

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

In classical and Homeric literature, the relationship between hero and deity is clearly antagonistic, with the deity responsible for the hero's hardships and, ultimately, for his death. However, as Gregory Nagy has shown, what is recorded as an antagonistic relationship in the narrative translates into a relationship of association in the cult practice.⁴ In other words, the death of the hero, recounted as the will of a god, is the cause for the establishment or *aition* of a cult that identifies that hero with the god in question.⁵ The romance novels of

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

5. Following Nagy, I use *aition* to mean the narrative event that spurs the establishment of a cult. It is important to acknowledge that this definition includes the understanding that myth and cult

the Hellenistic era, while of a different genre from the epics, preserve this relationship between god, hero, and cult, but do so exclusively within the narrative.

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

These romance novels preserve a Greco-Roman understanding of the ways in which extraordinary human beings become or are divine. In other words, the novels participate in the cultural expectations about heroes and their relationship to the divine. This understanding is one that I contend John's Gospel develops to its own advantage. Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus' divinity is demonstrated both explicitly in direct statements and implicitly through Jesus' signs.

do not have a linear relationship, with myth creating cult. Rather, tradition and ritual evolve together; one is not derivative of the other (Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 279 n. 2).

John has a clear preoccupation with Jesus' divine identity. Jesus' arrival on the earth, which is necessarily tinged with mortality, is the will of God; thus Jesus' salvific death is God's ultimate aim, a death to which all Jesus' acts point.⁶ Jesus is a character who occupies dual ontological categories simultaneously; he is at once mortal and divine. This conflation of identities is emphasized in John 6, where Jesus both gives bread and is that bread. Jesus' statement that his followers must "eat the flesh of the Son of Man," which is the bread that he gives (δίδωμι ὑπέρ) them, must be understood as a statement of identity. Like the heroines of the romances, Jesus is ultimately a sacrifice who does not die, but whose flesh is nevertheless consumed. In the moment of that consumption, occurring at the level of narrative, John fully articulates Jesus' divinity in his identification with God.

Method

I expand the study of John 6:51c-58 by bringing it into dialogue with its immediate historical context, namely, the Greco-Roman world and the Johannine literary tradition. On the one hand, I read John 6:51c-58 as a component of a unified Gospel of John; on the other hand, I read it as a participant in the wider historical world. First, I approach John 6:51c-58 as part of a literary whole. I understand this scene to be an integral part of John's Gospel rather than an addition by a later hand attempting to insert sacramental rites. As I argue in chapter one, this section of John shares linguistic and theological affinities with the rest of the Gospel despite attempts to demonstrate otherwise. I reject claims that this section is theologically incompatible with John's supposed anti-sacramental approach, and I agree with scholars who observe this pericope's linguistic continuity

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

with the sections that surround it.⁷ Further, I accept that John has been read and understood as it currently stands without much difficulty for as long as we have a manuscript tradition for it; in other words, the text-critical trajectory of John 6:51c-58 gives us no reason to doubt its authenticity. Thus I follow C. K. Barrett's argument for Johannine unity: "*someone* published it substantially as it is now stands; and I continue to make the assumption that he knew his business, and that it is the first duty of a commentator to bring out this person's meaning."⁸ In fact, my present argument regarding John 6:51c-58 renders explanations involving Johannine interpolations moot.

Second, by approaching John 6:51c-58 in this way, I am necessarily engaging with it as a text that exists in history and in culture. John is therefore also part of a larger whole that constitutes the diverse corpus of Hellenistic literature. Other scholars have already established that John presents many of the literary tropes used by Hellenistic authors. Jo-Ann Brant and Jennifer Berenson Maclean, for instance, have both written about John's characterization of Jesus as a heroic figure.⁹ Lawrence Wills has outlined the ways in which the Gospel of John and the *Life of Aesop* share similar literary patterns.¹⁰ Most recently, Kasper Bro Larsen has argued that John

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

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

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

makes use of a type scene common in classical literature, *anagnorisis*, or the recognition scene.¹¹ Harold Attridge's 2002 article demonstrated how John manipulates common tropes of Hellenistic literature in order to point to his own particular theological aims.¹² As such, my argument about John 6:51c-58 both emerges from and innovates on current approaches in Johannine scholarship. In developing this holistic approach to this section of John, and using previous Johannine scholarship alongside innovative methods for integrating Greco-Roman literary culture to its study, I offer a new solution for this troubling passage, a solution that reflects both the integrity of the gospel and its necessary participation in the ancient Mediterranean world in which it was created.

As a text produced in the Greco-Roman world, John necessarily shares certain literary tropes and devices with other texts produced in that world. Genres are complex to define, since any genre "is never fully identical with itself, nor are texts fully identical with their genres."¹³ John is comparable to the genre of the novel in certain specific ways. First, chronologically, John and the novels together preserve cultural expectations of the first few centuries of the common era. John dates from around 90 to 100 CE. The earliest of the novels, Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, dates from the early first century CE.¹⁴ *An Ephesian Tale* is likely from the second century CE. The earliest novels also preserve the expectations of a certain geographical range—that of the Hellenistic world. Chariton's name

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

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

12. Harold Attridge, "Genre Bending in the Fourth Gospel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121, no. 1 (2002): 3–21, esp. 14.

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

14. B. P. Reardon, "General Introduction," in *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, ed. B. P. Reardon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 17.

carries the epithet “of Aphrodisias,” locating him in present-day Turkey in a city named for Aphrodite, located about one hundred kilometers from the coast. John, whether composed in Syria,¹⁵ in Ephesus,¹⁶ or elsewhere, is a text that was produced in the Greco-Roman world, probably in a metropolitan center, coming into contact with the variety of narratives available to those inhabiting the historical ancient Mediterranean. That is, while the specific provenance of John’s Gospel is not relevant to this project, the fact that it was written in a milieu that was also producing the ancient romances allows for a natural comparison of these texts with the Gospel.

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

Main Themes

Rituals in Ink

In arguing that John 6:51c-58 does *not* preserve a Johannine Eucharist, I remove Jesus’ statement about eating and drinking his flesh and blood from the world of historical Christian ritual activity

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

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

and locate it firmly in the narrative world. Just as with the Greek romances, whose cannibalistic sacrifices do not reflect any historical ritual ever really practiced, John 6:51c-58 represents a ritual that only exists in text. As I demonstrate in chapter three, tropes of human sacrifice and cannibalism are used to paint a description of a barbaric Other and do not reflect actual ritual practice of any known group, past or present. Thus, in the novels, as in other texts that describe such rites, the meaning that is produced by a “ritual in ink”¹⁷ exists not because the ritual parallels a familiar one that took place in the “real” historical world, but because the ritual in ink creates meaning by interacting with existing notions of what it means to sacrifice and to consume.

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

17. Jörg Rüpke, introduction to *Rituals in Ink: A Conference on Religion and Literary Production in Ancient Rome Held at Stanford University in February 2002*, eds. Alessandro Barchiesi, Jörg Rüpke, Susan A Stephens (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2004), vii–viii.

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

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

The narrative realm creates its own realities: the actions depicted in texts interrupt the “real” world, the historical world, and collide with the symbols and truths of that world, producing new meanings in it. This force exists without historical correlation, as in the case with the sacrificial *Scheintod*¹⁹ the heroines of the novels undergo. This phenomenon, the trope of rituals that exist only in the narrative realm, is also reflected in John 6:51c-58; the flesh and blood do not point to a practice of ritually eating Jesus’ flesh, even in symbolic terms, but to Jesus’ identification with God, something that is only solidified through this consumption of his sacrificed flesh.

Contemporaneity

Contemporaneity, or *die Gleichzeitigkeit*, as Bultmann terms it in the original German version of his *Gospel of John*, describes the peculiar quality of Johannine time. John has no future: everything that occurs takes place in the present moment. Bultmann describes how eschatology in John’s Gospel “is taking place even now in the life and destiny of Jesus.”²⁰ That is, Jesus’ coming to the earth, his

18. *Ibid.*, vii–viii.

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

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

death, his returning to the Father—all these events take place in the same moment; everything is imminent. Regarding John 6:51c-58, this concept allows us to talk about the collision of several aspects of Jesus' characterization. His identity as the Word made flesh occurs at this moment; Jesus' death on the cross occurs at this moment. "*Past and future are bound to each other.* That the hour of death is the hour of glorifying God rests on the fact that the entire work of Jesus serves the revelation."²¹ Every moment in the Johannine narrative can be said to occur at the same time—that is, contemporaneously. The moment when Jesus exhorts his audience to consume his flesh and drink his blood therefore collides with the overall Johannine narrative, pointing at the same time to Jesus' divinity and his mortality in the moment of his sacrificial death. These moments, colliding in John 6:51c-58, illuminate the significance of Jesus' anthropophagic words. In instigating this narrative rite of consuming his sacrificed flesh, Jesus points to all the moments of his a-temporal existence and death. That is, the meaning of John 6:51c-58 refracts into multiple concurrent moments of Johannine theology; this pericope, then, is the culmination of John's statements about Jesus' divinity and death. It is in this light that we can see Jesus' statements about consuming his sacrificed body as the signifier of his divine identity.

Simultaneity

Whereas contemporaneity is a chronological term designating the intersection of two or more elements in a temporal landscape, I propose simultaneity as an ontological term that points to the intersection of multiple identities within the same being. In the Greek romance novels the protagonists are characterized by their

21. *Ibid.*, 429. Italics in original.

divinity. Like those who view Jesus' signs in John, the spectators in the novels recognize the heroines as goddesses by certain external indicators. In the novels, this divinity is manifested using certain accepted tropes of epiphany, taken from the literature of the classical world and especially Homer. The nature of the relationship between mortals and divine beings in the ancient world gives way to an understanding of the heroines where, like Jesus, they are simultaneously human beings and divinities. In the ancient world, the perception of a human being as divine—the belief that the individual is a manifestation of a divinity—is enough to make that person phenomenologically divine. Thus, when the narrative devices used in the novels describe the heroines as having radiant beauty, as being larger-than-life, and as worthy of worship by those who come across them on their travels, this suggests that the narrative is making claims about the divinity of those protagonists.

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

suggests a further comparison that is significant for understanding the intersection of tropes of divinity and consumption in John: the category of the hero.

Cannibalism and Anthropophagy

The terms *cannibalism* and *anthropophagy* are often used interchangeably to refer to the consumption of human flesh by other humans. Both cannibalism and anthropophagy as culturally-sanctioned behaviors are fictional;²² while incidents of desperation have from time to time in the history of humanity produced situations in which the eating of human meat was necessary (under siege conditions, for example), William Arens²³ has convinced many anthropologists that the absence of *any* evidence for *any* population practicing cannibalism or anthropophagy means that we must seriously question its historical reality. Rather, Arens suggests, and I agree, that cannibalism instead serves as a demarcator of social boundaries between right/insider and wrong/outsider. That is, accusations of cannibalism abound, but rather than reflect real-world practices, they indicate boundary-making anxieties and identify the group accused of the practice as Other, a group outside of right society.

As such, the human sacrifices described in the romance novels do not preserve actual rituals practiced by actual groups; rather, they reflect the social expectations about right and wrong ritual behavior, the latter exemplified by the characters of bandits and barbarians. As I propose in chapter three, the terminology used to depict the human sacrifices in the romances leaves open the thrilling possibility of a

22. For a more meaty discussion of what is at stake with these two terms, see chapter three, especially note 152.

23. William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth: Anthropology and Anthropophagy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

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

Outline

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

In the second chapter, "Second Only to Artemis," I introduce the four main Hellenistic romance novels relevant to this project, including a history of scholarship of the novels as literature and as a genre. Key to my discussion of John 6:51c-58 as christological is this chapter's discussion of how the romantic heroines are described as goddesses and likewise, their association with the classical heroes of the epics. These sections explain the translation of the association between hero and divinity noted by Nagy into a purely narrative context; whereas in Nagy's Homeric examination, such association

occurs only at the historical level, leaving the antagonism to the literature, in the romances the association with the divine is written into the fabric of the plot.

“Her Viscera Leapt Out,” chapter three, details the second half of the association formula: the antagonistic relationship between the heroines of the romances and their gods, a relationship that ultimately leads to the apparent-death (*Scheintod*) of the protagonist. I first give an overview of Nagy’s conclusions about this phenomenon and then outline Greek sacrificial procedure and terminology and the function of human sacrifice and cannibalism in the Greek cultural imagination. These latter sections describe human sacrifice and cannibalism in the cultural imagination, and not in history, since, following William Arens²⁴ and others, I put forward that these tropes exist only in the literary realm and were never practiced in history. Having established cannibalism’s cultural function, I then turn to how this trope works in the Greek novels and argue that the act of sacrifice and implied anthropophagy represents the ultimate conferral of divinity on the heroines, whose deaths are simultaneously implied and avoided.

The last chapter, “My Flesh is Meat Indeed,” applies the conclusions made in the previous chapters to John 6:51c-58. After a summary of these conclusions, this chapter outlines how John participates in the antagonism trope, making use of Lawrence Wills’s comparisons between this Gospel and the *Life of Aesop* as well as internal evidence from the Gospel itself. Next, the relationship between Jesus’ death and God’s glory is developed using Bultmann’s concept of contemporaneity;²⁵ here I make the argument that the temporal convergence of Jesus’ death and his anthropophagic statements point clearly to his divine identity, an argument that

24. Ibid.

25. Bultmann, *John*, 198.

reaches its completion after an analysis of how cannibalism has been used both against and by Christians as an identity marker. This discussion also illustrates another way in which John plays with what Attridge calls “genre-bending,”²⁶ the altering of traditional modes of expression in order to communicate new ideas. Finally, I conclude the chapter with an analysis of how the sacrificial meals of hero cults ultimately articulate Jesus’ divinity through his shocking call to consume his flesh, making special reference to the verbs used in John 6:51c-58 as pointing to sacrificial language and away from a eucharistic context. As Dennis Smith shows in his discussion of the cult banquet,²⁷ the meal is often inseparable from the act of sacrifice, a cultural trope than John manipulates, I argue, in order to identify Jesus with God.

A concluding chapter follows that relates my findings to the work of two scholars: first, Kasper Bro Larsen’s 2008 work on recognition scenes, and, second, Wayne Meeks’s 1967 monograph, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and Johannine Christology*. The latter supports my conclusions, albeit from a different vantage point: John 6 utilizes key references to the Exodus traditions, references that Meeks argues construct Jesus’ Christology in John. Given that John 6:51c-58 utilizes motifs from Exodus, Meeks’s conclusions bolster my proposal that this pericope contributes to the Gospel’s identification of Jesus as divine. Larsen’s study uses the Homeric trope of the recognition scene to describe what he calls the “hybrid” identity of Jesus as both God and mortal.²⁸ Using similar methods to the present study, Larsen’s work views John as participating in the literary world of the ancient Mediterranean. Our parallel approaches lead us to similar conclusions about Jesus’ divine nature: that, contrary to the previous

26. Attridge, “Genre Bending,” 14.

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

28. Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 219.

century's debates, Jesus' divinity cannot be fully described by either of the terms *σάρξ* or *δόξα*.²⁹

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

Second, the conclusions I present provide new insight into the function of eating and consumption in John in general and in John 6:51c-58 in particular. It has been difficult to create distance between this scene's references to flesh and blood and the references to flesh and blood in the Synoptic Gospels in the context of the institution of the Eucharist. By removing this pericope from a synoptic reading and locating it as participating in a narrative trope common in the ancient novels, this study shifts the conversation around this scene away from concerns of sacramental theology and toward a subject more in tune with the Gospel's clearly stated christological concerns.

Finally, in locating the type of eating presented in John 6:51c-58 in the context of the cult *aition*, I not only articulate the need for a category of narrativized rituals that do not reflect historically practiced rites (e.g., cannibalistic sacrifices) but also argue for a particular function of this narrative ritualized eating in John. That is,

29. Cf. chapter one.

in making the connection between Nagy's work on antagonism and symbiosis in the epics, the evolution of that pattern in the romances, and the internalization of that trope in John, I propose that the significance of Jesus' statement in John 6:51c-58 is not a demonstration of historical community ritual practice but is instead the causal mechanism by which Jesus' divine identity is realized. These conclusions offer new ways of understanding the function of rituals in an entirely narrative setting, and in particular ritualized eating in narrative.

“The Word Was Made Flesh” (John 1:14)

Introduction

The tension throughout the Gospel of John between the divinity and humanity of Jesus is of paramount importance for the interpretation of John 6:51c-58 because the historical debate in scholarship about this pericope revolves around its interpretation as *either* a christological or eucharistic text.¹ As such, to anticipate my argument, the emphasis elsewhere in this Gospel, and especially in the prologue, on the relationship between Jesus’ divine and human characteristics lays the groundwork for a christological interpretation of John 6:51c-58 despite its eucharistic echoes. In John, the Word is *both* flesh (1:14) and God (1:1); John’s primary concern is in demonstrating the relationship between Jesus and the divine.² John 6:51c-58 has frequently been viewed as a eucharistic scene, inserted

1. These terms are inherently problematic when applied to John’s Gospel.

by a later redactor to sacramentalize a Gospel long viewed as anti-sacramental at its core.³ Several scholars, whose arguments will be discussed below, have argued that since John 6:51c-58 appears to them to be a eucharistic scene, it must therefore be the product of a later period in which sacramentality had become important; they argue that John's Gospel rarely has interest in sacramentality other than at this point and that the section is therefore the product of the so-called Ecclesiastical Redactor. This represents a circular argument in which a portion of John is assumed to be about a later practice (the Eucharist), resulting in a redactional argument regarding its authorship. Alternate theories have refuted this assumption and its repercussions by arguing for a christological reading of John 6:51c-58, and this alternative view is helpful to my argument. These theories have nonetheless neglected the relevance of Greco-Roman literature to John's creation of Jesus' identity vis-à-vis the divine. One of the ways the relationship between Jesus' human and divine natures can be viewed is through the lens of the Greco-Roman category of the hero. John's representation of Jesus shares many characteristics with the Hellenistic hero. I argue that this scene, in which Jesus encourages his followers to eat his flesh and drink his blood, is better viewed in the context of John's concern with Jesus' identity. Other heroes in the classical world become associated with gods and goddesses through ritual sacrifice; the literary representation of this phenomenon is found in the Hellenistic romance novels from around the time of John's composition.⁴ I suggest, therefore, that

2. Raymond E. Brown, "Does the New Testament Call Jesus God?" *Theological Studies* 26, no. 4 (1965): 556 n. 52.

3. Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, ed. Francis J. Moloney (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 229-30.

4. *Leucippe and Clitophon* by Achilles Tatius (second century CE), *Chaereas and Callirhoe* by Chariton (first century CE), *The Ephesian Tale* by Xenophon of Ephesus (second century CE), and *An Ethiopian Story* by Heliodorus of Emesa (third century CE) will be discussed in the second chapter.

John 6:51c-58 is a section in which the Gospel writer concretizes the identification between Jesus and God.

The context of John 6:51c-58 is Jesus’ lecture on the beach of the Sea of Galilee/Tiberias (6:22ff), across the water from where he feeds the five thousand in the beginning of the chapter. Jesus has also recently performed the miracle of walking on the water (6:16-21). When the crowd confronts Jesus about his miracles, he answers with a lecture on the bread of life (6:25ff). Here, Jesus describes himself as the bread of life, which is superior to both the manna eaten in the wilderness in Exodus 16 and to that bread miraculously reproduced by Jesus the previous day in 6:1-14. When οἱ ἰουδαῖοι⁵ protest that Jesus cannot possibly be from heaven as he claims, since his parents are both decidedly mortal (6:41-42), Jesus reiterates his credentials as a heavenly person sent by God and confirms his identity as the previously mentioned bread from heaven (6:44-51b). Then Jesus makes a truly shocking claim: “the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh” (51c). That is, Jesus insists that *he* is the bread of life, and that this bread is his flesh; it is imperative for those who wish to live forever to eat this bread—that is, to eat Jesus’ own flesh. This statement is not accepted enthusiastically; again, οἱ ἰουδαῖοι protest, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” (6:52). Jesus is forced to clarify. But when he does, the commandment is even stronger: while in 6:51b the listener is told that those who eat will live forever—a positive statement—in 6:53, Jesus turns the commandment into a negative one and states that those who do not eat the flesh and blood of the Son of Man have *no life in them to*

5. I have opted to leave John’s use of this term in Greek to avoid the complicated issue of how to translate it since it can either be Judeans or Jews in almost all instances in the New Testament. For a discussion of these terms, see Shaye D. Cohen, “Ioudaios, Iudaeus, Judaeus, Jew,” in *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, ed. Shaye D. Cohen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 69–106. There is currently a great deal of debate about the translation of this term. See *Marginalia Review of Books*’s forum, “Have Scholars Erased the Jews from Antiquity?” <http://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/jew-judean-forum/>.

begin with. The negative statement's weight shocks even his disciples: "many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, 'This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?'" (6:60); "after this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him" (6:66). The context of οἱ ἰουδαῖοι questioning Jesus' heavenly identity in 6:41-42 supports the interpretation of 6:51c-58 as christological.

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

Johannine Christology: State of the Question

The simultaneously human and divine category of Jesus’ identity is the subject of one of the most divisive debates in the field of Johannine studies, a debate that naturally relates most closely to this project. Generally, scholars have tended to align themselves either with a more divine reading of Jesus or a more human one. There has been little in the way of chronological consensus; the debate has numbers on either side throughout the history of scholarship.⁶ While scholars rarely, if ever, deny outright the importance of the other element of Jesus’ being, there is a tendency to present reasoned arguments as to why one aspect of Jesus’ identity is more significant than the other. As such, this kind of discussion is representative of the overarching trend in scholarship when discussing the Christology of John’s Gospel; in dichotomizing flesh and glory, Jesus’ complex identity as *both* God and human can become something of an afterthought. The contention surrounding this debate between the supporters of the flesh and the supporters of the glory speaks, in my

6. A classic example of the debate exists in the scholarship of Rudolf Bultmann and Ernst Käsemann. For these scholars, the christological perspective of the entire Gospel rests on each of their perceived emphases of John 1:14. Bultmann takes 1:14a as the starting point for John’s Christology. The emphasis on the flesh, for Bultmann, indicates John’s original concern for a fleshly Jesus; other christological conclusions reflect a later source (e.g., *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel [New York: Scribner, 1955], 2:3–14). Käsemann emphasizes 1:14c, the glory of Christ, as the most significant theological point of this verse, going so far as to deny the significance of the corporeal aspect of John’s Christology altogether (Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17* [London: SCM, 1968], 12; “The Structure and Purpose of the Prologue to John’s Gospel,” in *New Testament Questions of Today*, ed. Ernst Käsemann [London: SCM, 1969], 160). Contemporary discussions of this type are also common. For instance, Paul N. Anderson, in his discussion of John’s Christology, notes that John O’Grady and Jerome Neyrey argued for the emphasis of the flesh on the one side and of the glory on the other, despite their work being published within a few years of one another (Paul N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6* [Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996], 24; John F. O’Grady, “The Human Jesus in the Fourth Gospel,” *Biblical Theological Bulletin* 14, no. 2 [1984]: 63–66; Jerome H. Neyrey, “My Lord and My God’: The Divinity of Jesus in John’s Gospel,” *SBL Seminar Papers 1986*, SBLSP 25 [Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1986], 152–71.)

opinion, to the importance of both the divine and the mortal in John's Christology. John's insistence that Jesus is *both* fleshly (1:14) and divine (1:1) indicates the author's concern with Jesus' identity as *both simultaneously*. Marianne Meye Thompson puts forward an argument that represents a shift in the debate.⁷ Her response to Bultmann and Ernst Käsemann's Christology rests on the interpretation of the word σάρξ in John 1:14.⁸ Thompson looks to other locations of Johannine use of this term in an attempt to come to a definition of σάρξ from context. For her, σάρξ is, as it is for C. K. Barrett and Raymond Brown and to some extent Käsemann as well,⁹ the opposition of the realm of humanity to that of God. In 1:14 this is demonstrated by the use of the term in contradistinction to λόγος.¹⁰ The close juxtaposition of "the Word was with God" and "the Word became flesh" highlights the contrast between the godly and the fleshly spheres for John. The glory referred to in 14c, then, represents the ability of witnesses to *testify* about the glory, rather than, as it is for Käsemann, the pinnacle of Johannine Christology.¹¹ For Thompson, then, Jesus' incarnation as described in the prologue emphasizes both aspects of Jesus' identity in order to exacerbate the offence of the incarnation; this offence exists (John 6:60, 61) *because* Jesus embodies both the human and the divine.

7. Marianne Meye Thompson, *The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

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

9. For Käsemann, the definition differs slightly: "the Word became flesh" indicates the coming into the *kosmos* of the *logos*, rather than the humanification of God ("Structure," 158); C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (London: SPCK, 1978), 164–65; Brown, *John*, 1:12.

10. Thompson, *Humanity*, 40.

11. *Ibid.*, 42.

While Thompson’s argument about 1:14 diffuses the problems with dichotomizing flesh and glory to a certain degree, as I will show in the following section, it is Paul Anderson’s discussion of John’s Christology as a dialectical relationship between the flesh and the glory that is perhaps the most helpful here because it elaborates on the issue of how the seemingly disparate identities coexist in one being.¹² He argues, and I agree, that John 1:14 is indeed key to understanding the Christology of this Gospel. However, unlike Bultmann or Käsemann, Anderson argues that 1:14’s reference to both the flesh and the glory

is a representative encapsulation of the dialectical portrayal of Jesus which runs throughout the entire Gospel. Therefore, any attempt to remove one of the poles which create the tension does violence to the central fibre of John’s christology overall . . . John 1:14a and c are held together by 1:14b ‘and *dwelt* among us’, which suggests that John’s high and low presentation of Jesus is not founded primarily on a theoretical construct, but on *experiential* ones.¹³

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

12. Anderson, *Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 137–66.

13. *Ibid.*, 162–63.

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

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

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

The very corporeal actions that Jesus does—his signs, whether feeding people with bread, healing the wounded with mud made

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

However, of all the passages in John that exemplify this concern, John 6:51c-58 is perhaps both the most significant and obscure in meaning. Insofar as the signs Jesus performs in John point consistently to Jesus’ divine identity, the feeding miracle on the beach provides a context for the Bread of Life Discourse in 6:51c-58 that suggests a christological interpretation. In every case, the miracles performed by Jesus allow for Jesus’ identity to become apparent (e.g., 9:16-17, 28-33, 35-38; 10:33, 37).¹⁴ Even (or perhaps especially) to Jesus’ opponents, Jesus’ emphasis on his physical nature in his healing miracles points, somewhat paradoxically, to the (dangerous) truth about Jesus’ divinity. In fact, John points out specifically that faith is the direct result of witnessing Jesus’ miracles, even as early as the wedding at Cana: “This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him”

14. Helmut Koester argues that Jesus’ signs in John underscore both the people’s belief in Jesus and also Jesus’ own dissatisfaction with the work these signs do in promoting belief (Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament: History and Literature of Early Christianity* [New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995], 2:190).

(2:11). Not only did Jesus' miracle of the wine reveal his divine glory, it also caused belief to grow in those who followed him. Likewise in 2:24, Jesus' miracles cause belief among the population of Jerusalem; here, however, it is Jesus who refuses to trust in the people. This contradiction is apparent throughout the Gospel because for Jesus and his Johannine creator, belief because of miracles misses the point. The signs point away from themselves and to a man whose body is itself a sign (John 3:11-15). Thus, given John's preoccupation with Jesus' dual nature, it seems best to approach John 6:51c-58 as a text about Jesus' identity following the pattern of the other signs.

John 6 and Christology

The importance of Jesus' signs to Jesus' divine identification suggests that John 6, and particularly John 6:51c-58, tells us much about the Gospel of John's ideas about Jesus' identity. John 6 participates in the pattern of John's use of signs to promote belief; for Vernon Ruland, "this entire chapter is . . . a *semeion*, an exfoliating revelation, an ever-more-dazzling theophany"¹⁵ that reaches its climax in 6:51c-58. For Ruland, Jesus' body is a "sacrament" in that his very existence is the expression of God's divine glory in the person of Jesus; eating Jesus as sacrament "makes his incarnate presence operative."¹⁶ Ruland further argues that just as the Word is incarnate in Jesus, so too is Jesus "incarnate" in the Bread of Life; he therefore interprets the scene as primarily soteriological-eucharistic. For Ruland, all of Jesus' actions are sacramental since Jesus himself is a future sacrament. The consumption of Jesus' flesh in 6:51c-58, for Ruland, *is* the eucharistic consumption of the bread that Jesus *is*—the scene is an allusion to the Eucharist that complements Johannine sacramental theology.

15. Vernon J. Ruland, "Sign and Sacrament: John's Bread of Life Discourse (Chapter 6)," *Interpretation* 18, no. 4 (1964): 459.

16. *Ibid.*, 460.

Bultmann’s view of John’s Christology is formulated without the inclusion of 6:51c-58, unsurprisingly. He defines “the Johannine view of *sarx* as the human and the worldly sphere, which is transitory, illusory, inauthentic, helpless, futile and corrupting—the nothingness of man’s [sic] whole existence.”¹⁷ The fact that Bultmann’s definition of John’s concept of the flesh omits 6:51c-58, where, I argue, flesh and divinity are so intermingled as to challenge Bultmann’s definition, is problematic. Thompson includes these verses in her definition of σάρξ but examines them out of order, since their integrity is in dispute. Nevertheless, she contests Bultmann’s dismissal of the feasibility of reading these verses in the context of the flesh/glory debate and further contests his interpretation of the scene’s meaning in general. Pointing out that it is unnecessary for Bultmann to assume that the verses refer to the Eucharist exclusively, Thompson joins other scholars¹⁸ in noting that 6:51c may well refer to Jesus’ very fleshly death on the cross.¹⁹ She argues that, while Bultmann interprets the phrase “I shall give” in 6:51 as a reference to the Eucharist, it should actually be interpreted to refer to the gift that is Jesus’ death on the cross.²⁰ Thompson supports this conclusion by pointing out the similarities between 6:51 and passages elsewhere in the Gospel where Jesus speaks about his death, noticing that in these instances, Jesus emphasizes his own willingness to give up his life; verse 51 participates in this mode of discussion and should therefore

17. Thompson, *Humanity*, 34, who quotes Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 141.

18. For example, James D. G. Dunn, “John 6: A Eucharistic Discourse?” *NTS* 17 (1971): 330, 335–36; Edwyn Clement Hoskyns and Francis Noel Davey, *The Fourth Gospel* (London: Faber & Faber, 1947), 297; Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (London: Oliphants, 1972), 267; Rudolph Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 2:55, and D. Moody Smith Jr., *The Composition and Order of the Fourth Gospel: Bultmann’s Literary Theory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965), 145.

19. Thompson, *Humanity*, 45.

20. *Ibid.* This allusion will have significance for my conclusions in chapter four, where I will draw connections between Jesus’ death and the type of heroic cult *aition*.

be understood, according to Thompson, in that context.²¹ Helpfully, Thompson also observes that 6:51–58 elucidates several points made earlier in chapter six, making both their inclusion in an “original” John more palatable and their interpretation as christological more sound. In terms of the observation that this section clarifies statements made earlier in John, Thompson suggests that 6:27, “do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you,” and 6:33, “the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world,” collaborate with 6:51 to explain Jesus’ precise meaning about his purpose on earth.²² That is, in light of Jesus’ typical way of talking about his death and in light of the earlier statements made about eternal life, Thompson argues that John 6:51–58 should be read as a christological and soteriological statement that Jesus’ death on the cross “bestows eternal life.”²³

Where I disagree with Thompson is in her contention that this statement has nothing to do with the eating of Jesus’ flesh.²⁴ In my view, the eating of Jesus’ flesh can still be read as a significant symbol in John 6 quite apart from the fact that it brings up remembrance of the Eucharist both to modern scholars and ancient interpreters. The key to its meaning, I argue, lies in the Hellenistic literature prolific during John’s time, and here I especially refer to the Hellenistic romance novels; in taking a step back from the debate somewhat internal to John (glory versus flesh), variant meanings become apparent. Nevertheless, Thompson’s arguments regarding John 6:51c–58’s christological implications are useful.

Paul Anderson, as I mentioned above, also supports a christological interpretation of John 6:51c–58. According to Anderson, the Bread

21. *Ibid.*, 46.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*, 47.

of Life Discourse is marked by an apparent discontinuity in plot in order to alert the reader about the importance of the christological statement to follow.²⁵ Bultmann has observed that Jesus’ response in verse 26, a statement regarding the food that endures for eternal life, does not logically follow verse 25, where the people ask Jesus when he arrived. He has likewise noted the rough transition between verses 28f and 30ff; Anderson responds to Bultmann’s observations by pointing out the continued use of irony by the author of John to highlight the “misunderstanding motif” common throughout John’s Gospel as an invitation to belief in Jesus.²⁶ Thus, what Bultmann considers inconsistencies attributed to a redactor, Anderson interprets as a way for the author to jar the readers’ attention to the important question of Jesus’ divinity. Paul Duke notes that in John it is often the unanswered questions that direct the reader to consider “new dimensions of meaning.”²⁷ Anderson argues that this section of John 6 is one such instance that points to the levels of meaning couched in 6:51c–58. This discussion will become particularly helpful in the next section, when we examine the Ecclesiastical Redactor.

Bultmann, unlike Anderson and Duke, sees the incongruities in John’s Gospel as evidence for the hand of the Ecclesiastical Redactor. He also argues that John 6:51c–58 is an interpolation given its contrast to the evangelist’s view on salvation. Whereas in most of John, he argues, belief in Jesus is enough for salvation, in these verses the consumption of flesh is a requirement, which must point to the Eucharist.²⁸ For Bultmann, not only is this section not an original part of John, but it also has little to do with Christology. However, in

25. Anderson, *Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 93–94.

26. *Ibid.*, 96; cf. Bultmann, *John*, 219–25.

27. Paul Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 91.

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

viewing these verses in a context other than the Eucharist, I propose that it is possible to find another, christological, interpretation. Given the surprising lack of eucharistic discussion where one might expect it, the Last Supper of John 13, it seems odd that a redactor would choose this location to interpolate sacramental theology into the Gospel of John. Instead, it fits nicely with Jesus' continued use, throughout John, of his body as a sign pointing to his true identity. This insight not only sidesteps the tricky issue of the redactor, but also resolves perceived contradictions in John's theology.

In sum, I suggest that these verses, John 6:51c-58, taken as a christological statement that unites the Word with the flesh, are key to understanding John's message about Jesus' identity. If we accept that these few verses are actually integral to the message about Jesus that the final hand responsible for this Gospel sought to advocate, regardless of their origin, then they should be taken into account seriously when evaluating John's christological views; it behooves scholars not to omit verses simply because they are confounding to our traditional understandings of an ancient author's theological standpoint. A christological approach to this section evades the problems of a unified or fragmented John and provides space for thinking about the significance of the christological statement and its meaning. While many scholars have attempted to resolve the apparent dichotomy between Christology and soteriology-through-Eucharist by rendering either one or the other void, I seek to reconcile the clearly christological statements implied and stated in John 6:51c-58 with the language of eating used therein, which has real significance for the interpretation of this passage. As I have suggested throughout and will continue to suggest, a way to resolve these two "opposing" tropes is found in the cultural expectations of the Hellenistic world as preserved in its literature.

John 6 and the Ecclesiastical Redactor

Before proceeding with the details of what such a christological interpretation of John 6:51c-58 would entail, the issue of the composition of this section should be addressed. When approaching John 6:51c-58, we have seen that scholars have normally taken one of two paths: either they argue that this portion of John represents an attempt to bring in sacramental theology to a text largely devoid of it, or that it does not.²⁹ In my view, the debate can be best illustrated

29. See Herbert Klos, *Die Sakramente im Johannesevangelium* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1970), 11-44 for a thorough overview of the various opinions to that date. More recently, Maarten J. J. Menken, “John 6,51c-58: Eucharist or Christology?” in *Critical Readings of John 6*, Biblical Interpretation Series 22, ed. R. Alan Culpepper (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 183 n.3 gives an excellent overview of the debate. Menken includes Jürgen Becker, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1979), 199, 219-21; Kikuo Matsunaga, “Is John’s Gospel Anti-Sacramental?—A New Solution in Light of the Evangelist’s Milieu,” *NTS* 27 (1980-81): 516-24; Michel Gourgues, “Section christologique et section eucharistique en Jean VI. Une proposition,” *RB* 88 (1981): 513-15; Simon Légasse, “Le pain de la vie,” *BLE* 83 (1982): 243-61; John Dominic Crossan, “It is Written: A Structuralist Analysis of John 6,” *Semeia* 26 (1983): 3-21; J. Gnilka, *Johannesevangelium*, Die neue Echter Bibel (Würzburg: Echter, 1983), 53-54; Urban C. von Wahlde, “Wiederaufnahme as a Marker of Redaction in Jn 6:51-58,” *Biblica* 64 (1983): 542-49; Stanislas Dockx, “Jean 6:51b-58,” in *Chronologies néotestamentaires et Vie de l’Église primitive: Recherches exégétiques*, ed. Stanislas Dockx (Leuven: Peeters, 1984), 267-70; Ludger Schenke, “Die literarische Vorgeschichte von Joh 6:26-58,” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 29 (1985): 68-89; H. Weder, “Die Menschwerdung Gottes: Überlegungen zur Auslegungsproblematik des Johannesevangeliums am Beispiel von Joh 6,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 82 (1985): 325-60; David G. Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon: An Investigation into the Relationship of Authorship and Authority In the Jewish and Earliest Christian Literature*, WUNT 39 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1986), 110-14; Christof Burchard, “The Importance of Joseph and Aseneth for the Study of the New Testament: A General Survey and a Fresh Look at the Lord’s Supper,” *NTS* 33 (1987): 102-34; Udo Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John: An Investigation of the Place of the Fourth Gospel in the Johannine School* (Linda M. Maloney, trans.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 194-208; P. Stuhlmacher, “Das neutestamentliche Zeugnis vom Herrenmahl,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 84 (1987): 1-35; Lothar Wehr, *Arzney der Unsterblichkeit: Die Eucharistie bei Ignatius von Antiochien und im Johannesevangelium* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1987), 182-277; Joachim Kügler, *Der Jünger, den Jesus liebte: Literarische, theologische und historische Untersuchungen zu einer Schlüsselgestalt johanneischer Theologie und Geschichte. Mit einem Exkurs über die Brotrede in Joh 6* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1988), 180-232; C. H. Cosgrove, “The Place Where Jesus Is: Allusions to Baptism and the Eucharist in the Fourth Gospel,” *NTS* 35 (1989): 522-39; Peter Dschulnigg, “Überlegungen zum Hintergrund der Mahlformel in JosAs. Ein Versuch,” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der ältern Kirche* 80 (1989): 272-75; Jean-Marie Sevrin, “L’écriture du IV^e évangile comme phénomène de réception: L’exemple de Jn 6,” *The*

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

Many scholars argue that while the verses preceding 51c discuss bread in a metaphorical sense, after 51c the tone shifts, and the eating of bread is no longer metaphorical, suggesting to some scholars that another hand is responsible;³⁰ Bultmann is a main proponent of this view. For Bultmann, the association of eucharistic language with Jesus' discussion of salvation in 6:51c-58 marks the crux of the problem for this portion's originality to the Gospel. Bultmann views these verses as a demonstration of an "instrumentalistic view of the eucharist, which opposes diametrically the evangelist's belief that faith in Jesus Christ alone is, in and of itself, efficacious."³¹ That is,

New Testament in Early Christianity, eds. J.-M. Sevrin and Barbara Aland (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989), 69-83; Philippe Roulet and Ulrich Rugg, "Étude de Jean 6: la narration et l'histoire de la rédaction," in *La communauté johannique et son histoire: La trajectoire de l'évangile de Jean aux deux premiers siècles*, eds. J.-D. Kaestli et al. (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1990), 231-47; Johannes Beutler, "Zur Struktur von Johannes 6," *Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt* 16 (1991): 89-104; to this list we must of course add Bultmann, *John*; Tom Thatcher, *The Riddles of Jesus in John: A Study in Tradition and Folklore*, Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 53 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 284, and others referred to throughout in the present study.

30. Menken, "Eucharist or Christology?" 183 n.1; Smith, *Composition*, 141, 216; Bultmann argues this shift happens in 5:51b; Bultmann, *John*, 218.

for Bultmann, the idea that a person must perform an actual ritual activity in order to achieve what the rest of John posits can be done simply through faith contradicts the fundamental message of the text as found in the prologue; thus, John 6:51c-58, having to do with the Eucharist, must be an interpolation. Bultmann’s view is that the theological opposition between this passage and the rest of John is so strong that it overrides even literary similarity as a factor in deciding its originality.³² Bultmann notes that the (supposed) redactor of this section does use the style and language not only of John as a whole but specifically of the preceding section about the bread from heaven.³³ Bultmann argues that, because it disagrees with his interpretation of 1:14a that the only way to God is through faith in the incarnate Word in Jesus, 51c marks the beginning of the interpolator’s interpretation of what has come before: an explanation of the bread already mentioned, which is, according to 51c, in fact Jesus’ flesh.³⁴ Bultmann takes this reference to flesh as a foreshadowing of Jesus’ death on behalf of the world.³⁵ This is no longer metaphorical bread: this is real flesh to be eaten *as an institution*, argues Bultmann, and it is for this reason that οἱ ἰουδαῖοι are disgusted in 6:52.³⁶ Without discussion, Bultmann assumes that this eating of flesh should be understood in the context of the institution of the Eucharist and not in any other gastronomic context. As a result, Bultmann determines that this section, John 6:51c-58, is the product of a redactor. In fact, Bultmann makes a circular argument. As Anderson rightly points out,

31. Anderson, *Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 110.

32. Bultmann, *John*, 234, esp. n.4, where Bultmann argues that the redactor imitated the style of the evangelist.

33. *Ibid.*, 234 n.3.

34. *Ibid.*, 234.

35. *Ibid.*, 235.

36. *Ibid.*

the tenability of the interpolation hypothesis assumes: a) that Bultmann's analysis of the evangelist's christology is correct; b) that his analysis of the sacramentalistic christology of 6:51ff. is correct; and c) that the christological views of 6:51c-58 *cannot* have been embraced by the author of 6:26-51b.³⁷

Once more, the interpretation of the word σάρξ is at the core. One side of this source-critical debate rests on John's choice of vocabulary throughout John 6:51c-58. As discussed above, Bultmann argues that for John, σάρξ always designates the human realm whereas πνεῦμα consistently designates the divine realm: σάρξ represents the lowliness of the human condition when compared to the divine and emphasizes, especially in John 1:14, Jesus' humanity.³⁸ Bultmann's view is that the divine aspect of Jesus is intentionally completely effaced by flesh.³⁹ This understanding of the term supports Bultmann's view that John 6:51c-58 is an addition, since the term σάρξ is used to refer to the eating of Jesus' body in a eucharistic context; the term does not fit into the dualistic pattern Bultmann constructs out of his interpretation of 1:14, which opposes σάρξ as human weakness to the divine πνεῦμα. Bultmann finds it incongruous that John 6:51c-58 speaks of σάρξ as something heavenly, Jesus' own body. While linguistically Bultmann and Käsemann are in agreement that σάρξ is in opposition to πνεῦμα, Käsemann interprets its use in John 1:14 to indicate that the divine aspect of glory *must* be visible in the person of Jesus, since God is now present on earth and that God in fact uses flesh *as a means* to communicate with creation; the Word could never completely

37. Anderson, *Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 111.

38. This term is the most important theologically as far as Bultmann is concerned, so much so that he does not discuss the term σῶμα in *John*. See esp. Bultmann, *John*, 63.

39. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Scribner, 1955), 2:42.

become flesh.⁴⁰ Käsemann nonetheless agrees with Bultmann at least in the sense that 6:51c-58 must be a later sacramental addition.⁴¹

More recently, Jaime Clark-Soles has discussed the different uses of σάρξ and ὄμα in John, specifically with a view to determine John’s eschatological aim.⁴² In her philological study, Clark-Soles determines that, contra Bultmann, σάρξ is not used to denote only human weakness, but also human *bodies*. All humans, including Jesus, have both σάρξ and αἰμά; when not used in reference to Jesus—that is, when used to describe ordinary humans—σάρξ is usually used in opposition to the spiritual, to πνεῦμα, which is a term used exclusively to describe Jesus.⁴³ However, when σάρξ is used of Jesus,⁴⁴ Clark-Soles argues that Jesus, in these instances, unites the material with the spiritual in order to create a bridge to the spiritual from the material—from the σάρξ to the πνεῦμα. “*Sarx* alone ends in death, just as bread alone, the kind that Moses gives (6:49), ends in death. . . . Jesus transforms the mundane into the spiritual by his participation in the mundane.”⁴⁵ Clark-Soles’s interpretation of this term is very helpful as it does away with the dichotomous, and problematic, interpretation of σάρξ wrought by both Bultmann and Käsemann. Because it prioritizes John 1:14, it also accounts for the term’s use in 6:51c-58: the invitation to consume this divine flesh creates new meaning—one that identifies Jesus with God. This interpretation also allows for a variety of valid meanings of the term, rendering its “problematic” use in John 6:51c-58 moot as a marker of its redaction. In other words, John’s use of σάρξ in 6:51c-58 refers to Jesus’ own human body, emphasizing Jesus’ participation in the

40. Käsemann, “Structure,” 159, 161.

41. Käsemann, *Testament of Jesus*, 32–33.

42. Clark-Soles, “I Will Raise.”

43. Clark-Soles, “I Will Raise,” 38.

44. John 1:14a is an example outside of the disputed 6:51c-58 where such a usage occurs.

45. Clark-Soles, “I Will Raise,” 37–38.

world in a way that transforms that world. I argue that this fleshy participation is precisely what marks Jesus as divine.

Since Bultmann's proposal, other scholars have responded with their own solutions to the Johannine problem represented in chapter six. Werner Georg Kümmel acknowledges the theological discrepancy in the Johannine material but argues that the difficulties cannot be attributed either to the shuffling of various disparate passages or to the insertion of later sacramental material, as suggested by Bultmann.⁴⁶ Specifically, Kümmel rejects the argument that John 6:51b-58⁴⁷ is an insertion by a later redactor; he argues instead for its originality to the Gospel despite its sacramental content because, among other reasons, of its linguistic affinities to the rest of John.⁴⁸ Kümmel defends John's integrity against several common charges: that it engages futuristic eschatology (Kümmel points out definitively Johannine passages where such theology occurs⁴⁹); that traces of an anti-Docetic redactor can be seen in certain passages⁵⁰ (which he counters by citing Ockham's Razor); and that in particular, John 6:51b-58 is the product of a redactor because of its theology.⁵¹ Since the argument against the inclusion of this section in the "original" John is based on its theological content rather than on its linguistic differences, Kümmel argues, based on Eugen Ruckstuhl's study, that it is wrong to argue for its instertion by a redactor simply because it disagrees with scholarly expectations of Johannine interests.

46. Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 206-207.

47. Kümmel, to some extent in good company, divides the section here, at 6:51b rather than at 6:51c.

48. Kümmel, *New Testament*, 209-10; Eugen Ruckstuhl, *Die literarische Einheit des Johannesevangeliums: der gegenwärtige Stand der einschlägigen Forschung* (Freiburg: Paulusverlag, 1951), 169ff, 220ff.

49. John 3:5; 10:9; 12:32; 14:3; 17:24; Kümmel, *New Testament*, 209.

50. I.e., 1:14-18; 5:28f; our own 6:51b-58, etc. Cf. Georg Richter, "Zur Formgeschichte und literarischen Einheit von Joh 6, 31-58," in *Studien zum Johannesevangelium*, eds. Georg Richter and Josef Hainz (Regensburg: Pustet, 1977), 88-199.

51. Kümmel, *New Testament*, 209-10.

Ruckstuhl criticizes Bultmann’s “weak” methodology and argues that there are no stylistic inconsistencies that would lead one to believe that the section is from another hand than John’s.⁵² Ruckstuhl further argues that even theologically, there is no real barrier to John 6:51c–58 being considered indigenous to the text, given that the Bread of Life Discourse given just previously could itself be considered an allusion to the Eucharist.⁵³ However generous Ruckstuhl is in giving this section of John a fair evaluation based on theology and linguistics, he, too, falls into the anachronistic trap of attempting to wedge John’s understanding of Jesus and eating into categories that only appeared on the scene much later; in the end, Ruckstuhl resorts to finding sacramentality in places where it ought not to be sought.

James Dunn proposes another, more intriguing, solution to the source-critical problem some scholars find in John 6:51c–58. He suggests that, rather than assume that the section is the product of a later redactor, it is possible that the evangelist uses eucharistic language to emphasize the metaphorical nature of the ritual. In other words, Dunn proposes that the sheer unbelievability of Jesus’ command in 6:51c–58 points to John’s emphatic rejection of actual ritual being a necessary component of true life.⁵⁴ The tone and style, and even the vocabulary, of this section are not incongruous with the rest of John.⁵⁵ Thus, given that the section is at most a later addition by the same author,⁵⁶ and therefore part of the intended message of the Gospel, Dunn associates this section of John in particular—with its gory references to flesh and blood—but also the Gospel as a

52. Ruckstuhl, *Literarische Einheit*, 169.

53. Ruckstuhl, *Literarische Einheit*, 170–71.

54. Dunn, “John 6,” 335.

55. *Ibid.*, 329; Eduard Lohse, “Wort und Sakrament im Johannesevangelium,” *NTS* 7 (1961): 120. Arguing for linguistic coherence: Ruckstuhl, *Literarische Einheit*, 220–71; Richter, “Zur Formgeschichte,” 35–39.

56. Dunn, “John 6,” 330.

whole to the overarching theme of Jesus' death on the cross and resultant exaltation. For Dunn, John's aim concerning this section of the Gospel is to highlight the act of Jesus' death as salvific because of Jesus' scandalous existence in the *σάρξ*.⁵⁷ Thus, for Dunn, and I agree, John 6:51c-58 represents a core statement in the christological view of the Gospel writer. Dunn's conclusions in this regard further lead him to evaluate critically the section's eucharistic overtones that are so frequently debated. For Dunn, John does indeed refer to the Eucharist, not in such a way as to

stress the necessity of the Lord's Supper and its celebration, but rather . . . he uses eucharistic terminology with a metaphorical sense, namely, to describe not the effect of the sacrament as such, but the union of the ascended Jesus with his believing followers through the Spirit.⁵⁸

Although I diverge from Dunn in his conclusion about the end purpose of this passage in some aspects, I agree that any potential allusion to eucharistic language and the practice of the Lord's Supper in John 6:51c-58 functions not as an apology for the practice as a means to salvation, but rather, in its reference to his death on the cross, as a siphon to direct attention to the true method of salvation, which is Jesus' existence as *both* a god *and* a human being.⁵⁹

While Dunn's argument may be correct in locating this scene in a christological context pointing to Jesus' eventual salvific death, I would argue that this section of John also functions in another way. The crosshairs of Dunn's argument are trained specifically on the question of the sacrament and its relation to other Christian texts, comparing language, form, and content to Ignatius, Paul, and the Synoptic Gospels; in this sense, his argument is sound. However, Dunn has neglected to explore how the context of the Greco-Roman

57. *Ibid.*, 331.

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.*, 337.

literary culture affects such a reading of John 6:51c-58; in exploring this rich source for understanding early Christian literature, I propose another option for John 6:51c-58 that participates in the christological hypotheses already mentioned but also contributes an additional argument through a comparison with the motifs of epiphany and anthropophagy in the Greco-Roman novels: it is in fact the consumption of Jesus’ flesh and blood in narrative that makes this christological statement possible.

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

The substitution of σάρξ for ἄρτος and of τρώγειν (to chew) for φάγειν (if the latter substitution is significant theologically) is best understood as a deliberate attempt to exclude docetism by heavily, if somewhat crudely, underscore the reality of the incarnation in all its offensiveness.⁶⁰

The debate surrounding the wording of John 6:51c-58, especially with reference to the supposed Ecclesiastical Redactor and his role in the creation of John as we now have it, shows that Dunn’s statement cannot be accepted without some unpacking. Certainly, the choice to use τρώγειν in vv. 54ff instead of φάγειν stands out. Many scholars agree with Dunn that the former is a marked⁶¹ verb, connoting more graphic eating than the unmarked φάγειν/ἔσθίω.⁶² For them, these

60. *Ibid.*, 336.

61. Throughout this project, I use the term “marked” to refer to the cultural encoding of certain terms and/or behaviors as unusual and therefore informative in the context of the familiar or ordinary (“unmarked”) categories of meaning accepted by a culture. In this use I follow, for example, Edwin L. Battistella, *The Logic of Markedness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); *idem.*, *Markedness: The Evaluative Superstructure of Language* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990); and Linda R. Waugh, “Marked and Unmarked: A Choice Between Unequals in Semiotic Structure,” *Semiotica* 38, no. 3-4 (1982): 299-318; among others.

62. H. Schürmann, “Joh 6:51c: Ein Schlüssel zur grossen johanneischen Brotrede,” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 2 (1958): 253-54; J. J. O’Rourke, “Two Notes on St. John’s Gospel,” *CBQ* 25 (1963):

marked terms highlight the symbolic nature of the eating in John 6:51–58, in contrast with actual eating such as that in the previous Bread of Life passage.⁶³ However, other scholars attempt to limit the significance of τρώγειν. According to C. Spicq’s 1980 study, the verb started out, in classical use, as a verb that did connote the munching and chewing that animals performed on raw vegetation, and then developed into use as a verb for the eating or snacking on vegetables and fruit. By the Hellenistic period, the verb could also be used to denote the eating of the prize portion of the meal, or of the consumption of a special treat. He concludes,

il semble qu’à l’époque hellénistique, τρώγειν, φαγεῖν, et ἐσθίειν, soient interchangeables, mais ils ne sont pas pour autant synonymes. Si leur signification fondamentale de ‘mange’ au sens le plus commun est fondamentale, la fluidité sémantique de permet d’attribuer a ce verbe des nuances propres, d’abord celle de ‘croquer’, puis celle de manger bonnes choses, un dessert, enfin celle d’avalier et de se gorger.⁶⁴

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

124–28; Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:92; L. Goppelt, “τρώγω,” *TWNT* 8:236–37; Ruland, “Sign and Sacrament,” 450.

63. Bultmann, *John*, 236; Schnackenburg, *John*, 62; O’Rourke, “Two Notes,” also takes this approach, as does Goppelt, “τρώγω.”

64. C. Spicq, “τρώγειν, φαγεῖν, et ἐσθίειν dans le Nouveau Testament,” *NTS* 26 (1980): 418.

Barrett, for one, sees no reason to assume that John meant anything other than normal eating in the verb. He notes that in previous verses, John has used the aorist of φάγειν, which is also the aorist of τρώγειν. Now that he needs a present participle, John elects to use τρώγειν instead of ἐσθίειν. In fact, Barrett notes, John *never* uses ἐσθίειν—and even uses τρώγειν in 13:18 instead of ἐσθίειν when quoting Psalm 41:10—suggesting that perhaps this verb choice is not so loaded after all.⁶⁵ Maarten Menken also takes this tack: he argues that, given that John avoids ἐσθίειν in favor of τρώγειν throughout the Gospel, it seems that in John’s vernacular, the latter simply serves as the present tense for φάγειν. Menken, however, admits that elsewhere in the Hellenistic corpus, it is entirely possible that τρώγειν does have stronger connotations than ἐσθίειν; it is simply that in the case of John’s Gospel, the difference between the verbs is irrelevant.⁶⁶ For Menken, and I agree, the fact that John also uses the verb when quoting Psalms confirms this conclusion.

This is not to disagree with Dunn’s proposal that John 6:51c–58 is careful to present Jesus as a physical being whose flesh could be consumed; the ordinary verb accomplishes this just as well as a specialized one. On the contrary, John’s message here unites the corporeal, edible Jesus with the heavenly version lauded by the Docetics John supposedly writes against.⁶⁷ Again, it is the integration of these two identities that is demonstrated by Jesus’ exhortation to eat his flesh and drink his blood. John does not, therefore, throw the divine baby out with the Docetic bathwater; the evangelist takes care to maintain Jesus’ divinity at the same time as he emphasizes

65. Barrett, *John*, 299.

66. Menken, “Eucharist or Christology?” 196.

67. The question of Docetic tendencies in the Fourth Gospel was originally brought up by Käsemann, *Testament of Jesus*; for an overview of the scholarly discussion of Docetism in John, see Thompson, *Humanity*, 1–6. See also Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 196–197; Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology*.

his corporeality. The question, however, is if such wording does, as Dunn argues, represent a marked incident of this kind of emphasis, an argument that I view as both unlikely and unnecessary, given the context of John 6:51c-58.

The variety of uses in the case of σάρξ and the pattern of John's use of the verb τρώγειν resolves the issue against the necessity of a redactor, in my opinion. But another point to the question of John's unity—one that is practical for this project—is that the Gospel can be read as a complete text, as it has in fact been for centuries, regardless of its compositional origins.⁶⁸ That is, the various shifting of passages, paragraphs, sentences, and words in previous manifestations of the Gospel(s) of John is not of major importance given that the text as it stands has largely been accepted and read as-is, including John 6:51c-58, from a very early stage. (In fact, for John 6:51c-58 to be the product of a redactor, the addition must have occurred at a time before any of the manuscripts on which we base our manuscript tradition were written.⁶⁹) For the purposes of this project, accepting John 6:51c-58 as part of John's cohesive whole not only makes sense, but allows us to put to the side the problems of redaction-critical analysis that have plagued the history of scholarship in this area.⁷⁰

To develop the conclusion that the text should be accepted in its present state, it might be more fruitful to take the long-standing disagreements between scholars and examine what lies behind the lack of consensus in this aspect of Johannine scholarship. That is,

68. Barrett, *John*, 22; C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 290; Brown, *John*, 63–64.

69. Kümmel, *New Testament*, 209.

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

I posit that the dichotomy created by scholars between Eucharist and Christology in John 6:51c-58 points not to a problem of the redaction history of John, but rather of our pigeonholing it to fit our expectations about the text. At this point, it is important to note the problems inherent in the scholarly use of “Christology” and “Eucharist” to describe a text that dates to the late first or early second century. While the practice of a shared meal or an understanding about Jesus’ identity vis-à-vis God certainly existed by that time in the development of early Christianity, the established terminology of the dogmatic concepts comes later; established ritual patterns and formulaic sayings may also be later developments. Thus, the date of composition for John implicates the difficulty in putting labels to the Gospel’s theology. In the previous century it was widely held that John’s “sacramentalism” was far too well developed to be the product of the first century. Further, since it was assumed that the Gospel and the Johannine Epistles were authored by the same person, and since the letters broach the topic of church leadership and structure, they must be late; so too, then, must John.⁷¹ Both the above assumptions have since dropped in prominence, largely, in both cases, due to a problem in anachronistic interpretation. “There is nothing in the theology of John that would clearly rule out final composition in the first century.”⁷² At any rate, there is no question that John’s Gospel dates to before the calcification of Christian doctrine, or at least before its iteration in some or another “official” creedal form such as the Nicene Creed of the fourth century; that is, it is safe to date John to a time in which ideas about what it meant to believe in Jesus, who Jesus was/is, and how followers of this movement ought to manifest these various understandings were all still in flux. Likewise, it is unclear whether it is possible even to speak of a coherent eucharistic

71. Brown, *John*, 207.

72. *Ibid.*

theology at this stage in the development of Christianity. Although Gregory Dix's 1945 thesis⁷³ argued that the Last Supper's model of the Eucharist became firmly established very early on in Christian communities, today this theory has been abandoned by the majority of those who research early Christian meal practices.⁷⁴ Thus, to discuss with any certainty John's "christological message," or to look for a concrete theology of the Eucharist, is to some extent to put the cart before the horse.⁷⁵

Thus, in examining the text in its present form—a form in which it has been embraced for many centuries—we are afforded the opportunity to challenge *our* notions of Johannine theology; this challenge promises to lead to theological and historical conclusions more respectful of the received Gospel's meaning for both the final hand responsible for the Gospel as we have it and its early readers. That is to say, John 6:51c–58 is best understood outside of the debates of Christology or Eucharist, redaction or cohesion; rather, the poor fit this section seems to exhibit when pressed into the molds of these categories must force a change in our approach to its interpretation. As a received text as it stands, John's rich theological meaning appears to have been read unproblematically by many Christian groups; the meaning of John 6:51c–58, then, is best uncovered by respecting

73. Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Dacre, 1945).

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

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

its function in situ. Indeed, I maintain that, when read in light of its historical context and in appreciating John’s reception as a “complete” text, the eating of Jesus’ flesh has everything to do with Jesus’ identity as God rather than the institution of a Eucharist per se. That is, John 6:51c-58 is not the product of a redactor seeking to “sacramentalize” the Gospel by including several verses about the Eucharist, but instead represents the penultimate demonstration, continuous with those made previously in the Gospel, of Jesus’ true identity as God.

Sacramental Theology in John’s Gospel

Having examined Johannine Christology and its eating terminology, and having concluded that the hypothesis of an Ecclesiastical Redactor is unnecessary here, it is now appropriate to tackle, at last, the question of John’s sacramentality. I argue that John 6:51c-58 reforms the significance of consuming Jesus’ body in order to point to Jesus’ identity as God. This hypothesis articulates an answer to the question of the meaning of this section in a way that, on the one hand, acknowledges the language of eating and drinking Jesus’ flesh and blood that appears in this peculiar section of the Gospel, and on the other hand, rejects the necessity of explaining away John’s sacramentality. I preface my argument about the meaning of this scene with a discussion of the considerable debate about its scholarly interpretation vis-à-vis the Christian sacraments. The interpretation of John 6:51c-58 is contested because, on the one hand, some scholars hear echoes of the eucharistic formula found in other New Testament texts, and on the other hand, John’s Gospel has a reputation for being anti-sacramental. The question of sacraments in John is a subject that must be treated differently than that of the sacraments in the Synoptics.⁷⁶ *Sacrament* as a term should be defined, although doing so in itself is not without problems. Many definitions hinge

on relating the spiritual to the physical—"a physical and outward sign of a spiritual and inward reality."⁷⁷ As Anderson argues, by this definition John's Gospel is certainly full of physical manifestations of the divine truth—full of sacramentality, in short.⁷⁸ Jesus' extremely physical miracles are widely argued to be demonstrations or signs of Jesus' divine identity. Here Bultmann appears to agree, although he nonetheless supports the idea of Johannine anti-sacramentality: "it is clear that in earliest Christianity the sacrament was by no means a symbol, but a miracle-working rite."⁷⁹ These "miracle-working rites" for Bultmann, though, are things such as the Eucharist and baptism, both found in 1 Corinthians.⁸⁰ Seeing an opposition between the simple miracle-working rites in most of John and what he views as a symbolic sacrament in John 6:51c-58, Bultmann divides the Gospel into sections according to his theological analysis.

76. Discussions of the sacraments (or lack thereof) in John's Gospel include the following: Bultmann, *Theology*, 2:70-92 (cf. 1:133-52); Bultmann, *John*; R. Wade Paschal Jr., "Sacramental Symbolism and Physical Imagery in the Gospel of John," *Tyndale Bulletin* 32 (1981): 151-76; E. Schweizer, *Ego Eimi* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965, 1939); Dodd, *Interpretation*; Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (London: SCM, 1953), 38-119 (this text is perhaps overzealous in its identification of sacraments in John's text); P. Niewalda, *Sakramentsymbolik im Johannesevangelium?* (Limburg: Lahn, 1958); Raymond E. Brown, "The Johannine Sacramentary," in *New Testament Essays* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1965), 51-76; Francis J. Moloney, "When is John Talking About Sacraments?" *Australian Biblical Review* 30 (1982): 10-33; Sandra M. Schneiders, "History and Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel," in *L'Évangile de Jean. Sources, rédaction, théologie*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium XLIV, ed. Martinus de Jonge (Gembloux: Duculot, 1977), 371-76; Sandra M. Schneiders, "Symbolism and the Sacramental Principle in the Fourth Gospel," in *Segni e Sacramenti nel Vangelo di Giovanni* Studia Anselmiana 66; Sacramentum 3, ed. P.-R. Tragan (Rome: Editrice Anselmiana, 1977), 221-35; Ruland, "Sign and Sacrament," 450-62; Raymond E. Brown, "The Eucharist and Baptism in St. John," *Proceedings of the Society of Catholic College Teachers of Sacred Doctrine* 8 (1962): 14-37; Cyril Vollert, "The Eucharist: Quests for Insights from Scripture," *Theological Studies* 21 (1960): 404-43; E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, trans. P. Barrett (London: Sheed & Ward, 1963); Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, trans. W. J. O'Hara (New York: Herder & Herder, 1963); Barnabas Lindars, "Word and Sacrament in the Fourth Gospel," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 29, no. 1 (1976): 49-63; Dunn, "John 6," 328-38.

77. Anderson, *Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 113; see also Bultmann, *Theology*, 135.

78. Anderson, *Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 113.

79. Bultmann, *Theology*, 135-36.

80. *Ibid.*

Concerning the *institutional* sacraments, that is, the seven sacraments still held by the Catholic Church to this day or the two (baptism and Eucharist) held by reformed churches, John’s Jesus is largely, and oddly, silent.⁸¹ The language in John 6:51c-58 of the blood and the flesh being consumed by Jesus’ followers certainly conjures up images of the Last Supper to anyone familiar with later Christian imagery and sacramental theology. Many scholars have argued that John’s Gospel simply decided to include the institution of the Eucharist at John 6:51c-58 rather than including it at the Last Supper as the other evangelists do.⁸² Especially given that in John 6 Jesus has been talking about manna in the lead up to this exhortation to consume his flesh and blood, this is not an unreasonable conclusion to draw. That is, because John 6:51c-58 appears to our eyes to use the language of the Eucharist found in the Synoptics and, presumably, in practice in the early church, scholars have disagreed as to (a) whether this passage refers to the Eucharist and (b) whether this passage represents a later addition by a secondary editor more concerned with sacramentality, as I have outlined above.

Recently, an increasing number of scholars have come out against the interpretation of this scene as eucharistic, whether interpolated or not. They argue that since John ignores the sacraments, including any reference to Jesus’ baptism, and includes only this ambiguous and disputed reference to the institution of the Eucharist, the section must refer to some non-sacramental aspect of Johannine theology. Paul Anderson argues that John 6:51c-58 is primarily a christological section that uses eucharistic imagery in order to appeal to a broader audience.⁸³ This interpretation is bolstered by the use of the word $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi$ that is used most memorably in 1:14, where the Word is

81. See Moloney, “Sacraments,” 10–33 for a thorough overview of various sacramental acts identified by scholars in John.

82. See the list in Menken, “Eucharist or Christology?” 183 n.3.

described as having become flesh; this verse uses the same vocabulary as the flesh that Jesus' followers must eat.⁸⁴ Indeed, John 1:14 and John 6:51c-58 are the only two sections in John that use the word σάρξ with reference to Jesus himself.⁸⁵ For Anderson, the point of consuming Jesus' σάρξ is to share with Christ in his suffering, death, and resurrection: it is this inference that the disciples find so hard to swallow in John 6:60.⁸⁶ In another work, Anderson elaborates on his argument that the crux of John 6:51c-58 is Christology: "despite the mention of 'eating', and Jesus' 'flesh', given for the life of the world, the reference is clearly to *Jesus' death on the cross*, not primarily the eucharist."⁸⁷ Thus, christological interpretations of this section have become more common in recent years.

In fact, given John's established predilection for genre-bending,⁸⁸ I would suggest that it is entirely possible that the author is intentionally referencing ritual dining practices embraced by members of the early Christian community (e.g., "eucharist," *agape* meal, etc.) in order to re-appropriate and reformulate the meaning of such ritual eating—a possibility made even more likely due to the conspicuous absence of the institution of the ritual meal in John 13. Dunn, in fact, comes close to making this assertion when he argues that

if eucharistic language is used in vv. 53 ff., it is not that John wishes thereby to stress the necessity of the Lord's Supper and its celebration, but rather that he uses eucharistic terminology with a metaphorical sense, namely, to describe not the effect of the sacrament as such, but

83. Paul N. Anderson, "The *Sitz im Leben* of the Johannine Bread of Live Discourse and its Evolving Context," in *Critical Readings of John 6*, Biblical Interpretation Series 22, ed. R. Alan Culpepper (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 6.

84. Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John: Text and Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 182–83.

85. Thompson, *Humanity*, 44; Richter, "Zur Formgeschichte," 88–119.

86. Anderson, "*Sitz im Leben*," 6.

87. Anderson, *Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 207. Italics in original.

88. Attridge, "Genre Bending," 3–21, esp. 14.

the union of the ascended Jesus with his believing followers through the Spirit.⁸⁹

Dunn then settles on interpreting the scene as metaphorical;⁹⁰ I rather prefer to conclude that John reformulates eating language with specific view to the ritual work such language does in both narrative and community, as I propose here. Speaking to the importance of language in the creation of symbolic meaning in rituals, Udo Schnelle writes,

Dies [sc. the creation of signs in the world] vollzieht sich zu einem erheblichen Teil durch Symbole und Rituale, deren lebensweltliche Funktion darin besteht, eine Brücke “von einem Wirklichkeitsbereich zum anderen” zu schlagen.⁹¹

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

I argue that Jesus’ identity as both a human and a god is concretized in John 6:51c-58; while other scholars understand the christological statement in this passage as solely referencing or foreshadowing the crucifixion, I propose that Jesus’ identity formation in this section is better understood in light of the heroic tradition found in Homeric literature and its descendants. This approach privileges the events in

89. Dunn, “John 6,” 334.

90. *Ibid.*, 335.

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

John 6:51c-58—namely, the command to consume a body that has been killed (or will be killed) at the hands of a god—in a way that wholly metaphorical understandings of this scene avoid. As I will demonstrate, it is not *just* Jesus' death that is implied in this section but also, if we take the text at its word, his being consumed. In this way, I argue that the heroes of the romance novels offer the best parallel with which to understand this section of John.

Jesus, Heroes, and the Mortal/Immortal Divide

It is clear that John's christological statements, in John 6:51c-58 specifically but also throughout the Gospel, are concerned with the identification of Jesus as the Son of God. John, more than any other Gospel, or indeed, more than the three canonical Gospels combined, uses the epithet "Father" when Jesus addresses God.⁹² Jesus himself is called "the Son" no fewer than twenty-seven times.⁹³ Although this title is frequently used alone, in some instances, the term "Son of God" is used, often in formulaic utterances (1:34, 49; 20:31). Nevertheless, in all the instances where Jesus is called the Son, the concept is correlated with the idea of God as Father, and indeed as the divine father of Jesus.⁹⁴ In fact, in John, it is only Jesus who addresses God as father and only he is called God's son.⁹⁵ Thus, for John, Jesus' relationship to God is unique; he is God's son and God is his father.

I propose that one useful way of understanding these overlapping identities of human and god occupied by Jesus is found in the Greco-Roman tradition of the hero.⁹⁶ While the term "son of God" has

92. Jarl Fossum, "Son of God," *ABD* 6:136.

93. *Ibid.*

94. *Ibid.*

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

a history in the wisdom and apocalyptic texts of early Judaism,⁹⁷ the phrase is also used to describe the semi-divine beings of the Greek and Roman world. Early on, Dionysus and Heracles were both described as sons of God, both having Zeus as their biological father. Closer to John’s time period, Apollonius of Tyana, the miracle worker and son of Zeus, was called by this epithet.⁹⁸ Rulers in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds were also given this title, not just as an honorific, but to signify their direct descent from a god. The Ptolemaic rulers embraced this trend, but it is with Augustus that we find the best example. Augustus, his name itself a term used to refer to Heracles, adopted the title *divi filius*, not only referring to his lineage tracing back to Apollo, but also to his status as the heir of the slain and deified Julius Caesar.⁹⁹ Horace described the Emperor Augustus as Mercury himself, sent by Jupiter for the good of the human race.¹⁰⁰ Wills points out that

in the Hellenistic and Roman periods . . . a larger number of figures from the *recent* past attain a heroic cult status, whether that includes those who were sometimes considered to have one divine parent (Alexander the Great, Augustus, or Apollonius of Tyana), or mortals who have no divine parentage, especially philosophers and kings (such as Empedocles, Lysander, or Cleomenes of Sparta). It is important to note that these figures are not simply the subjects of learned discussion, but received actual cult veneration.¹⁰¹

96. Wills, *Quest*, 43–50 discusses how historical early Christian communities might have imaged Jesus in the pattern of the hero.

97. E.g., *4 Ezra*; *1 Enoch* 105:2; *Joseph and Aseneth* 6:3, 5; 13:13; *3 Enoch* 48[C]:7; Ezek. *Trag. Exagoge*, 100.

98. Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 1.6.

99. Fossum, *ABD* 6:133; see the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* for an example.

100. Horace, *Ode* 1.2.41–45.

101. Wills, *Quest*, 33.

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

To give one example, Jennifer Berenson Maclean, points out the affinities that John's Jesus has with the hero Proteselaios in the text of *Heroikos*. Although Berenson Maclean uses textual evidence in her examination, her real interest is the potential for the existence of a cult to Jesus in the form of the Greco-Roman hero cult, of which *Heroikos* and Proteselaios are representatives.¹⁰² John's Jesus makes an excellent candidate for this type of evaluation because of the focus in John on right ritual practices, despite not explicitly including the institutions of the Eucharist or baptism.¹⁰³ That is, the Gospel is preoccupied with correct cultic behavior (e.g., 4:20-24) even *without* clear reference to these typically Christian ritual acts. If cultic actions are those that define or maintain community, John's Jesus is very interested in issues of cult, even though his approach differs from those of the other evangelists.¹⁰⁴ Jesus' discussion in John 4:20-24 on the right type of προσκυνήσις (worship), where προσκυνέω and related terms are used ten times in the space of four verses, speaks to the idea that Jesus' mission creates true *worshippers* of God, not just true *believers*.¹⁰⁵

In addition, Berenson Maclean points out the generic compatibility found by other scholars such as Lawrence Wills¹⁰⁶ between the biography of the poet-hero and the Gospel of John in particular.¹⁰⁷ Wills's study argues that the novelistic pattern of the poet-hero's life and death, including the poet's antagonistic

102. Jennifer Berenson Maclean, "Jesus as Cult Hero in the Fourth Gospel," in *Philostratus's Heroikos: Religion and Cultural Identity in the Third Century C.E.*, eds. Ellen Bradshaw Aitken and Jennifer K. Berenson Maclean (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 195–218.

103. *Ibid.*, 201.

104. *Ibid.*

105. *Ibid.*, 202.

106. Wills, *Quest*, 23–50.

107. Berenson Maclean, "Jesus as Cult Hero," 199.

relationship with both the city and a deity, makes it appropriate for comparison with John’s structure.¹⁰⁸ Specifically, Wills suggests that *The Life of Aesop* fits the same pattern as Mark and John; for instance, all three begin at the adulthood of the main character rather than with his birth and all three involve, close to the outset, an experience from heaven.¹⁰⁹ Jesus’ ambivalent relationship with the Temple and οἱ ἰουδαῖοι also makes John’s comparison to *Life of Aesop* appropriate.¹¹⁰

Nagy’s work on the hero now becomes very relevant to the discussion: “by losing his identification with a person or group and by identifying himself with a god who takes his life in the process, the hero effects a purification by transferring impurity.”¹¹¹ The expiatory understanding of Jesus’ death is apparent in early Christian works such as 1 Corinthians 15:3, Romans 3:25, 1 Corinthians 5:7, and Mark 10:45. For Wills, this further locates the early Christian understanding of Jesus in the context of the Greco-Roman hero, though he cautions that the paradigm of the hero is more variable than a single genre could contain. Gunnel Ekroth concurs with this point, saying, “a characteristic of heroes and hero cults is their heterogeneity.”¹¹² Rather, for all three of the texts Wills examines, the paradigm of the hero is narrated in a way that establishes the cult even if not all the elements are present in any given text and with the reservation that there is no single paradigm that encompasses all of early Christianity’s understanding of Jesus’ life and death.¹¹³

Returning now to Jennifer Berenson Maclean’s work, it is important to note that she is not attempting in her study to assert

108. Wills, *Quest*, 23–50.

109. *Life of Aesop* 6–7; Mark 1:10; John 1:32, 51; Wills, *Quest*, 29–30.

110. Wills, *Quest*, 28.

111. Gregory Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 307.

112. Gunnel Ekroth, “Heroes and Hero Cults,” in *A Companion to Greek Religion*, ed. Daniel Ogden (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 100.

113. Wills, *Quest*, 50.

something about the actual identity of an historical Jesus, and neither am I in this project. Her study examines whether ancient Christians might have drawn on the trope of the hero as a way of locating Jesus' identity as a remarkable human being, and it seems likely, given Wills's study, that this is the case.¹¹⁴ It is clearly fruitful, given both Wills's and Berenson Maclean's findings, to examine the problem of Jesus' relationship to the divine by placing depictions of him alongside those of the antique heroes. Likewise, the Greek romances present the trope of the hero and heroine, following the pattern of the Homeric epics and other tales of heroes, and developing it. Although the existence of hero *cults* around characters in the novels is not attested as far as I am aware, the descriptions of the protagonists and their plights are intentionally mimetic of the trope of the hero in earlier literature: the abandonment at birth, the overcoming of adversity, and the brushes with death.¹¹⁵ Chariton's *Callirhoe*, for example, directly quotes lines from the *Iliad*¹¹⁶ and the *Odyssey*¹¹⁷ and thereby provokes comparison in the audience between its characters and those of the epics.¹¹⁸ This, according to John Morgan, "casts Chaereas as a new Achilles, so that his anger and jealousy, which power the early stages of the plot, become a re-writing of the wrath of Achilles."¹¹⁹ Likewise, *Callirhoe* is both compared to and

114. Berenson Maclean, "Jesus as Cult Hero," 195.

115. Unlike the heroes of the epics, however, the heroes of the novels are ordinary (though elite) folk without extraordinary abilities or talents (Bryan P. Reardon, "The Greek Novel," *Phoenix* 23, no. 3 [1969]: 292).

116. *Iliad* 1.317 (Chariton 6.2.4); 3.146 (5.5.9); 4.1 (5.4.6); 13.131 (7.4.3); 18.22–24 (1.4.6); 19.302 (25.12; 8.5.12); 21.114 (3.6.4); 22.82–83 (3.5.6); 22.304–305 (7.2.4); 22.289–90 (5.10.9); 23.66–67 (2.9.6); 23.71 (4.1.3); 24.10–11 (6.1.8).

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

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

119. Morgan and Harrison, "Intertextuality," 220.

contrasted with Homeric heroines. She is no Helen, but she does bear resemblance to Penelope as a faithful wife who is able to join her husband only after harrowing adventures. In fact, Morgan points out that at the appearance of Callirhoe in the courtroom in Babylon (5.5.9), Chariton takes the association so far as to include references to the *Odyssey* (18.213) concerning the reaction of Penelope’s suiters to her reappearance.¹²⁰ Further, Heliodorus’s *Ethiopian Story* makes even more explicit the connection between the heroes of the novel and those of Homer’s epics. Aside from the very structure of the work, which calls to mind that of the *Odyssey*, multiple characters in the novels become associated with Odysseus through their actions.¹²¹ Especially relevant is the heroine of Heliodorus’s work, Chariclea, who is patterned after the hero Odysseus because of her journey home, her ten-year exile in Delphi, and her escape by sea and resulting shipwreck.¹²² Heliodorus also references Penelope in his characterization of Chariclea’s chastity, just as Chariton did when writing Callirhoe. Again, Heliodorus makes this connection explicit by the author with a visit from a Homeric character in 5.22.3: in an apparition, Odysseus appears to Kalasiris and sends greetings from his wife to Chariclea, “since she esteems chastity above all things.”¹²³ Thus, the authors of the romance novels were not only conscious of the epics and their heroes, as was their society as a whole,¹²⁴ but also molded their heroes after those of Homer in order to bring out in the characters of the romantic heroes the latent connotations buried within the cultural understanding of the epic heroes.

120. *Ibid.*, 220 n.3.

121. *Ibid.*, 224.

122. *Ibid.*, 224–25.

123. *Ibid.*, 225.

124. See Hock, “Educational Curriculum,” 15–36.

The Greco-Roman Novels and Johannine Christology

The characterization of both Jesus and the heroines of the novels as heroes in the tradition of the epics clearly participate in the expectations around, on the one hand, individuals capable of great works, and on the other hand, the literary development of the hero or heroine as characters. There are, however, further commonalities in the novels and in John besides the shared characterization with heroes, and one important device shared by the authors is the trope of mistaken identity. For John's Gospel, the identification of Jesus as God is paramount, and this importance is stressed through the anxiety about who Jesus is in relation to God. For the heroines of the novels, this is also the case. The heroes and heroines of the romance novels are, at the outset of the plot, cast down from their elite positions in society, and continually thereafter they take on lowly identities as slaves and prisoners. The quest to return to their original place in society, which is naturally also beside their beloveds, is what drives the plot of the romance. This quest of the reinstatement of right identity is obviously a key theme for John as well.

Jo-Ann Brant points out the importance of the Greek novels for understanding John's Christology.¹²⁵ In the romance novels, the main protagonists are often distanced from their biological/legitimate parents by circumstance or fate, their true identities unknown. Likewise, Brant points out that Jesus' parental abandonment (by God, on earth) and his subsequent reunion with the Father mirror those found in the novels.¹²⁶ There also appear to be similarities between the antagonistic relationships between the heroes and their parents, and between Jesus and his earthly parent(s). Jesus, like the heroes, is

125. Jo-Ann A. Brant, "Divine Birth and Apparent Parents: The Plot of the Fourth Gospel," in *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative*, ed. Ronald Hock et al. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 199–218.

126. *Ibid.*, 202.

abandoned by his high-status (divine) father. Brant points out that in John’s Gospel, Jesus continually distances himself from his mother, Mary (e.g., John 2:4a), while performing acts that make those around him question his parentage (6:42; 7:3-9; 8:48).¹²⁷ However, though Brant draws important parallels regarding the novels and their identity concerns, she fails to account for the fact that really, John places far less emphasis on Jesus’ earthly family than do the Synoptics. As we have seen above, it is the divine Father-Son relationship that is paramount for John. That is, for John, Jesus’ identity crisis is not one of social status, but one of divine status; the novels, too, seem concerned with this issue.

As illustrated above, Jesus’ signs and wonders all give clues to his true identity. For Brant, these miracles induce people to behave in various ways: “some rush to judgment while others remain cautious (7:25-31; 40-44: 10:19-21).”¹²⁸ In this way, Jesus’ signs fuel the resolution of his identity crisis. Likewise, Brant argues, the appearance and beauty of the heroines provokes constant and varying responses from those who encounter Callirhoe and her fellow protagonists:¹²⁹ they try to molest, release, or harm these women when their elite status is revealed. However, I would argue that it is more significant that these heroines’ interactions with those around them often provoke reverence: those who encounter them see the distinct possibility that these women are actually goddesses, recognizable by their beauty and appearance just as Jesus becomes recognizable as god through his actions. Thus, while for Brant the key element of the identity crises in the novels and in John is the parentage problem, I would argue that given the constant identification of the heroines with goddesses, the real implications for

127. *Ibid.*, 205-7.

128. *Ibid.*, 206.

129. *Ibid.*

Jesus' signs are that they point not simply to his divine parentage, but to his own divinity.

The complex relationship that Jesus has with his real, heavenly father is therefore not just a reflection of the parent-child anxiety that pervades the novels; it is rather more indicative of the god-hero antagonism and association spoken of by Gregory Nagy and Jennifer Larson. First Nagy, and then Larson, building off his arguments, argue that "antagonism between a hero and god in myth corresponds to the ritual requirements of symbiosis between hero and god in cult."¹³⁰ For the heroines of the romance novels, their association with the goddesses is apparent throughout their troubles, but at the same time the goddesses are, in fact, responsible for the plight of the star-crossed lovers. The elite origins of the parents of Callirhoe and the other heroines are uncertain after they leave the comforts of their homelands; *their* identity is uncertain. Perhaps they are low-born slaves, run away from their masters, but on the other hand, the novels raise the distinct possibility that the heroines are actually Artemis, or Isis, or Aphrodite. In classical heroine cults, virgin heroines are often associated with Artemis simply by virtue of being virgins at the time of their deaths;¹³¹ in novels, the heroines are mistaken for the patron deities responsible for the fates of the protagonists.¹³² That is, they are directly associated with the main deities of the plot in the same way that the male heroes in the epics are.

Likewise, Jesus' identity with regard to his high-status father, who left him to be raised on earth rather than in heaven, is not certain. His signs and wonders point to his identification *with* God the Father (7:3); they do not merely identify his genealogical origins. The

130. Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 121; Jennifer Larson, *Greek Heroine Cults* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 116.

131. Larson, *Greek Heroine Cults*, 117.

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

identification of Jesus with the divine is further developed at Jesus’ trial. In 19:7, Jesus is accused of claiming to be the Son of God based on his performance of necromancy on Lazarus in John 11:47–48. That the very reason for his death is that he does his Father’s will not only conforms to the novels’ preoccupation with parent-child antagonism,¹³³ but further suggests an even closer relationship between Jesus and his heavenly father in the light of the divine-mortal antagonism present in the romances. While Charikleia is almost sacrificed by her father in *An Ethiopian Story* (10:16ff), and is saved through eventual obedience to her father’s will, Jesus is crucified in the end, and through his death displays *not only* his obedience to his father but also, as I will show, his own divinity. In fact, according to Nagy, the moment of a hero’s death represents the closest interconnection between the hero and the god who is his ritual antagonist. When Achilles confronts the god Apollo in Book 20 of the *Iliad*, an act that foreshadows the hero’s death, he is described by the *Iliad* as “*daimoni isos*” or “equal to a daimon.”¹³⁴ Jesus himself, in John 3:14–15, points to his death as the ultimate sign that proves his divinity; and even further, in 5:18, John places the phrase “ἴσον . . . τῷ θεῷ” in the mouths of Jesus’ accusers, who eventually bring him to the trial that leads to his death. As such, it seems not only appropriate, but also necessary to contextualize Jesus’ statements regarding his identity in the heroic literature and cults of the Greco-Roman world. For John 6:51c–58, this will provide a new understanding of what it means to consume Jesus’ flesh that takes into account the antagonism (and its resolution) between Jesus, οἱ ἰουδαῖοι, and God. The romance novels and their renewal of the heroic genre provide an appropriate lens with which to view John’s Jesus and it is to these texts that we now turn.

133. Brant, “Divine Birth,” 208.

134. *Iliad* 20.447; Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 143–44.

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

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I illustrated how the Gospel of John is preoccupied with the identity of Jesus as simultaneously human and divine and I argued that this divine identity is established in John 6:51c-58. It is clear that John is particularly concerned with Jesus' divinity; the prologue in particular sets the tone for the rest of the Gospel. But discussions of his identity preface John 6:51c-58 as well. In 6:42, the crowd questions his identity by referring to his earthly parents. This preoccupation suggests that the Bread of Life Discourse be understood as referring to Jesus' identity as divine. I make this suggestion in opposition to interpretations that view the scene as reflecting a Johannine eucharistic practice. The terminology of eating, though unusual compared to the Synoptic Gospels, cannot be seen as out of line with the rest of John's vocabulary, nor, indeed,

with normal Greek usage for his time. This passage is not a redactor's attempt at inserting a reference to the Eucharist; rather, this pericope references the consumption of a deity in order to point toward Jesus' divinity, that is, his association with God. Given this scene's reference to Jesus' expiatory death in the context of these statements about consumption, I argue that the hero traditions of the Greco-Roman world provide illumination for its meaning. These traditions are preserved, around John's time, in the Greek romances, which also take care to establish the divine identities of their protagonists.

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

The Greek romances that receive the most regular scholarly attention are those written by Chariton, Xenophon of Ephesus, Achilles Tatius, Longus, and Heliodorus. These range in date from

as early as the first century CE to the fourth century; others of the genre date both earlier (*Ninus* is dated to as early as the first century BCE) and toward the end of that range (the *Alexander Romance* or *Apollonius King of Tyre*, both third century CE).¹ However, there is much debate concerning the dating of these texts, and often “the margin of doubt varies from a couple of decades to a century or more.”²

History of Scholarship on the Hellenistic Romance

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

The term *novel* and likewise *romance* are certainly terms that originate out of literary criticism from modern times; however, they are now applied by scholars of ancient literature to describe certain

1. B. P. Reardon, “General Introduction,” in *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, ed. B. P. Reardon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 5.

2. *Ibid.*

Greek (and Latin) narratives that depict the love and adventure tales written by the authors listed above.³ The novel represents a rather late invention in Greek literature,⁴ although Greek fiction as a whole goes back at least to Homer. The novels came to scholarly attention most memorably in the work of Erwin Rohde in 1876, in his book, *Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer* (*The Greek Romance and its Precursors*). Since then, the field has developed significantly and multiple works are published every year, each of them making reference, still, to Rohde's opus. Rohde's understanding of the novel was shaped by his belief that it was the product of a post-Socratic, individualistic world in decline.⁵ In some ways, he reads that social-historical situation as a sort of foreshadowing of the socio-historical situation that produced the modern novel centuries later.⁶ In other respects he calls attention to what he viewed as the influence of the Second Sophistic movement on the novels, especially in their characterization of the male protagonists.⁷ His dependence on this idea forced him to locate the novels in a later historical period than is currently accepted; he named *An Ethiopian Story* as the earliest novel at the second century CE and placed the others even later. As research in the field developed and *Ninus* was determined to have been written at the latest by the first century CE (and probably earlier), this position became untenable and was abandoned.⁸ A scholarly focus on the Second Sophistic movement replaced the former prominence of nineteenth-century Orientalist critiques of the novels, as scholars

3. Ronald F. Hock, "The Greek Novel," in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament*, SBL Sources for Biblical Study 21, ed. David Aune (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 125.

4. Simon Swain, "A Century and More of the Greek Novel," in *Oxford Readings in the Greek Novel*, ed. Simon Swain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3.

5. *Ibid.*, 15.

6. *Ibid.*; Swain notes the heavy use of Wagner in Rohde's work and therefore the influence of German romanticism on his work.

7. *Ibid.*, 16; Erwin Rohde, *Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1914; repr., Hildesheim: Olms, 1960), 549.

8. Swain, "Greek Novel," 17.

began to abandon the judgmental criticism that Hellenistic culture represented a “decline” from the Classical period.⁹ The discussion of the role of Atticization, the intentional “purification” of the Greek language in an attempt to return to a classicized style, became a hallmark of debates around the novels. This view often accompanies the idea that Atticization served to revive the degenerate Hellenistic literary culture, as the Romans of the late Republican period viewed it. However, current scholarship favors approaching Greek literature of this period on its own terms and therefore has come to problematize the notion that Atticization reflects a reforming tendency as far as the Greeks were concerned.¹⁰ That is, Greek literature is a reflection of the dynamism of Hellenistic culture, which preserves also the religious tensions and assumptions of the time. This is important to bear in mind for our study of John 6:51c-58 because it reminds us that literature is the product of a culture of ideas and that John was part of that world.

Much of the dating of the novels comes directly from the level of Atticization identified in the text. U. Wilcken, writing after Rohde but nonetheless paying his respects to the more senior scholar, argued that *Ninus*, for example, could have been Ptolemaic, but that its Atticism points to a more likely date of the first century BCE.¹¹ “Wilcken’s dating [of *Ninus*] encouraged a rebellion against Rohde’s totalizing masterpiece and may be said to have shaped all major scholarship till fairly recent times.”¹² Although Rohde had never denied the possibility that the novels as a genre may have existed prior to his late dating, an earlier date allowed for more light to be shed on the novels and related texts, such as satirical imitations of that form. Wilcken’s dating also paved the way for other scholars to

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. U. Wilcken, “Ein neuen griechischer Roman,” *Hermes* 28 (1893): 161–93, esp. 191–93.

12. Swain, “Greek Novel,” 18.

publish their dissenting opinions, which became increasingly direct after Rohde's early death in 1898.¹³

Rohde was concerned with uncovering the connection between the rise of the novel as a genre and what he viewed as the decline of the classical world in the form of the Hellenistic and Roman periods. His insights into the individualization of Hellenistic Greeks and the increase in erotic poetry and novels were a hallmark of his research.¹⁴ However, Rohde's innovations in looking at the novels from a socio-historical perspective were not embraced by the scholarly community at large until later. Ben Perry's *The Ancient Romances* (1967) also supports the idea that a rise in individualism was at the root of the rise of the novel, a form that he viewed as a more accessible genre compared with the epic.¹⁵ But immediately after Rohde's publication, other approaches, literary rather than socio-historical, were offered.

First, in 1896, Eduard Schwartz suggested that the genre of the novel arose out of the historiography of the Hellenistic period. Schwartz, like Rohde, proposed that the novel emerged only after the second century CE, and he therefore saw its development as the bastardization of historiography with "orientalized" rhetoric and poetry.¹⁶ Schwartz identified the erotic poetry localized around Alexandria as a major influence of the romantic aspects of the novel but minimized the significance of the travel narratives that are a major aspect of the romantic genre. The identification of historiography as an influential force on the creation of the genre is important and was overlooked by Rohde.¹⁷ The fact that many of the

13. *Ibid.*, 19.

14. Rohde, *Der griechische Roman*, 127–28.

15. Swain, "Greek Novel," 19.

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

17. Swain, "Greek Novel," 20.

novels allude to historical elements and events makes historiography a likely candidate for generic influence.

Second, Otmar Schissel von Fleschenberg made a connection between the longer romantic novels and collections of shorter stories that he argued showed the novelists how to frame their plots.¹⁸ He argued that Aristides’s *Milesiaka* was an example of the type of tale that would have provided a context for the longer novels; indeed, even the title of this work is reminiscent of the titles employed by the Hellenistic novels proper.¹⁹ This approach was later taken up in 1965 by Fritz Wehrli; he proposed that these novellas, because they occurred both within the romances and in Petronius and Apuleius, showed the early relationship between the collected short tales and the novels.²⁰

Third, following Schwartz, Bruno Lavagnini published *Le origini del romanzo greco* (1922) in which he argued that the novels’ romantic bent emerged from the individualistic desire to read about oneself and therefore about love.²¹ This conclusion certainly owes something to Rohde’s socio-historical interpretation of the origins of the novels. To this approach, Lavagnini adds the relationship to Alexandrian poetry suggested by Schwartz and further suggests that, since the poetry’s audience was largely elite, the resulting stories were expanded and enlarged to appeal to a broader audience unfamiliar with the rhetorical and literary forms with which well-educated individuals were familiar.²² Lavagnini’s proposal therefore provides a link to the Hellenistic poetry and the Second Sophistic movement

18. Otmar Schissel von Fleschenberg, *Entwicklungsgeschichte des griechischen Romanes im Altertum* (Halle a.S.: Niemeyer, 1913); for opposing views, see Rohde, *Der griechische Roman*, 606–608, 612–13.

19. Swain, “Greek Novel,” 20.

20. Fritz Wehrli, “Einheit und Vorgeschichte der griechisch-römischen Romanliteratur,” *Museum Helveticum* 22 (1965): 133–54.

21. Swain, “Greek Novel,” 21; Bruno Lavagnini, *Le origini del romanzo greco* (Mariotti: Pisa, 1921).

22. Swain, “Greek Novel,” 21.

by way of the novels.²³ At the same time, his theory allows for *Ninus's* dating and generic categorization to stand unproblematically in the context of the emergence of the romance genre. As a result, Lavagnini's work was well received by his colleagues; his theories were reiterated in 1962 by Giuseppe Giangrande's survey of the history of the novel.²⁴

While thus far in the history of the scholarly treatment of the novel there had been more or less continuity in ideas and approaches, from literary to socio-historical to a combination of the two, in 1927, Karl Kerényi presented a new approach to the field based on the religious meaning of the novels rather than their historical or literary origins. This is worth exploring, since although Kerényi does focus on the religious aspects of the novels, I disagree with his methods and therefore also with his conclusions. A proponent of the history of religions school, Kerényi was interested in exploring the religious developments of the Hellenistic era and later; he viewed the increase in mystery and private religions as evidence of a crisis of faith in the old religious systems that further pointed to a desire for individual salvation rather than for public or state protection.²⁵ Kerényi reduced the novels to reiterations of the Isis and Osiris myth. He argued that the religious aspects of the novels were clues to their date and origin, tracing the stories back to that Egyptian myth.²⁶ Naturally, chief among his examples was the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius and its base-text, *Lucius or the Ass*. Reinhold Merkelbach's work elaborated

23. Ibid.

24. Giuseppe Giangrande, "On the Origins of the Greek Romance," *Eranos* 60 (1962): 132–51.

25. Swain, "Greek Novel," 22; Karl Kerényi, *Die Griechische-Orientalische Romanliteratur in religionsgeschichtlicher Beleuchtung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1927). The linear evolution from state to personal salvific religion "naturally" culminated in the Christian religion.

26. See A. D. Nock's review in *Gnomon* 4, no. 9 (1928): 485–92 for an evaluation of Kerényi's contributions; see also D. S. Robertson's comments in *The Classical Review* 42, no. 6 (1928): 230–32, where he describes Kerényi's book as "immensely learned and very interesting" but "seriously marred by the author's lack of balance and common sense."

on Kerényi’s proposal by arguing that the romances functioned as sacred texts for the mystery religions. For him, *Metamorphoses* was not a novel in its own right but a cipher for the Isiaic mysteries.²⁷ The other novels were metaphors for the initiations of other mystery cults according to Merkelbach, who aligned various details in the texts with specific rites in each cult. Neither of these theories, Kerényi’s nor Merkelbach’s, is widely accepted, and today the trend of viewing the novels as evidence of social, literary, or religious decline is dying out.

Perry’s seminal work on the ancient novels, *The Ancient Romances: A Literary-Historical Account of their Origins*, rejected to some extent the previous models proposed for the origins of the romance novels. He disagreed that the genre emerged gradually out of existing historiography or poetry, but at the same time recognized the influences of earlier texts, and especially Xenophon’s *Cyropedia*. His famous statement about the creation of the first novel “on a Tuesday afternoon in July” indicates that he privileges the creation of a work in a specific socio-historical context while acknowledging the role of the author and his or her innovation.²⁸ He dates its origin extremely early—the late second century BCE, in fact—and proposes that *Ninus* was not the first of its kind. According to Perry, the novel functioned as entertainment for the average individual in a world where people were relocating all over a vast empire; as such, it would have appealed to readers in cosmopolitan areas who either came into regular contact with foreigners or were foreigners themselves—in short, people alienated in a world constantly looking to a past golden age. Perry likened the novel to the “latter-day epic” and called it “the natural medium for a reading public.”²⁹ Although Perry’s work remains

27. Reinhold Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (Munich: Beck, 1962); Swain, “Greek Novel,” 23.

28. Perry, *Ancient Romances*, 175.

influential in the field, very few people agree with his placement of the origins of the novel at such an early date. As discussed above, Chariton's work, largely accepted as the earliest completely preserved example of the genre, is most commonly dated to the end of the first century CE and *Ninus* slightly earlier. From other evidence, this period of time shows itself to be a time in which Greek culture was not in the least one of disenchanting or disenfranchising foreigners, nor one only remembering a long-gone glorious past; rather, and especially with the Second Sophistic in mind, it was a culture bursting with cultural creativity and confidence, which is likewise reflected in the romantic genre.³⁰

As a result of this, and more recently, scholars have begun to focus on the literary innovation and intelligence of the novels rather than on their origins in the degeneration of a once-complex society. The shift in approach is the result of a better understanding of Greek society under Roman domination and the literature produced by Greeks in that time.³¹ Some of the recent studies in the field have exposed the high degree of literary allusion and the elevated rhetorical techniques used by the novels, techniques that must have developed out of the Hellenistic educational system; the presence of these aspects of the novels suggests that, far from being the degenerate literature they were thought to be in the previous century's scholarship, the novels may have been read by an educated, perhaps even elite, demographic.³² In any case, an attempt to define the readership more clearly has therefore become an important part of the field, although this is not a significant aspect for this study.³³

29. *Ibid.*, 29, 72, 79.

30. Swain, "Greek Novel," 25.

31. *Ibid.*, 26.

32. On the other hand, well-educated, intelligent, elite individuals frequently read unsophisticated literature. A modern example might be Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series.

33. S. Bartsch, *Decoding the Ancient Novel: The Reader and the Role of Description in Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989); Swain, "Greek Novel," 27;

Related to this task are the ramifications of the prominence of the female subject in the novels. Brigitte Egger’s work in this field has shown that the position of the women in the romances is not necessarily an indicator of their respect in the social setting of the Hellenistic world.³⁴ The readership question as a whole has re-opened the problem of dating, since the division between “presophistic” and “sophistic” novels is no longer tenable.³⁵

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

The Novel in its Context

In order to compare the use of imagery in Hellenistic literature and its antecedents and the ways in which this imagery reflects the religious views of the ancient world, a certain number of caveats should be outlined at the outset. First, of course, is the obvious

Ewen L. Bowie, “The Readership of Greek Novels in the Ancient World,” in *The Search for the Ancient Novel*, ed. J. Tatum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 435–59; Ewen L. Bowie, “The Ancient Readers of the Greek Novels,” in *The Novel in the Ancient World*, ed. Gareth Schmelling (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 87–106; Susan A. Stephens, “Who Read Ancient Novels?” in *The Search for the Ancient Novel*, ed. J. Tatum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 405–18.

34. Brigitte Egger, “Zu den Frauenrollen im griechischen Roman. Die Frau als Heldin und Leserin,” *Groninger Colloquia on the Novel* 1 (1988): 33–66; repr. “The Role of Women in the Greek Novel: Woman as Heroine and Reader,” in *Oxford Readings in the Greek Novel*, ed. Simon Swain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 108–35.
35. Swain, “Greek Novel,” 28; cf. B. E. Perry, *The Ancient Romances: A Literary-Historical Account of Their Origins* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 98; Tomas Hägg, “The *Parthenope Romance* Decapitated?” *Symbolae Osloenses* 59 (1983): 61–92; Hägg, “Orality, Literacy, and the ‘Readership’ of the Early Greek Novel,” in *Contexts of the Pre-Novel Narrative: The European Tradition*, ed. R. Eriksen (New York: Mouton du Gruyter, 1994), 47–81; also Bowie, “Ancient Readers,” 95–100.

problem of genre. Bryan Reardon outlines aspects of the novel that are considered elemental to the genre:

Most of them offer a mixture of love and adventure; it would seem that as the form increased in sophistication, the proportion of adventure declined, and the theme of love was treated less simplistically than in the earliest stages. Hero and heroine are always young, wellborn, and handsome; their marriage is disrupted or temporarily prevented by separation, travel in distant parts, and a series of misfortunes, usually spectacular. Virginity or chastity, at least in the female, is of crucial importance, and fidelity to one's partner, together often with trust in the gods, will ultimately guarantee a happy ending.³⁶

What unites these texts beyond these components is their fictionality. The Homeric treatment of the Trojan War, however it might differ from actual historical events, is at least rooted therein.³⁷ The novels, on the other hand, do not pretend to be historically rooted even when they reference historical events. Of course, the boundary between the two genres, history and fiction, is notoriously blurred. Historiography enjoyed popularity in the Hellenistic age, and so it is no wonder that, just as Herodotus's works included fantastical elements, fictional works, such as Lucian's *True Stories*, reflect the genre of historiography, and others, such as our canon of romances, attempt to insert historical realism into their plots. Some histories, such as the *Cyropaedia*, or *Education of Cyrus* by Xenophon of Athens, have novelistic elements³⁸ that indicate the division is not so clearly defined for the ancients as it is for present society. Rather, ancient writers, such as Celsus, seemed to have trouble distinguishing between fiction and history, as Celsus's discomfort with the Gospels illustrates.³⁹ That Celsus approached the Gospels as records of

36. Reardon, "Introduction," 2.

37. *Ibid.*, 1.

38. *Ibid.*, 3.

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

historical fact that, because of their fantastic content, required disputing (in the form of a fictional conversation, no less) indicates the uneasiness Celsus felt in determining the genre of the works in question. No less can one see the difficulty Origen faces refuting Celsus on his charges that the Gospels are fiction since Origen himself admits that history and historical documents include fictitious events: “we are embarrassed by the fictitious stories that for some unknown reasons are bound up with the opinion, which everyone believes, that there really was a war in Troy between the Greeks and the Trojans.”⁴⁰ That is, how can a person evaluate what is history (a genre one assumes is factual at its core) and fiction (a genre one assumes is false at its core) when the genres seem so hopelessly mixed up? On the other side of that coin—that fictions themselves contain historical facts—G. W. Bowersock reminds us that

in reading fiction we must be able to accept the historical context, even though we know it is not real. It must fall within the boundaries of the possible and represent what for the reader would be credible. That is why Sextus Empiricus described fictions (πλάσματα) as describing things that resemble what really happens. Julian obviously understood this too when he denounced πλάσματα that were created in the form of history.⁴¹

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

Beyond these considerations, there is also the question of where the genre of the romance ends and another begins: should the Jewish novels⁴² (e.g., *Joseph and Aseneth*), travel narratives, and utopian

40. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I.42 (Chadwick).

41. Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 51. For Sextus Empiricus’s descriptions, see *Adversus Math.* I.263–69.

literature be treated as belonging to this type of creative literature or as distinct from it? To some extent, each instance of the novel genre represents a divergence from an imagined “pure” form, so that any purist definition relegates to the fringe most of the examples of the Hellenistic romance. A generous definition, such as Reardon’s above, is more useful for the discussion of the genre and of the innovations made by each of its representatives.

Second, there remains the question of the relationship between the genre of epic and that of romance. The novels were not composed in verse, as were Homer’s works; this is significant, especially given the above discussion, since, as Reardon points out, “in early antiquity verse is always the medium for what we call creative literature. Prose is used for other purposes, such as the collection and analysis of information in the field of history or philosophy, not for imaginative purposes.”⁴³ In the Hellenistic period, this shifts, and prose begins to be used for “imaginative purposes”; thus, while the epic and the Hellenistic romance differ in syntax, each made use of the accepted vernacular of its time in writing fiction. As such, while the novels are not direct equivalents of the epics of the previous era, the similarities between the romances and the epics outweigh any potential problems of genre or language. In fact, the novels themselves are conscious that they share much with the Greek literature of the past. Chariton’s work, for instance, quotes directly from the *Iliad*⁴⁴ twelve times and from the *Odyssey* nine.⁴⁵ Other themes, such as the sacrificial virgin,

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

43. Reardon, “Introduction,” 1.

are also resurrected from older literature and given new life in the romances; this latter topic will be covered extensively in the next chapter.

Epiphanies in the Romance Novels

The religious meaning of the Hellenistic romance novels has been a subject of debate since they were first studied. Undoubtedly, there are multiple religious aspects to these tales, the two most significant to this study being the responsibility of gods or goddesses for the fates of the protagonists and the representation of the protagonists as these same deities. This representation has rarely been discussed outright in the secondary literature, although it is certainly alluded to in passing. Those who have approached the texts with the aim of uncovering some religious meaning have seldom found their conclusions accepted by the majority of scholars. It is therefore necessary to state explicitly what I am *not* attempting to do in this section of the chapter. In arguing that the protagonists of the romance novels are represented as deities, I am not arguing, as Merkelbach and Kerényi have argued,⁴⁶ that the novels and their characters reflect the novels’ use as sacred texts in the mystery cults of the Hellenistic and Roman periods. I do not suggest that the religious aspects of the novels are somehow representative of actual religious practice among

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

45. *Odyssey* 1.366 (=5.5.9); 4.703 (= 1.1.14); 6.102-104 (= 6.4.6); 15.21 (= 4.4.5); 17.37 (=4.7.5); 17.485, 487 (=2.3.7); 18.213 (=5.5.9); 23.296 (= 8.1.17); 24.83 (=4.1.5); Hock, “Educational Curriculum,” 22.

46. Kerényi, *Die Griechische-Orientalische Romanliteratur*; See also Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium*; Merkelbach, *Die Hirten des Dionysos: Die Dionysos-Mysterien in der römischen Kaiserzeit und der bukolische Roman des Longus* (Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1988); and Roger Beck, who discusses the problems with Merkelbach’s and Kerényi’s conclusions in “Mystery Religions, Aretalogy and the Ancient Novel,” in *The Novel in the Ancient World*, ed. Gareth Schmeling (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 131-50.

their readership or that they contain secret messages understandable only to the initiated. Instead, I argue that the epiphanies in the romance novels reflect the means of divine identification found in Homer's epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and that because of this reflection, the romance novels' depiction of the heroines as goddesses reflects the Hellenistic understanding of the very porous boundaries between hero and god. That is, the heroines in the romance novels are depicted as goddesses because as heroes in the tradition of the Homeric epic, heroes and gods become associated with one another in a way that blurs the categories between human and divine.

To this end, I outline here in brief the previous arguments regarding the religious elements of the novels, if only to illustrate further what is not on the table here. As discussed above, Kerényi proposed in 1927 that the romances were metaphorical retellings of the foundation myths of certain mystery cults, and especially of the Isis cult, with its tale of the death and resurrection of Osiris and Isis's wandering quest to find him and be reunited. Merkelbach took this proposal further and argued that the romances were in fact the sacred texts of the mystery cults and were composed for that very purpose by the cult personnel. Merkelbach categorized the novels according to their referent mystery cults: the Isis cult was hidden in Apuleius's tale of *Cupid and Psyche*, *Metamorphoses*, and *Leucippe and Clitophon*. *Daphnis and Chloe*, he decided, was the product of the cult of Dionysus, and the cult of the sun god was responsible for *An Ethiopian Story*. He also found reference to the cult of Mithras in the *Babyloniaca* of Iamblichus.⁴⁷

The connection between the mystery cults and the novels occurs at several loci. First, the individual "salvation"⁴⁸ and initiation that

47. Reinhold Merkelbach, *Mithras* (Königstein: Hain, 1984), 252–59.

48. The term "salvation" is perhaps misleading given its connotations in Christianity for a postmortem respite from suffering; rather, for the mystery religions (and indeed, religion in

made the mystery religions so attractive are features that find analogy in the plots of the romances. Initiation in a mystery religion alters the relationship between the human individual and the god, a theme that is also prominent in the novels.⁴⁹ Further, at least one novel, *Metamorphoses*, depicts an actual initiation into a mystery religion—that of Isis. As Roger Beck states, however, “given its provenance . . . it would be illogical to deploy it in order to demonstrate resonances between life and art without being absolutely sure that it has a foot in each camp rather than both feet planted firmly in the latter.”⁵⁰ Thus, forging direct connections on the basis of this text alone is unwise. Rather, it is in the similar tropes at the heart of the novels on the one hand and the concerns of the mysteries on the other that we find a connection. It is unlikely, however, that the connection is a direct one; instead I see the novels as reflections of a world concerned with this type of personal relationship with a deity, just as the novels are reflections of all sorts of other types of idealized relationships.

Second, the novels also find points of contact with the genres of aretology and the biographies of holy men.⁵¹ The aretologies were not considered part of a literary genre by the ancients; it is only modern scholars who have compiled the texts and categorized them as a genre.⁵² However, the “scattered primary remains”⁵³ of inscriptions and the like display certain regular features such as the persecution of an individual associated with a cult, his rescue by the god of the cult, and the punishment of the persecutors. This type of inscription praises the deity for his or her action in the real world and is based

general in the Greco-Roman period) this term is better understood as referring to material and physical well-being in the here-and-now.

49. Beck, “Mystery Religions,” 133.

50. *Ibid.*, 134.

51. *Ibid.*, 137.

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*, 138.

on real events.⁵⁴ In this way, some scholars find affinities with the novels, which, as Beck says, can be viewed as “aretalogies writ large, narratives about the gods’ more permanent favorites, ideal types rather than individuals, moving in a world like but not quite identical with the contemporary.”⁵⁵ The novels, to be sure, display many of the same characteristic elements that the inscribed aretalogies do: the terrible, unjust plight of the protagonist, the protagonist’s eventual rescue by the god, and the reinstatement of the just order of the world.⁵⁶ Again, *Metamorphoses* is the most explicit in its proximity to the aretalogy, both in content and form. Likewise, Xenophon’s *Ephesian Tale* actually claims to have emerged from a vow made and inscribed by Anthia and Habrocomes at the temple of Artemis at Ephesus (5.15.2). However, while affinities can be seen here in form and in explicit reference, this is not enough to argue for the novels’ primary composition as religious texts for the cults of the gods in question. Rather, again, they represent reflections of religious expectations and modes of behavior and belief because they emerge from a religious society.

The biographies of the holy man (θεῖος ἄνθρωπος) are the final point of comparison.⁵⁷ These biographies are set, like the novels, in the

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

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

57. For more on the “divine” or “holy man,” which was first discussed as θεῖος ἄνθρωπος rather than ἄνθρωπος, see Graham Anderson, *Sage, Saint, and Sophist: Holy Men and Their Associates in the Early Roman Empire* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Hans Dieter Betz, “Gottmensch” II, *RAC* 12 (1983): 234–312; Ludwig Bieler, *Theios Anēr: Das Bild des ‘Göttlichen Menschen’ in Spätantike und Frühchristentum*, vols. 1–2 (Vienna: Höfels, 1935); Barry Blackburn, *Theios Anēr and the Markan Miracle Traditions: A Critique of the Theios Anēr Concept as an Interpretive Background of the Miracle Traditions Used by Mark*, WUNT 2.40 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991); Gail P. Corrington, *The ‘Divine Man’: His Origin and Function in Hellenistic Popular Religion* (New York: P. Lang, 1986); David Lenz Tiede, *The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker*, SBL Dissertation Series 1 (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature for the Seminar on the Gospels, 1972); David S. du Toit, *THEIOS ANTHROPOS: Zur verwendung von θεῖος ἄνθρωπος und sinneverwandten Ausdrücken in der Literatur der Kaiserzeit* (Tübingen:

real world, but their main characters are not fictional, or at least we are meant to assume that they are real or historical, regardless of how fanciful the biographies seem.⁵⁸ Like the aretalogies, their main characters claim a special relationship to the divine; it is this point that also connects them to the mystery religions and to the novels. The holy man’s relationship with the divine gives him special powers and presents him with special problems, sometimes persecution, especially at the hands of those who do not understand his privileged position. As such, the *Life of Aesop* will also prove to be an important point of comparison for this study.

Both Kerényi and Merkelbach therefore represent an “extreme case on the role of religion in the novel.”⁵⁹ Their proposals that the romance novels were either produced by the mystery cults or have direct (secret) information about them misses the point that for the world in which the ancient novels were produced, religious experiences were considered part and parcel with living in the world. Such a limited understanding of the novels, their production, and their intent conflicts with so many widely held conclusions about the genre and literary composition of the texts.⁶⁰ That the aretalogies and the biographies discussed above have commonalities with the novels illustrates the common societal understanding of religious experience: that it occurred in the world; that gods intervened in the lives of their devotees; and that particular individuals may have held favored positions with the gods. This common understanding in no way forces the conclusion that the novels, which also reflect such

Mohr Siebeck, 1997); Jaap-Jan Flinterman, “‘The Ancestor of my Wisdom’: Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism in *Life of Apollonius*,” in *Philostratus*, eds. E. Bowie and J. Elsner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 155–75.

58. Beck, “Mystery Religions,” 140–41.

59. *Ibid.*, 132.

60. *Ibid.*; cf. Perry, *Ancient Romances*, who argues convincingly that the novels are the products of independent authors who nevertheless included religious themes in their work for the simple reason that religion featured prominently in the social context of the ancient world.

an understanding of the human–divine relationship, were specifically the product of mystery religions.⁶¹ Certainly, there are novels whose form and content is more explicitly religious, or as Walter Burkert says, “most diligently [exploit] a religious dimension.”⁶² But this religious aspect does not automatically connect the text to a specific cult. In the case of Heliodorus’s *Aethiopica*, which Merkelbach attributes to the cult of the sun god, the text does ally itself with various aspects of a sun god: the colophon proclaims that the author is of a clan of the Descendants of the Sun, and it concludes with the hero and heroine becoming the priest and priestess of the cult of the Sun and the Moon, the goddesses that they were supposed by others to be all along.⁶³ Beck observes that throughout the novel, there is a progression toward the ideal religious affiliation, from Greek to Egyptian, to Ethiopian, supervised by the priest Kalasiris who acts as a mentor to our heroes.⁶⁴ At first blush, then, this seems like a prime example of the type of text–cult relationship suggested by Merkelbach. The problem, however, is that there were no solar mysteries; there was no cult to which this text could be tied.⁶⁵ If Merkelbach’s theory were correct, it would stand to reason that this, the most explicitly religious novel, would have the clearest ties to an

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

62. Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 67.

63. Beck, “Mystery Religions,” 144.

64. *Ibid.*, 145.

65. *Ibid.*; cf. R. Turcan, “Le Roman Initiatique: à Propos d’un Livre Récent,” *Revue de l’Histoire des Religions* 163 (1963): 195–98. There is neither any connection between Heliodorus’s novel and the Mithras cult.

actual cult.⁶⁶ Beck’s summary of the general critique of Merkelbach’s proposal is worth reprinting here:

If they [sc. the novels] are allegories, they will have a certain quality of strangeness and illogicality in detail which indicates that while the narrative appears to be telling a story it is actually signalling something altogether different. . . . Oddities of incident are certainly to be encountered here and there in the novels, but the consensus of scholarship since *Roman und Mysterium* has been that in general the narratives are coherent and comprehensible on their own terms qua stories. As R. Turcan wisely sensed, Merkelbach’s reductionism of detail finally subverts the theory’s credibility: “. . . en voulant tout et trop expliquer, on risque de tout fausser.”⁶⁷

In sum, although I recognize that the Hellenistic romances certainly contain numerous religious aspects, and although I enthusiastically and regularly engage with those religious facets, I reject Merkelbach’s and Kerényi’s hypotheses regarding their relationship to actual religious practice. The religious elements, while they reflect real *attitudes*, do not preserve actual cult *practices*. The literary realm is significant in its own right; the religious aspects contained in the novels not only represent what are probably the ordinary worldview of the society in which the novels were composed, but in a related fashion also reflect the projection of the expectations around the relationship between human beings and the divine in the ancient world. As H. S. Versnel puts it, “the result was that ancient man [sic] could never be sure whether the person he was talking with was not actually a god in disguise.”⁶⁸ That is, the close similarities

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

67. Beck, “Mystery Religions,” 148–49; Turcan, “Le Roman Initiatique,” 176.

68. H. S. Versnel, “What Did Ancient Man See When He Saw a God? Some Reflections on Graeco-Roman Antiquity,” in *Effigies Dei: Essays on the History of Religions*, ed. Dirk van der

between the descriptions of the heroes and the gods in the romances are intentionally crafted to blur the line between human and god in ways understandable to their audience.

The use of the trope of the divine epiphany⁶⁹ in the ancient romance novels is the key event for this project. Epiphanies in ancient literature are common.⁷⁰ In earlier Greek literature, the appearance of a divine being, god or hero, often initiates the founding of a cult to the deity on the spot where he or she was seen.⁷¹ Deities might appear in battle to aid one side or appear in dreams with messages for the dreamer, an event that also occurs in the romances. The point of this section on epiphanic representations of the heroines of the romances is to illustrate how the novels use descriptive terms for goddesses in order to blur the line between the goddess and the heroine. The lack of clear definition between human and divine beings in the novels

Plas (Leiden: Brill 1987), 46; Versnel's "bibliographic note" at the end of this article is very useful.

69. F. Pfister ("Epiphanie," *RE* Supplement 4 [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1924]: 277) divides epiphanies into three categories: visual revelations of gods to fully conscious mortals; dream visions; and miracles that prove a god's presence.
70. Scholarship on epiphanies, however, is not. Up until recently, not much has been written on the subject: Pfister, "Epiphanie," 277–323; E. Pax, *Epiphaneia: Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Beitrag zur biblischen Theologie*, Münchener theologische Studien 1.10 (Munich: K. Zink, 1955); Dieter Lüthmann, "Epiphaneia: Zur Bedeutungsgeschichte eines griechischen Wortes," in *Tradition und Glaube. Das frühe Christentum in seiner Umwelt*, eds. G. Jeremias et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 185–99; Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1986), 102–67; Versnel, "What Did Ancient Man See," 42–55; Hubert Cancik, "Epiphanie/Advent," in *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe*, eds. Hubert Cancik et al., 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1998), 2:290–296; Fritz Graf, "Epiphany," *Brill's New Pauly*, eds. Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider, 2006, <http://www.encyclopedia.brill.nl/entries/brill-new-pauly/epiphany-e333100>; A. Stephens, "Telling Presences: Narrating Divine Epiphany in Homer and Beyond" (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2002); D. Turkeltaub, "The Gods' Radiance Manifest: An Examination of the Narrative Pattern Underlying the Homeric Divine Epiphany Scenes" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2003); G. Petridou and Verity Platt, eds., *Epiphany: Envisioning the Divine in the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming); Danuta Shanzer, ed., *Divine Epiphanies in the Ancient World*, Illinois Classical Studies 29 (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004); and of course Verity Platt, *Facing the Gods: Epiphany and Representation in Graeco-Roman Art, Literature and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
71. Graf, "Epiphany."

is a reflection of the attitudes toward divine identity in the ancient world—more of a sliding scale than a defined categorization; the novels exploit this understanding of the divine-human relationship in order to suggest that the heroines’ divinity is coexistent with their humanity. In this way, the heroines are fashioned after the heroes of the epics in the era before them.

Despite the prevalence of the trope both in ancient Greek literature and in the romances of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, Tomas Hägg’s 2002 publication and Robert L. Cioffi’s 2014 contribution⁷² remain the only modern treatment of this device in the novels, apart from Kerényi’s and Merckelbach’s largely problematic contributions. Hägg’s study outlines the use of epiphanies in the novels, but especially focuses on their function in Chariton’s *Chaereas and Callirhoe*. He evaluates several possible explanations for its use and concludes that the trope functions to drive the plot: Callirhoe’s identification as Aphrodite in all cases, he argues, provokes action in other characters and creates the necessary plot points that makeup the narrative.⁷³ He, like others, objects to Kerényi’s conclusion that the manifestations of the protagonists as deities are representations of ancient mystery cults, hidden in the metaphor of a romance novel, and he instead proposes, albeit briefly, that the trope represents a development of the Homeric theme of the hero as divine.⁷⁴ It is clear that Chariton’s *Callirhoe* makes a direct link with Homer when referring to his characters, given the prolific use of direct quotations

72. Tomas Hägg, “Epiphany in the Greek Novels: The Emplotment of a Metaphor,” *Eranos* 100 (2002): 51–61; repr., “Epiphany in the Greek Novels: The Emplotment of a Metaphor,” in Tomas Hägg, *Parthenope: Selected Studies in Ancient Greek Fiction (1969–2004)*, eds. Lars Boje Mortensen and Tormod Eide (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2004), 141–55. Very shortly before press, I was made aware of the following recent contribution to the topic: Robert L. Cioffi, “Seeing Gods: Epiphany and Narrative in the Greek Novels,” *Ancient Narrative* 11 (2014): 1–42. Cioffi’s article largely supports the identification of epiphanic scenes in the novels I outline in this chapter.

73. Hägg, “Emplotment,” 143.

74. *Ibid.*, 153–55.

from Homer when describing Callirhoe. Hägg observes two examples: first, in 4.7.5, when Callirhoe is announced to the Persian court as a woman as beautiful as Artemis or “Aphrodite the Golden” (cf. *Odyssey* 17.37; 19.54, both in reference to Penelope); and second in 6.4.6, when the King of Persia likens his beloved Callirhoe to Artemis the archer (*Odyssey* 6.102-104, this time in reference to Nausikaa).⁷⁵ Hägg observes that in most cases in Homer, the heroine, Penelope for instance, is merely likened in her beauty to the goddess, not actually mistaken for one; there are only a few instances where the latter is the case for the epic poetry.⁷⁶ In contrast, the mistaking of the romantic heroines for goddesses occurs frequently. The extraordinary beauty of the heroines (the aspect on which Hägg focuses) is not the only way in which the romantic protagonists are taken to be divine; they are also mistaken because of their shining and radiant appearance.

That gods and goddesses can be recognized by their shining faces and radiant, ethereal light is taken for granted by ancient authors (and often also by modern scholars). Eva Parsinou’s work, *The Light of the Gods*, surveys the use of light to identify gods in archaic and classical Greek cult and its artistic representation. Although she does not approach literature in her study, her introduction touches on the point that “Greek literature is suffused with bright images of the divine.”⁷⁷ Parsinou therefore takes the imagery used to identify gods in literature and examines its manifestation in cults and in art, where lit torches predominate. She identifies the use of light and fire in various rites in Greek religion as emanating primarily from this association between light/fire and the divine realm.⁷⁸ In Homer,

75. *Ibid.*, 154.

76. *Ibid.*; The few instances include *Od.* 6.149ff where Odysseus first addresses Nausikaa and wonders whether she is Artemis or a mortal.

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

human beings experience the epiphanies of gods and goddesses as manifestations of light and brightness, among other descriptive terms.⁷⁹ “Shining brightness [in the works of Homer] often heralded a divine arrival.”⁸⁰ Indeed, Alfred Heubeck, in his commentary on the *Odyssey*, notes that the source of light attributed to Athena’s lamp in 19.36–40 is actually emanating from the goddess herself, something he understands as “characteristic of a divine presence.”⁸¹ Whether this manifestation was in the lighting of lamps, in a bright light from seemingly no source at all, or from the eyes, face, or hair⁸² of a god in human form, it is clear that this trope is commonly used as a marker of divine presence in ancient literature. Athena and Aphrodite both are recognized by the fire in their eyes.⁸³ Fritz Graf writes that it is simply standard that deities appear surrounded by light,⁸⁴ and Christof Burchard agrees that light is a “must” for heavenly appearances.⁸⁵ Finally, N. J. Richardson, in his commentary

78. *Ibid.*, 1.

79. B. C. Dietrich, “Divine Epiphanies in Homer,” *Numen* 30, no. 1 (1983): 54–55; Dietrich also notes that gods are described as birds, as larger humans, as mist, and like the fall of night.

80. *Ibid.*, 67.

81. Alfred Heubeck et al., *A Commentary on Homer’s Odyssey* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), 3:76; Cedric H. Whitman, in his book *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 121–22 understands the light brought by the gods to be representative of victory. For him, divine light is a harbinger of success, since it symbolizes the support of the gods.

82. The radiance of the face and hair is also found in the Hebrew Bible in Exodus 34:29, where Moses’ face shines after being in God’s presence, although the verb’s meaning here is famously contested. Seth Sanders attributes this to the ancient Babylonian astrological understanding of the stars as deities: “visualization of divine radiance was a daily activity for the astronomer” (“Old Light on Moses’ Shining Face,” *Vetus Testamentum* 52, no. 3 (2002): 403. In the New Testament, the transfiguration of Jesus in Matthew 17:1–9/Mark 9:2–8/Luke 9:28–36 is another example of this; whether the authors built on biblical or Hellenistic understandings of the manifestation of divine presence is perhaps not a fruitful discussion to have, since biblical understandings of radiance clearly align with Hellenistic ones in this instance. For more on early Christian ephiphanic imaginings, see Margaret Mitchell, “Ephiphanic Evolutions in Earliest Christianities,” *Illinois Classical Studies* 29 (2004): 183–204.

83. Dietrich, “Divine Epiphanies,” 67; *Iliad* I.104; 21.415.

84. Graf, “Epiphany”; cf. Callimachus *Fragments*, 1.21–28; Ovid, *Fasti*, 1.93–101.

85. Christof Burchard, “Joseph and Aseneth,” in *OTP*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 2:14.2f.

on the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, concurs that “divine radiance is . . . a common epiphany feature.”⁸⁶ Since the time of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, then, epiphanies were not only possible events (especially in literature) but were described using Homeric tropes such as the radiance and beauty of a not-so-ordinary human being.⁸⁷

Daniel Turkeltaub’s 2003 dissertation creates categories for the epiphany⁸⁸ scenes found in the Homeric corpus, which he defines as any poetry attributed to Homer, regardless of compositional history or tradition; he includes the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Homeric Hymns*.⁸⁹ These categories are not based around linguistic similarities, since the variety of terms used in describing epiphanies is too great to allow for strict comparison; rather he suggests that each epiphany has a “thematic kernel” that remains the same, but the structure and language of the appearance in literature might not.⁹⁰ He outlines several themes that arise in Homeric epiphany scenes, such as disguise

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

87. Dietrich, “Divine Epiphanies,” 70–71. See, for instance, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 275–80; *The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, 172–75; Hesiod, *Scutum*, 7–8; Hesiod, *Theogony*, 9; Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, 115; Euripides, *Hippolytus*, 1391. In Latin poetry, see Virgil, *Aeneid*, 1.403; Ovid, *Fasti* 5.375.

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

89. *Ibid.*, 7.

90. *Ibid.*, 6.

(of the god); hint of divinity (in which the mortal is given a clue as to the divinity of his or her guest); false biography (the made-up back-story used by a god to “pass” as a mortal); ironic treatment (of a god by a mortal); and the epiphanic moment itself, among others.⁹¹ Turkeltaub’s categorization of the various aspects of the literary epiphany in the Homeric texts can also be applied to the romances and their depictions of the heroines.

First, in preparing to appear to a human being, Turkeltaub observes that the god or goddess first disguises him- or herself.⁹² In the *Hymn to Aphrodite*, the goddess first beautifies herself and then hides her true form, taking on the appearance of a young woman trying to find a husband. It is clear that the heroines in the romance novels also appear to other characters in disguise: due to their misadventures, their true identities have been lost—they are taken for slaves in various places of the romance novels,⁹³ and frequently even their own lovers do not recognize them when they come across each other.⁹⁴ Further, and perhaps most telling, the heroines themselves make no attempt to reveal their original names, status, or places of origin to those they encounter, even though they are often begged to do so. In *Aetheopica*, for instance, Charikleia is in possession of the jewelled necklace and embroidered belt (2.31) that would identify her as the daughter and heir of the Ethiopian king and queen, yet even at the end of the tale, she appears reluctant to reveal this information (8.11), even withstanding fire rather than show her birth tokens. This deliberate concealment of the heroines’ real selves amounts to a tactic that is comparable to the more explicit disguising of the goddesses in the Homeric literature. As such, the

91. *Ibid.*, 51–78.

92. *Ibid.*, 21–22.

93. E.g., *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 1.12ff; 4.2; *Leucippe and Clitophon* 5.17–19; etc.

94. E.g., *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 8.1; *Leucippe and Clitophon* 4.17, 5.17–19; *An Ethiopian Story* 7.7; etc.

heroines of the romance novels can be considered disguised in their identity, both divine and human, just as the goddesses in Turkeltaub's discussion of Homer undertake to conceal their true identity from those they visit.

Second, the heroines reveal hints of their divinity.⁹⁵ In short, their disguise does not prevent people from guessing that they are divine and behaving in ways that reflects their assumption; everywhere around the heroines of the romance novels, individuals and crowds bow down in worship when they catch a glimpse of Callirhoe or Anthia, for example. Turkeltaub's discussion of the trope of the divine hint outlines how, for example, the goddess Aphrodite displays recognizably divine features despite being disguised. In this case, Aphrodite reveals hints of her true identity as a goddess through her brilliant clothing and jewelry;⁹⁶ although both clothing and jewelry are described using these terms simply to denote their fine quality, Turkeltaub argues that in this context they serve as a marker of her divinity as well.⁹⁷ She is also identifiable by her great beauty and her stature, both well-established markers of divine beings.⁹⁸ Likewise, whether the heroines of the romances are at home or abroad, disguised as the ordinary but beautiful daughters of elite parents, those who view them are struck by their great beauty and their radiant appearance; as in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, in the novels, too, the transparency of the disguise leads to the divine hint.⁹⁹ This divine hint goes a long way to supporting the application of Turkeltaub's categories to the novels, and as such, to supporting the interpretation of the heroines as goddesses in disguise. The trope of the divine hint will be explored in detail below.

95. Turkeltaub, *Radiance Manifest*, 22–23.

96. *The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, 85.

97. Turkeltaub, *Radiance Manifest*, 58, esp. n. 101.

98. Richardson, *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 208.

99. Turkeltaub, *Radiance Manifest*, 60.

Third, Turkeltaub identifies the ironic treatment of the gods by the mortals they encounter as an identifying feature of their identity.¹⁰⁰ He writes that mortals behave in two ways toward the disguised gods or goddesses, each of which is ironic in its own way. In the first type, mortals behave inappropriately toward goddesses or gods because they misidentify them as mortals, and often lowly or low-status mortals. In this situation, the deity is treated with disrespect; the irony is that the mortal’s behavior highlights his or her ignorance of the truth of the matter. In the second type, mortals behave with great respect and deference to the god or goddess, but not because the mortal recognizes the deity for what he or she truly is; the mortal’s respectful behaviour is unrelated to the god’s divine status and is therefore ironic in its appropriateness. In the Homeric literature the dramatic irony is pushed to an extreme level by this treatment, but still the mortal does not recognize the god as such, even though at times incomprehension seems impossible.¹⁰¹ With the characters of the novels, the clearest example of ironic behavior is the selling of the heroines into slavery, a regular occurrence in the plots of the romances. However, I would suggest that the acts of worship that people perform when faced with the hints of divinity displayed by the heroines also count as ironic; frequently, their behavior is seen as foolish by others, even though it is really appropriate if the heroines are goddesses in disguise. A good example of this is Dionysius’s experience in Aphrodite’s temple in *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 2.3.6; Dionysius has already bowed down and begun to pray to the apparition but his steward Leonas corrects him and reminds him that the woman he believes to be a goddess is actually his slave; Dionysius retorts that Leonas is a blasphemer for not seeing that Callirhoe is a goddess.

100. *Ibid.*, 26.

101. *Ibid.*

For this study, a final point made by Turkeltaub is relevant: namely, that the goddesses in disguise often have false biographies prepared in order to enhance their disguise.¹⁰² His example of Aphrodite is useful here. Aphrodite creates a story that she, a virgin, was brought from a strange land against her will in order to get married; she tells her would-be lover that if she could only marry him, she could be free from her undesirable fate.¹⁰³ Turkeltaub presents this as one example among many of this type. The narrative pattern of a young woman brought to a strange land against her will and the danger of an unwanted marriage should be ringing bells; the romances follow this same pattern, a pattern common in the literature of Greek mythology, too.¹⁰⁴ But at the same time, at least some of those ringing bells may be sounding the alarm: surely the plot of the romance novels is not presented as a false biography, but as a narratively real one? I would suggest that the audience's knowledge of these biographies as literarily true does not negate the fact that for the characters, the biographies of the protagonists are sometimes deliberately concealed, as in *Chaereas and Callirhoe*; Callirhoe is given the opportunity to tell Dionysius her family origins and be returned to them, and yet is reluctant to disclose her true identity and must be pressed to do so (2.5). Leucippe, even when questioned, gives a false name (Lakaina) and place of birth (Thessaly) (5.17). The biographies of the heroines, while known to the audience, are concealed from the people they meet on their travels. But on the other side of this, the divine hints, the ironic treatment, and the disguise tropes borrowed from the Homeric tradition, and put to use in the novels, may render the "true" narrative biography of the heroines false; in providing a plausible backstory for the protagonists in this way, one

102. *Ibid.*, 25–26.

103. *The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, 110–135; Turkeltaub, *Radiance Manifest*, 60.

104. Turkeltaub, *Radiance Manifest*, 61, esp. n. 112.

that is shared with the readers but not with the bulk of the characters the protagonists meet, the novels cause us to doubt whether the biographies are in fact true. Thus, the novels participate in this trope in two ways: the heroines conceal their biographies, thereby causing confusion about their social identity; and the prominent use of the other epiphanic tropes cause doubt in the veracity of the biography that is revealed to the readership. As I will show below, this is not simply the *mistaking* of the heroines as divinities by other characters; rather, because of the dynamics of Hellenistic religion and the cultural understanding of the relationships between gods and mortals, the heroines are literarily depicted as the goddesses themselves. The perception of a human being as a goddess—the belief that the individual is a manifestation of a divinity—is enough to make that person the goddess phenomenologically.¹⁰⁵

Instances of Epiphany in the Romances

The identification of the heroines with goddesses in the romances is a useful tool here for exploring the connection in John between

105. The example of the epiphany of a goddess in the midst of a battle is reported by Plutarch in his *Life of Aratus*, a Hellenistic general of Sicyon. The epiphany determined the outcome of the battle, which took place in 241 BCE. Plutarch relates how one of the captive women, known for her great beauty, was sitting in a sanctuary of Artemis nearby, as she had been ordered by her captor. The captor had taken her, put his own three-crested helmet on her head, and left her there for safekeeping while he returned to battle. She, however, ventured just outside of the sanctuary to better view the fight. From her vantage point on the hill, she seemed to those fighting to be the goddess herself, with her helmet still on her head. Those who saw her were struck by her appearance and stopped fighting, enabling victory for the other side (*Life of Aratus* 32.1.2). While other sources outline the procedure for invoking the presence of a god or goddess to help with battle, here Plutarch describes the spontaneous visitation of a divinity. The presence of this woman in a helmet, appearing from out of the sanctuary of Artemis, is an epiphany of the goddess herself, for it accomplishes the same thing—victory: “as she looks down from the city’s acropolis, the daughter of Epigethes is viewed as Artemis Soteria herself, come to rescue her loyal worshippers in a battle epiphany typical of both Homeric epic and Hellenistic military tradition . . . the daughter of Epigethes . . . possesses an ambiguous ontological status: are the Aetolians simply mistaken in viewing her as a sacred apparition (a *phasma theion*)? Or is Artemis actually working through her mortal avatar, generating an epiphany that may be simulated, but is no less ‘real’?” (Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 14).

protagonist and divinity. In each of the romance novels, the main characters, but most often the female ones, are described using language that equally describes a goddess and/or they are worshipped as goddesses by other characters. Often, those who do the worshipping are ordinary people or even “barbarians,” but occasionally elite characters are so struck by the heroines that they, too, understand the women to be goddesses. When the hint of divinity is revealed, often in the form of blazing light or great beauty, the treatment of the heroines by other characters is often ironic—the heroines are worshipped as goddesses despite their mortal status, suggesting a simultaneous ontology in the narrative reality of the novel. In all of these most frequent manifestations of the epiphany motif (beauty and radiance especially), *Chaereas and Callirhoe* is the novel in which epiphanies of this sort most often occur. I show that the heroines in all four of the novels under examination here are described as divine beings created in the images both of the heroes of Homeric literature and of the epiphanic forms of Hellenistic goddesses.

For convenience, below is a chart of passages that demonstrate the divine characterization of the heroines. Although not all of the passages are discussed explicitly, the examples below illustrate how pervasive the divine characterization of the protagonists is as a trope.

Source	English	Greek
<i>Chaereas and Callirhoe</i> 1.1	Her beauty was more than human, it was divine , and it was not the beauty of a Nereid of a mountain nymph at that, but of the maiden Aphrodite herself.	Ἦν γὰρ τὸ κάλλος οὐκ ἀνθρώπινον ἀλλὰ θεῖον, οὐδὲ Νηρηΐδος ἢ Νύμφης τῶν ὀρειῶν ἀλλ’ αὐτῆς Ἀφροδίτης [παρθένου].
<i>Chaereas and Callirhoe</i> 1.1.15-16	Then Chaereas ran forward and kissed her; recognizing the man she loved, Callirhoe, like a dying lamp ¹⁰⁶ once it is replenished with oil, flamed into life again and became taller and stronger. When she came out into the open, all were astounded, as when Artemis appears to hunters in lonely places. Many of the onlookers even knelt in homage.	ὁ μὲν οὖν Χαιρέας προσδραμὼν αὐτὴν κατεφίλει, Καλλιρῶη δὲ γνωρίσασα τὸν ἐρώμενον, ὥσπερ τι λύχνου φῶς ἦδη σβεννύμενον ἐπιχυθέντος ἐλαίου πάλιν ἀνέλαμψε καὶ μείζων ἐγένετο καὶ κρείττων. ἐπεὶ δὲ προῆλθεν εἰς τὸ δημόσιον, θάμβος ὄλον τὸ πλῆθος κατέλαβεν, ὥσπερ ἀρτέμιδος ἐν ἐρημίᾳ κυνηγέταις ἐπιστάσης· πολλοὶ δὲ τῶν παρόντων καὶ προσεκύνησαν.
<i>Chaereas and Callirhoe</i> 1.14.1	Leonas and all in the room were struck with amazement at the sudden apparition, as if they had set eyes on a goddess , for rumor had it that Aphrodite could be seen in the fields.	ὁ δὲ Λεωνᾶς καὶ πάντες οἱ ἔνδον ἐπιστάσης αἰφνίδιον κατεπλάγνυσαν, οἷα δὴ δοκοῦντες θεᾶν ἐωρακέναι· καὶ γὰρ ἦν τις λόγος ἐν τοῖς ἀγροῖς Ἀφροδίτην ἐπιφαίνεσθαι.
<i>Chaereas and Callirhoe</i> 2.1.5	Although Dionysius was pleased to hear of the girl’s beauty, for he was a great admirer of women, he was not pleased to hear she was a slave ... “Leonas,” he said, “it is impossible for a person not free-born to be beautiful. Have you not learned from the poets that beautiful people are the children of gods , and all the more likely children of the nobly born?”	ὁ δὲ διονύσιος τὸ μὲν κάλλος ἤδέως ἤκουσε τῆς γυναικός (ἦν γὰρ φιλογύνης ἀληθῶς), τὴν δὲ δουλείαν ἀηδῶς: [...] “ὦ λεωνᾶ, κάλὸν εἶναι σῶμα μὴ πεφυκὸς ἐλεύθερον. Οὐκ ἀκούεις τῶν ποιητῶν ὅτι θεῶν παῖδες εἰσιν οἱ καλοί, πολὺ δὲ πρότερον ἀνθρώπων εὐγενῶν;”

106. This lamp reference is also reminiscent of the lamp of Athena in *Od.* 19.33ff.

- Chaereas and Callirhoe* 2.2.2 After she had gone in [to the bath] they rubbed her with oil and wiped it off carefully, and marveled at her all the more when undressed, for, whereas when she was dressed they admired her face as **divine**, they had no thoughts for her face when they saw her hidden beauty. Her skin **gleamed** white, **shining** just like a **shimmering** surface.
- Chaereas and Callirhoe* 2.3.6 At the sight of her [Callirhoe] Dionysius cried, “Aphrodite, be gracious to me, and may your presence bless me!” As he was in the act of **kneeling**, Leonas caught him and said, “Sir, this is the slave just bought. Do not be disturbed. And you, woman, come to meet your master.” . . . But Dionysius struck Leonas and said, “You blasphemer, do you talk to gods as you would to men [sic]? Have you the nerve to call her a bought slave? No wonder you were unable to find the man who sold her. Have you not even heard what Homer teaches us? ‘**Of in the guise of strangers from distant lands / the gods watch human insolence and righteousness.**’”¹⁰⁷
- Chaereas and Callirhoe* 3.2.14 As she made her way from the shrine to the sea, the boatmen were overwhelmed with awe on seeing her, as though Aphrodite herself were coming to embark, and with one accord they hastened to **kneel in homage**.
- Εἰσελθοῦσαν δὲ ἤλειψάν τε καὶ ἀπέσμηξαν ἐπιμελῶς καὶ μᾶλλον ἀποδυσσαμένης κατεπλάγησαν· ὥστε ἐνδεδυμένης αὐτῆς θαυμάζουσαι τὸ πρόσωπον ὡς θεῖον, <ἀ>πρόσωπον ἔδοξαν <τᾶνδον> ἰδοῦσαι· ὁ χρῶς γὰρ λευκὸς ἔστιλπεν εὐθύς μαρμαρυγῇ τινι ὁμοίον ἀπολάμπων·
- θεασάμενος οὖν ὁ Διονύσιος δὲ ἀνεβόησεν “ἴλεως εἴης, ὦ Ἄφροδίτη, καὶ ἐπ’ ἀγαθῶ μοι φανείης.” καταπίπτοντα δὲ αὐτὸν ἡδὴ Λεωνᾶς ὑπέλαβε καὶ “αὕτη” φησὶν “ἔστιν, ὦ δέσποτα, ἡ νεώνητος· μηδὲν ταραχθῆς· καὶ σὺ δέ, ὦ γύναι, πρόσελθε τῷ κυρίῳ.” [...] ὁ δὲ Διονύσιος πλήξας τὸν Λεωνᾶν “ἀσεβέστατε” εἶπεν, “ὡς ἀνθρώποις διαλέγῃ τοῖς θεοῖς; ταύτην λέγεις ἀργυρώνητον; δικαίως οὖν οὐχ εὔρες τὸν πιπράσκοντα. Οὐκ ἤκουσας οὐδὲ Ὅμηρου διδάσκοντος ἡμᾶς” “καὶ τε θεοὶ ξείνοισιν εἰοικότες ἄλλοδαποῖσιν Ἀνθρώπων ὕβριν τε καὶ εὐνομίην ἐφορῶσι;”
- Βαδίζουσαν δὲ αὐτὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ τεμένους ἐπὶ τὴν θάλασσαν ἰδόντες οἱ ναῦται δείματι κατεσχέθησαν, ὡς τῆς Ἀφροδίτης αὐτῆς ἐρχομένης ἵνα ἐμβῆ, καὶ ὥρμησαν ἀθροοὶ προσκυνήσαι·

107. Dionysius here quotes from the *Odyssey* 17.485, 487.

- Chaereas and Callirhoe* 3.9.1 The old woman came in answer and said, “My child, why are you crying amid such blessings? Why, even strangers are paying you homage now as a goddess. The other day two fine young men sailed by here, and one of them nearly expired at the sight of your statue, so like an **epiphany** [of the goddess] has Aphrodite made you.”
- Chaereas and Callirhoe* 5.3.9 Callirhoe’s face **shone** with radiance which **dazzled** the eyes of all, just as when on a dark night a blinding **flash** is seen. Struck with amazement, the Persians knelt in homage.
- An Ephesian Tale* 1.2.2ff A local festival for Artemis was underway, and from the city to her shrine, a distance of seven stades, all the local girls had to march sumptuously adorned, as did all the ephebes who were the same age as Habrocomes; he was about sixteen and already enrolled among the ephebes, and he headed the procession. . . . The procession marched along in file, first the sacred objects, torches, baskets, and incense, followed by horses, dogs, and hunting equipment, some of it martial, most of it peaceful . . . each of the girls was adorned as for a lover. Heading the line of girls was Anthia, daughter of Magamedes and Euippe, locals.
- ἡ δὲ πρεσβυῖτις ὑπακούουσα “τί κλάεισ” εἶπεν, “ὦ παιδίον, ἐν ἀγαθοῖς τηλικούτοις; ἤδη γὰρ καὶ σὲ ὡς θεὰν οἱ ἕξνοι προσκυνοῦσι. Πρῶν ἦλθον ἐνθάδε δύο νεανίσκοι καλὶ παραπλέοντες· ὁ δὲ ἕτερος αὐτῶν θεασάμενός σου τὴν εἰκόνα, μικροῦ δεῖν ἐξέπνευσεν. Οὕτως ἐπιφανῆ σε ἡ Ἄφροδίτη πεποίηκεν.”
- ἐξέλαμψε δὲ τὸ Καλλιρόης πρόσωπον, καὶ μαρμαρυγὴ κατέσχε τὰς ἀπάντων ὄψεις, ὥσπερ ἐν νυκτὶ βαθεῖα πολλοῦ φωτὸς αἰφνίδιον φανέντος· ἐκπλαγέντες δὲ οἱ βάρβαροι προσεκύνησαν.
- Ἦγετο δὲ τῆς Ἀρτέμιδος ἐπιχώριος ἑορτῆ· ἔδει δὲ πομπεῦν ἀπὸ τῆς πόλεως ἐπὶ τὸ ἱερόν, στάδιοι δὲ εἰσιν ἑπτὰ, πάσας τὰς ἐπιχωρίους παρθένους κεκοσμημένας πολυτελῶς καὶ τοὺς ἐφήβους, ὅσοι τὴν αὐτὴν ἡλικίαν εἶχον τῷ Ἀβροκόμῃ· ἦν δὲ αὐτὸς περὶ τὰ ἐξκαίδεκα ἔτη καὶ τῶν ἐφήβων προσήπτετο καὶ ἐν τῇ πομπῇ τὰ πρῶτα ἐφέρετο. . . . Παρήσαν δὲ κατὰ στίχον οἱ πομπεύοντες, πρῶτα μὲν τὰ ἱερά καὶ δῶδες καὶ κανᾶ καὶ θυμιάματα, ἐπὶ τούτοις ἵπποι καὶ κύνες καὶ σκευὴ κυνηγετικά, ὧν τὰ μὲν πολεμικά, τὰ δὲ πλεῖστα εἰρηνικά. . . . ἑκάστη δὲ αὐτῶν οὕτως ὡς πρὸς ἑραστὴν ἐκεκόσμητο. ἦρχε δὲ τῆς τῶν παρθένων τάξεως Ἀνθία, θυγάτηρ Μεγαμήδους καὶ Εὐίππης, ἐγχωρίων.

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

Ἦν δὲ τὸ κάλλος τῆς Ἀνθίας οἷον θαυμάσαι καὶ πολὺ τὰς ἄλλας ὑπερεβάλετο παρθένους. ἔτη μὲν ὡς τεσσαρεσκαίδεκα ἐγγεγόνει, ἦνθι δὲ αὐτῆς τὸ σῶμα ἐπ' εὐμορφία, καὶ ὁ τοῦ σχήματος κόσμος πολὺς εἰς ὥραν συνεβάλετο· κόμη Ξανθή, ἢ πολλὴ καθειμένη, ὀλίγη πεπλεγμένη, πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀνέμων φορὰν κινουμένη· ὀφθαλμοὶ γοργοί, φαειροὶ μὲν ὡς καλῆς, φοβεροὶ δὲ ὡς σώφρονος· ἐσθῆς χιτῶν ἀλουργῆς, ζωστὸς εἰς γόνυ, μέχρι βραχιόνων καθειμένος, νεβρίς περικειμένη, ὄπλα γωρυτὸς ἀνημμένος, τόξα . . . , ἄκοντες φερόμενοι, κύνες ἐπόμενοι. **πολλάκις αὐτὴν ἐπὶ τοῦ τεμένους ἰδόντες ἐφέσιοι προσεκύνησαν ὡς Ἄρτεμιν, καὶ τότε οὖν ὀφθείσης ἀνεβόησε τὸ πλῆθος, καὶ ἦσαν ποικίλαι παρὰ τῶν θεωμένων φωναί, τῶν μὲν ὑπ' ἐκπλήξεως τὴν θεὸν εἶναι λεγόντων, τῶν δὲ ἄλλην τινα ὑπὸ τῆς θεοῦ πε[ρι]ποιημένην, προσηύχοντο δὲ πάντες καὶ προσεκύνουν καὶ τοὺς γονεῖς αὐτῆς ἐμακάριζον, ἦν δὲ διαβόητος τοῖς θεωμένοις ἅπασιν Ἀνθία ἢ καλή.**

*An Ephesian
Tale 1.12.1–2*

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

Κατήγετο δὲ ἡ ναῦς εἰς Ῥόδον
καὶ ἐξέβαινον οἱ ναῦται, ἐξῆει
δὲ καὶ ὁ ἀβροκόμης ἔχων μετὰ
χεῖρα τὴν Ἀνθίαν· συνῆεσαν δὲ
πάντες οἱ Ῥόδιοι τὸ κάλλος
τῶν παίδων καταπεπληγότες
καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις τῶν
ιδόντων παρήλθε σιωπῶν,
ἀλλ’ οἱ μὲν ἔλεγον ἐπιδημίαν
ἐκ τῶν θεῶν, οἱ δὲ
προσεκύνουν καὶ
προσεπιτνοῦντο. . . .
ἐπεύχονται δὲ ἀποτοῖς δημοσίᾳ
δαὶ θυσίας τε θύουσι πολλὰς
καὶ ἑορτὴν ἄγουσι τὴν
ἐπιδημίαν αὐτῶν.

*Leucippe and
Clitophon 1.4*

And as I gazed at her [a richly dressed older woman], I suddenly saw a maiden [lit. a maiden **suddenly appeared** to me] on her left, who **blinded** my eyes, as with a stroke of **lightning**, by the beauty of her face. She was like that picture of Europa on the bull which I saw but just now: an eye at once piercing and voluptuous; golden hair in golden curls; black eyebrows—jet black; pale cheeks, the pallor shading in the centre into a ruddy hue, like that stain wherewith the Lydian women tint ivory; and a mouth that was a rose—a rose-bud just beginning to uncurl its petals. . . . I admired her tall form, I was stupefied by her beauty.¹⁰⁸

ὥς δὲ ἐπέτεινα τοὺς
ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐπ’ αὐτήν, ἐν
ἀριστερᾷ παρθένος ἐκφαίνεται
μοι, καὶ καταστράπτει μου
τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῷ
προσώπῳ. Τοιαύτην εἶδον
ἐγὼ ποτε ἐπὶ ταύρῳ
γεγραμμένην Εὐρώπην· ὄμμα
γοργὸν ἐήδονῃ· κόμη ξανθή,
τὸ ξανθὸν οὖλον· ὄφρυς
μέλαινα, τὸ μέλαν ἄκρατον·
λευκὴ παρειά, τὸ λευκὸν εἰς
μέσον ἐφοίνισετο καὶ ἐμμεῖτο
πορφύραν οἶαν εἰς τὸν
ἐλέφαντα Λυδία βάπτει γυνή·
τὸ στόμα ρόδων ἄνθος ἦν,
ὅταν ἄρχηται τὸ ρόδον
ἀνοίγειν τῶν φύλλων τὰ χεῖλη.
. . . ἐπήνουν τὸ μέγεθος,
ἐξεπεπλήγμην τὸ κάλλος.

108. Height is another indicator of divinity found in Homeric and classical texts.

*An Ethiopian
Story 1.2.1-2*

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

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

*An Ethiopian
Story 1.2.6*

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

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

*An Ethiopian
Story 2.23.1*

... particularly Pythian Apollo, and also to Theagenes and Charicleia, the noble and fair, for they count as **gods** in my book.

... αὐτῷ γε ἀπόλλωνι πυθίῳ προσέτι θεαγένει καὶ χαρικλείᾳ τοῖς καλοῖς τε καὶ ἀγαθοῖς, ἐπεὶ καὶ τούτους εἰς θεοὺς ἀναγράφω.

*An Ethiopian
Story 2.31.1*

... there was something special, something **godlike**, about the **light** in the baby's eyes, so piercing yet so enchanting was [her] gaze.

καὶ ἄλλως καὶ τὸ παιδίον αὐτόθεν μέγα τι καὶ θεῖον τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἐξέλαμπεν, οὕτω μοι περισκοποῦντι γοργόν τε καὶ ἐπαγωγὸν ἐνεΐδε.

*An Ethiopian
Story 5.10.2*

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

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

*An Ethiopian
Story 8.9.13*

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

ἐπέβη προλαβοῦσα τῆς πυρᾶς
καὶ εἰς τὸ μεσαίτατον
ἐνιδρυθεῖσα αὐτὴ μὲν ἐπὶ
πλεῖστον ἀπαθῆς εἰσθήκει,
περιρρέοντος αὐτὴν μάλλον
τοῦ πυρὸς ἢ προσπλάζοντος
καὶ λυμαινομένου μὲν οὐδὲν
ὑποχωροῦντος δὲ καθ’ ὃ μέρος
ὀρμήσειεν ἡ Χαρίκλεια καὶ
περιαυγάζεσθαι μόνον καὶ
διοπτεύεσθαι παρέχοντος
ἐπιφαιδρυνομένην ἐκ τοῦ
περιαυγάζματος τὸ κάλλος
καὶ οἷον ἐν πυρίνῳ θαλάμῳ
νυμφευομένην

*An Ethiopian
Story 10.9*

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

Μηδὲ κελεῦσαι τοὺς
ἐπιτεταγμένους ἀναμείνασα
ἐνέδου τε τὸν ἐκ Δελφῶν ἱερὸν
κιτῶνα, ἐκ πηριδίου τινὸς ὃ
ἐπεφέρετο προκομίσασα,
χρυσουφῆ τε ὄντα καὶ ἄκτισι
κατάπαστον, τὴν τε κόμην
ἀνεῖσα καὶ οἶον κάτοχος
φανεῖσα προσέδραμέ τε καὶ
ἐφίλατο τῇ ἑσχάρᾳ καὶ
εἰσθήκει πολὺν χρόνον ἀπθῆς,
τῷ τε κάλλει τότε πλέον
ἐκλάμποντι καταστράπτουσα,
περίοπτος ἐφ’ ὑψηλοῦ πᾶσι
γεγεννημένη, καὶ πρὸς τοῦ
σχήματος τῆς στολῆς
ἀγάλματι θεοῦ πλέον ἢ θνητῇ
γυναικὶ προσεικαζομένη.
Θάμβος γοῦν ἅμα πάντας
κατέσχε·

Callirhoe, the heroine of *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, is frequently assumed to be divine by those she encounters, more so than any of the protagonists in the other novels. There are at least nine points in the narrative where Callirhoe is worshipped as a goddess, described in terms of light and brilliance that associate her with divinity,¹⁰⁹ or where she is otherwise understood to be an epiphany of a goddess.¹¹⁰ One example must suffice here: after Callirhoe is purchased as a slave by Dionysius, her new master catches sight of her for the first time and begins to bow down to her in worship, believing her to be Aphrodite. Quoting Homer, Dionysius remarks how “Of in the guise of strangers from distant lands / the gods watch human insolence and righteousness” (2.3.6). His behavior in this section is ironic; only a few sections earlier, Dionysius was in disbelief that his new slave could be beautiful, since Dionysius subscribes to the understanding that only the children of gods have radiant beauty (2.1.5).

Anthia, the female lead of *Ephesian Tale*, is introduced using a comparison to Artemis.¹¹¹ Scarcely do we begin the novel when we hear that Anthia was often mistaken by crowds as the patron deity of Ephesus.¹¹² We first meet her at a festival to Artemis, where we read about a procession in which Anthia plays a major role:¹¹³

109. For a fuller exploration of this trope in the romances, see my discussion in “A Robe Like Lightning: Clothing Changes and Identification in *Joseph and Aseneth*,” in *Dressing Judeans and Christians in Antiquity*, ed. Alicia Batten et al (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 137–153.

110. *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 1.1; 1.1.15–16; 1.14.1; 2.1.5; 2.2.2; 2.3.6; 3.2.14; 3.9.1; 5.3.9. This is not an exhaustive catalogue of epiphanic allusions.

111. A further clear example where Anthia is worshipped as a goddess can be found in *Ephesian Tale* 1.12.1–2.

112. *Ibid.*, 1.1.

113. On the imitation of gods and goddesses by their cult personnel, see Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*, trans. J. Raffan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 97; Richard Hamilton, “Euripidean Priests,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 89 (1985): 55; Jeremy Tanner, *The Invention of Art History in Ancient Greece: Religion, Society and Artistic Rationalisation* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2006), 57–60; J. B. Connolly, *Portrait of a Priestess: Women and Ritual in Ancient Greece* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University

Anthia’s beauty was an object of wonder . . . she wore a purple tunic down to the knee, fastened with a girdle and falling loose over her arms, with a fawnskin over it, a quiver attached, and arrows for weapons; she carried javelins and was followed by dogs. Often as they saw her in the sacred enclosure the Ephesians would worship her as Artemis. And so on this occasion too the crowd gave a cheer when they saw her, and there was a whole clamor of exclamations from the spectators: some were amazed and said it was the goddess in person; some that it was someone else made by the goddess in her own image. But they all prayed and prostrated themselves and congratulated her parents.¹¹⁴

Regardless of whether the crowd understands Anthia as an epiphany of the goddess or as her manifestation on earth, they behave the same way, and bow down in worship. Anthia is the goddess here because of her dogs and fawnskin, and because of her beauty, another signifier of divinity.¹¹⁵

This theme is also visible in *Leucippe and Clitophon* where Leucippe, the titular heroine, is described in terms that hint at her divinity. Clitophon first glimpses Leucippe in 1.4 and he is immediately struck by how suddenly she seems to have appeared (ἐκφαίνεται), and he is blinded by her dazzling, lightning-like beauty. Leucippe’s tall form likewise suggests to Clitophon that this woman is someone extraordinary. This characterization of Leucippe is in line with other texts where divinities are described in terms of

Press, 2007), 104–115; and G. Petridou, “On Divine Epiphanies: Contextualizing and Conceptualizing Epiphanic Narratives in Greek Literature and Culture (7th C BC–2nd C AD)” (PhD diss., University of Exeter, 2006), 31–39. On the relationships between goddesses and their mortal impersonators, see Deborah Lyons, *Gender and Immortality: Heroines in Ancient Greek Myth and Cult* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 134–70.

114. *Ephesian Tale* 1.2.2ff.

115. W. R. Conner distinguishes between Anthia as goddess and Anthia’s role in depicting the goddess (“Festivals and Processions: Civic Ceremonial and Political Manipulation in Archaic Greece,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 107 [1987]: 44) but more recent scholarship articulates the problem with distinguishing in a phenomenological sense a mortal woman dressed as a goddess from the goddess herself. In other words, from the point of view of those watching the procession, Anthia’s humanity makes no difference—she is the goddess. See Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 17. Plutarch’s example of the epiphany of a goddess in the midst of a battle (*Life of Aratus* 32.1–2) is a good example of an ancient attitude toward this ontological question.

their great height, bright appearance, and more than mortal beauty; Leucippe, then, appears to Clitophon as a goddess.¹¹⁶

The characterization of the heroine Charikleia in *An Ethiopian Story* also participates in this generic pattern, and uses descriptive terms to mark her as a goddess. Charikleia is depicted in the posture or costume of a divinity multiple times in the novel. The reader is first introduced to Charikleia in 1.2.1-2, where she holds a bow and quiver of arrows that is reminiscent of Artemis but also rests in a posture like Isis, since she cradles her wounded lover; the characters who come upon her in this pose cannot decide, as in *Ephesian Tale*, whether she is a goddess or the manifestation of the goddess as her priestess (1.2.6). Significantly, one notable example of Charikleia's depiction as radiantly divine occurs at the same time that she would have been put to death as a human sacrifice in 10.9:

Then, before the people supervising the test [of her virginity by standing on the gridiron] could tell her what to do, she produced, from a little pouch that she was carrying, her Delphic robe, woven with gold thread and embroidered with rays, and put it on. She let her hair fall free, ran forward like one possessed, and sprang onto the gridiron, where she stood for some time without taking any hurt, her beauty blazing with a new and dazzling radiance [τῷ τε κάλλει τότε πλέον ἐκλάμποντι καταστράπτουσα] as she stood conspicuous on her lofty pedestal; in her magnificent robe she seemed more like an image of a goddess [ἀγάλματι θεοῦ πλέον ἢ θνητῆς γυναικί] than a mortal woman. A thrill of wonder ran through the crowd.¹¹⁷

116. In another example, toward the end of the novel when Leucippe and Clitophon are about to be reunited, a recognition scene takes place that relies on Leucippe's resemblance to the goddess Artemis. For this study, Kasper Bro Larsen's *Recognizing the Stranger: Recognition Scenes and the Gospel of John* (Leiden: Brill, 2008) is particularly useful in its analysis of recognition scenes; its implications will be discussed in the conclusion. See also, Peter Gainsford, "Formal Analysis of Recognition Scenes in the *Odyssey*," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 1, no. 23 (2003): 41-59.

117. For more information on the use of light and fire as indicators of divine presence in Homer, see above. This particular scene blends the allusions to the goddesses and the heroines; Charikleia is a goddess because of her appearance in the flames. But because she is spared from death, her experience on the pyre holds double meanings, the second of which will be discussed in

As in the other novels, language describing Charikleia’s brightness and radiance associates her with goddesses who are typically portrayed in the same way. It is also notable, as I will demonstrate in chapter three, that it is precisely at the moment when Charikleia should have died that her divinity becomes apparent.

In this section I have outlined in brief the most relevant portions of the Greek romance novels where the protagonists are described as divine. This trope references the epiphanic scenes found in Homeric literature, as outlined by Turkeltaub and alluded to by others scholars. Although some would argue that these characters are merely appearing in the image of the goddess, or that those witnessing their divine appearance are duped into thinking they are divine, I have suggested that the porousness of the boundary between the mortal and divine ontological categories makes this question irrelevant. Charicleia, Callirhoe, Anthia, and Leucippe are described as goddesses; the actions of those around them confirm this identity, often ironically. The appearance of an individual in the image of a goddess has the effect, for practical and literary purposes, of rendering that person a manifestation of the goddess. However, the identities of these female figures are not one-dimensional; their identities are complicated by the fact that the author uses Homeric literature not only to mark them as divine, but also to compare them to the heroes and heroines of the literature of previous eras.

Allusions to the Heroines of Classical Literature

The romances make use of tropes and descriptors used by classical literature to link their heroines with those in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. By way of illustration, this section will examine examples of specific association between the novels’ heroines and Ariadne,

chapter three. There I will demonstrate that her appearance also becomes significant when the continuing use of the trope of human sacrifice by the novels is examined in this context.

Penelope, and Helen. The novels' reliance on Homer and other ancient texts concretely links the main characters of the romances with characters in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. As I mentioned above, Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe* quotes directly from the *Iliad*¹¹⁸ twelve times and the *Odyssey* nine.¹¹⁹ These quotations do more than merely display the author's education—they also associate his characters with those of Homer. The author's use of the *Odyssey* in 1.1.14 links the main female protagonist, Callirhoe, with Penelope: the phrase, "her knees gave way and her heart as well" comes from *Odyssey* 4.703 after Penelope learns that her suitors were planning on killing Telemachus. This is, indeed, a stock quote for both Homer and Chariton.¹²⁰ Thus, when Callirhoe uses this line in response to learning that she is to marry a strange young man, the echoes of Penelope's fear ring in the readers' ears.

When Callirhoe is presumed dead after Chariton strikes her in a fit of jealousy, she is described as a "sleeping Ariadne" by those who attend her funeral. This popular theme in literature is used here by Chariton to reference the tale of how Ariadne helped Theseus against the Minotaur but was then abandoned by him on his return to Athens as she lay sleeping.¹²¹ She is again compared to Ariadne and to Leda, mother of Helen by Zeus, in 4.1.8.

Callirhoe also is likened to Helen through citations of Homer. When she is entering the courtroom in the final stages of the plot in 5.5.8–9, Chariton describes her appearance with a quote from

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

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

120. Reardon, "Introduction," 23 n. 6; Chariton uses a similar phrase, this time with reference to Dionysius, in both 3.6.3 and 4.5.9 (cf. *Iliad* 21.114).

121. *Callirhoe* 1.6; Reardon, "Introduction," 29 n. 18.

the *Iliad* 3.146, when Helen appears on the wall. In the next line, Chariton uses a line from the *Odyssey* to compare her to Penelope and her suitors:

Εἰση̄θεν οὖν εἰς τὸ δικαστήριον, οἷαν ὁ θεῖος ποιητὴς τὴν Ἑλένην ἐπιστῆναί φησι τοῖς “ἀμφὶ Πρίαμον καὶ Πάνθοον ἠδὲ Θυμοίτην”¹²² δημογέρουσιν· ὀφείσα δὲ ἄμβρος ἐποίησε καὶ σιωπήν, “πάντες δ’ ἠρήσαντο παραὶ λεχέεσσι κλιθῆναι.”¹²³

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

The important point is therefore not that Callirhoe is associated with one Homeric heroine specifically; her attributes call to mind a variety of heroines—Helen, Penelope, and Ariadne. Rather, the key element is that she is a heroine in the pattern of the Homeric heroines and shares not only their attributes but also the literary characteristics that role implies, as I will show.

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

ὥς φάτο· τὸν δ’ ἄχεος νεφέλη ἐκάλυψε μέλαινα,
ἀμφοτέρησι δὲ χερσὶν ἔλων κόνιν αἰθαλόεσσαν
χεύατο κακ κεφαλῆς, χαρίεν δ’ ἤσχυνε πρόσωπον.¹²⁴

122. *Iliad* 3.146

123. *Odyssey* 1.366 = 18.213

124. *Callirhoe* 1.4.6.

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

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

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

ἐπέστη δὲ [αὐτῆ] εἰκὼν Χαίρεου πάντα αὐτῷ [ὁμοία]
 μέγεθος τε καὶ ὄμματα κάλ' εἰκνῖα,
 καὶ φωνήν, καὶ τοῖα περὶ χροῖ εἴματα ἔστο.

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

In the *Iliad*, Achilles experiences the vision of his dead friend. In *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Callirhoe receives it. Chaereas can say no more than that he entrusts their unborn son to her care before Callirhoe leaps up from sleep in order to embrace her husband. Limited though his message might have been, Callirhoe resolves to honor his request, as Achilles does Patroclus's.¹²⁵ The association of Callirhoe with Achilles and Chaereas with Patroclus happens again in

125. There are many other instances where Chaereas is associated with other heroic characters. In 3.5.6, Chaerea's mother speaks to him using the words of Hecuba addressing Hector when she begs Hector not to enter into battle with Achilles.

Chariton’s work. Several brief examples:¹²⁶ first, in 4.1.3, Dionysius uses the words of Patroclus’s ghost from *Iliad* 23.71 to impress upon Callirhoe that just as Patroclus wants burying as soon as possible, so too Chaereas should be grieved quickly. Second, the tomb that Dionysius suggests building for Chaereas’s memory is described using *Odyssey* 24.83’s description of Achilles’s tomb. Third, Chaereas quotes Homer in a speech he makes in 7.3.5, and the readers would hear, in his altered use of the *Iliad*, his association of himself with the hero Diomedes and of his friend Polycharmus with Sthenelos.¹²⁷

Fourth, Chaereas is compared to Protesilaus in 5.19:

ἔξαίφνης γοῦν ἀνεβόα [πολλάκις] “ποῖος οὔτος ἐπ’ ἐμοῦ
Προτεσίλεως ἀνεβίω;”

At any rate he suddenly began to shout, “What sort of Protesilaus is this who has come back from the dead to attack me?”

Protesilaus, the first Greek to be killed at Troy, is a significant hero at the time of composition of this novel.¹²⁸ Protesilaus was missed so much by his wife, Laodamia, that he was permitted to return to life for one day, after which his wife took her own life. Here Chariton uses the reference to the hero to comment on both the miraculous nature of Chaereas’s reappearance and the quality of the love shared by *Chaereas and Callirhoe*. Finally, reference to hero and heroine in love is again found when Chaereas and Callirhoe are finally reunited at the end of their long journeys in 8.1.17:

126. Other examples abound (e.g., *Callirhoe* 7.2.4, where Chaereas uses Hector’s words in *Iliad* 22.304ff); here I have only outlined a few to illustrate the point.

127. *Iliad* 9.48; Hock, “Educational Curriculum,” 22.

128. Philostratus’s *Heroikos* was written in the third century ce; two shrines are confirmed places of worship for Protesilaus. Philostratus, *Heroikos*, *Writings from the Greco-Roman World*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Jennifer K. Berenson Maclean and Ellen Bradshaw Aitken (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001.)

ἐπεὶ δὲ ἄλις ἦν δακρύων καὶ διηγημάτων, περιπλακέντες ἀλλήλοις
 “ἀσπάσιοι λέκτροιο παλαιοῦ θεσμὸν ἴκοντο.”

When they had had their fill of tears and tales, embracing each other,
 “they gladly came to the ancient rite of the bed.”

The quoted portion here comes from the *Odyssey* 23.296 and describes the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope. In comparing the two lovers to Odysseus and Penelope, Chariton makes claims about their roles in the novel. Not only are the individual characters associated with individual heroes, but the relationship the characters have to one another is also to some extent patterned after the one between Odysseus and Penelope in the *Odyssey*. Thus, the associations between heroes are not fixed but are mutable; the static aspect of this association is that the heroes of the novels are described using quotes and allusions to the Homeric heroes, so that in the minds of the readers, the two become associated.

But beyond individual quotations, Chariton sets up his readers' expectations with mythological references to heroes when foreshadowing plot elements, as in 1.1.16. There the author compares the wedding of Chaereas and Chariton to that of Thetis (the Nereid and future mother of Achilles) to the mortal Peleus. In that tale, every god but Discord (Eris) was invited; Eris's revenge set into course the events that would cause the Trojan War. In *Callirhoe*, Chariton references the strife yet to come by implying that Discord was also present at *his* protagonists' nuptials; the comparison not only locates the plot of the novel in the pattern of the Trojan War, but, further, associates the individuals involved in the epic with Chaereas and Callirhoe. “By means of these quotations Chariton compares his characters and events to those of epic, comparisons that thereby redound to the credit of the former by giving them a heroic backdrop.”¹²⁹ In this way, Chariton takes the established pattern in

Homer and applies its situation to his own characters. The characters therefore fall into the familiar roles cast for them first by Homer and then adopted by Chariton. Certain expectations are therefore established regarding the characterization of these heroes and heroines.

An Ethiopian Story also contains allusions to heroes and heroines of the Homeric epics in its descriptions of the protagonists and their fates.¹³⁰ In one instance, we find not a quotation but an allusion to a scene from the *Iliad* (6.321ff) where Hektor leaves the battlefield to find Paris; Hektor, finding Paris readying his weapons in his bedroom, exhorts him to join the battle.¹³¹ In *An Ethiopian Story* 1.27, Thyamis is polishing his helmet and sharpening his lance when Theagenes and Charicleia, led by Knemon, burst in on him and warn him to prepare for an attack. The scene is imitative of the *Iliad* and resurrects a memory of the Homeric plot taking place in the characters of *An Ethiopian Story* even if there is not a precise association of Homeric hero with romantic hero.

An Ethiopian Story again references Homer’s works in 2.19. After surviving a bandit attack, Theagenes and Charicleia head for a village with the aim of meeting up with Knemon at a later time. Theagenes and Charicleia decide to disguise themselves as beggars, but Knemon finds this idea laughable since their great beauty belies their true identities:

“χαλεπῶς μὲν” ἀπεκρίνατο ὁ Θεαγένης “Χαρικλείας γε ταύτης ἕνεκα τοῦ βραδίξειν μακρότερον ἀήθως ἐχούσης· ἐλεσόμεθα δ’ οὖν ὅμως εἰς πτωχοὺς καὶ τοὺς καὶ τροφήν ἀγύρτας ἑαυτοὺς μεταπλάσαντες.” “νῆ

129. Hock, “Educational Curriculum,” 22.

130. In fact, this tale abounds with quotations and allusions to Homer’s corpus; here, however, there is only space to examine those which pertain to our protagonists. It is clear from the frequency of citations, however, that Heliodorus is very conscious of his lineage as a storyteller; his mimesis of Homer suggests that he is attempting that most sincere form of flattery.

131. John R. Morgan, “*An Ethiopian Story*,” in *The Collected Greek Novels*, ed. B. P. Reardon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 374 n. 28.

δία” εἶπεν ὁ Κνήμων· “καὶ γὰρ τῶν ὄψεων σφόδρα διεστραμμένως ἔχετε, ἢ δὲ Χαρίκλεια καὶ πλέον ἅτε καὶ τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν ἀρτίως ἐκκεκομμένη· καὶ ἐμοὶ δοκεῖτε τοιοῖδε ὄντες οὐκ ἀκόλους ἀλλ’ ἄοράς τε καὶ λέβητας αἰτήσιν.”

“It will not be easy,” answered Theagenes, “at least for Charicleia, who is not used to walking long distances. All the same we shall get there. We shall disguise ourselves as beggars, vagabonds who beg for a living.” “Of course!” said Knemon. “Your faces are hideously ugly, Charicleia’s even more so now she has just had her eye cut out!¹³² It seems to me that beggars like you will not ask for scraps but for swords and cauldrons.”

This scene “reverses *Odyssey* 17.222, where Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, is described by the arrogant Melanthios as ‘begging for handouts, never for swords or cauldrons’ (the kind of thing that any self-respecting member of epic society would desire as a gift of friendship.)”¹³³ In his mimetic inversion of the scene, Heliodorus associates Odysseus with his own heroes, Charicleia and Theagenes.¹³⁴

Later in the chapter, when Kalasiris is recounting how Charikles came to foster Charicleia, Heliodorus uses a phrase borrowed from the *Iliad*. In *Iliad* 18.437, Achilles is described by Thetis; both Achilles and Charikleia are depicted as having grown up quickly “like a vigorous young plant.”¹³⁵ Achilles is also referenced when describing Theagenes’s presence; in 3.3.5, Theagenes’s appearance in a procession, holding a spear of ash wood, recalls Achilles’s spear of

132. Earlier, in 2.16, Charikleia has a prophetic dream that her eye is taken out by sword; Knemon’s comment is sarcastic rather than literal.

133. Morgan, “*An Ethiopian Story*,” 391 n. 43.

134. Later in this section, in 2.19, when Knemon and Thermouthis are making a separate journey, Heliodorus uses several Homer-isms. See Morgan, “*An Ethiopian Story*,” 392 nn. 44, 45. Theagenes is also associated with Odysseus in 5.5.2 by the scar that both received in the event of hunting a boar (*Odyssey* 19.392–475; cf. Morgan, “*An Ethiopian Story*,” 449 n. 129: “This assimilates Theagenes to the second great epic hero, Odysseus, whose nurse, Eyrkleia, recognizes him by a scar given him by a hunted boar.”).

135. In Homer, ὁ δ’ ἀνέδραμεν ἔρνεϊ ἴσος; in Heliodorus, τάχιστα δὲ εἰς ἀκμὴν καθάπερ ἔρνος τι τῶν εὐθαλῶν ἀνέδραμεν (2.33.3).

the same material.¹³⁶ It appears that gender is not a discriminating factor in the association of the heroes and heroines of the romances with those in the Homeric corpus, since Charicleia is compared to Achilles, as described just above, and also to Herakles, such as when she appears dressed in fine clothes in a golden chariot, riding out of the temple of Artemis.¹³⁷ According to Morgan, this passage “echoes *Odyssey* 11.613–614, where Odysseus describes the baldric worn by the ghost of Herakles.”¹³⁸ Again, in using Homeric terminology familiar to his readers, Heliodorus creates an association between his main characters and the heroes his story emulates.

While the above two novels, Chariton’s *Chaereas and Callirhoe* and Heliodorus’s *An Ethiopian Story*, use explicit quotations to mark their protagonists as “modern-day” epic heroes and heroines, Xenophon’s *An Ephesian Tale* and Achilles Tatius’s *Leucippe and Clitophon* use more oblique methods to accomplish similar ends. Neither of these texts contains many explicit references to Homeric texts, and when they do occur, they are not often used to describe the main characters in the way that such quotations were used in *Chaereas and Callirhoe* or *An Ethiopian Story*. Instead, Xenophon’s and Achilles Tatius’s works contain references to the heroic character and heroic actions that were culturally expected in the Greco-Roman world. Not all heroes worshipped or acknowledged in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds found descriptions of their deeds recounted in Homer’s epics; thus, we should not expect that Homer should be the only text referenced by the novels in their characterization of the protagonists,

136. The ash-wood spear is referred to throughout the *Iliad*. Cf. Philostratus, *Heroikos*, 19.4. Theagenes is compared to Achilles, whom Theagenes claims as ancestor (cf. *Ethiopian Story*, 4.5.5), at other points in the narrative such as 4.2.3 (describing Theagenes as “swift footed,” an epithet of Achilles in Homer), and 4.3.1 (cf. *Iliad* 21.203–384; Theagenes is described, as he awaits his turn at the race, as being like Achilles before his battle with the river Skamandros.).

137. *Ethiopian Story* 3.4.2.

138. Morgan, “*An Ethiopian Story*,” 412 n. 85.

nor should we expect that *texts* must be referenced in order to show this characterization. “The Greek novelists have inherited the whole Greek tradition with its poetical and historical myths, and they draw parallels between those myths and their heroes in order to delineate the latter, but also to establish their positions vis-à-vis other actors.”¹³⁹ For *An Ephesian Tale* and *Leucippe and Clitophon*, the characterization of the protagonists as heroes and heroines is more culturally than literarily bound. The authors do associate their protagonists with heroines through direct reference, but also, as with Leucippe and Anthia, through characterization. Jennifer Larson notes that “in a heroization story specific to females, the heroine dies (often attempting to escape a rapist) and is made immortal by Artemis. Usually the heroine becomes identified with Artemis in the process.”¹⁴⁰ The harrowing tales of Leucippe and Anthia mimic the ordeals of classical heroines: their chastity is consistently challenged, they are threatened with death at every turn, and they do appear to have associations with corresponding deities, such as Artemis. However, there are important differences. One of the differences is that in our romances, we arrive at a happy ending: the protagonists escape death. However, as I will show in the next chapter, the threat of death is so closely associated with the heroines that it is almost as if the sacrifice of these divinely beautiful heroines actually occurs.

Conclusions

It is clear from the above survey that the heroines of the romance novels were created by their authors as characters whose identities straddle the boundary of divine and mortal in a way that was to some extent part and parcel of the Greco-Roman expectations around

139. Alain Billault, “Characterization in the Ancient Novel,” in *The Novel in the Ancient World*, ed. Gareth Schmeling (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 127.

140. Jennifer Larson, *Greek Heroine Cults* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 16–17.

these categories. Their depiction as shining, beautiful, exaggerated women indicates to those around them (and to the readership) that they are divine, associated with Artemis, Isis, or Aphrodite. The epiphanies that occur throughout the narratives are not cases of mistaken identity; those who bow down and attempt to worship the heroines are not only foreigners or low-class citizens, but also elite members of society such as Dionysius. The removal of the “true” identities of the heroines at the outset of the plots, and the heroines’ reluctance to reveal their ordinary identities to those they meet, enhances the narrative reality of their divinity, not only to the characters who question their humanity, but also to the omniscient reader, who understands that gods sometimes walk the earth in human form.

Their descriptions in other cases also call to mind both the male and female heroes of Homer’s epics, especially regarding the hardships both categories of heroes undergo; the specifics of this association will be developed in the next chapter, but for the time being, I point out that the common characteristic heroes share is their *agon*. The heroines in the novels should therefore be viewed in terms of the heroines in the classical literature, whose beauty associates them with the divine sphere and whose sacrifice is often the result of their proximity to the gods and their handling of human beings’ fates. As in the Homeric corpus, the heroes’ lives and deaths are tied to the gods who oversee and direct the events of the stories. However, whereas in Gregory Nagy’s texts the association of heroes and gods occurs at the level of cult, in the romances this association occurs at the level of narrative; that is, the heroines and goddesses are made equivalent throughout the plot, in a variety of examples. The divine characteristics of the heroines in the romance novels associate these women not just with the *lives* and adventures of the heroes and heroines of the ancient world, but also with their *deaths*. The

significance of a hero's death for establishing his or her association with a deity will be discussed in the next chapter.

“Her Viscera Leapt Out”
(Leucippe and Clitophon 3.15)

Introduction

In the previous chapter I illustrated how, just as John’s Gospel is concerned with identifying its protagonist as divine, the novels also take pains to associate their heroines with the main goddesses driving the plots. The association between protagonist and god is clear, but its significance is yet to be uncovered. Jesus is killed in the course of John’s narrative; in 6:51c-58, Jesus advocates the consumption of his own flesh. How can these grotesque elements be reconciled with the Gospel’s fixation with Jesus’ divinity? To answer this question, it behooves us to return to the novels and the Greco-Roman religious world out of which they emerged. In these texts, too, the protagonists are severely tested, frequently to the point of sacrifice and near-death; it is in this context that John’s concern with Jesus’ physical body and its consumption in 6:51c-58 makes sense as a christological statement.

Jonathan Z. Smith, writing about the ways in which sacred space defines how we understand ritual, argues that “the temple serves as a focusing lens, marking and revealing significance.”¹ The temple functions in this way because it is a space demarcated for meaning; within its boundaries, every action is potentially a ritual. When an action takes place inside a sacred space it has a different significance than if that same action occurred in ordinary, unmarked space. I argue that the Greek romance novels act in a similar way; they are lenses through which we can view the relationship between mortal and divine. Gregory Nagy’s work on the relationship between literature and cult illustrates this proposal well, since for him, the epic focuses the relationship between the hero and the deity in a way that manifests itself in their association in cult. In the novels, I argue, the lens is focused on that same relationship between the goddess and the heroine, but the cult activity, too, takes place within that boundary. In examining the antagonism that exists between the heroines and the various gods and goddesses in the novels, I aim to illustrate how the association between the heroine and the divine reaches its climax at the moment of ultimate antagonism: human sacrifice.

Antagonism Between Heroes and Gods

Gregory Nagy’s work *The Best of the Achaeans* shows how “antagonism between hero and god in myth corresponds to the ritual requirements of symbiosis between hero and god in cult.”² His work

1. Jonathan Z. Smith, “The Bare Facts of Ritual,” *History of Religions* 20, no. 1–2 (1980): 113.
2. Gregory Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 121; cf. Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 119; Walter Burkert, “Greek Tragedy and Sacrificial Ritual,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 7 (1966): 102–104; and Walter Burkert, “Apellai und Apellon,” *Rheinisches Museum Für Philologie* 118, no. 1–2 (1975): 19, where, most significantly for this study, he writes, “Achilles, fast ein Doppelgänger Apellons, steht zum Gott offenbar im gleichen Verhältnis wie Iphigenie zu Artemis, Erechtheus zu Poseidon, oder Hyakinthos zu Apollon: der Heros

focuses on Homer as a representation of a cultural system³ and pays close attention to the linguistic issues in Homer and to the poetics involved in expressing meaning. His main point rests on the fact that the repetition of elements constructs a system akin to culture. He therefore approaches the texts as a system rather than as literature in order to argue “against the assumption that the Homeric text of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* . . . can be viewed synchronically as a cross-section that represents a single real composition or performance.”⁴ For Nagy, and I agree, the Homeric texts (and, as we will see, the novels) develop meanings within themselves rather than historically—meanings that shift and are at times self-referential.⁵ To that end, the relationship between the god and the hero is culturally governed: “there is no question . . . about the poet’s freedom to say accurately what he means. What he means, however, is strictly regulated by tradition.”⁶ That is, Nagy also relates the Homeric understanding of the hero-god relationship to the establishment of hero cults in the archaic age, at the same time as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* “were attaining their ultimate form.”⁷ The correspondence between the formulation of literature dealing with heroic definition and the rise in cults celebrating heroes contributes to Nagy’s understanding of the intersection of cult and literature as it establishes the relationship between hero and god. One particularly useful example given by Nagy is that of Pyrrhos, a cult hero of Delphi.⁸ Pyrrhos, also known

als umdunkeltes Spiegelbild des Gottes in der unauf löslichen Polarität des Opfers.” / “Achilles, almost a doppelgänger of Apollo, clearly stands in the same relationship to the god as Iphigenia does to Artemis, Erechtheus to Poseidon, or Hyacinth to Apollo: the hero as a mirror image of the god, in indelible polarity to the victim” (my translation). Cf. also Marie Delcourt, *Pyrrhos et Pyrrha: Recherches sur les valeurs du feu dans les légendes helléniques*, Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l’Université de Liège 174 (Paris: Société d’édition Les Belles Lettres, 1965), 38.

3. Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, xi.

4. *Ibid.*, xv.

5. *Ibid.*, xvi–xvii.

6. *Ibid.*, 3.

7. *Ibid.*, 10.

as Neoptolemus, is the son of Achilles and likewise is associated with Apollo. Pyrrhos's cult is located at Delphi since it was believed that his bones were entombed there, directly inside the precinct of Apollo.⁹ This association of the hero with the god stems from the myths surrounding Pyrrhos's death, which many authors attribute to Apollo's hand, just as Apollo also killed Pyrrhos's father Achilles.¹⁰ Nagy notes that Pindar celebrates the death of Achilles and Pyrrhos in parallel sections of his *Paeon* 6, composed to honor Apollo specifically at Delphi, making the association between Achilles's death by Apollo and that of Pyrrhos all the more explicit.¹¹ Nagy includes in his work the various recorded ways in which Pyrrhos is killed. First is the myth that Pyrrhos tried to steal from Delphi and is killed by Apollo as a result.¹² According to Pindar, there is a disagreement between Pyrrhos and the temple attendants about the meat that was being distributed after the sacrifice. In *Paeon* 6.117–120, Apollo himself is responsible for Pyrrhos's death; in *Nemean* 7.40–43, it is the temple attendants who kill him rather than the god directly. According to Nagy, the ritual here involved trading a non-meat offering for a portion of the meat sacrifice, which Pyrrhos did with his spoils from Troy (*Nemean* 7.41); being denied his portion of meat (something that was part of the ritual at Delphi),¹³ Pyrrhos

8. *Ibid.*, 118–41. I choose this example rather than that of Achilles himself since, as Nagy observes, Achilles's ritual aspects can at times be overshadowed by his association with the epic (118). Pyrrhos serves as an example of a hero/god complex recorded in poetry that has parallels with the way Achilles is represented in epic. There are also more useful parallels between Pyrrhos and the heroines of the romance novels than there are with Achilles.

9. Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 120; Pindar, *Nemean Odes*, 7.34–35.

10. Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 121.

11. *Ibid.*; Pindar, *Paeon* 6, 78–80 (Achilles); 117–120 (Pyrrhos).

12. Nagy notes that Achilles, too, is associated with plundering the Delphic temple: “In the only Iliadic mention of Delphi [(IX 404–407) . . .] Achilles is renouncing the prospect of plundering the riches of Apollo's sanctuary there, which have just been juxtaposed with the riches contained in the citadel of Troy (at IX 401–403)” (*Best of the Achaeans*, 122).

13. *Ibid.*, 125. Parallels with *Life of Aesop* are also significant; that this later biographical novel, a genre that shares commonalities with the Hellenistic romances, echoes the pattern of conflict,

fighters to get his rightful portion and is killed in the *melée*.¹⁴ As the sacrificer, Pyrrhos should be entitled to a portion, but instead he ends up becoming the sacrifice; he is killed on the offertory table with the very knife used to distribute the sacrificial meat. The climax of Apollo’s anger toward Pyrrhos results in the hero’s slaughter in an intensely ritualized setting. Since both the myth of Pyrrhos’s death and the ritual that takes place at the site involve a squabble over ritual meat, Nagy concludes that “the convergence of themes is so close that we may see in the death of Pyrrhos the official Delphic myth that integrates the ideology of the ritual.”¹⁵ That is, the intersection of the death of Pyrrhos in this sacrificial context *at the level of story* feeds into the contemporary ritual practiced at Delphi that honors both Apollo and Pyrrhos as associated divine beings.¹⁶

The case of Pyrrhos illustrates the antagonism between god and hero in literature and its role in the establishment of cult. The romances of the Hellenistic world also contain this antagonism—our protagonists are flung about the world at the hands of various divine forces, put in danger, and eventually brought home. There are, however, no established cults, to my knowledge, for any of our

death, and heroization of the earlier Pyrrhos creates another link in the chain that binds Greek literature and cultural expectations around the immortalization of heroes.

14. In the next chapter, we will see how this event is translated into the novel genre in the example of *Life of Aesop*, a text with which Lawrence Wills (*The Quest of the Historical Gospel: Mark, John, and the Origins of the Gospel Genre* [New York: Routledge, 1997]) has drawn parallels to John.

15. Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 126.

16. Nagy further links this association to Achilles in the Homeric tradition by pointing out the affinity to the theme of the sacrificial meal that the Aeacids have. “For the Achilles figure, the most overt . . . Homeric manifestation of the ritual element is the first song of Demodokos at [*Odyssey*] viii 72–82, where the hero’s future death is implicitly linked with the themes of Delphi/sacrifice/quarrel—and these are the same themes that frame the death of Pyrrhos as it is presented in Pindar’s *Paean* 6 and *Nemean* 7” (*ibid.*, 137–38). This leads Nagy to ponder whether the references to the *dais* where Achilles and Odysseus fought is actually a reference to the rituals practiced at Delphi, making *Od.* viii. 72–82 even more ritualistically inclined than previously thought and therefore even further evidence of the association created between god and hero in cult (*ibid.*, 138).

heroines. Rather, the antagonism in the narrative is reinterpreted so that the cult action occurs within the text itself: the sacrificial offering is conflated with the divine antagonism that results in the near death of the protagonist. That is, both the sacrifice and the antagonism occur at the level of story—there is a simultaneity that superimposes the two elements in the romances upon each other. This is especially the case since the heroines are often offered up as sacrificial victims themselves. As such, the antagonism between heroine and divinity results in the sacrificial act that would, as it does in Pindar, institute a cult. *Leucippe and Clitophon*, *An Ephesian Tale*, and *An Ethiopian Story* are explicit about the responsibility each deity has in leading the protagonist to near sacrificial victimhood; *Chaereas and Callirhoe* lacks the sacrificial aspect of the antagonism but nevertheless firmly establishes the same type of relationship between Callirhoe and Aphrodite. I will review each case in turn.

Beginning with *Leucippe and Clitophon*, Leucippe's plight—her flight from her home, her shipwreck, her apparent sacrifice—is the fault of Zeus in the eyes of her lover Clitophon, the narrator of the tale. When first Clitophon is set to be married to another girl in 2.2.2-3, the wedding is prevented due to a bad omen from Zeus: his eagle swoops down and steals the wedding sacrifice (2.12.2-3). This omen is not simply about the marriage Clitophon escapes but also foreshadows Zeus's responsibility for the whole of the events that transpire as a result of the failed sacrifice. Since the wedding is called off, Clitophon takes the opportunity to pursue Leucippe more aggressively, leading to the attempted sleepover that in turn necessitates the couple's flight. When their ocean voyage takes a turn for the worse, Clitophon remarks that Poseidon has shown them favor by not dashing them on the rocks or drowning them (3.5.1-4) but later blames the god for saving them for an even worse fate (3.10.1-2, 6). Indeed, both Zeus and Poseidon appear to be jointly

responsible for the twin fates of Clitophon and Leucippe. Upon arriving in Egypt, our heroes approach a statue of Zeus in the hope of receiving an oracle about their destinies. No sooner is their request made than they round a corner and come face-to-face with twin paintings depicting the plights of Andromeda and Prometheus.¹⁷ The length and depth of the description of the paintings suggests that they are the oracular response given by the god(s): Andromeda, who was offered up to a sea monster to appease Poseidon,¹⁸ is clearly a stand-in for Leucippe. Prometheus is therefore the type for Clitophon, punished by Zeus for brazen behavior and saved only by Hercules himself. Clearly, the author sets up an antagonistic relationship between the heroes Leucippe and Clitophon and the gods responsible for their fates; while the pair praises the gods for each respite, they also recognize that their troubles come directly from the hands of the gods. Leucippe’s sacrifice, especially, is connected to the gods in this way: hardly has Clitophon finished his soliloquy in 3.10 when Leucippe is whisked off to become a sacrificial victim (3.12), an event that will be dissected in detail below. Her death as sacrificial victim is therefore the direct responsibility of the gods who control the plot. That Zeus and Poseidon are responsible for the tribulations the pair experience but Leucippe is not explicitly likened to either of those gods should not pose a problem. Leucippe’s own divine identity, after all, is ambiguous; we witness only that she is understood to be a goddess by those around her.

In *An Ephesian Tale*, it is clear that Eros controls the fate that the two lovers share. Habrocomes systematically disrespects Eros’s shrines, declaring himself “superior to any Eros both in physical beauty and power.”¹⁹ Eros then decides to retaliate against

17. *Leucippe and Clitophon*, 3.6–8.

18. Apollodorus, *Library*, 2.4.3–5.

19. *Ephesian Tale*, 1.1.6.

Habrocomes's disrespect: "Eros grew furious at this, being a competitive god and implacable against those who disdain him."²⁰ As punishment, Eros makes Habrocomes fall hopelessly in love with Anthia at the festival of Artemis (1.3.1-2). The pair's fate is sealed when, desperate for a cure for their children's lovesickness, an oracle of Apollo suggests their marriage, but with a foreboding twist:

τίπτε ποθεῖτε μαθεῖν νούσου τέλος ἠδὲ καὶ ἀρχήν;
 ἀμφοτέρους μία νοῦσος ἔχει, λύσις ἔνθεν ἀνυστή.
 δεῖνὰ δ' ὄρω τοῖσδεσσι πάθη καὶ ἀνήνυτα ἔργα·
 ἀμφοτέροι φεύξονται ὑπεῖρ ἄλλα λυσσοδίωκτοι,
 δεσμὰ δὲ μοχθήσουσι παρ' ἀνδράσι μιξοθαλάσσοις
 καὶ τάφος ἀμφοτέροις θάλαμος καὶ πῦρ ἀΐδηλον.
 ἀλλ' ἔτι που μετὰ πήματ' ἀρείονα πότμον ἔχουσι
 καὶ ποταμοῦ ἱεροῦ παρὰ ρεύμασιν Ἴσιδι σεμνῇ
 σωτηριῇ μετόπισθε παριστᾶσ' ὄλβια δῶρα.

Why do you long to discover the end and the start of this illness?
 Both are in the thrall to one illness, and thence must the cure be
 accomplished.
 Terrible their sufferings I can foresee and toils never-ending.
 Both will take flight o'er the sea, pursued by a frenzy of madness;
 Chains will they bear at the hands of men who consort with the ocean,
 And one tomb and annihilating fire will be their nuptial bower.
 Yet in time, when their sufferings are over, a happier fate is in store,
 And alongside the streams of the sacred river to Isis the Holy,
 Isis the Savior, in time thereafter rich gifts shall they offer.²¹

While their fathers now have an answer to their question, the solution has come with some unpleasant conditions attached. Their children are apparently doomed to have a rocky first year of marriage. With the aim of softening the oracle, Anthia and Habrocomes's fathers decide to send the couple away and put them on the ship that takes them on a world tour of hardship.²² Again the author is

20. Ibid., 1.2.1.

21. Ibid., 1.6ff

explicit in holding the gods responsible for the adventures Anthia and Habrocomes are about to experience: “But fate had not forgotten, nor did the god neglect what he had decided.”²³ With this proclamation, the tale begins its series of adventures, which endanger both the lives and chastity of our main characters, including the near sacrifice of Anthia in 2.13.

In *An Ethiopian Story*, the gods’ influence is less direct but nonetheless important for the plot. The Delphic oracle’s statement in 2.35 declares the gods’ interest in our main characters, Charicleia and Theagenes.

Τὴν χάριν ἐν πρώτοις αὐτὰρ κλέος ἕστατ’ ἔχουσαν
φράζεσθ’, ὦ Δελφοί, τὸν τε θεᾶς γενέτην·
οἱ νηὸν προλιπόντες ἐμὸν καὶ κῦμα τεμόντες
ἴξοντ’ ἡελίου πρὸς χθόνα κυανέην,
τῇ περ ἀριστοβίων μέγ’ ἀέθλιον ἐξάψονται
λευκὸν ἐπὶ κροτάφων στέμμα μελαινομένων.

One who starts in grace and ends in glory, another goddess-born:
Of these I bid you have regard, O Delphi!
Leaving my temple here and cleaving Ocean’s swelling tides,
To the black land of the Sun will they travel,
Where they will reap the reward of those whose lives are passed in
virtue:
A crown of white on brows of black.

This oracle binds Charicleia and Theagenes to their fates, decreed by Apollo of Delphi. The oracle makes allusions to Charicleia and Theagenes’s names with clever plays-on-words (“grace” “glory”/ *charis kleos*; “goddess-born”/ *thea -genes*)²⁴ that in turn suggest their divine connections. Although no one present is capable of

22. *Ibid.*, 1.10.3ff.

23. *Ibid.*, 1.10.2.

24. John R. Morgan, “*An Ethiopian Story*,” in *The Collected Greek Novels*, ed. B. P. Reardon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 409 n. 76.

understanding the meaning of the oracle at this point, later on, all becomes revealed. In 3.11, we learn that Kalasiris has received a visit from the gods in his dreams and he tells the readers how the deities instructed him regarding the pair:

ἦδη δὲ μεσοῦσης τῆν νυκτὸς ὄρω τὸν Ἀπόλλω καὶ τὴν Ἄρτεμιν ὡς ὄμην, εἴ γε ὄμην ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀληθῶς ἐώρων· καὶ ὁ μὲν τὸν Θεαγένην ἢ δὲ τὴν Χαρίκλειαν ἐνεχείριζεν· ὀνομαστί τέ με προσκαλοῦντες “ᾠρα σοι” ἔλεγον “εἰς τὴν ἐνεγκοῦσαν ἐπανήκειν, οὕτω γὰρ ὁ μοιρῶν ὑπαγορεύει θεσμός. αὐτὸς τε οὖν ἔξιθι καὶ τούσδε ὑποδεξάμενος ἄγε, συνεμπόρους ἴσα τε παισὶ ποιούμενος, καὶ παράπεμπε ἀπὸ τῆς Αἰγυπτίων ὅποι τε καὶ ὅπως τοῖς θεοῖς φίλον.

Then, in the small hours, Apollo and Artemis appeared to me, so I imagined—if indeed I did imagine it and not see them for real. Apollo entrusted Theagenes to my care; Artemis, Charicleia. They called me by name and said: “It is time now for you to return to the land of your birth, for thus the ordinance of destiny demands. Go then and take these whom we deliver to you; make them companions of your journey; consider them as your own children. From Egypt conduct them onward wherever and however it please the gods.”

Here it is even more clear that the gods Apollo and Artemis are (respectively) responsible for the fates that await Theagenes and Charicleia. The gods put the earthly well-being of the couple in the hand of Kalasiris; nevertheless, the lovers experience innumerable hardships on their travels, as directed by Apollo’s earlier oracle. The immediate “reward of those whose lives are passed in virtue” appears to be Theagenes and Charicleia’s suitability for human sacrifice at the end of the tale; as Theagenes bitterly whispers to Charicleia at the point of his near-sacrifice, “A life of virtue earns a fine wage in Ethiopia: sacrificial slaughter is chastity’s reward!”²⁵

25. *Ethiopian Story*, 10.9; “καλὰ” λέγων ἡρέμα πρὸς τὴν Χαρίκλειαν “τάτιχαιρα παρ’ Αἰθίοψι τῶν καθαρῶς βιούντων· θυσίαι καὶ σφαγαὶ τὰ ἔπαθλα τῶν σωφρονοούντων.”

John Winkler observes that the twin themes of amphiboly—that is, multiple, simultaneously “true” interpretations of the same event—and divine intervention are intricately and purposefully linked throughout Heliodorus’s novel.²⁶ First, Winkler shows how Heliodorus equivocates concerning the reasons behind certain events, first emphasizing one possibility and then suggesting another.²⁷ Winkler lists three categories of examples: the first conclude that divine providence is the most likely explanation for the turn of events being described;²⁸ the second, that material causes are to blame;²⁹ and the third, that either explanation is possible.³⁰ Winkler’s categories are useful for exploring the role of theodicy in the plot; what he does not point out, however, is that in the first category the examples all involve the interpretations of events concerning the main characters: Thyamis’s dream (1.18); the death of Kalasiris (7.11.4); Theagenes’s attempt at stopping a runaway bull (10.28.4); the outburst of Charicleia’s maid during her murder trial (8.9.2); and so on. In all of the examples listed by Winkler, the description of events tends to put more emphasis on the likelihood that the gods had a hand in the outcome than the other, naturalistic explanation. In Winkler’s second category, where naturalistic explanations are favored, the events revolve around characters unfavourable to the main instruments of the plot, namely Theagenes and Charicleia. In these examples, barbarians and “Others” equivocate about the interpretation of events (examples include the truth about Homer’s Egyptian origins in 3.14.4, the etymology of a place-name in 2.34.2, and the reasons for Thyamis’s attempted murder of Charicleia in the cave in 1.30.6).

26. John J. Winkler, “The Mendacity of Kalasiris and the Narrative Strategy of Heliodoros’ *Aithiopika*,” in *Later Greek Literature*, Yale Classical Studies 27, eds. John J. Winkler and Gordon Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 93–158.

27. *Ibid.*, 114–37.

28. *Ibid.*, 122–23.

29. *Ibid.*, 123–26.

30. *Ibid.*, 126–29.

Winkler concludes that “both groups of alternatives—those weighted toward the supernatural and those weighted toward the natural—are meaningful and have complementary functions in the context of a melodramatic narrative whose characteristic feature is the alternation between hope and despair.”³¹ The final meaning of these amphibolic statements is clarified when Winkler discusses the third category: scenes where neither the naturalistic nor the supernatural explanation is emphasized. In these portions of the novel, the reader is not guided toward one pole or the other; instead, Heliodorus deliberately leaves open the possibility of either (or both?) explanation.³² For Winkler, this only serves to highlight the role of the divine in the resolution of the romance. This is done in a subtler manner than in other romances, which unquestioningly assign responsibility to a god.³³ Citing John Morgan,³⁴ who points out that this literary device is widely used by authors to imply that their history records strictly the facts, Winkler suggests that beyond simple realism, the amphibolies employed by Heliodorus have a certain directionality. That is, by providing both naturalistic and supernatural options, and especially through the viewpoint of the narrator Kalasiris (“a man above all obedient to the divine plan”),³⁵ Heliodorus has provided space for double meanings to exist, and therefore for the possibility of *divine intervention specifically* to seem more real.

While *Chaereas and Callirhoe* lacks the gruesome human sacrifice that marks the pinnacle of the divine antagonism in the other novels, it participates in the articulation of an antagonistic relationship

31. *Ibid.*, 125–26.

32. *Ibid.*, 127–28.

33. *Ibid.*, 128.

34. John J. Morgan, “A Commentary on the Ninth and Tenth Books of Heliodoros’ *Aithiopika*” (PhD diss., Oxford University, 1978), lxi–lxxix, 69, 73, 95f, 470f, 596; and John J. Morgan, “History, Romance and Realism in the *Aithiopika* of Heliodoros,” *Classical Antiquity* 1, no. 2 (1982): 227–32.

35. Winkler, “Heliodoros’ *Aithiopika*,” 146.

between the goddess and the heroine. There are examples of specific accusations against Aphrodite as the author of the couple’s misfortunes. The most significant of these occurs when Callirhoe is invited to visit the shrine of Aphrodite near Dionysius’s estate; she weeps at the irony of this request, since even as a slave her resemblance to the goddess is noticed. “What a disaster!” she says, “Even here Aphrodite reigns, the cause of all my woes. But I will go [to the shrine], for I have many complaints to lay before her.”³⁶ Here Callirhoe holds the goddess responsible for her never-ending hardships. The reference is particularly fitting in this example since Callirhoe is prompted to accuse the goddess by yet another reference to her resemblance to Aphrodite. The antagonism and identification found throughout the novels is made especially explicit in this section of *Callirhoe* by Chariton’s juxtaposition of the physical resemblance with the role the goddess plays in the misfortunes.

Another example from *Callirhoe* is found in 7.5.3. In this section, Callirhoe has been left on the island of Aradus for safekeeping by the king of Persia. Being the home to a famous shrine to Aphrodite, Callirhoe naturally pays her respects to the goddess, such as they are at this stage in the narrative.

Θεασαμένη δὲ Καλλιρόη τὴν Ἀφροδίτην, στᾶσα καταντικρὺ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ἐσιώπα καὶ ἔκλαιεν, ὄνεικίζουσα τῇ θεῷ τὰ δάκρυα· μόλις δὲ ὑπεφθέγγετο “ἰδοὺ καὶ Ἄραδος, μικρὰ νῆσος ἀντὶ τῆς μεγάλης Σικελίας καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐνταυθα ἐμὸς. ἀρκεῖ, δέσποινα. Μέχρι ποῦ με πολεμεῖς;”

When Callirhoe caught sight of the statue of Aphrodite, she took her stand in front of it; first she remained silent and wept, reproaching the goddess with her tears; but at length she spoke: “So now I am on Aradus, a tiny island compared with mighty Sicily, and without a friend! My Lady, this is enough! How long will you treat me as an enemy?”³⁷

36. *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, 2.2.6; οἴμοι τῆς συμφορᾶς, καὶ ἐνταῦθ’ ἐστὶν Ἀφροδίτη θεὸς ἢ μοι πάντων τῶν κακῶν αἰτία. Πλὴν ἄπειμι, θέλω γὰρ αὐτὴν πολλὰ μέψασθαι.

The language used here clearly points the finger at Aphrodite as the goddess responsible for Callirhoe's fate. Our heroine even goes so far as to accuse the goddess of treating her as an enemy! Clearly, even without the threat of sacrificial death, Chariton has set up the goddess and his heroine as antagonists in the romantic plot.

Sacrifice in Greek and Roman Religion

Walter Burkert provides a comprehensive overview of the Greek mode of sacrifice.³⁸ The sacrificial rite is marked by special acts performed by the people involved: they wash, put on fresh clothing, and weave garlands of twigs to wear. An animal³⁹ free of imperfections is selected and decorated with ribbons and gilt. The procession is made up of musicians playing flutes, someone carrying water, sometimes a person bringing an incense burner, a "blameless maiden" carrying the sacrificial basket full of barley or cakes that conceals the knife, and of course, the animal. Together they approach the altar (as elaborate as carved stone or as simple as a pile of ash) and, ideally, the animal does not refuse to be led to the location of its death.⁴⁰

Once the group is established at the location of sacrifice, the basket and the water dish are carried around in a circle, demarcating the sacred area. The participants wash their hands with the water and some is also sprinkled on the animal. When the animal is sprinkled, it jerks its head; this signifies its assent to its role in the sacrifice.⁴¹

37. *Ibid.*, 7.5.3.

38. Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*, trans. J. Raffan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 55–57.

39. Oxen were the most highly prized sacrificial animal but sheep were the most common; goats and pigs are also represented with frequency.

40. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 56.

41. The trope of the consent of a sacrificial animal was prevalent in the discussion of Greek and Roman sacrifice even if in practice consent was not consistently sought (F. S. Naiden, "The Fallacy of the Willing Victim," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 127 [2007]: 61–73.)

Next, while a prayer is intoned and a vow made, the participants take handfuls of barley from the basket and then throw the barley at the sacrificial animal. At this point, the knife is finally revealed. The sacrificer cuts off some of the animal’s hairs and throws them into the fire. A large animal like an ox is struck with an axe before its throat is slit; smaller animals are lifted over the altar to be slaughtered. In both cases, blood is splashed over the altar; in the case of the large animal, blood is collected in a basin and then poured over the top and sides. At the moment of death, the women who took part in the procession perform a sacrificial scream.⁴²

Finally, the animal is skinned and butchered. The σπλάγχνα, the internal organs, are roasted on the open flame at once: “to taste the entrails immediately is the privilege and duty of the innermost circle of participants.”⁴³ Then the bones and inedible parts of the animal are consecrated to the flames. Other food offerings such as cakes are also burned. Wine is poured over everything so that the flames flare up with the alcohol. When the fire has died down again, the rest of the meat is prepared for the sacrificial meal; it is either roasted over the coals or boiled in a pot and then consumed by those present.⁴⁴ Of course, this “typical” sacrifice described by Burkert is susceptible to local variations of custom. The “unmovable” parts are the procession leading to the slaughter and the feast. Most notably, in ordinary Greek (and Roman) sacrifice the meat is given not to the god but to the participants; the gods receive bones and fat instead of meat, thanks to Prometheus’s deception.⁴⁵

The above represents the ordinary, common method of sacrifice, usually categorized as the Olympian mode of sacrifice.⁴⁶ This pattern

42. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 56.

43. *Ibid.*, 57.

44. *Ibid.*

45. Hesiod, *Theogony* 535–44.

46. Daniel Hughes, *Human Sacrifice in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1991), 4.

of sacrifice happened both on a grand scale at public events and also at family events. Daniel Hughes observes that this kind of sacrifice is often denoted by the words *θυσία* and *θύω*.⁴⁷ It is worth observing that our English word *sacrifice* has no exact equivalent in Greek in that there are a variety of words used to describe the variety of types of ritual slaughter of animals and/or the offering of meat and/or vegetables to deities. Hughes outlines a total of seven categories of sacrifice practiced by ancient Greeks, each with its own associated vocabulary (see chart). It is important to note here that this chart and Hughes’s descriptions represent the typical scholarly categorization of sacrifice; in reality, the divisions between these categories and the use of these terms is far more varied and complex than it seems, as Jean Casabona’s work (discussed below) has shown.

Greek Terms	Expected Context of Rites	Expected Ritual Components
θυσία	“Olympian” deities	Blood sacrifice with meal
ἐναγίσματα	Heroes	Holocaust or burial of offerings
ἐναγίσματα, σφάγια	Ordinary dead	Holocaust or burial of offerings
ὄλοκαυτώματα	“Chthonic” deities	Holocaust
σφάγια	Battle	Spilling of blood
τόμια	Swearing of oaths	Standing on/adjacent to sacrificed animal
καθαρμοί	Purification	Varies; no meal

Olympic is the first, described above with the term *θυσία*. The second is sacrifice to heroes, described using *ἐναγίζειν*, *ἐναγισμοί*, *ἐναγίσματα*, and *ἐντέμειν*; in these types of sacrifice, the animal is not consumed by the attending participants but is instead burnt whole

47. Ibid.

(ὄλοκαυτεῖν) on the altar or entombed in βόθροι (ritual pits in which to place offerings).⁴⁸ Third, Hughes lists funerary sacrifices, which, like the rites for heroes, are associated with the word ἐναγίζειν, but also σφάζειν and its family of terms. Again, similar to the heroic sacrifices, these offerings are either put into the grave or are burnt whole; typically, there is no shared consumption of the offerings. There are also, fourth, whole burnt offerings (ὄλοκαυτώματα) that take place at the cults of major deities, those who are neither heroes nor the dead, but who nevertheless receive this type of offering. Frequently, these divine recipients are of the chthonic variety (as opposed to the Olympian), meaning they are associated with the earth and underworld, and therefore with death.⁴⁹ Next in Hughes’s list come sacrifices carried out before a battle, often before crossing a boundary either natural or political.⁵⁰ These offerings are called σφάγια or σφαγιάζεσθαι, and were neither offered to a specific deity⁵¹ nor eaten by those performing the sacrifice. Sixth, Hughes describes sacrifices made in order to swear an oath properly (τόμια, ὄρχιον/ὄρχια τέμνειν). In these types of sacrifice, the animal is not eaten; rather the oath-takers might surround the animal, stand on its entrails, or hold them in their hands.⁵² Finally, animals were sacrificed for purification ceremonies called καθαροί. These come in various shapes and sizes, but Hughes’s example of purification by passing through the split corpse of a dog in Boetia suffices to illustrate that, here too, the animal’s flesh would not be eaten in this type of rite.⁵³

48. *Ibid.*, 4–5.

49. Robert Christopher Towneley Parker, “Chthonian Gods,” *OCD* 329–30; the division between Olympian and Chthonian deities is problematic; see Scott Scullion, “Olympian and Chthonian,” *Classical Antiquity* 13, no. 1 (1994): 75–119.

50. Hughes, *Human Sacrifice*, 5.

51. There are, of course, some exceptions to this generalization—in particular, pre-battle sacrifice to Artemis Agrotera by Spartans (Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 60, also n. 37). See Hughes, *Human Sacrifice*, 5 n. 14 for a select bibliography on this type of sacrifice.

52. Hughes, *Human Sacrifice*, 5.

53. *Ibid.*

All of Hughes's classifications are based on the dual cores of the occasion of the sacrifice and the vocabulary used to describe it. Vocabulary might be seen as a significant factor in the typology of sacrifice, but as it is so variable and is used inconsistently, vocabulary alone cannot be used to build an argument about normative sacrificial categories. Occasion is also necessary. For the purpose of this study, where the implications of human sacrifice are at stake, two word-families in particular bear discussion: σφάγια and θυσία. Jean Casabona's *Recherches sur le vocabulaire des sacrifices en grec* showed that θυσία became in the classical period the "default" or unmarked term for sacrificial offerings, whether vegetable or animal, whether consumed or not.⁵⁴ To reiterate, this means that nothing can be assumed about the type of rite described by this term; the meaning of the verb θύω depends on the circumstances and context in which it is found. In Euripides we find an example that is especially pertinent to this study, given the importance of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia to my conclusions. Here the term θύω is used in conjunction with κτείνω; whether a character uses θύω or κτείνω reflects their opinion of whether Iphigeneia's death is a legitimate sacrifice or not, respectively.⁵⁵ Agamemnon never uses κτείνω but always θύω; Clytemnestra, on the other hand, almost exclusively uses vocabulary that distances the slaughter from a legitimate sacrifice.⁵⁶ A conversation between Clytemnestra and Agamemnon further illustrates the multiple meanings of θύω:

Κλυταιμήστρα: προτέλεια δ' ἤδη παιδὸς ἔσφαξας θεῶ;
 Ἄγαμέμνων: μέλλω: 'πὶ ταύτῃ καὶ καθέσταμεν τύχῃ.
 Κλυταιμήστρα: κάπειτα δαίσεις τοὺς γάμους ἐς ὕστερον;
 Ἄγαμέμνων: θύσας γε θύμαθ' ἃ ἐμὲ χρὴ θῦσαι θεοῖς.

54. Jean Casabona, *Recherches sur le vocabulaire des sacrifices en grec des origines à la fin de l'époque classique*, (Aix-en-Provence: Orphys, 1966), 69–154, esp. 82.

55. *Ibid.*, 78.

56. *Ibid.*, 79.

Clytemnestra: Have you already offered the goddess a **sacrifice** to usher in the maiden’s marriage?

Agamemnon: I am about to do so; that is the very thing I was engaged in.

Clytemnestra: And then will you celebrate the marriage feast afterwards?

Agamemnon: Yes, when I have offered a **sacrifice** required by the gods of me.⁵⁷

As Casabona points out, Agamemnon and Clytemnestra are talking about two entirely different sacrifices. Clytemnestra is curious as to whether Agamemnon has made the proper preliminary sacrifices for the wedding. She uses ἑσφαξας to refer to these offerings. Agamemnon, referring to a different, more tragic sacrifice, but intending for Clytemnestra to understand that he is responding to her, replies using θύσαι to refer to the sacrifices he intends to perform.

Dans sa [Agamemnon’s] pensée, θύω coïncide avec σφάζω. Mais Clytemnestre, qui songe à bien autre chose, s’inquiète de la θυσία et du banquet . . . Ce sont les diverses valeurs possibles de θύω qui permettent ces effets tragiques.⁵⁸

Homer, for his part, uses θύω to refer to sacrifices where meat is the end product, often without naming explicitly the divine recipient of the offering.⁵⁹ Casabona suggests that this is because for θύω, what is most important is the context in which the offering is made rather than the divinity on the receiving end.⁶⁰ In sum, while θύω is the “standard” term used to describe “standard” sacrificial practice (i.e., including the feast that takes place after the slaughter), the context in

57. Euripides, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, 718–21 (Kovacs, LCL).

58. Casabona, *Recherches*, 79. “In his mind, θύω coincides with σφάζω. But Clytemnestra, who is thinking of something else entirely, is concerned about the θυσία and the banquet. . . . These are the various possible meanings of θύω that permit such tragic effects” (my translation.)

59. *Ibid.*, 80.

60. For instance, even for the so-called Chthonian sacrifices or those offered to heroes, Casabona finds evidence that θύω was used (*ibid.*, 83–85).

which the verb is used is so varied that the conclusion we must come to concerning its meaning is that it is a general verb that certainly allows but does not *require* the sacrifice it describes to include a meal. Other terms, we shall see, are more restrictive in this respect.

Casabona's work is also commonly cited where the word σφάγια comes into discussion. Casabona reports that when used in the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, the term refers to the ritual gesture of slaughter in a blood sacrifice.⁶¹ That is, in these texts, the term refers to the actual action of slitting the throat or to the stunning action before the throat is cut and does not automatically imply a meal. It is therefore associated with the exsanguination of a sacrificial animal and is sometimes best translated as such.⁶² Casabona lists several ways this family of terms is used in early Greek literature: first, it can specifically refer to the sacrifice of an animal in conjunction with other words; second it can imply a sacrifice when other words are present even when the event of sacrifice is not apparent (e.g., *Iliad* 24.621–622); third, the verb can stand in for the whole event of the sacrifice including the meal, since the blood-spilling is such an integral aspect of the whole (*Iliad* 9.466–469, 23.29–32); fourth, it is used in instances where the religious coloring is so faint that it is difficult to say if the action it describes is sacrificial or not (*Odyssey* 1.92, 4.320)—in such cases, slaughter is spoken of but its ritual components are effaced; and finally the term is used when there is a sacrifice of an animal and the animal is not consumed (*Odyssey* 10.532, where an animal is offered as a holocaust). Thus, according to Homer's use of the term, the σφάγ-^{*} root implies sacrifice or slaughter of animals either to be consumed or to be left unconsumed.⁶³

61. *Ibid.*, 155.

62. *Ibid.*, 156.

63. *Ibid.*, 156–58.

After Homer, however, the usage shifts. The σφάγ-^{*} family of words becomes associated with non-ritual killings such as massacres and murders, especially those that occur during civil wars (cf. Euripides, *Andromeda*, 260, 315, 412); Casabona suggests that some of these occurrences may also have religious overtones, such as Thucydites II 92.3, which describes the suicide (ἔσφαξεν ἑαυτόν) of a passenger on a ship that sunk. For the most part, then, after Homer,

σφάζω connaît des emplois généraux qui n'ont rien à voir avec le sacrifice, bien qu'en certains cas il s'agisse d'actes religieux, voire d'«immolations» au sens large. Mais le mot continue à désigner, comme chez Homère, au sens strict, le rite de l'égorgeement dans un sacrifice sanglant, et par métonymie, l'ensemble de la cérémonie.⁶⁴

It is here where the meat, so to speak, of Casabona's argument is located. Here he compares the uses of θύω and σφάζω and finds that while θύω is the umbrella term encompassing the whole of the ceremony, the other, σφάζω, specifically remains the act of slaughter.⁶⁵ This is especially clear when the two terms are also often used in conjunction, leading from the general to the specific, as in Herodotus II.39:

ἀγαγόντες τὸ σεσημασμένον κτήνος πρὸς τὸν βωμὸν ὅκου ἂν θύωσι, πῦράνακαίουσι, ἔπειτα δὲ ἐπ' αὐτοῦ οἶνον κατὰ τοῦ ἱρηίου ἐπισπείσαντες καὶ ἐπιτελέσαντες τὸν θεὸν σφάζουσι, σφάξαντες δὲ ἀποτάμνουσι τὴν κεφαλὴν.

After leading the marked beast to the altar where they will **sacrifice** it, they kindle a fire; then they pour wine on the altar over the victim and call upon the god; then they **cut its throat**, and having done so sever the head from the body.⁶⁶

64. Ibid., 162; “σφάζω connotes general uses that have nothing to do with sacrifice, even though in some cases it refers to religious acts, immolations in the broader sense. But the word continues to designate, as in Homer, in a strict sense, the rite of slaughter in blood sacrifice, and through metonymy, the entire ceremony” (my translation).

65. Ibid., 162–67.

Thus, particularly when used in conjunction with another term of sacrifice, σφάζω and its associated words take on specific meanings pertaining to blood letting.

Most importantly for us, however, Casabona observes that the term can be used on its own to denote an entire ceremony, of any type of blood sacrifice, including those followed by banquet, as in Homer (above) and Herodotus (5.8).⁶⁷ He notes, however, that while this use is *possible* and linguistically permissible, it is rare:⁶⁸ “il y a une tendance nette à préférer σφάζω pour désigner des cérémonies de caractère chthonien, où le sang joue le rôle principal.”⁶⁹ Casabona provides a clear example in Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* 8.3.24, where different types of sacrifice are offered to different deities in succession, clearly showing the distinction in offerings for Olympian and chthonic gods:

ἐπεὶ δὲ ἀφίκοντο πρὸς τὰ τεμένη, ἔθυσαν τῷ Διὶ καὶ ὠλοκαύτησαν τοὺς ταύρους· ἔπειτα τῷ Ἡλίῳ καὶ ὠλοκαύτησαν τοὺς ἵππους· ἔπειτα Γῆ σφάξαντες ὡς ἐξηγήσαντο οἱ μάγοι ἐποίησαν· ἔπειτα δὲ ἦρωσι τοῖς Συρίαν ἔχουσι.

So, when they came to the sanctuaries, they performed the **sacrifice** to Zeus and made a holocaust of the bulls; then they gave the horses to the flames in honor of the Sun; next they did **sacrifice** to the Earth, as the magi directed, and lastly to the tutelary heroes of Syria.⁷⁰

The various uses of the terms for sacrifice are clearly laid out here. First, the use of θύω illustrates its use as an unmarked designation of general sacrifice. Then we have two whole burnt offerings, first to Zeus and then to Helios, and next an offering to Ge, σφάζω, which

66. Herodotus, *Histories*, 2.39 [Godley, LCL].

67. Casabona, *Recherches*, 163.

68. *Ibid.*, 164.

69. *Ibid.*; “there is a clear tendency to prefer σφάζω to designate ceremonies of a chthonian nature, where blood plays the central role” (my translation).

70. Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, 8.3.24 [Miller, LCL].

is not described further. At the end there is a sacrifice to the Heroes of Syria, again undescribed, but contained within σφάζω. As Casabona observes, we do not know what the σφάγια to the heroes and the Earth entailed—we are ignorant as to whether they, too, were burnt, buried, or broiled.⁷¹ Casabona concludes that the key elements here are that the heavenly gods require fire with their sacrificial offerings, which the earthly gods and the heroes need blood for theirs.⁷² In many other instances listed by Casabona, σφάζω is used to describe the flow of blood from an animal as a sacrificial offering, usually to chthonic deities.⁷³ He concludes that blood serves as a pacifying offering, especially on the battlefield, to angry or dangerous deities. “Le sang versé ainsi doit satisfaire les dieux et héros qui habitent le sol, et épargner celui des combattants.”⁷⁴ σφάζω, then, is a marked term specifically used to describe, especially in the post-classical period, sacrifices where blood-offering is the primary sacrificial mode (as opposed to roasting and banqueting). This is in contrast to what Casabona concludes about another, unmarked word for sacrifice, θύω, which leaves the contents of the rites it describes open:

il apparaît donc, ici encore, que θύω est un terme très général pouvant s’appliquer aussi bien à des sacrifices aux dieux <<d’en-haut>> qu’à des offrandes aux héros ou aux morts divinisés. Mais par opposition à ἐναγίζω, terme technique désignant les honneurs funèbres rendus aux morts, θύω prend la valeur de <<sacrifier à un immortel ou à un dieu Olympien>>.⁷⁵

71. Casabona, *Recherches*, 164.

72. *Ibid.*

73. *Ibid.*, 164–66.

74. *Ibid.*, 165; “the spilled blood thus must satisfy the gods and heroes who inhabit the earth at the same time as it saves that [sc. the blood] of the combatants” (my translation).

75. Casabona, *Recherches*, 85; “It appears, then, here again, that θύω is a very general term capable of being applied equally well to the sacrifices of celestial deities as to the offerings to heroes or the divinized dead. But in contrast to ἐναγίζω, a technical term designating the funerary rites given to the dead, θύω takes the meaning of ‘sacrificing to an immortal or to an Olympian god’” (my translation).

That is, to reiterate, θύω is an unmarked term for sacrifice and is not specific about what it entails.

ἐναγίζειν is a further sacrificial term that bears investigating. On the most basic and earliest levels, the term refers to consecrating something, to making an offering.⁷⁶ Sophocles describes the ἀγίζειν of a bull to the hearth of Poseidon.⁷⁷ But ἐναγίζειν is at once more technical and more difficult to interpret.⁷⁸ “Un fait est clair: ce verbe est toujours employé pour des offrandes à des défunts ou à des morts héroïses.”⁷⁹ Casabona observes that Herodotus makes the clearest distinction between “θύειν ὡς ἀθανάτῳ” and “ἐναγίζειν ὡς ἥρωϊ.”⁸⁰ Heroic and funerary cults alike involve both the total annihilation of offerings by breaking them or burning them up completely and the sacrifice and consumption of offerings in the form of a banquet.⁸¹ Although the verb at hand is most frequently used to denote blood sacrifices like those of σφάγια, “rien n’indique que ἐναγίζω ait jamais été réservé à des offrandes sanglantes.”⁸² In fact, there does not appear to be a strong differentiation between the destructive heroic offerings and the commensal offerings in terms of the use of this vocabulary. That is, ἐναγίζειν appears to be able to refer to either destructive and/or banquet type offerings performed for heroes or the dead but not to gods.

In sum, then, while certain words like ἐναγίζω and σφάζω are more likely to be associated with certain patterns of sacrifice, they are not entirely limited in their meanings. Further, θύω, the standard

76. *Ibid.*, 198.

77. Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus*, 1495–96.

78. Casabona, *Recherches*, 204.

79. “One thing is clear: this verb is always used for offerings to the deceased or to the heroic dead” (my translation).

80. Casabona, *Recherches*, 204; “sacrificing as if to an immortal” versus “making offerings as if to a hero.”

81. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 193, 205.

82. Casabona, *Recherches*, 206; “nothing indicates that ἐναγίζω was ever reserved exclusively for blood offerings” (my translation).

word for sacrifice, leaves open the possibility of both slaughter and consumption. With the linguistic ambiguities in mind, what, then, can we say about the symbolic significance of sacrifice for Greek and Roman religion?

The Sacrificial Meal

Jean-Pierre Vernant's discussion of Greek sacrifice brings up the question of the essential meaning of the sacrificial rite.⁸³ Studies from the previous century located the climax of the event at the slaughter of the animal; according to this understanding, exemplified by the study of Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss,⁸⁴ the slaughter of a sacrificial animal was a way of uniting the divine and mortal spheres, mediated by the victim's death. The climax of the sacrificial procession is thus the death of an animal;⁸⁵ in death, the animal leaves the mortal world and is able to transfer itself (but not its flesh) to the sacred realm. The consecration of the animal and its transcendence is, according to this view, somehow contagious, so that just as the animal is transferred to the sacred in its death, so too the sacrificer attains some portion of that sacrality in performing the sacrificial act. This hypothesis assumes that there is a substitution occurring—that the animal is a stand-in for the mortal human who acts as executioner, who, due to the morbid nature of the sacrificial act, must step away at the final moment in order to avoid death.⁸⁶ Everything, then, points to the moment of slaughter of the animal. But as Vernant

83. Jean-Pierre Vernant, "A General Theory of Sacrifice and the Slaying of the Victim in the Greek *Thusia*," in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*, ed. Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 290–302.

84. Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, "Essai sur la nature et les fonctions du sacrifice," *Année Sociologique* 2 (1899): 29–138; repr. Marcel Mauss, "Les fonctions sociales du sacré," in *Oeuvres* (Paris: Minuit, 1968), 1:193–307.

85. Burkert, *Homo Necans*, also adopts this perspective. Cf. René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

86. Vernant, "A General Theory of Sacrifice," 293.

points out, locating the focal point of the rite with the slaying of the victim does not reflect the concerns of Greek theology as established by representations of sacrifice in literature and art.⁸⁷ Indeed, Greek depictions of sacrifice skirt around the slaughter, preferring to deny the violence that Hubert and Mauss, among others, would locate at the heart of the rite.

For Vernant, the avoidance of discussion of the violence inherent in sacrifice indicates the attempt by Greeks to differentiate this type of act from murder.⁸⁸ Vernant points out that, without question, in Greek sacrifice, the animal must approach the altar of its own volition; coercion does not enter the picture, and the animal must assent to the sacrifice by nodding or shivering. Even the knife is hidden during the procession. As Vernant states,

the sacrificial ceremony might be precisely defined as follows: the sum of procedures permitting the slaughter of an animal under such conditions that violence seems excluded and the slaying is unequivocally imbued with a characteristic that distinguishes it from murder and places it in a different category from the blood-crime that the Greeks call *phonos*.⁸⁹

This discomfort with the act of slaughter corresponds to the silence in mythology around the moment of sacrifice, which is glossed over almost universally.⁹⁰ In vase paintings depicting sacrificial scenes, of which there are many, “not one of them presents the slaying and death of the victim.”⁹¹ This is remarkable. The only time the ritual knife is shown is when it is used to cut up into pieces the already-slaughtered animal. Never is blood depicted as flowing from the throat of the victim.⁹² Both myth and practice, then, seem to

87. *Ibid.*, 293–94.

88. *Ibid.*, 294.

89. *Ibid.*

90. *Ibid.*, 293, 294.

91. *Ibid.*, 294. An exception to this is the depiction of Polyxena by the Timiades Painter (London 1887.0727.2), which preserves the moment of slaughter of the human victim, perhaps because it is so patently horrifying a concept.

contradict Hubert and Mauss’s theory of sacrifice, since that theory relies on the slaughter as the climax of the event—a climax that myth and practice take great pains to avoid articulating. If we are to be respectful of Greek tradition, then our discussion of sacrifice must reflect the *emic* understanding of the rite. As such, the distinction between death as an event and sacrifice as a rite seems to be of paramount importance.

This distinction becomes especially important when sacrifice is done improperly. When blood and gore are mentioned it is with reference to events that ancient authors wish to highlight as murderous, non-normative sacrificial acts.⁹³ Human sacrifice marks perhaps the pinnacle of impropriety with regard to sacrificial normativity. Although depicted frequently in myth, the treatment it receives in literature clearly marks it as abhorrent. Vernant suggests that the description of the slaughter of human victims in the sacrificial rite is described in all its gory glory *in order to* mark it as wrong.⁹⁴ “The gap revealed by the different handling of images aims to show that a human being is neither a good meal nor a good sacrifice.”⁹⁵ For Vernant, this proves that the crux of sacrificial activity cannot be

92. Vernant, “A General Theory of Sacrifice,” 294.

93. A fascinating exception to this seems to be *Iliad* 23.174–84: “ἐννέα τῶν γε ἄνακτι τραπεζῆς κύνες ἦσαν, καὶ μὲν τῶν ἐνέβαλλε πυρῆ δύο δειροτομήσας, δώδεκα δὲ Τρώων μεγαθύμων υἱέας ἐσθλοὺς χαλκῶν δητῶων: κακὰ δὲ φρεσὶ μῆδετο ἔργα: ἐν δὲ πυρὸς μένος ἦκε σιδήρειον ὄφρα νέμοιτο. ὦμωξέν τ’ ἄρ’ ἔπειτα, φίλον δ’ ὀνόμνηεν ἑταῖρον: χαῖρέ μοι ὦ Πάτροκλε καὶ εἰν Ἀΐδαο δόμοισι: πάντα γὰρ ἦδη τοι τελέω τὰ πάροιθεν ὑπέστην, δώδεκα μὲν Τρώων μεγαθύμων υἱέας ἐσθλοὺς τοὺς ἅμα σοὶ πάντας πῦρ ἐσθίει: Ἑκτορα δ’ οὐ τι δώσω Πριαμίδην πυρὶ δαπτέμεν, ἀλλὰ κύνεσσιν.” / “Nine dogs had the prince, that fed beneath his table, and of these did Achilles cut the throats of twain, and cast them upon the pyre. [175] And twelve valiant sons of the great-souled Trojans **slew** he with the bronze—and grim was the work he purposed in his heart and thereto he set the iron might of fire, to range at large. Then he uttered a groan, and called on his dear comrade by name: ‘Hail, I bid thee, O Patroclus, even in the house of Hades, [180] for now am I bringing all to pass, which afore-time I promised thee. Twelve valiant sons of the great-souled Trojans, lo all these together with thee the flame **devoureth**; but Hector, son of Priam, will I nowise give to the fire to feed upon, but to dogs.” [Murray, LCL].

94. Vernant, “A General Theory of Sacrifice,” 295.

95. *Ibid.*

the moment of slaughter; for the Greeks, this moment is articulated only when it is necessary to point at a rite as barbaric. That is, the explicitness of such a description highlights such an act as the antithesis of right sacrificial behavior.

Given that the sacrificial meal is in fact an integral part of the sacrifice as a whole, the anxiety around potential or mythical human sacrifice makes sense. George M. Calhoun writes, “Every meal [in the ancient world] was a sacrifice and an act of worship, and every sacrifice a meal.”⁹⁶ Dennis E. Smith begins his chapter on the sacrificial banquet in the Greek and Roman world with a quote from Dio Chrysostom: “What sacrifice is acceptable to the gods without the participants in the feast?”⁹⁷ The feast is a religious meal attached to the ritual of the sacrifice and not simply a secular afterthought.⁹⁸ The meal that occurs after the slaughter must therefore be considered a significant aspect of the practice of sacrifice (θυσία) as a whole; the consumption of the meat sacrificed on an altar therefore has religious import. Sacrifices took place on the altar in front of the temple or inside the precinct boundaries or at the public hearth. The banquets afterwards took place in a variety of locations. At large public events, such as that described by Plutarch,⁹⁹ it is clear that there are multiple locations for the same meal: some dine with Plutarch, reclining at his table, but others must feast at home, since there were such a large number participating publicly.¹⁰⁰ Smith notes that for this sacrifice, the location of the meal is not a factor in its practice.

96. George M. Calhoun, “Polity and Society: The Homeric Picture,” in *A Companion to Homer*, eds. A. J. B. Wace and F. Stubbings (London: MacMillan, 1962), 446.

97. Dio Chrysostom, *3 Regn. (Or. 3)*, 97, qtd. in Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 67.

98. Smith, *Symposium*, 67–68.

99. “There is a traditional rite of sacrifice, which the archon performs at the public hearth but everyone else at home, called the driving out of the *bulimy* . . . When I was archon, a larger number than usual participated in the public rite. After we had completed the ritual acts and returned to our places at table, we discussed first the term.” *Quaestiones Convivales* 693E–694a.

100. Smith, *Symposium*, 70.

For other rites, however, the location where the meat is consumed is legislated. For instance, Pausanias records that the Epidauran rules for sacrifice mandate that the meat offered must be consumed within the sacred bounds.¹⁰¹ Thus, the consumption both of the entrails, consumed on the spot, and also of the rest of the meat was restricted to the sacred precinct and could not be taken home or sold in the market in these instances. Sterling Dow interprets these restrictions as secular attempts to equalize the distribution of meat at large public sacrifices.¹⁰² This regulation instead suggests, argues Smith, that the meal was an important enough part of the sacrificial whole that social equalizers needed to be enforced in order to maintain social cohesion.¹⁰³ In short, the consumption of meat sacrificed, whether privately in the home or publicly at a cult center, is a religious act. The legislation around its ingestion indicates its religious nature, but even meat removed from the precinct to be consumed at home is eaten in participation with the rest of the sacrificial banqueters. Participating in the feast after the slaughter is therefore a requirement for participating in those examples of *θυσία* that include meat eating (i.e., not *σφάγια*). Since sacrifice transforms the animal being offered from living being into food fit for human consumption—a meal—the consequences of human sacrifice are not insignificant.

Human Sacrifice in the Greek Imagination

Human sacrifice is a type of ritual killing of a human being. Ritual killing does not always involve sacrifice, that is, the offering of the victim to a super-human entity.¹⁰⁴ Scholars of ritual often

101. Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 2.27.1; Smith observes that similar regulations were in force for Hestia (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 2.40) and other sanctuaries (Smith, *Symposium*, 71).

102. Sterling Dow, “The Greater Demarkhi of Erkhia,” *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellenique* 89 (1965): 210.

103. Smith, *Symposium*, 71.

differentiate, with regards to the ritual killing of humans, between these two categories—one in which the victim is offered to a god or goddess (sacrifice) and one in which the victim is not (ritual killing). However, in common scholarly parlance, we refer to all ritual killing of animals, whether as offerings or not, as sacrifice; Hughes proposes, and I tend to agree, that it therefore seems squeamish of us not to do the same for the ritual killing of human beings.¹⁰⁵ Hughes defines the human sacrifice as “those ritual killings for which the Greeks employ words usually reserved for the sacred slaughter of animals, chiefly, *thuein*, *sphazein*, and their compounds.”¹⁰⁶ Examples of the use of these words to describe human beings’ ritual slaughter can be found, most readily, in the story of Iphigeneia.¹⁰⁷

It must be stressed that there is no evidence for the actual practice of human sacrifice; human sacrifice *only* occurs in the literary realm. To the Greeks, the best-known cult that required human sacrifice—and only in the literature that describes it—was the Taurian Artemis, whose rite is recalled in the story of Iphigeneia. In this literary context, Iphigeneia is usually the daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra;¹⁰⁸ learning of a prophecy that the Greek ships cannot sail to Troy without her sacrifice, her father decides to offer her up to Artemis. There are various versions of the tale but in all of them, Artemis demands the sacrifice of Iphigeneia in return for giving the Greeks a good wind to sail from Aulis to Troy. The ancient texts disagree whether this was the harsh result of the killing of one of Artemis’s sacred deer by Agamemnon, after having boasted of his hunting skills in comparison to those of the goddess, or the

104. Hughes, *Human Sacrifice*, 3.

105. *Ibid.*, 4.

106. *Ibid.*, 4.

107. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 232; Euripides, *Iphigeneia at Tauris*, 359; cf. Euripides, *Hecuba*, 260–61.

108. Though not always. In some less common versions, she is the daughter of Theseus and Helen; Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, “Iphigenia,” *OCD* 765.

killing of a sacred goat in the same situation, or whether Artemis’s anger was aroused due to the non-fulfillment of a vow by Atreus.¹⁰⁹ In most versions, Artemis replaces the girl at the last minute with a hind or a bear, or sometimes an *eidolon* of herself, so that Iphigeneia avoids sacrifice in the end. In the *Kypria*, Agamemnon is hunting and kills a deer. He is so proud of himself that he brags that he has outdone Artemis. Artemis takes ire at this and prevents his fleet of ships from sailing by creating storms. Calchas interprets the goddess’ anger and declares that the only solution is to sacrifice Iphigeneia to the goddess. They send for the girl, telling her that she is coming for her wedding to Achilles. They attempt to sacrifice her, but at the last minute Artemis provides a deer for the sacrifice and takes Iphigeneia to Tauris and makes her immortal.¹¹⁰ Euripides’s *Iphigeneia in Aulis* follows this plotline, and his *Iphigeneia among the Taurians* resumes with Iphigeneia as priestess of Artemis’s cult at Tauris, where she herself oversees human sacrifices. According to Hesiod, she is replaced by an *eidolon*, an image of herself, which Pausanias later interprets as Iphigeneia’s transformation into the divine Hecate.¹¹¹

Aeschylus, however, suggests that she is, in fact, sacrificed, or at least that those witnessing the ritual thought she was.¹¹² In Aeschylus, unmarked vocabulary is used to describe Iphigeneia’s sacrifice:

ἐπεὶ δ’ ἀνάγκας ἔδου λέπαδνον
 φρενὸς πνέων δυσσεβῆ τροπαίαν
 ἄναγνον ἀνίερον, τόθεν
 τὸ παντότολμον φρονεῖν μετέγνων.
 βροτοὺς θρασύνει γὰρ αἰσχρόμητις

109. Ibid.; see also the helpful chart in Albert Henrichs, “Human Sacrifice in Greek Religion: Three Case Studies,” in *Le Sacrifice dans l’Antiquité: Huit Exposés Suivis De Discussions: Vandœuvre-Genève, 25-30 Août 1980*, eds. Jean Pierre Vernant, Jean Rudhardt, and Olivier Reverdin (Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1981), 200–201.

110. Henrichs, “Human Sacrifice,” 200.

111. Hesiod, *Catalogue of Women*, Fr. 32a 15–26 b M–W; Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.43.1.

112. Sourvinou-Inwood, *OCD* 765; Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 218–49 (Smyth, LCL).

τάλαινα παρακοπὰ πρωτοπήμων. ἔτλα δ' οὖν
 θυτήρ γενέσθαι θυγατρός,
 γυναικοποιῶν πολέμων ἀρωγὰν
 καὶ προτέλεια ναῶν.
 λιτὰς δὲ καὶ κληδόνας πατρώους
 παρ' οὐδὲν αἰῶ τε παρθένειον
 ἔθεντο φιλόμαχοι βραβῆς.
 φράσεν δ' ἀόζοις πατήρ μετ' εὐχὰν
 δίκαν χιμαίρας ὑπερθε βωμοῦ
 πέπλοισι περιπετῆ παντὶ θυμῷ προνωπῆ
 λαβεῖν ἀέρδην, στόματός
 τε καλλιπρώρου φυλακᾶ κατασχεῖν
 φθόγγον ἀραῖον οἴκοις,
 βία χαλινῶν τ' ἀναύδῳ μένει.
 κρόκου βαφὰς δ' ἐς πέδον χέουσα
 ἔβαλλ' ἕκαστον θυτήρ
 -ων ἀπ' ὄμματος βέλει
 φιλοίκτῳ, πρέπουσά θ' ὡς ἐν γραφαῖς, προσεννέπειν
 θέλουσ', ἐπεὶ πολλάκις
 πατὸς κατ' ἀνδρῶνας εὐτραπέζους
 ἔμελψεν, ἀγνᾶ δ' ἀταύρωτος αὐδᾶ πατὸς
 φίλου τριτόσπονδον εὖ-
 ποτμον παιῶνα φίλως ἐτίμα—
 τὰ δ' ἔνθεν οὔτ' εἶδον οὔτ' ἐννέπω:
 τέχνη δὲ Κάλχαντος οὐκ ἄκραντοι.

But when he had donned the yoke of Necessity, with veering of mind, impious, unholy, unsanctified, from that moment he changed his intention and began to conceive that deed of uttermost audacity. For wretched delusion, counsellor of ill, primal source of woe, makes mortals bold. So then he hardened his heart to sacrifice his daughter so that he might further a war waged to avenge a woman, and as an offering for the voyage of a fleet! For her supplications, her cries of “Father,” and her virgin life, the commanders in their eagerness for war cared nothing. Her father, after a prayer, bade his ministers lay hold of her as, enwrapped in her robes, she lay fallen forward, and with stout heart to raise her, as if she were a young goat, high above the altar; and with a gag upon her lovely mouth to hold back the shouted curse against her house—by the bit’s strong and stifling might. Then, as she shed to earth her saffron robe, she struck each of her sacrificers with a glance from her

eyes beseeching pity, looking as if in a picture, wishing she could speak; for she had often sung where men met at her father’s hospitable table, and with her virgin voice would lovingly honor her dear father’s prayer for blessing at the third libation—What happened next I did not see and do not tell. The art of Calchas was not unfulfilled.¹¹³

The word in Greek that is translated “to sacrifice” in the English excerpt is really two words, θυτήρ γενέσθαι, to become sacrificer. θυτήρ is a derivative of θύειν, the ordinary or unmarked word used to refer to sacrifice, a word used frequently in what Hughes describes as the Olympian sacrifices, the outline of which I gave above: in short, a rite wherein an animal is slaughtered and its flesh is divided, some to be consumed by flames and some by the participants. This term does not *require* such a feast but definitely *allows for it*. Later, in line 233, Iphigeneia is compared to a young goat (χιμαίρας) as she is in the process of being held over the altar in preparation for her sacrifice. Being a smaller animal, goats would have been held aloft to allow the blood to spray the altar. Finally, in this version of Iphigeneia’s sacrifice, it appears that her father does in the end go through with the rite; this conclusion is not stated explicitly (“What happened next I did not see and will not tell”) but is implied with the statement, “the art of Calchas was not unfulfilled.” Calchas, arguably the most famous augur in Greek culture, was responsible for the divinatory conclusion that Iphigeneia’s sacrifice was required to create a favorable wind for the Greek ships to set out from Aulis to Troy. By stating that his oracle was fulfilled, Aeschylus makes clear that Iphigeneia was not spared or whisked away at the last second as in other versions. Although her exact moment of slaughter is not represented, it occurs. In fact, the absence of the moment of slaughter could rather emphasize the sacrificial nature of her death.¹¹⁴

113. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 218–49 (Smyth, LCL).

114. Cf. Vernant, “A General Theory of Sacrifice,” 294.

Whether Iphigeneia's sacrifice took place is more ambiguous in other sources, and Euripides avoids it by having Artemis replace the victim. When describing what would be Iphigeneia's sacrifice, Euripides uses different vocabulary in comparison to Aeschylus, while using other descriptive devices to maintain, overall, the same plot. First, in *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, Iphigeneia is reluctant to submit to the sacrifice. She and her mother attempt to persuade Agamemnon against it, and Achilles, who resents being used to lure Iphigeneia into this deadly trap, rises to her defense. When it becomes clear, however, that the sacrifice will take place in spite of attempts to prevent it, Iphigeneia accepts her fate, deciding that she would rather gain glory in dying for her country than die struggling against the inevitable.¹¹⁵ When the time comes for the sword to strike her neck, however, Artemis steps in:

ἱερεὺς δὲ φάσγανον λαβῶν ἐπεύξατο,
 λαιμόν τ' ἐπεσκοπεῖθ', ἵνα πλήξειεν ἄν:
 ἐμοὶ δέ τ' ἄλγος οὐ μικρὸν εἰσήει φρενί,
 κάσπην νενευκῶς: θαῦμα δ' ἦν αἴφνης ὄρᾶν.
 πληγῆς κτύπον γὰρ πᾶς τις ἦσθετ' ἄν σαφῶς,
 τὴν παρθένον δ' οὐκ εἶδεν οὐ γῆς εἰσέδου.
 βοᾷ δ' ἱερεὺς, ἅπας δ' ἐπήχησε στρατός,
 ἄελπτον εἰσιδόντες ἐκ θεῶν τινος
 φάσμι', οὐ γέ μιν ὄρωμένου πίστις παρῆν:
 ἔλαφος γὰρ ἀσπαίρουσ' ἔκειτ' ἐπὶ χθονὶ
 ἰδεῖν μεγίστη διαπρεπῆς τε τὴν θέαν,
 ἧς αἵματι βωμὸς ἐραίνεται ἄρδην τῆς θεοῦ.
 κὰν τῷδε Κάλχας πῶς δοκεῖς χαίρων ἔφρη:
 ὦ τοῦδ' Ἀχαιῶν κοίρανοι κοινοῦ στρατοῦ,
 ὄρατε τήνδε θυσίαν, ἣν ἡ θεὸς
 προύθηκε βωμίαν, ἔλαφον ὀρειδρόμον;
 ταύτην μάλιστα τῆς κόρης ἀσπάζεται,
 ὡς μὴ μιάνη βωμὸν εὐγενεῖ φόνω.
 ἡδέως τε τοῦτ' ἐδέξατο, καὶ πλοῦν οὔριον

115. Euripides, *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, 1370–401 [Kovacs, LCL].

δίδωσιν ἡμῖν Ἰλίου τ' ἐπιδρομάς,
 πρὸς ταῦτα πᾶς τις θάρσος αἶρε ναυβάτης,
 χώρει τε πρὸς ναῦν: ὡς ἡμέρα τῆδε δεῖ
 λιπόντας ἡμᾶς Αὐλίδος κοίλους μυχοὺς
 Αἴγαιον οἶδμα διαπερᾶν.
 ἐπεὶ δ' ἅπαν
 κατηνθρακώθη θυμ' ἐν Ἐφαισίου φλογί,
 τὰ πρόσφορ' ἠϋξασθ', ὡς τύχοι νόστου στρατός.
 πέμπει δ' Ἀγαμέμνων μ' ὥστε σοι φράσαι τάδε,
 λέγειν θ' ὅποιας ἐκ θεῶν μοίρας κυρεῖ
 καὶ δόξαν ἔσχεν ἄφθιτον καθ' Ἑλλάδα.
 ἐγὼ παρὼν δὲ καὶ τὸ πρᾶγμ' ὀρῶν λέγω:
 ἢ παῖς σαφῶς σοι πρὸς θεοὺς ἀφίπτατο.
 λύπης δ' ἀφαίρει καὶ πόσει πάρες χόλον:
 ἀπροσδόκητα δὲ βροτοῖς τὰ τῶν θεῶν,
 σῶζουσὶ θ' οὐς φιλοῦσιν. ἦμαρ γὰρ τόδε
 θανοῦσαν εἶδε καὶ βλέπουσαν παῖδα σήν.

But the priest, seizing his knife, offered up a prayer and was closely scanning the maiden's throat to see where he should strike. It was no slight sorrow filled my heart, as I stood by with bowed head; when there was a sudden miracle! Each one of us distinctly heard the sound of a blow, but none saw the spot where the maiden vanished. The priest cried out, and all the army took up the cry at the sight of a marvel all unlooked for, due to some god's agency, and passing all belief, although it was seen; for there upon the ground lay a deer of immense size, magnificent to see, gasping out her life, with whose blood the altar of the goddess was thoroughly bedewed. Then spoke Calchas thus—his joy you can imagine—“You captains of this leagued Achaean army, do you see this victim, which the goddess has set before her altar, a mountain-roaming deer? This is more welcome to her by far than the maid, that she may not defile her altar by shedding noble blood. Gladly she has accepted it, and is granting us a prosperous voyage for our attack on Ilium. Therefore take heart, sailors, each man of you, and away to your ships, for today we must leave the hollow bays of Aulis and cross the Aegean main.” Then, when the sacrifice was wholly burnt to ashes in the blazing flame, he offered such prayers as were fitting, that the army might win return; but Agamemnon sends me to tell you this, and say what heaven-sent luck is his, and how he has secured undying fame throughout the length of Hellas. Now I was there myself and speak as an

eyewitness; without a doubt your child flew away to the gods. A truce then to your sorrowing, and cease to be angry with your husband; for the gods' ways with man are not what we expect, and those whom they love, they keep safe; yes, for this day has seen your daughter dead and living.¹¹⁶

In this version Iphigeneia has avoided sacrifice and been swept away to safety by Artemis, but at the same time, the text maintains that she has died. The rescue comes immediately before the conclusion of the play, meaning that the build-up of suspense and imagination of this sacrificial act is maximized; in the end, Iphigeneia is simultaneously dead and alive through her anticipated sacrifice and eleventh-hour stay of execution. Iphigeneia, describing her willingness to be sacrificed in 1555 tells her father that she gladly offers up her body as sacrifice (θῦσαι), not shying away from what she believes must take place.¹¹⁷ In doing so, she takes on the role of sacrificial victim; in the end, even when she does not end her life on the altar, she occupies both categories: she both is and is not sacrificed.

Then, in *Iphigeneia in Tauris* 344–360, Iphigeneia speaks of her sacrifice and compares it to an ordinary sacrifice, though clearly gruesome and unnatural, requiring vengeance:

ὦ καρδία τάλαινα, πρὶν μὲν ἐς ξένους
γαληνὸς ἦσθα καὶ φιλοικτίμων αἰεί,
ἐς θούμόφυλον ἀναμετρομένη δάκρυ,
Ἕλληνας ἄνδρας ἠνίκ' ἐς χέρας λάβοις.
νῦν δ' ἐξ ὀνείρων οἴσιν ἠγριώμεθα,

116. *Ibid.*, 1578–612.

117. “ὦ πάτερ, πάρειμί σοι: τοῦμὸν δὲ σῶμα τῆς ἐμῆς ὑπὲρ πάτρας καὶ τῆς ἀπάσης Ἑλλάδος γαίας ὑπὲρ θῦσαι δίδωμι· ἐκοῦσα πρὸς βωμὸν θεᾶς ἄγοντας, εἴπερ ἐστὶ θέσφατον τόδε. καὶ τοῦπ' ἐμ' εὐτυχεῖτε: καὶ νικηφόρου δώρου τύχοιτε πατρίδα τ' ἐξίκοισθε γῆν. πρὸς ταῦτα μὴ ψαύση τις Ἀργείων ἐμοῦ: σιγῇ παρέξω γὰρ δέρην εὐκαρδίως.” / “O my father, here I am; willingly I offer my body for my country and all Hellas, that you may lead me to the altar of the goddess and sacrifice me, since this is Heaven's ordinance. May good luck be yours for any help that I afford! And may you obtain the victor's gift and come again to the land of your fathers. So then let none of the Argives lay hands on me, for I will bravely yield my neck without a word.”

δοκοῦσ' Ὀρέστην μηκέθ' ἥλιον βλέπειν,
 δύσνον με λήψεσθ', οἵτινές ποθ' ἦκετε.
 καὶ τοῦτ' ἄρ' ἦν ἀληθές, ἡσθόμην, φίλοι:
 οἱ δυστυχεῖς γὰρ τοῖσι δυστυχεστέροις
 αὐτοὶ κακῶς πράξαντες οὐ φρονοῦσιν εὔ.
 ἀλλ' οὔτε πνεῦμα Διόθεν ἦλθε πώποτε,
 οὐ πορθμῖς, ἥτις διὰ πέτρας Συμπληγάδας
 Ἑλένην ἀπήγαγ' ἐνθάδ', ἥ μ' ἀπώλεσεν,
 Μενελέων θ', ἔν' αὐτοὺς ἀντετιμωρησάμην,
 τὴν ἐνθάδ' Αὔλιν ἀντιθεῖσα τῆς ἐκεῖ,
 οὔ μ' ὥστε μόσχον Δαναΐδαι χειρούμενοι
 ἔσφαζον, ἱερεὺς δ' ἦν ὁ γεννήσας πατήρ.

O my unhappy heart, you were gentle to strangers before, and always full of pity, measuring out tears for the sake of our common race, whenever Hellenes came into your hands. But now, after those dreams that have made me savage, thinking that Orestes is no longer alive, whoever comes here will find me harsh to them. This is true after all, my friends, I have realized: the unfortunate, when themselves doing badly, do not have kind thoughts towards those who are more unfortunate. But no breeze from Zeus ever came, or a boat, bringing Helen here, through the rocks of the Symplegedes—Helen who destroyed me, with Menelaus, so that I might avenge myself on them, setting an Aulis here against that one there, where the Danaids overpowered me and were going to sacrifice me like a calf, and my own father was the priest.¹¹⁸

In this case, in line 359, Iphigeneia uses the word ἔσφαζον from the verb σφάζω to describe her fate on the altar. As in Aeschylus's text, Iphigeneia is again compared to a normal sacrificial animal, this time a calf. Although larger than a goat, this animal, too, would have been small enough to be lifted above the altar during the rite. As we have seen above, Euripides represents the sacrifice in different ways depending on whose mouth describes it, but in the end, the significant aspect of this version of Iphigeneia's sacrifice is that it is avoided. And yet, Iphigeneia is still associated with Artemis in

118. Euripides, *Iphigeneia at Tauris*, 344–60 [Kovacs, LCL].

cult and characterized by Euripides as both living and dead. This conclusion is important to keep in mind: even when Iphigeneia does not have her blood spilled on the altar, at the literary level she still faces death and is therefore Artemis in cult.

Jennifer Larson's study of Greek heroine cults is an important development of Nagy's proposal that antagonism between god and hero and myth corresponds to their association in actual cult practice. Iphigeneia, the sometimes-victim of human sacrifice, was the recipient of cult worship in various locations, including Brauron and Tauris. Larson suggests that just the act of dying while still a maiden is enough to associate a girl with Artemis.¹¹⁹ This differs from the association found between male heroes and gods, where there is frequently a similarity between the two that contributes to their association.¹²⁰ Larson notes that, in fact, for many heroines associated with Artemis, there is no myth of antagonism between the heroine and the goddess—the only reason for their association with her is that the victims happened to be virgins at the time of their death. Iphigeneia is arguably an exception to this, since clearly Artemis is the cause of Iphigeneia's sacrifice and is therefore her antagonist. But since other women and girls who become heroes through their deaths are automatically associated with her because of their unmarried status, it seems likely that Larson's conclusions are in general correct.¹²¹ The mythological antagonism reflected in these works seems to represent a long-established understanding of the human-divine relationship with regards to heroization. In short, Iphigeneia represents the best known of the myths of the sacrificial virgin; her association with Artemis reflects both the cultural expectations around the heroization of girls and is represented in

119. Jennifer Larson, *Greek Heroine Cults* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 117.

120. *Ibid.*, 116.

121. This association-by-default does not occur in the novels; although association for the heroines there is the result of antagonism, there is not always a direct correlation to a specific deity.

myth as an antagonistic relationship between the goddess and the girl.¹²²

Jan Bremmer’s essay, “Myth and Ritual in Greek Human Sacrifice: Lykaon, Polyxena and the Case of the Rhodian Criminal,”¹²³ outlines three cases of human sacrifice that illustrate how myth and ritual forged a relationship in the religious practice of the ancient Greeks. This discussion is useful for our study since Bremmer’s cases illustrate how human sacrifice functioned in the cultural expectations of the Greeks. His first example, that of the Rhodian criminal, is one that falls on the ritual side of the ritual-myth trajectory. He analyses the report by Porphyry of the sacrifice of a criminal in Rhodes on the sixth day of Metageitnion each year. Originally, Porphyry states, the victim sacrificed to Kronos was not a criminal; only later did the Kronia festival make use of a man on death row to satisfy the ritual.¹²⁴ Oddly, according to Porphyry, the man would be led out to a statue of Artemis Aristoboule,¹²⁵ where he would be given wine and then killed.¹²⁶ But although Artemis is frequently associated with acts of human sacrifice, there is no known association between her and Kronos, the child-eating god to whom the festival was dedicated. Further, Bremmer points out that while Kronos is a name never given to children due to his bloodthirsty mythology, Aristoboulos

122. Since her sacrifice occurs in the context of a war, Iphigeneia’s story also fits into the category of peri-battle sacrifices, when σφάγια or blood-sacrifice without an accompanying meal was commonplace. Plutarch reports that the normal sacrificial offering was replaced with captured Persian prisoners before the Battle of Salamis (Plutarch, *Themistodes*, 13); cf. Henrichs, “Human Sacrifice,” 208–24; and Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 60 for tales of other maidens sacrificed before battles.

123. Jan Bremmer, “Myth and Ritual in Greek Human Sacrifice: Lykaon, Polyxena and the Case of the Rhodian Criminal,” in *The Strange World of Human Sacrifice*, Studies in the History of Anthropology of Religion 1, ed. Jan Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 55–79.

124. *Ibid.*, 56.

125. This is the interpretation given by H. S. Versnel, *Transition and Reversal in Myth and Ritual*, vol. 2, *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 100f.

126. Bremmer, “Greek Human Sacrifice,” 56; Porphyry, *On Abstinence*, 2.54, qtd. in Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, 4.16.1.

is a common name on Rhodes.¹²⁷ He concludes that the association between the location of sacrifice and Artemis Aristoboule is unlikely; rather, the criminal might have represented some sort of scapegoat ritual in which the victim is feasted and processed outside of the gates of the city before the sacrifice, a connection that fits both with the geographical and calendrical location of the event.¹²⁸ Thus, the real location of the sacrifice is outside of the city gates; the temple of Artemis Aristoboule's location across the street is mentioned as a point of reference rather than of association. Kronos, on the other hand, at whose festival the sacrifice takes place, is associated with human sacrifice elsewhere, such as Crete.¹²⁹ Sophocles, too, associates the god Kronos with the human sacrifice that barbarians were rumored to practice.¹³⁰ Bremmer concludes that, since at the time Porphyry writes the origins of the practice on Rhodes was unclear, the myth of Kronos was used to establish in literature a false history of the practice of killing a condemned criminal every year on that date.¹³¹

Bremmer's second example is that of Polyxena. This example is one not of ritual propped up by myth, as the previous story is, but of the depiction of a ritual in a myth.¹³² Polyxena is a mythological character, the daughter of Priam and Hecuba. She does not appear in the Homeric tradition, but is mentioned by Euripides, where she is sacrificed on the tomb of Achilles by Neoptolemus to appease Achilles's ghost.¹³³ Euripides's version in *Hecuba* describes the sacrifice

127. Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice", 57, esp. n.10; he notes more than sixty examples of the name found inscribed. Cf. the association of the Aristobouliastai, *Inscriptiones Graecae* XII 1.163.

128. Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 57.

129. Ibid.; Istros *FGrH* 334 F 48; Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, 4.16.7.

130. Sophocles, *Fragment*, 126 Radt; Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 58.

131. Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 59.

132. Ibid., 59.

133. Jennifer R. March, "Polyxena," *OCD* 1213; Euripides, *Hecuba*, 220ff. In older versions of the myth that discusses Polyxena, she is not sacrificed; the *Cypria* has her fatally wounded by Odysseus and Diomedes during the capture of Troy (*Cypria* F43 Bernabé = F 27 Davies).

over multiple lines. Polyxena is to be sacrificed to appease the spirit of Achilles, who has appeared above his tomb in golden armor (110). He requests Polyxena as his “special prize” (41). Odysseus is sent by the Greeks to collect Polyxena, who is described using the word πρόσφαγμα or victim (41). As discussed above, the word family around σφάγ-^{*} is a marked term for a particular type of sacrifice where the ordinary term, θυ-^{*} is normative or unmarked.¹³⁴ That is to say that Euripides uses a special term for Polyxena as a sacrificial victim rather than relying on the ordinary, all-encompassing family of words connected with θύω. Σφάγ-^{*} terms are used multiple times by Euripides: in 41 and 26,5 it is used for Achilles’s special sacrificial request; in 109, 119, 135, and 305, σφάγ-^{*} is used to describe Polyxena as a victim. It is used to describe the sacrifice directly (either as a noun or a verb) in 188, 221, 433, 505, 522, and 571. Only once is the word θύω used, in 223. In that instance, it is used to describe the sacrificial ritual in general.¹³⁵ Bremmer asserts that the σφάγ-^{*} root implies brutality and carnage rather than orderly, approved ritual killing.¹³⁶ During the sacrifice itself, Polyxena is taken by the wrist by Neoptolemos (523), as if at a wedding ceremony.¹³⁷ As with Iphigeneia’s sacrifice, the description emphasizes Polyxena’s young unmarried status as a harsh contrast with the reality that she will never marry. Neoptolemos pours a libation at the tomb, probably of unmixed wine, given that Neoptolemos likens it to the blood of the young woman that he is about to spill (536-537). Youths hold Polyxena from struggling, although the willingness of the animal is highly valued in Greek sacrifice, and indeed, Polyxena bravely offers up her throat a few lines later (548-549). Bremmer notes that only

134. Bremmer, “Greek Human Sacrifice,” 60.

135. *Ibid.*, 61.

136. *Ibid.*

137. *Ibid.*, 62, esp. n. 41.

rarely do we find depictions of Polyxena being lifted up like an animal (or like Iphigeneia).¹³⁸ When finally her throat is slit, the text describes how her blood gushes out (567), the event rarely described in depictions of normative animal sacrifices.

According to Bremmer, Polyxena's great beauty makes her an appropriate victim, since scapegoat sacrifices are often noted for their beautiful appearance—and so are the heroines of the romance novels, as we will discuss shortly.¹³⁹ This description of human sacrifice follows the standard protocol for animal sacrifice, with the exception, of course, that the victim is a young woman rather than an ox or a sheep. Bremmer suggests that this shot of normalcy—this adherence to standard sacrificial procedure—might have reduced the horror and shock felt by observers of this action, since the audience would be familiar with sacrificial procedure. On the other hand, he notes that the juxtaposition of normative sacrifice with barbaric human sacrifice might have had the opposite effect of creating an even stronger link between reality and fictional human sacrifice, making the scene all the more gruesome.¹⁴⁰ In this way, the scene is witness to the dual possibilities that exist simultaneously in human sacrifice: it is both gruesomely impossible and frighteningly real.

In his third and final example, Bremmer discusses an archaic Arcadian cult, where several ancient authors record the practice of a sacrifice involving a human boy at the time of the Arcadian games.¹⁴¹ Although the literary preservations of the rite do not agree in all aspects, it seems that the sacrifice was to Zeus Lykaios; that the participants ate the entrails of the boy who was the sacrificial victim; and that after having eaten the entrails, one of the participants was

138. *Ibid.*, 63.

139. *Ibid.*, 64; cf. Jan Bremmer, "Scapegoat Rituals in Ancient Greece," in *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion*, ed. R. Buxton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 276ff.

140. Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 65.

141. *Ibid.*, 66ff.

turned into a wolf for a period of nine years, after which time he could return to society as a human being, so long as he had not consumed human flesh during his sojourn as a wolf.¹⁴² While in both the previous examples given by Bremmer, the victims' flesh is not described by the sources as being consumed in the course of the ritual, in this example the boy's entrails are shared by the participants, as though the victim were a normal sacrificial animal.¹⁴³ Bremmer relates the ritual, and especially the lycanthropy, to initiation rites; certainly this fits the time in exile from the community.¹⁴⁴ However, it is also unusual, if this ritual does find its context in an initiation, that only one of the individuals who consume human flesh is exiled in this way, as a wolf.¹⁴⁵ At any rate, and regardless of the fact that we have clear lacunae in our information about this ritual, at least three literary sources report regular human sacrifice at Mount Lykaion to Zeus. In terms of origin stories, Hesiod describes the sacrifice and cutting up of a baby as a meal for Zeus on that mountain; the god was disgusted with Lykaon, the sacrificer, and hurled a lightning bolt at his house.¹⁴⁶ Other myths of human sacrifice might also prove useful in understanding this reported rite. The myth of Lykaon has a parallel in that of Tantalus and his son Pelops, in which Tantalus cuts up his son and cooks him as a meal for the gods in order to test their divinity; during the meal, Demeter, distracted by her grief

142. *Ibid.*, 67; Skopas, *Olympic Victors*, in *FGrH* 413 F 1; Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 6.8.2; Varro, in Augustine's *City of God* 18.17; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 8.81 gives the most complete account.

143. On the mechanisms of transformational eating, see my forthcoming book *Hierophagy: Transformational Eating in Ancient Literature* and my master's thesis, "Like Dew From Heaven: Honeycomb, Religious Identity and Transformation in Joseph and Aseneth" (MA thesis, McGill University, 2006).

144. Bremmer observes that the number nine functions as a typical amount of time for an event ("Greek Human Sacrifice," 73–74; cf. Jan Bremmer, "Heroes, Rituals, and the Trojan War," *Studi Storico-Religiosi* 2 [1978]: 5–38.)

145. Bremmer, "Greek Human Sacrifice," 75.

146. *Ibid.*; cf. M. L. West, *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 154f.

for her kidnapped daughter, accidentally eats the shoulder of Pelops. In the end, Zeus resurrects the boy, replacing his eaten shoulder with a shoulder of ivory, and Tantalus is punished.¹⁴⁷ In terms of determining actual human sacrificial practice, however, this example, like others, has very little material evidence to support it; in fact, *not one human bone* has been excavated from the altar of Zeus Lykaios.¹⁴⁸ It is hard to tell, then, concludes Bremmer, just what exactly went on at this cult: “whether the Arcadian ‘wolves’ were real ‘cannibals’ we will probably never know.”¹⁴⁹ I would venture that they were not, given the literary function of cannibalism, which will be discussed below. Nevertheless, the recording of this type of cult gives a good example of the lurking possibility of human sacrifice in the Greek imagination, if not actual practice. Further, I would observe, the example of Zeus Lykaios also indicates that human sacrifice was not exempt from the sacrificial barbecue that occurred as part of the normal sacrificial rite, even if Polyxenia’s and Iphigeneia’s sacrifices do not explicitly include them. In other words, the unmarked term, *θυσία*, when used to describe human sacrifice in literature, contains the possibility of a banquet of human flesh.

Again, terminology plays a role in our conclusions about how human sacrifice was imagined by Greek and Hellenistic cultures. Bremmer uses Casabona’s work on the terminology of sacrifice to point out the brutality of Polyxena’s human sacrifice; whereas the *θυ-** root is used to describe the sacrifice of an ox, the more shocking *ἄνθρωποσφάγειν* is used to highlight the horror of human sacrifice.¹⁵⁰ Bremmer takes Casabona’s discussion of marked and

147. Pindar, *Olympian Odes*, 1.26-27, 47-53; Bacchylides F 42 Maehler; Euripides, *Iphigeneia at Tauris*, 386-88, etc.

148. Bremmer, “Greek Human Sacrifice,” 78; K. Kourowniotis, “*Anaskaphai Lukaion*,” *Archaeologike Ephemeris* (1904): 162-70. Bremmer notes that one must exercise caution when citing excavation results that were done over a hundred years ago now.

149. Bremmer, “Greek Human Sacrifice,” 78.

150. *Ibid.*, 61.

unmarked language and focuses on the raw gore implied in the σφάγ-^{*} root. When used to describe the ritual sacrifice of a human being, he argues that the term is more loaded than the ordinary θύω. In this way, he suggests that the horror of human sacrifice is heightened by using specialized terminology that implies slaughter rather than festivity. As Vernant states, “properly speaking, there is no human ‘sacrifice’ which is not also a deviant or corrupted sacrifice, a monstrous offering.”¹⁵¹ That human sacrifice in the ancient world is spoken of using language of slaughter and gore could indicate to some the discomfort felt by those who recorded its occurrence. However I would suggest that the use of the term σφάζω also has a built-in safety mechanism: σφάγια rituals do not include the banqueting aspect of “ordinary” sacrifice and in using that term, one is safely ushered away from the threat of cannibalism.

The Function of Cannibalism in Antiquity

The accusation of human sacrifice in the ancient world is used as a marker of barbarism; it serves to alienate another people from civilization by marking them as outside or Other. Evidence of actual practice of human sacrifice is far from prolific; more often than not, a population reported to have practiced human sacrifice has been the subject of a polemical “othering,” as I will discuss below. Certainly, behind the horrific concept of human sacrifice (and the threat it posed to those who might come in contact with its practitioners), is the even more frightful unspoken threat: that sacrifice, in its basic conception, is the process by which a living creature becomes meat. Behind human sacrifice, then, lurks cannibalism. William Arens’s groundbreaking 1979 book *The Man-Eating Myth: Anthropology and Anthropophagy* accuses anthropologists of failing to recognize the

151. Vernant, “A General Theory of Sacrifice,” 295.

polemical nature of the cannibalism label when doing ethnographic research. Arens claims, and so far no one to date has proven otherwise,¹⁵² that there has been no anthropologist-observed ritual cannibalism recorded in any culture current or historical.¹⁵³ In fact, he claims, anthropologists and historians alike have been duped into believing the culturally motivated accusations of cannibalism as fact; Arens points out throughout his book that in every case he investigated, cannibalism is a brush with which to paint opposing groups. However, Arens does not deny the occurrence of necessity-

152. There were a number of strong reactions to Arens's book. Among the positive are: R. E. Downs, "Review of William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*," *American Ethnologist* 7, no. 4 (1980): 785–86; Ivan Brady's extremely thorough evaluation in *American Anthropologist* 84, no. 3 (1982): 595–611; Khalid Hasan, "Review of William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*," *Third World Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (1980): 812–14. I remain unconvinced by the following dismissive reviews, which seem to me to fall into exactly the trap Arens takes pains to point out to his colleagues: Thomas Krabacher, "Review of William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*," *Human Ecology* 8, no. 4 (1980): 407–409; James W. Springer, "Review of William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*," *Anthropological Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (1980): 148–50; P. G. Riviere, "Review of William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*," *Man* 15, no. 1 (1980): 203–205; Shirley Lindenbaum, "Review of William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*," *Ethnohistory* 29, no. 1 (1982): 58–60; and Marshall Sahlins, "Review of William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*," *New York Review of Books*, March 22, 1979. The public exchange between Arens and Sahlins can be read here: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1979/mar/22/cannibalism-an-exchange/?pagination=false>. Sahlins's most recent foray into the cannibalism debate is "Maintained Controversies: Global Warming and Fijian Cannibalism," in *Anthropology Today* 19, no. 3 (2003): 3–5; Arens's response is convincing to me: Arens and Gananath Obeyesekere, "Cannibalism Reconsidered: Response to Marshall Sahlins (*AT* 19.3)," in *Anthropology Today* 19, no. 5 (2003): 18–19. See also Peggy Reeves Sanday, *Divine Hunger: Cannibalism as a Cultural Construct* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 9–10.
153. Arens's most recent work on the subject is "Rethinking Anthropophagy," in *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*, eds. F. Barker et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 39–62. In this piece he maintains his position: "I see no reason to revise my original premise concerning the mythological nature of these creatures [sc. cannibals]" (40). More recently, Obeyesekere's book, *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), confirms Arens's conclusions, although its distinction between cannibalism (fictional) and anthropophagy (real) draws criticism from Arens in his review (*The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 115, no. 3 (2006): 295–98). In an e-mail dated September 27, 2012, Arens confirmed to me that no events of culturally-sanctioned cannibalism or anthropophagy have been witnessed or verified by any anthropologist in the intervening years: "Fortunately for my argument, I do not know of any eye witness accounts of [cannibalism] as a custom."

cannibalism, resorted to in times of severe famine, plane crashes in the Andes,¹⁵⁴ and bad winters spent in the Sierra Nevada.¹⁵⁵

This conclusion is based on the fact that, excluding survival conditions, I have been unable to uncover adequate documentation of cannibalism as a custom in any form for any society. Rumors, suspicions, fears and accusations abound, but no satisfactory first-hand accounts. Learned essays by professionals are unending, but the sustaining ethnography is lacking.¹⁵⁶

Arens questions why accusations against Christians and Jews have been (rightly) dismissed as polemical but those against “primitive” societies studied by anthropologists have been taken as legitimate.¹⁵⁷ In doing so, he highlights the crux of the issue behind cannibalism: that it is *always* an accusation and *never* a condoned cultural activity. In other words, even in the field of anthropology, what cannibalism *means* is more important than whether or not it is practiced. This is even more the case in story, and in particular in the romances, where cannibalism is real in the narrative. In other words, this is to say that cannibalism is a purely narrative phenomenon; it is real only in the

154. The sixteen survivors of the 1972 plane crash in the Andes, a group of rugby players, survived for over ten weeks by consuming the flesh of their dead comrades. After the fact, when interviewed by media, one of the survivors, Pancho Delgado said this: “When the moment came when we did not have any more food, or anything of that kind, we thought to ourselves that if Jesus at His last supper had shared His flesh and blood with His apostles, then it was a sign to us that we should do the same—take the flesh and blood as an intimate communion between us all” (in Piers Paul Read, *Alive: The Story of the Andes Survivors* [New York: Avon, 1974], 306). Later, the Archbishop of Montevideo condoned the survivors’ decision, as did Gino Concetti, a theologian writing for *L’Osservatore Romano*. Monsignor Rubio, however, denied that the consumption of human flesh in the context of survival could be likened to the Eucharist (Read, *Alive*, 308–309).

155. Interestingly, the bone evidence from the Donner Party expedition is inconclusive regarding deliberate butchery of human flesh, despite the initial admission of the survivors that they had resorted to cannibalism (Ethan Rarick, *Desperate Passage: The Donner Party’s Perilous Journey West* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008], 193).

156. William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth: Anthropology and Anthropophagy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 21.

157. *Ibid.*, 9.

sense that it is a cultural narrative. As such, its narrative functions are extremely significant and hold a wealth of cultural meaning.

Philip Harland takes up where Arens's study loses relevance for us. Harland's essay on the banqueting practices of outsiders in the Greek novels and other Greco-Roman literature illustrates how the label of "cannibal" is used to depict the barbarity of those considered outside the civilized world. Harland rightly observes that the process of creating a barbaric Other is as much about defining the civilized as it is about distinguishing and distancing the uncivilized. In focusing on common meals and banquets as means of creating social cohesion, Harland points out how scandalous or wrong religious behavior, such as human sacrifice and cannibalism, become tools with which the authors of the romances delineate right behavior. As such, Harland argues that these "anti-associations" of bandits represent the opposite of what legitimate voluntary associations could be expected to be.¹⁵⁸ His examination includes the cannibalistic scene from the fragmentary Lollianos text, which, he observes (after Albert Henrichs), "follows the usual Greek pattern of sacrifice, including the central importance of the internal organs (σπλάγχνα)."¹⁵⁹ However, the ritual is inverted—the sacrifice is grotesque: as in the cases of Polyxena and Iphigeneia, it uses a human rather than an animal as the sacrificial victim. For Harland, this anti-ritual creates identity: it forms from a group of disparate hoodlums a band of barbarian brothers, a danger to chaste Hellenic society. The rite of consuming certainly solidifies the group and unites its human members; however, it also cements the relationship between the cult and its

158. Philip Harland, "These People are . . . Men Eaters': Banquets of the Anti-Associations and Perceptions of Minority Cultural Groups," in *Identity and Interaction in the Ancient Mediterranean: Jews, Christians and Others: Essays in Honour of Stephen G. Wilson*, eds. Zeba A. Crook and Philip A. Harland (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2007), 58–59.

159. *Ibid.*, 61; cf. Albert Henrichs, "Pagan Ritual and the Alleged Crimes of the Early Christians," in *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, eds. Patrick Granfield and Josef A. Junmann (Münster: Verlag Aschendorff, 1970), 33–34.

presiding deity. As Dio Chrysostom articulates, the consumption of sacrificed flesh is what makes whole the act of sacrifice.¹⁶⁰ Slaughter is therefore not enough; the sacrificial victim must be consumed by the participants.

Human Sacrifice and Implied Cannibalism in the Novels

Human sacrifice and cannibalism are therefore literary phenomena, rather than historical realities. Thus it is appropriate to view the ritual events in the novels as taking part in this cultural narrative about how human sacrifice and cannibalism function—they create communities, certainly, but they especially function to cement these cultic relationships. John Winkler’s refutation of the historicity of one such event serves as an example of how important it is to take these types of scenes as literary events. In his article, “Lollianos and the Desperadoes,”¹⁶¹ Winkler presents an argument against taking the human sacrifices described in many of the Greek romances as representations of actual rituals, as Henrichs proposed.¹⁶² Taking the extremely fragmentary text of *Phoinikika* as the core of the discussion, Winkler evaluates the scene of human sacrifice and cannibalism that takes place in fragment B. Henrichs proposed that the scene in Lollianos represents an actual, probably Dionysian, rite and that this fragmentary text can be used to recreate in part our understanding of this cult and its rituals.¹⁶³ As such, he concluded that Kerényi and Merkelbach’s proposal to understand the Greek novels as ciphers for the ancient mystery cults was methodologically correct.¹⁶⁴ Winkler’s disagreement with Henrich’s conclusions comes from three areas.

160. Dio Chrysostom, *3 Regn. (Or. 3)*, 97.

161. John Winkler, “Lollianos and the Desperadoes,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 100 (1980): 155–81.

162. Lollianos, *Die Phoinikika Des Lollianos: Fragmente Eines Neuen Griechischen Romans*, ed. Albert Henrichs (Bonn: R. Habelt, 1972), 29.

163. *Ibid.*, 78 n. 6.

164. *Ibid.*, 78.

First, Winkler concludes that fragment B's description of the black and white masquerade outfits worn by the practitioners is not a reflection of the historical requirements of some Dionysiac cult but rather the literary use of ghost costumes in order to create fear in the audience.¹⁶⁵ Second, and most importantly for our study, Winkler shows how the pattern of human sacrifice in Lollianos is incongruous with what we know of ritual murder of human beings in Greek and other religious traditions of the ancient Mediterranean; he concludes, again, that the details of these sacrifices are not included because they are historical but rather in order to create a sense of horror in the readers.¹⁶⁶ Finally, Winkler explores the historicity of bandits themselves, who are called "Boukoloi" in *Phoinikika*, a name that has provoked their association with the boukoloi mentioned in Dio.¹⁶⁷ Here Winkler allows for a slightly more historical interpretation of Lollianos's naming practices, suggesting cautiously that an Egyptian rebel group might have adopted the name "Boukoloi" given the prominent role the herding-type of boukoloi played in rebellions earlier in Egyptian history. Again, Winkler guards against a reading that historicizes the named Boukoloi in the novel and rather proposes that the group is a natural one to include given the context out of which the text arose.¹⁶⁸

Winkler's conclusions are important for this study because they are founded on an understanding of how literature develops and is created. He notes that literary interdependence is not always as direct as it seems; imitation may make it seem as though the dependence is one-to-one when in actuality it may reflect the common usage of a wider literary pattern, as with the constant use of brigands in the Greek romances.¹⁶⁹ This explains the common use by many of

165. Winkler, "Desperadoes," 157–66.

166. *Ibid.*, 166–75.

167. *Ibid.*, 175–81; Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 71.4.

168. Winkler, "Desperadoes," 181.

the novels of what have become recognizable tropes: travel, danger, near-death, disguise, and recognition. However, he also notes that direct literary dependence is very frequently represented by a *development* of an aspect used in the original text rather than its word-for-word reproduction. It seems likely, for instance, that Heliodorus had read Achilles Tatius’s work when he created the bandits, but Heliodorus does not copy Achilles Tatius’s bandits wholesale; he rather develops them to fit his own creation. I would further argue that even when an older text *is quoted* word-for-word, that the reference to the older text takes on new meaning in its new context. That is, when the novelists cite Homeric texts, they not only call to mind the meaning in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* but also give an additional meaning to that quotation by virtue of including them in their plots.

Further, Winkler observes that recurring tropes in novels do not necessarily betray the usage of one text by another; rather stories and their peculiarities are spread like seeds in the wind and authors may pick and choose useful elements from these stories without directly having read or heard the original tale. As Winkler puts it, “Sinbad and Odysseus both drive hot stakes into a giant’s eye(s): the specificity of detail seems to demand a connection, but it need not be that Shahrazad read Homer.”¹⁷⁰

Finally, Winkler makes the observation that stories do represent, to some extent, the realities their authors experienced. “The connection between these two literary texts [Euripides’s *Iphigeneia at Tauris* and Xenophon’s *Ephesian Tale*] is that they are rooted in the same circumstances of human society—national isolation and xenophobia—and in the same selective powers of human imagination.”¹⁷¹ That is, two texts might have similarities in how

169. *Ibid.*, 156; or indeed, with the trope of theophagy in general, as I argue.

170. *Ibid.*, 157.

they describe a certain scene because they share motivation; rather than assuming a direct or indirect literary relationship, in certain cases the similarities may reflect actual cultural assumptions. In Winkler's article, he offers the example of the "motif of a shore landing where the heroes are captured by natives and brought somewhere to be disposed of as slaves."¹⁷² In this case, it is not out of place to venture that this might be a likely turn of events in real life as well as the novels. However, as always, distinguishing between truth and fiction is not always as clear-cut.

For the purpose of this project, the division between historical truth and literary fiction is irrelevant; the literary context of a text is inseparable from its social implications since it is society that governs our horror when we read of Leucippe's plight on the altar or of Charicleia's at the hands of her parents. This, too, is something that Winkler acknowledges, although in passing. After his treatment of sacrificial scenes in the novels, he concludes that these scenes are not representative of actual religious practice in the ancient world because (a) there is no precedent for them in non-fictional literature, and (b) their description takes pains to invoke horror and disgust: "as soon as we admit the factors of fear and loathing, the narrator's objectivity in the face of his audience is compromised."¹⁷³ Certainly, these gruesome scenes, whether they depict or only suggest the sacrifice of the heroines of our novels, are crafted in order to jar and shock the reader: it is horrific that such a divine creature should meet such an end! But additionally shocking is the consumption of the flesh of the divinely beautiful heroine. Winkler takes pains to emphasize the distinction in the Greek world between sacrifice that is eaten and that which is not (σφάγια).¹⁷⁴ "These two classes

171. Ibid.

172. Ibid.

173. Ibid., 171.

174. Ibid., 166–68.

are exclusive. In the rare and highly shocking cases where a human victim is sacrificed, the ritual is not a meal but a *sphagion*.”¹⁷⁵

For Winkler, who is questioning the historical veracity of the rituals performed in the novels, this is an important point: they *cannot* be representations of actual events because human sacrifice, when (in Winkler’s view) it rarely occurs, is *always* σφάγια whereas the cases in the novels are clearly meal-type sacrifices. I have been arguing throughout, however, that human sacrifice and cannibalism are *always* literary and as such exist *only* in the cultural narrative. Winkler’s differentiation between σφάγια and θυσία, then, becomes all the more significant when we acknowledge that we are working entirely in the literary realm. For here we have a human sacrifice that culminates in a meal and is called θυσία. In the novels, then, we have our first instance where the word θυσία implies a meal of *human* flesh as part of the ritual.

I would argue that it is exactly this fact that makes the scenes in the novels so shocking and also so significant. When we examine the instances of human sacrifice—apparent or just-barely-prevented—in the Greek romance novels, it is clear that the author’s choice of words is intended to send a thrill up the readers’ spines. The terms used to describe the impending sacrifice of our heroines is never σφάγια¹⁷⁶ and always some variation of θυσία or an equivalent term, implying the possibility of a sacrificial meal.

175. *Ibid.*, 166–67, citing Friedrich Schwenn, *Die Menschenopfer bei den Griechen und Römern* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1914; repr., Berlin: Töpelmann, 1966).

176. The only exception to this is in a phrase uttered by Theagenes and then the term is in conjunction with θυσία. For analysis of this occurrence, see below, note 184.

MY FLESH IS MEAT INDEED

Novel	Citation	Context	Explicit Feast?	Term(s) Used
<i>Ephesian Tale</i>	2.13.1	Robbers sacrifice Anthia to Ares	no	θυσίαν (x3), θύεσθαι
<i>Ethiopian Story</i>	9.1.4-5	Discussion of Theagenes and Chariclea as sacrifices	no	θυσίας, ἱερεῖα
<i>Ethiopian Story</i>	10.4.5	Theagenes and Chariclea as sacrifices to specific gods	no	θυσίας
<i>Ethiopian Story</i>	10.9.1	Theagenes laments his fate	no	θυσίαί and σφαγαί together
<i>Ethiopian Story</i>	10.16.4-7	Hydaspes discusses Charicleia's sacrifice	no	(ἱερουργεῖν), ἐναγίζεῖν
<i>Ethiopian Story</i>	10.16.10	Hydaspes leads Charicleia to the altar	no	θυσίαν, ἱερείων
<i>Leucippe and Clitophon</i>	3.12.1	Leucippe is taken to become a sacrifice by the bandits	yes	ἱερεῖον
<i>Leucippe and Clitophon</i>	3.15.1-6	Graphic description of Leucippe's sacrifice	yes	(σπονδήν)
<i>Leucippe and Clitophon</i>	3.16.5	Clitophon wails about Leucippe's death	yes	(θύμασιν)
<i>Leucippe and Clitophon</i>	3.19.2	Recounting the events leading up to Leucippe's sacrifice	yes	καταθύσαι
<i>Leucippe and Clitophon</i>	3.20.2	Recounting the events leading up to Leucippe's sacrifice	yes	θυσίας
<i>Leucippe and Clitophon</i>	3.22.3	One bandit discusses his band's sacrificial traditions	yes	θυσίας, ἱερείας, ἄνθρωπον καταθύειν

This is not to say that θυσία always indicates that a meal will take place during the rite; as I discussed above, this term is the generic, unmarked term for sacrifice. Rather, in its lack of specificity, in its ambiguity, it allows for the thrilling possibility of consumption. That is, although other instances of human sacrifice are safely described as

σφάγια, specifying that the flesh will *not* be eaten, the authors of the novels have chosen to use a term without that specificity.

In *An Ephesian Tale*, Anthia has been captured by a gang of bandits led by Hippothous when we hear the gruesome details of what is to befall her:

οἱ δὲ περὶ τὸν ἱππόθοον τὸν ληστὴν ἐκείνης μὲν τῆς νυκτὸς ἔμειναν εὐωχοῦμενοι, τῇ δ' ἐξῆς περὶ τὴν θυσίαν ἐγίνοντο. παρεσκευάζετο δὲ πάντα καὶ ἀγάλματα τοῦ ἄρεος καὶ ξύλα καὶ στεφανώματα· ἔδει δὲ τὴν θυσίαν γενέσθαι ρόπῳ τῷ συνήθει. τὸ μέλλον ἱερεῖον θύεσθαι ἔτε ἄνθρωπος εἴτε βόσκημα εἴη κρεμάσαντες ἐκ δένδρου καὶ διαστάντες ἠκόντιζον, καὶ ὁποῖοι μὲν ἐπέτυχον τούτων ὁθεὸς ἐδόκει δέχεσθαι τὴν θυσίαν, ὁποῖοι δὲ ἀπέτυχον αὐτίς ἐξιλάσκοντο. ἔδει δὲ τὴν ἀνθίαν οὕτως ἱεουργηθῆναι.¹⁷⁷

The bandit Hippothous' gang spent that night partying, and the next day they got busy with their sacrifice. When everything was prepared—images of Ares, firewood, and garlands—the sacrifice was to be carried out in their usual manner: they hung the victim that was going to be sacrificed, whether human or animal, from a tree, stood at a distance, and tried to hit it with javelins, and the god was considered to accept the sacrifice of all who scored a hit, while those who missed tried to appease him a second time. It was Anthia who was to serve as this kind of sacrificial victim.

Luckily for Anthia, an officer of the peace named Perilaus bursts in at the last moment and rescues Anthia from her brutal fate. Examining the passage, it is clear that nowhere in the course of the description is any consumption of her flesh ruled out; the term *θυσία* leaves open what will occur after the death of the victim. The cult of the god Ares does not appear to require σφάγια-only cult and therefore does not imply *de facto* non-banquet worship.¹⁷⁸ We are therefore left

177. *Ephesian Tale* 2.13.1.

178. The god Ares, to whom these bandits dedicate the sacrifice, had very few established cults (Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 169–70), making it difficult to say (a) whether there was a normative pattern of sacrifice to Ares, and (b) whether it can be inferred here based on the items gathered for preparation. The few references we have to the cult of Ares are from Pausanias. In 8.48.4–5,

with what the text of our novel itself says. The passage describes first the sacrifice and then Anthia as sacrificial victim in ambiguous terms (θυσίαν, θύεσθαι) that neither imply nor rule out a ritual meal. We do know, from their preparations, that they have gathered firewood in order to create a fire; at least, then, the victim is to be put to the flame after she is killed. It is unclear from this passage, however, whether she is to be burnt wholly or merely cooked. I suggest that the ambiguity displayed by the text is telling. Ares's cult is unhelpful in establishing a context in which to locate this sacrifice; so too is the language, which does not automatically infer cannibalism, but takes no trouble to rule it out. The reader is left with the terrifying suspense of the unknown: human sacrifice will certainly occur, but will those prepared flames cook the meat of our poor heroine's corpse, or will she be "lucky" and escape cannibalization? The lack of specificity in this passage creates space for the reader to imagine the worst: Anthia might be eaten by a horde of bandits in some perverse barbarian rite.

An Ethiopian Story includes more than a whole chapter of anticipation of the human sacrifices of Chariclea and Theagenes. The drama begins at the end of chapter eight when Chariclea and Theagenes are bound in chains and dragged off for safekeeping. At the start of chapter nine, we learn that as the first of prisoners of war, they will be used as victory sacrifices under Ethiopian law. Our heroes are carted off with utmost care; their guards are given instructions "to spare no pains in catering to their needs and stint

Pausanias recounts the establishment of a festival of Ares where women alone partake in the sacrifices (θυσία) and the feast that takes place afterwards. In contrast, 3.22.6-7 refers to a temple and grove of Ares in Geronthrae that holds a festival each year at which women are forbidden; no mention is made of what takes place during the festival. Pausanias notes a Spartan puppy sacrifice (no mention of banquet) to Enyalios (a god associated with Ares) in 3.17.9. The type of sacrifice that might historically be expected to be offered to Ares cannot, therefore, be articulated in any concrete sense; the few examples we have of the cult of Ares include explicit mention of feasting but in other cases do not specify. We do not know whether banquet-type sacrifices were the norm or whether only σφάγια types were expected. Ares's "established" cult therefore does not have bearing on what occurs in *An Ephesian Tale*.

nothing in their care, but above all to keep them clean of all impurity, for they were now being kept as a pair of sacrificial victims.”¹⁷⁹ To emphasize this, let me restate that Heliodorus describes the pair as being treated *just like ordinary sacrificial animals*. The chosen sacrificial animal in Greek religion must be pure and unblemished and treated with care; so too are the victims here. Hydaspes, the Ethiopian king (and secretly Charicleia’s father!), orders that the every need of Charicleia and Theagenes be met with no expense spared, and their chains are to be replaced with chains of gold.¹⁸⁰ This emphasis on the over-the-top treatment of Charicleia and Theagenes highlights their recategorization as consecrated sacrificial victims and heightens the expectation of their impending ritual deaths.

At this point, the suspense is left for quite some time while the battles rage. At the end of twenty-four sections, we finally hear from our heroes again. They are brought before Hydaspes again, who remains ignorant of his relationship to the victims before him. A long discussion follows about Chariceleia’s beauty, her resemblance to a daughter the king once dreamt he had, and other coy allusions to Charicleia’s true parentage before they are whisked out of the plot again until the middle of book ten. We begin again to hear about the preparations for the sacrifice. Persinna, the queen, is the Priestess of the Moon and the only woman allowed to be present at the sacrifice; her husband, the king, is the Priest of the Sun. Charicleia, we learn, is to be sacrificed to the Moon and Theagenes to the Sun.¹⁸¹ After a long description of the location and layout of the sacrificial area that last several sections, the rite begins: Charicleia and Theagenes, along with the other prisoners, are brought before the Priest of the Sun. Persinna remarks on the radiant beauty of Charicleia and compares

179. *An Ethiopian Story*, 9.1.5.

180. *Ibid.*, 9.1.5.

181. *Ibid.*, 10.4.5.

her to the daughter she gave away at birth; she begs her husband to make this victim exempt.¹⁸² Hydaspes states that it is impossible to save her from her fate unless she were proven to be impure—if she has the “taint of intercourse with a man.” The test for this is to walk across a golden gridiron without being scorched; only Theagenes and Charicleia, the very two for whose escape Persinna had hoped the test would allow, pass the test. Charicleia, when it is her turn, dons her radiant Delphic robe and stands on the gridiron as a dazzling vision, her hair loose and flowing around her. Her divine appearance shocks the crowd but her proven virginity at the same time seals her fate as a sacrificial victim.¹⁸³ At the very moment of the most remarkable display of her divine beauty, Charicleia is confirmed as a sacrificial victim; as Theagenes stated earlier, “A life of virtue earns a fine wage in Ethiopia: sacrificial slaughter [θυσίαί καὶ σφαγαί] is chastity’s reward.”¹⁸⁴ At the last minute, however, Charicleia saves herself by finally making her case in front of the king and successfully convinces her father of his relationship to her by showing everyone her recognition tokens. Even then, her father seems determined to sacrifice his daughter to the gods.¹⁸⁵ He makes what seems like an impassioned exhortation on the sacrificial practice and why he as king must go through with the sacrifice of his own daughter.

The drama of the sacrifice is spread out over so many sections that the first-time reader must have envisioned Charicleia’s death on the altar many times over by the time she is able to breathe this

182. *Ibid.*, 10.7.4–5.

183. *Ibid.*, 10.9.3.

184. *Ibid.*, 10.9.1; “τάπιχειρα παρ’ αἰθίοσι τῶν καθαρῶς βιούντων· θυσίαί καὶ σφαγαί τὰ ἔπαθλα τῶν σωφρονούντων.” Theagenes’s use of the term σφαγία falls under one of the categories of use in Casabona’s analysis in that he has used both the general term to refer to the rite as a whole, potentially including a meal of the victim, and the specific term to refer only to the moment of blood-letting; when used in conjunction the pair of terms can still imply a sacrificial meal. See above, this chapter. Cf. Casabona, *Recherches*, 163; Herodotus, *Histories*, 2.39, for example, uses the terms in conjunction in much the same way.

185. Herodotus, *Histories*, 10.16.4–7.

sigh of relief. The suspense is released after the climax of Charicleia’s ordeal on the gridiron, but the tension returns as the display of her magnificence apparently cements her fate as a sacrificial victim even as it simultaneously suggests her divinity. The terms used for the sacrifice in this section vary. Theagenes uses *θυσία* and *σφάγια* in conjunction in 10.9.1 indicating, as Casabona has shown, an ordinary, unmarked sacrificial rite wherein the moment of slaughter (*σφάγια*) is specifically indicated within the sacrificial act as a whole (*θυσία*), including banquet. However, Hydaspes, declaring that he will put Charicleia on the altar in 10.16.7, uses the term *ἐναγίζειν*, a term usually reserved for offerings to the dead or heroes, as discussed above. This is odd, given that we know that the Sun and the Moon are neither deceased nor heroes; they are gods in their own rights, and decidedly celestial ones at that.

It is also the first time that the verb *ἐναγίζειν* is used to describe what should have happened to Charicleia; previously the most common descriptors were *θυσία* and *ἱερεία*. Clearly this is a highly marked use of this word in the context of this novel. It is bizarre for the king to refer to the impending sacrifice using this term. Nor, as my discussion of the term above shows, does its use relieve the anxiety about whether the victims will be the main course at the festive banquet afterwards, as the heroic cults, too, where the verb *ἐναγίζειν* was routinely used, included feasts after certain types of sacrifice included under this term.

What purpose does Hydaspes’s use of this term serve, then? I propose his choice of words is deliberately chosen to lessen the importance of the sacrifice he is pretending to attempt to legitimize—the king is trying to play down the sacrifice in order to save his daughter’s life and has therefore deliberately chosen *ἐναγίζειν*, an incongruous word. At last, when Hydaspes leads Charicleia off to the altar, he compares her fate to the one she will

never have, of being dressed as a bride.¹⁸⁶ All the while, we learn from the narrator, Hydaspes is praying “that his oration, whose rhetoric he had contrived to ensure its ineffectiveness, would fail to carry its point.”¹⁸⁷ Finally, then, Hydaspes’s choice of that peculiar sacrificial term has found motivation: he purposefully selected a term marked as an offering to the dead or to heroes rather than one that would be appropriate for the most important celestial deities of Ethiopia in the hopes that the crowd would change its priorities and beg for his daughter Charicleia’s release.

The significance, then, of sacrificial terminology in the novels is not to be discounted; in Heliodorus’s romance, it serves first to create tension and concern about the fate of Charicleia and Theagenes, but in particular Charicleia, whose sacrificial drama is drawn out more thoroughly than Theagenes’. The terms used are purposefully ordinary—they neither confirm nor deny the type of sacrifice or whether there is to be a banquet of the carved flesh of the victims. Contextually, all the reader knows is that there is to be a θυσία to the celestial gods of the Sun and the Moon of some virginal humans and some other (ordinary) sacrificial animals. The human and animal victims are treated with equal care leading up to the ritual and every victim, human and animal alike, are expected to be free of blemish. It is only when the king is attempting to downplay the importance of this celestial-type sacrifice that he chooses a marked vocabulary word, and even then, the word he chooses can imply a banquet as part of the rite.

The final incident of human sacrifice in the corpus of Greek romances is found in *Leucippe and Clitophon*.¹⁸⁸ Having just hired

186. *Ibid.*, 10.16.10; This reference is reminiscent of the other sacrificial maidens of Greek literature, especially Iphigeneia, who was lured to the sacrifice with the promise of her own wedding.

187. *Ibid.*, 10.17.1.

188. While Callirhoe is not at risk of becoming a human sacrifice like the other heroines, Chaereas nonetheless experiences her loss in the form of a suspected loss of chastity. While this may

a boat to take them along the Nile to Alexandria, poor, ill-fated Leucippe and Clitophon are attacked by the Boukoloι and captured. They are tied up and left in a hut, giving Clitophon time to reflect at length on their fate. In his soliloquy, Clitophon holds the gods responsible for their fates, from the shipwreck they have just survived to their impending capture by the bandits:

“ὦ θεοὶ καὶ δαίμονες,” ἔφην, “εἴπερ ἔστέ που καὶ ἀκούετε, τί τηλικούτον ἠδικήκαμεν, ὡς ἐν ὀλίγαις ἡμέραις τοσοῦτω πλῆθει βαπτισθῆναι κακῶν; νῦν δὲ καὶ παραδεδώκατε ἡμᾶς λησταῖς αἰγυπτίοις, ἵνα μηδὲ ἐλέου τύχωμεν. . . . μάτην σοι, ὦ θάλασσα, τὴν χάριν ὠμολογήσαμεν· μέμφομαί σου τῇ φιλανθρωπίᾳ· χρηστοτέρα γέγονας πρὸς οὓς ἀπέκτεινας, ἡμᾶς δὲ σώσασα μᾶλλον ἀπέκτεινας. ἐφθόνησας ἡμῖν ἀληστεύτοις ἀποθανεῖν.”

“O all ye gods and guardian angels [δαίμονες],” said I, “if really ye exist and can hear me, what great wrong have we done to be plunged in such a sea of troubles in so short a space of time? Now have you also delivered us over into the hands of Egyptian robbers, so that we have not even a chance of pity. . . . Ah, all in vain, O sea, did we give you thanks: now I blame your mercy; you were kinder to those whom you destroyed, and you have destroyed us yet more grievously by keeping us alive; you grudged us death save by a robber’s hand.”¹⁸⁹

not seem an appropriate equivalence to modern readers, for whom chastity is perhaps not as highly valued, Winkler has observed instances in the Greek romances, in particular *Leucippe and Clitophon*, where loss of sexual virtue is described using gruesome metaphors of slaughter and vice versa (Winkler, “Desperadoes,” 173). The strongest example is found first in 2.23.5 when Leucippe’s mother dreams that she witnesses “a robber with a naked sword snatch her daughter from her, throw her down on her back, and then rip her up the middle of the belly with the blade, beginning from the groin [lit. genitals].” (Greek: ἔτυγε γὰρ ὄνειρος αὐτὴν ταραξας. ἐδόκει τινα ληστήν μάχαιραν ἔχοντα γυμνὴν ἄγειν ἀρπασάμενον αὐτῆς τὴν θυγατέρα καὶ καταθέμενον ὑπτίαν, μέσσην ἀνατέμνειν τῇ μαχαίρᾳ τὴν γαστέρα κάτωθεν ἀρξάμενον ἀπὸ τῆς αἰδοῦς.) This unmistakable reference to sexual violence is echoed when Leucippe is slit from stem to stern in 3.15. It is no surprise, then, that Chaereas expresses the loss of Callirhoe’s virtue in similar terms to when she is “dead” in the first book; upon hearing the lie that Dionysius has at last managed to take Callirhoe as his wife (7.1.3–6), Chaereas mourns for his lost bride (7.4.10; compare 3.3.5–6). Callirhoe’s ‘death’ exists only insofar as Chaereas assumes her chastity has been violated but given the parallels between violence and sexuality in *Leucippe* especially, this final climax in the drama of *Callirhoe* may belong to this category as well; instead of the virgin it is virginity itself on the altar.

189. *Leucippe and Clitophon*, 3.10.1–2, 6.

Suddenly, one of the bandits returns to fetch a virgin from among the captives: “If there chance to be a virgin among the captives, I am to take her away for the god, to be a propitiatory and cleansing sacrifice for the host.”¹⁹⁰ While Leucippe is carted off to be a most unwilling sacrifice, the rest follow at a slower pace. Before they can arrive at bandit headquarters, however, they are met by a group of soldiers who successfully butcher the bandits and free Clitophon, who convinces the soldiers to go with him to save Leucippe. The next day they make their way to the bandit lair and watch from a distance as Leucippe is made ready for sacrifice:

ἀγουσι δὴ τινες δύο τὴν κόρην, ὀπίσω τῷ χεῖρε δεδεμένην· καὶ αὐτοὺς μὲν οἴτινες ἦσαν οὐκ εἶδον, ἦσαν γὰρ ὀπλισμένοι, τὴν δὲ κόρην λευκίπτην οὖσαν ἐγνώρισα. εἶτα κατὰ τῆς κεφαλῆς σπονδὴν χέαντες, περιάγουσι τὸν βωμὸν κύκλῳ καὶ ἐπηύλει τις αὐτῇ, καὶ ὁ ἱερεὺς, ὡς εἰκός, ἦδεν ᾠδὴν αἰγυπτίαν· τὸ γὰρ σχῆμα τοῦ στόματος, καὶ τῶν προσώπων τὸ διελευσμένον ὑπέφαινε ᾠδὴν. εἶτα ἀπὸ συνθήματος πάντες ἀναχωροῦσι τοῦ βωμοῦ μακρὰν· τῶν δὲ νεανίσκων ὁ ἕτερος ἀνακλίνας αὐτὴν ὑπτίαν, ἔδησεν ἐκ παττάλων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐρηρισμένων, οἷον ποιοῦσιν οἱ κοροπλάθοι τὸν μαρσύαν ἐκ τοῦ φυτοῦ δεδεμένον· εἶτα λαβὼν ξίφος βάπτει κατὰ τῆς καρδίας καὶ διελκύσας τὸ ξίφος εἰς τὴν κάτω γαστέρα, ῥήγνυσι· τὰ σπλάγχχνα δὲ εὐθύς ἐξεπήδησεν, ἃ ταῖς χερσὶν ἐξελκύσαντες ἐπιθέασι τῷ βωμῷ, καὶ ἐπεὶ ὀπτῆθη, κατατεμόντες ἅπαντες εἰς μοίρας ἔφαγον. ταῦτα δὲ ὀρῶντες οἱ μὲν στρατιῶται καὶ ὁ στρατηγὸς καθ’ ἓν τῶν τραπομένων ἀνεβρόων καὶ τὰς ὕψεις ἀπέστρεφον τῆς θεάς, ἐγὼ δὲ ἐκ παραλόγου κατήμενος ἐθεώρουν. Μέτρον γὰρ οὐκ ἔχον τὸ κακὸν ἐνεβρόντησέ με. . . . ἐπεὶ δὲ τέλος εἶχεν, ὡς γε ὦμην, τὸ ἔργον, τὸ σῶμα ἐνθέντες τῇ σορῷ καταλείπουσι, πῶμα ἐπ’ αὐτῆς ἐπιθέντες, τὸν δὲ βωμὸν καταστρέψαντες, φεύγουσιν ἀμεταστρεπτί. οὕτω γὰρ αὐτοῖς ποιεῖν ἔτυχε μεμαντευμένος ὁ ἱερεὺς.

Then two of them led up the girl, her hands tied behind her back. I could not see who they were, as they were in full armour, but I recognized her as Leucippe. First they poured libations over her head

190. Ibid., 3.12.1; εἴ τις παρθένος ἐστὶν ἐν τοῖς εἰλημμένοις, ταύτην ἀπάγειν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, ἱερεῖον ἐσομένην καὶ καθάρσιον τοῦ στρατοῦ.

and led her round the altar while, to the accompaniment of a pipe, a priest chanted what seemed to be an Egyptian hymn; this at least was indicated by the movements of his lips and the contortions of his features. Then, at a concerted sign, all retired to some distance from the altar; one of the two young attendants laid her down on her back, and strapped her so by means of pegs fixed in the ground, just as the statuary represents Marsyas fixed to the tree; then he took a sword and plunging it in about the region of the heart, drew it down to the lower part of the belly, opening up her body; the bowels gushed out, and these they drew forth in their hands and placed upon the altar; and when they were roasted, the whole body of them cut them up into small pieces, divided them into shares and ate them. The soldiers and the general who were looking cried out as each stage of the deed was done and averted their eyes from the sight. I sat gazing in my consternation, rooted to the spot by the horror of the spectacle; the immeasurable calamity struck me, as by lightning, motionless . . . When the business came, as I thought, to an end, the two attendants placed her body in the coffin, put the lid upon it, overturned the altar, and hurried away without looking round; such were the instructions given to them by the priest in the liturgy which he chanted.¹⁹¹

This is the most explicit and the most shocking of all the cases of human sacrifice reported in the novels, and perhaps in all of Greek literature. The graphic detail with which the sacrifice and perverse banquet is described is horrific; further, that the sacrifice and disembowelment are even described at all is shocking. In her book, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman*, Nicole Loraux observes how women in tragedies normally die off-scene. Their deaths are described but never depicted. Just as in the vase paintings described by Vernant, where the act of slaughter is never shown, virgin sacrifice in theater also takes place out of sight. Nevertheless, their deaths are described. Since in tragedy, words are of paramount importance,¹⁹² what occurs verbally is as significant if not more so than that which is depicted

191. *Ibid.*, 3.15.1-6.

192. Nicole Loraux, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman*, trans. Anthony Forster (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), vii.

physically by actors on the stage. That is, the fact that the deaths of the virgins in the Greek tragedies occur in the imaginations of the audience does not diminish their significance, but rather creates the coexistence of multiple meanings.

In connections with these deaths that are put into words, I would repeat what Beaudelaire said about beauty, when he defined it as “lending itself to conjecture.” Death by report lends itself to conjecture vastly more than does violence exposed to public view. [...] This is all the more true in that tragedy uses for the spoken description words of multiple meaning, words that are somehow ‘in the know.’¹⁹³

In this way Loraux articulates the paradoxical nature of the virgin sacrifice. The death occurs not on stage but in the imaginations of the audience; in that way, it is more powerfully real than it would be were it depicted using theatrical tricks. Leucippe’s graphic, full-frontal sacrifice, disembowelment, and cannibalization are so far out of the norm in its central place in the theater of the plot. However, as it is revealed later on, Leucippe’s death is also an act of theater: it is not real. This transgressive *double-entendre* created by Achilles Tatius provokes horror and then relief as the ruse is exposed.

In the other examples, the narratives spin out the drama of the impending sacrifice in order to enact the sacrifice in the minds of the readers without actually having it occur within the bounds of the plot. Here, Achilles Tatius does not rely on suspense to create the image of human sacrifice and ritual cannibalism in the minds of his readers: he outlines each step of this rite so that its memory burns in their minds as it does in Clitophon’s as he describes it first hand. And yet, the theater of the event persists; the sacrifice is exposed as a fake, but the readers are left pondering, *what if?* There is no doubt here that this is an alimentary sacrifice of an

193. *Ibid.*, x.

ordinary, although horrifically perverted, type. Leucippe, just like the beast in Burkert's *Greek Religion*, has a libation poured over her head and is led around the altar before being slaughtered and her entrails roasted and eaten. This woman, only shortly before described as a divine beauty, is graphically slaughtered before the readers' eyes. However, just as in the other novels, this sacrifice too never actually takes place. Despite appearances to the contrary, Leucippe has not been eviscerated by bandits, her entrails eaten; rather, she is safe in the coffin, alive (3.17.7). Her sacrificers are actually Clitophon's old friends, Menelaus and Satyrus, who have contrived to trick the robber band into thinking the sacrifice is real. Using their knowledge of the theater and having conveniently found a trick sword, the pair have sewn a sheep's stomach up with its guts and bound it to Leucippe's stomach under her robes. The trick sword, with its collapsing blade, cuts only so deep as to tear the false stomach and split it open; Leucippe therefore only had to *act* the part of the sacrificial virgin all the while remaining safe on the altar and then in the coffin. Leucippe's sacrifice is the most graphic of all those that occur (or do not occur) in the romances. Her cannibalism is the most explicit even though she is never actually eaten. As far as the narrator, Clitophon, and the readers are concerned, Leucippe is slain on the altar and her entrails are consumed as part of this perverse ritual.

The heroines in the novels are both sacrificed *and* not sacrificed; they are eaten *and* not eaten. The anxiety of the readership occurs *because of the ambiguity in the verb used*; this imagination allows for both possibilities to exist simultaneously. In literature, unlike real life, it is possible for contradicting realities to coexist. In literature, this creates a depth of meaning akin to a *double entendre*. The "sacrifice" of these maidens, whether or not it actually occurs in the plot, happens in the language describing the potentiality of the action; the sacrifice exists as a reality in the text each time the event

is discussed. The sacrifices of Leucippe, Charicleia, and Anthia are realities in the narrative realm. And as such, their effect is likewise real. To some extent, the “comedy of innocence” observed by Karl Meuli¹⁹⁴ is taken to a more complex level in the novels: where in the anthropological examination of normal Greek sacrifice, a discomfort with the guilt associated with the hand that slays has been ritualized, in the romances the discomfort is represented by the victims preventing the guilt in the first place. That is, that our heroines escape death reimagines the trope of the guilty knife, as exemplified in Porphyry’s *De Abstentia* 2.28.4–2.30; where in reality the anxiety around murder finds a ritual solution, in the novels a narrative solution takes its place. The heroines—like Iphigeneia—are simultaneously alive and dead. Their sacrifice is envisioned and witnessed by both readers and characters; in the end, the performance is real.

Sacrifice and Simultaneity

With the preceding in mind, I propose that these sacrifices are the moments when these heroines become identified with their antagonistic goddess. Nagy’s proposal in *The Best of the Achaeans* is, I argue, represented also in these novels, where antagonism, radiant beauty, and death intersect to identify the heroines with divinity. The trope of the apparent death, or *Scheintod*, is a stock plot device in the ancient novels used to create tension and suspense, but *Scheintod* also has another function. Tracing the history of resurrection in Greek and Latin literature, G. W. Bowersock notes that for the ancients, the concept of a resurrected human was foreign; necromancy was a popular feature of ancient magic, but according to Bowersock,

194. Karl Meuli, “Griechische Opferbäuche,” in *Phyllobolia für Peter von der Mühlh*, ed. Olof Gigon (Basel: Schwabe, 1946), 185–288.

resurrection was not a common concept in non-Jewish literature until after the Jesus movement.¹⁹⁵ Bowersock, perhaps unintentionally, suggests that the heroines' false deaths and lively reappearances are suggestive of their association with the divine: "Gods might die and be reborn, but not mortals of flesh and blood."¹⁹⁶ Antonius Diogenes's *The Wonders Beyond Thule* includes the character of Zamolxis who had been resurrected from death and was thence regarded as divinity.¹⁹⁷ Thus, in the eyes of the Hellenistic and Roman world, to be brought back from death gives a person a certain divine quality; that heroes, for example Protesilaus,¹⁹⁸ returned from Hades is part of this understanding as are, to a certain extent, the apotheoses of the emperors. The association between divinity and coming back from the grave is solidified by the constant misidentifications of these heroines with various divinities (*Ephesian Tale* 2.2; *Leucippe and Clitophon* 7.15; *An Ethiopian Story* 1.2, 1.21; *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 1.1, 1.14, 2.1, etc.). The apparent deaths of the heroines therefore reinforce their divine identity, marked, as discussed above in chapter two, by their shining, radiant beauty. Their sacrifice identifies them with the virgins, such as Iphigeneia, who were offered to Artemis and who as a result became heroines, straddling the divine-mortal divide. But their sacrifice also represents the climax of the antagonism between them as heroines of the narrative and the deity responsible for their fates.

In Greek hero cults, the death of the hero is required to establish the cult to the hero; it is also that moment of death that in literature establishes the identification of the hero with the god or goddess.¹⁹⁹

195. G. W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 103.

196. *Ibid.*, 102.

197. *Ibid.*, 100; Photius, *Bibliothèque*, 109a-b [166], 141, ll. 41-42 (Henry), on Myrto. For Zamolxis, see 110a [166], 143-44, ll. 22-37 (Henry). Herodotus, *Histories*, 4.94-96.

198. Philostratus, *Heroikos*, 11.7, for example.

According to Nagy, even though Achilles's death is postponed until after the *Iliad*, the text uses Patroclus as his surrogate and thus the death of the hero still takes place.²⁰⁰ Thus, the deferral of the hero's death does not mean that that death does not occur in the narrative; as Nagy shows, a hero can in some ways be both alive and dead at the same time in the literary world. This deferral of death is also what happens in the romances when Leucippe, Anthia, and Charicleia avoid sacrifice; though only Leucippe has a surrogate (in the form of her own theatrical mock-sacrifice), the ambiguity of the language used to describe the impending sacrifices serves to realize all of the heroines' ritual deaths. The paradoxical nature of their death, life, and identities is firmly bound up in their ritual sacrifice. But further, the establishment of their cults occurs in that language: the sacrifices take place that establish their cult while the heroines are at risk of being put to death on the altars. In the potentiality of the heroines' consumption by their cult practitioners, their identity is consumed with that of the goddess responsible for their plight. The relationship between the eaters, the eaten, and the goddess is so interwoven that it becomes its own cause and effect: the identities of the goddess and the heroine become "infinitely reversible" in the pattern of Greek mythology and epic.²⁰¹ As with the identification of the hero and the deity in epic, in the novels the death and the cultic rites collide to create the divine-hero association. The cannibalism present in the descriptions of the cultic activity enacted on the heroines represents both the climax of the antagonism with the deity and the establishment of the cult through the death of the hero.

199. Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 286.

200. *Ibid.*, 142; cf. 33, 113 on how Patroclus is the surrogate for Achilles.

201. Maggie Kilgour, *From Communion to Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 13–14.

Conclusions

If the death of the hero is necessary for the cult's establishment and corresponding identification with the deity,²⁰² so too the apparent death and cannibalization of the heroines participate in establishing their divine identity. Not one of the romantic heroines, as far as I know, has an established cult, but the apparent death of the heroines hints at this expected outcome. The girls are modeled after the heroes, both of Homer and of cults like that of Iphigeneia, and they behave in ways expected of the Greco-Roman hero, epic or not. At the same time, their ritual deaths occur in the context of a cultic meal, something that is horrific in its performance and yet is unmistakably located in the cultic world. The romantic heroines appear to be sacrificed on altars but do not die. The worshippers appear to consume their flesh (or intend to) and yet do not. A cult event both occurs and is narrowly avoided simultaneously. I argue that the novels conflate what in Nagy's examples from epic and lyric traditions occur separately. That is, for Nagy, the death of the hero and his antagonism with a god occur within literature while the cult worship around a hero and his association with that god occur in historical reality. In the novels, the lines are blurred between categories. History and fiction, life and death, mortal and divine all appear to occupy the same space. They are blended; so are the events surrounding the identification of these heroines with goddesses. The novels further act as focusing lenses within which ritual gains meaning. The heroines' deaths, the events that would establish the cult that in turn would associate them with a goddess, are prevented, but the readers and other characters at the same time witness their consumption or near-consumption in a cultic meal. The verbs used in the novels offer no reassurance; instead they evoke the anticipation

202. Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 286.

of the sacrifice and potential feast so that the sacrificial performance becomes real. The antagonism displayed by the goddesses or gods responsible for the fates of the heroines is clearly articulated throughout the novels, but at the same time, their identification with the goddesses through their appearances and through the actions of those around them make clear that the girls *are* the goddesses. Everything is happening at the same time, and everything is happening in the narrative world. The cultic act, which is the result of the death of the hero, occurs but the death is prevented. The association with the goddess that is the result of the cultic activity takes place, but often both before *and* after the sacrifice; often, the misfortunes of the heroine both occur and are prevented by her godlike appearance.

Above all, moreover, it is in the commensality that occurs after the sacrifice of the maiden that the association between the goddess and the heroine is cemented. In that cult act, which occurs completely within narrative, we find represented what for Homer's heroes occurred in real practice. The hero's death is the catalyst for the establishment of his cult, where animal sacrifice and feasts occur on his behalf and for the god with which he is associated. In the novels, the sacrificial performance of the death of the heroine not only represents the climax of the antagonism that draws the divine identity ever closer, but since it occurs in a sacrificial setting, this consumption of her flesh solidifies the association between heroine and goddess. The simultaneous convergence of life and death, divine and mortal, cannibalistic feast and the escape from it, all point to this culmination of identities for the heroines: because they are killed and consumed in the narrative world, they become (and have always been) the deities we always suspected them to be.

“My Flesh is Meat Indeed”
(John 6:55, KJV)

Introduction: Reconsidering John 6:51c-58

Returning at last to the Gospel of John and Jesus’ strange exhortation in 6:51c-58, we should, at the outset, lay out what we have discovered up until this point. First, it is crucial to remember my earlier argument that John 6:51c-58 is not making a eucharistic statement but rather a christological one. Throughout the Gospel, but explicitly in the prologue, John takes great pains to emphasize both Jesus’ fleshly and divine qualities. As I have argued above in chapter one, John understands Jesus’ humanity and divinity as coexisting in a dialectical state, since Jesus’ signs, often very physical, lead directly to observers’ recognition of his divinity. Given the preoccupation that John’s Gospel has with the relationship between Jesus’ divinity and his humanity, it is appropriate to evaluate the meaning of Jesus’ words in John 6:51c-58 in light of this concern. Attempts to understand

this scene in terms of the Eucharist (which is so important in other Gospels) have led to circular arguments involving the so-called Ecclesiastical Redactor and assumptions about the early Christian development of a focus on the sacraments. John 6:51c–58 comes on the heels of a statement made about Jesus' human parentage in John 6:41–51b, making divine/mortal identity a logical context in which to understand his statements about eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

Previous studies that have approached John 6:51c–58 have largely sought context only from within the New Testament, even though it has lately been recognized that John's Jesus shares many characteristics with the Greco-Roman hero. John's Christology is dependent on Jesus' close and unique relationship with God the Father, a relationship that is expressed through language distinguishing Jesus as the *only* son of God (as opposed to the disciples being sons as well); this divine father/human son relationship is well established in the ancient world and normally marks the divine ancestry of a heroic figure such as Heracles, or of a soon-to-be-divine ruler, such as Augustus. And yet, as we have seen in chapters one and three—and as we will discuss further in this chapter—this father-god is the deity responsible for our hero's death. As I discussed chapter one, a further way in which John's Jesus resembles the heroic figures of the Greco-Roman world is through his concern for right ritual practice, especially given that the Christian rituals ordinarily expected to be described, such as Eucharist and baptism, are nowhere to be found in this Gospel.¹ Cultic actions are those that define or maintain community; John's Jesus is therefore very interested in issues of cult, despite the fact that his approach differs from those of

1. Jennifer Berenson Maclean, "Jesus as Cult Hero in the Fourth Gospel," in *Philostratus's Heroikos: Religion and Cultural Identity in the Third Century C.E.*, eds. Ellen Bradshaw Aitken and Jennifer K. Berenson Maclean (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 201.

the other evangelists.² Jesus’ discussion in John 4:20–24 on the right type of προσκυνήσις, where προσκυνέω and related terms are used ten times in the space of four verses, speaks to the idea that Jesus’ mission creates true worshippers of God, not just true believers.³ Jesus’ statements in John 6:51c–58 are the literary performance of a ritual meal—a ritual that exists in narrative only, like the human sacrifices performed on the heroines; but I argue that this narrative meal is not the Eucharist. Instead, this section has as its background the cultic meal that establishes the hero cult and as such establishes the hero’s divinity. For John, Jesus’ sacrifice is not complete without the meal that makes him equal to God. In examining Jesus’ commandment to eat his flesh and drink his blood in the context of the Greco-Roman hero, I will show how John uses this anthropophagic meal to make a christological claim.

Second, we should keep in mind the conclusions I have drawn about the novels throughout chapters two and three. It is significant that the heroines of the romances are formed in the image of gods, as I proposed in chapter two. The heroines’ appearance, and especially their glowing aura, incites those whom they encounter to worship them. The actions of the pious bystanders confirm divine identity for the heroines. Further, in chapter three, I demonstrated how the deities are responsible for the heroines’ ill-fated adventures. In each case, a divine being is responsible for the misfortunes suffered by the couple; the couple often voices frustration directed at these specific deities. And finally, I illustrated the significance of the climax of the antagonism between the deity and the heroine, which is found at the (near) sacrifice and consumption of the female half of the couple. The anticipation of this climax evokes the sacrifice in the minds of the readers so that the rite takes place even if it does not end up taking

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., 202.

place in the narrative. In the one romance in which the sacrifice and feast do occur, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, the sacrifice of Leucippe turns out to be a false-death (*Scheintod*), an act that even further associates the heroine to the deity. In each case of potential or actual sacrifice, the language used to describe the impending slaughter is ambiguous; this ambiguity creates the possibility that the heroines will be consumed and not simply slaughtered.

This slaughter and consumption represents the establishment of cult, entirely within the narrative. As Gregory Nagy has shown, it is the formation of the cult and its rites that brings about the association between the hero and the god. There is a clear association in the Homeric texts among the hero's glorification, his death, and the sacrificial feast.⁴ This association is developed and expanded in the Hellenistic period. It is visible in the novels in their concern for divine identification and the climactic moment of human sacrifice that implies consumption of the divine heroines. In John, the glorification, death, and sacrificial meal of Jesus are likewise intimately connected. John 6:51c-58 is the locus of this interconnection. The novels therefore act as a focusing lens with which we can view the relationships between human beings and gods, since both the antagonism and the association occur, for the novels and in John, within the narrative realm. Sacrifice itself is a driving metaphor in the narrative worlds of Greco-Roman literature. As we have seen in chapter three, human sacrifice in particular carries certain associations such as barbarism and horror, the likes of which are usually not depicted in detail either in literature or in pictorial representations. The depiction and anticipation of the sacrifices in the novels and the horror that necessarily accompanies them is marked. The sacrifices that occur in the novels represent the moment at which

4. Gregory Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 59–60.

the antagonism between the hero and deity is transformed into the identification of the two with each other. In the classical world, and as Nagy has demonstrated, the tension between deity and hero in narrative was only fully realized in the establishment of a cult where the pair were associated: “antagonism in myth, symbiosis in cult.”⁵ The novels transform this relationship so that it takes place entirely within the bounds of narrative.

Thus, given that John’s Gospel focuses on the divine identity of Jesus and that John’s Jesus shares characteristics with heroes, it makes sense to examine John 6:51c-58 in light of what we know about contemporary views of the divine-mortal relationship, and in particular in view of the imaginings exhibited in the romance novels of the first through fourth centuries CE. I argue that John 6:51c-58 re-purposes the sacrificial language of eating flesh and drinking blood in order to make Jesus’ divine identity explicit. First, I will provide an overview of the context in which cannibalistic statements in the ancient world would have been understood. This provides some landmarks by which we can evaluate the meaning of Jesus’ statement as early interpreters saw it. An approach from this perspective allows us to see how early interpreters of John’s Gospel were uncomfortable with a eucharistic interpretation of John 6:51c-58 and also questions the association between the Christian practice of the Eucharist and anthropophagic accusations.

Second, I will demonstrate that John’s Gospel participates in the trope of antagonism between patron deity and hero, albeit in a transformed way. In Jesus’ case, the fact that God sends him to earth demonstrates this antagonism in two ways: in coming down to earth, Jesus necessarily becomes subject to death, but further, it is God’s intent in sending him that he should die *on behalf of* others. Thus,

5. Ibid., 286.

in John, God and Jesus share a relationship that ultimately leads to Jesus' death, a relationship that is comparable with the antagonistic relationships shared by hero and god elsewhere. This assertion benefits from comparison with *Life of Aesop*, which Lawrence Wills has already compared with John's Gospel, and with the novels in question in this study.

Third, having established this particular relationship, I will make the point that Jesus' death in fact happens contemporaneously with the exhortation to consume his flesh and drink his blood in John 6:51c-58. Using Rudolf Bultmann's analysis of time and eschatology in John, I argue that, just as in the Greek romances where the heroines are simultaneously mortal and divine, Jesus' death occurs at the same time as his identification with the deity. This point is important to make: Jesus makes clear allusions in his speech in 6:51c-58 to his death and the fact that they occur in this speech signals, too, his association with the God responsible for his death and therefore his divinity.

Finally, I return to Jesus' words in John 6:51c-58 and evaluate them in light of what we know about cultic sacrificial meals, and in particular, in light of Nagy's conclusions about the ramifications of such a meal for divine-hero association.

Cannibalism and Christianity: An Overview

Allegations of cannibalism are frequent in ancient literature. Jews have perhaps been the longest victims of this allegation; Apion, in the first century CE, reports that

they [sc. Jews] would kidnap a Greek foreigner, fatten him up for a year, and then convey him to a wood, where they slew him, sacrificed his body with their customary ritual, partook of his flesh, and while immolating the Greek, swore an oath of hostility to the Greeks.⁶

Damocritos, of the same era, also reports this ritual murder and consumption of a foreigner by a group of Jews.⁷ Philip Harland proposes that these accusations are the extension of the assumption among some Greco-Roman authors that Jews were intolerant of outsiders. The charge of cannibalistic rituals thus served to confirm this rumor and also to cordon off this group from the normative religious groups present in the Hellenistic and Roman world.⁸ Thus, given my discussion above in chapter three about the use of cannibalism as an accusation against those whom the Greeks and Romans considered Other, it should be no surprise that Christians also frequently seem to have defended themselves against charges of cannibalism and child sacrifice.

In Tacitus’s *Annals* 15.44, we find the claim that Christians were “a class hated for their abominations” (*flagitia*).⁹ Tacitus is not forthcoming concerning the nature of these abominations, but the term *flagitia* comes up frequently when Christian activities are discussed negatively; the term, though vague, has been interpreted as referring to cannibalistic meals,¹⁰ an association that has persisted. Pliny’s *Letter to Trajan* also alludes to the possibility of Christians behaving in ritually abhorrent ways. Pliny refers to the “unlawful meals” supposedly hosted by Christians, but refutes the charge rather

6. Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.91–96 (LCL); “Ac postremum consulentem a ministris ad se accedentibus audisse legem ineffabilem Iudaeorum, pro qua nutriebatur, et hoc illos facere singulis annis quodam tempore constituto: et comprahendere quidem Graecum peregrinum eumque annali tempore saginare, et deductum ad quandam siluam occidere quidem eum hominem eiusque corpus sacrificare secundum suas sollemnitates, et gustare ex eius uisceribus, et iusiurandum facere in immolatione Graeci, ut inimicitias contra Graecos haberent.”

7. Menahem Stern, ed. and trans., *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974–84), 1:531.

8. Harland, “These People are . . . Men Eaters,” 57; Jonathan Rives comes to the same conclusion in “Human Sacrifice Among Pagans and Christians,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 85 (1995): 73–74.

9. “Ergo abolendo rumori Nero subdidit reos et quaesitissimis poenis adfecit quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Christianos appellabat.”

10. The association appears to go back at least to H. Achelis, *Das Christentum in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1912), 294.

than substantiating it. As far as Pliny has uncovered, Christians come together “to partake of food—but food of an ordinary and innocent kind.”¹¹ These non-Christian authors all refer to the peculiar practices of the early Christian groups. According to their reports, Christians are well known for their inappropriate ritual acts, which, at least for Pliny, include meal practices. However, as Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta observes, these authors are curiously vague about what exactly these abominations and/or meals entail; only Apion’s accusations against Jews (as reported by Josephus) go into any detail concerning specific abhorrent activities. For details about *Christian* ritualized cannibalism, we must turn, oddly enough, to the Christian sources, as the pagan ones are insufficiently specific.¹²

Both Tatian and Justin Martyr specifically refute the abomination of eating human flesh. Tatian assures his readers that “we [Christians] do not practice cannibalism—that is a lie of you educated people—but according to you Pelops, even though he is Poseidon’s darling, becomes the gods’ dinner, Cronus devours his sons and Zeus swallows Metis.”¹³ Tatian throws the accusation back in the faces of the Greeks, citing their own mythology for proof that their own gods consumed human flesh. Tatian is not explicit in contextualizing the nature of the supposed cannibalism of Christian groups, but instead focuses on refuting the accusation. Justin is more forthcoming about the alleged context for Christians’ anthropophagic meals, alluding to the practice twice. In the first instance, Justin refers to the practices of Christian groups to which he does not belong and therefore cannot confirm: “whether they commit the shameful deeds about which

11. Pliny, *Letter to Trajan*, 10.96.8; “quibus peractis morem sibi discedendi fuisse rursusque coeundi ad capiendum cibum, promiscuum tamen et innoxium.”

12. Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, “The Early Christians and Human Sacrifice,” in *The Strange World of Human Sacrifice*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 81–102.

13. παρ’ ἡμῖν οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνθρωποφαγία· ψευδομάρτυρες οἱ πεπαιδευμένοι γεγόνατε· παρ’ ἡμῖς δὲ Πέλοψ δέιπνον τῶν θεῶν γίνεται κὰν Ποσειδῶνος ἐρώμενος, καὶ Κρόνος τοὺς υἱοὺς ἀναλίσκει, καὶ ὁ Ζεὺς τὴν Μῆτιν καταπίνει.” (Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos*, 25.3 [Whittacker].)

stories are told—the upsetting of the lamp, promiscuous intercourse, and eating human flesh—we do not know.”¹⁴ Here Justin links inappropriate sexual conduct with cannibalistic feasts, although he takes care in the surrounding context to distance “good” Christians from the offending heretics who might perform such rituals. Justin’s second reference comes in the form of a reflection on the likelihood of finding both zeal for earthly pleasures and zeal for death in the same sort of person:

For I myself too, when I was delighting in the teachings of Plato, and heard the Christians slandered, and saw them fearless of death, and of all other things which are counted fearful, saw that it was impossible that they could be living in wickedness and pleasure. For what sensual or intemperate person, or whoever counts it good to feast on human flesh, could welcome death that he might be deprived of his enjoyments, and would not rather always continue the present life, and try to escape the observation of the rulers; and much less would he denounce himself when the consequence would be death?¹⁵

Justin’s logic is that (a) even when he was not a Christian, he found the accusation of cannibalism impossible to believe because (b) pleasure in life (i.e., the base pleasure of eating forbidden human flesh) is incompatible with indifference toward death. In his two statements on the subject, Justin at once dichotomizes “real” Christians, whose hatred of earthly pleasures is irreconcilable with anthropophagy, with “false” or heretical Christian groups, who may or may not host such abhorrent banquets, where darkness allows

14. “εἰ δὲ καὶ τὰ δύσφημα ἐκεῖνα μυθολογούμενα ἔργα πράττουσι, λυχνίας μὲν ἀνατροπὴν καὶ τὰς ἀνέδην μίξεις καὶ ἀνθρωπέων σαρκῶν βοράς, οὐ γινώσκομεν.” Justin Martyr, *Apologies*, 1.26.6-7 [Barnard].

15. “καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸς ἐγώ, τοῖς Πλάτωνος χαίρων διδάγμασι, διαβαλλομένους ἀκούων χριστιανούς, ὁρῶν δὲ ἀφόβους πρὸς θάνατον καὶ πάντα τὰ ἄλλα νομιζόμενα φοβερά, ἐνενοῦον ἀδύνατον εἶναι ἐν κακίᾳ καὶ φιληδονίᾳ ὑπάρχειν αὐτούς. τίς γὰρ φιλήδονος ἢ ακρατῆς καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων σαρκῶν βορὰν ἀγαθὸν ἠγούμενος δύναται ἂν θάνατον ἀσπάζεσθαι, ὅπως τῶν αὐτοῦ ἀγαθῶν στερηθῆ, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐκ παντὸς ζῆν μὲν αἰεὶ τὴν ἐνθάδε βιοτήν καὶ λαθάνειν τοὺς ἄρχοντας ἐπειράτο, οὐχ ὅτι γε ἑαυτὸν κατήγγελλε φονευθησόμενον;” Justin Martyr, *Apologies*, 2.12.1-2 [Barnard].

unnatural sexual acts to go unchecked and where human flesh is the main course.

The reference Justin makes to the overturned lamp, which creates the dark atmosphere in which perversity can flourish, is also found in Tertullian's *Apology*:

Come, plunge your knife into the babe, enemy of none, accused of none, child of all; or if that is another's work, simply take your place beside a human being dying before he has really lived, await the departure of the lately given soul, receive the fresh young blood, saturate your bread with it, freely partake. Then while as you recline at table, take note of the places which your mother and your sister occupy; mark them well, so that when the dog-made darkness has fallen on you, you may make no mistake, for you will be guilty of a crime, unless you perpetrate a deed of incest [Thelwall].¹⁶

Tertullian has included a much more elaborate description of the human sacrifice that initiates the anthropophagic banquet. Here, the victim is an infant whose blood is mopped up with bread and eaten. After that rite, while the diners are reclining, the lamps are knocked over by dogs¹⁷ so that in the darkness, the second part of the banquet can proceed. Again like Justin, Tertullian links sexual impropriety with cannibalistic feasting. Lanzillotta's discussion of the context is helpful here:

The passage occupies the central segment of a longer section of the *Apology* (Chapters 7–9), in which Tertullian deals with the accusation. Whereas in chapter 7 he presents the charges against Christians and approaches them from different angles, in Chapter 9 he intends to turn them against the accusers. In this context, Chapter 8—the chapter that

16. "Veni, demerge ferrum in infantem nullius inimicum, nullius reum, omnium filium; eul, si alterius officium est, tu modo assiste morienti homini, antequam uixit, fugientem animam nouam exspecta, excipe rudam sanguinem, eo panem tuum satia, uescere libenter. Interea discumbens dinumera loca, ubi mater, ubi soror; nota diligenter, ut, cum tenebrae ceciderint caninae, non erres. Piaculum enim feceris, nisi incestum." Tertullian, *Apology*, 8.2-3 [LCL].

17. This is made clear earlier, in 7.1: "the dogs, our pimps, forsooth, overturning the lights and getting us the shamelessness of darkness for our impious lusts."

includes our passage—has a clear transitional function, since it allows him to focus on his main goal: providing a number of examples of human sacrifice that will present it as a token of paganism.¹⁸

As such, when Tertullian in chapter seven compares the Christian “mysteries” to the pagan ones, he observes the peculiarity of the content of the former being widely known when this is not the case for the latter cults.¹⁹ In this way, Tertullian sets up the potential for turning the tables on his accusers. When we reach chapter eight, then, we find a parody of the accusations rather than a refutation done with seriousness. The author’s sarcasm in his treatment of this issue suggests that the content of the ritual should not be taken as a literal representation of an actual accusation, “but rather as a parody or an intentional deformation that had to serve his argument.”²⁰ Tertullian effectively transforms a defensive argument into an offensive one by repurposing the cannibalistic accusation and altering it into a reminder of ritualized human sacrifice as initiation, something he imagines is well reported in pagan cults.²¹

Minucius Felix’s account, which relies on Tertullian’s,²² likewise reflects an attempt to refute accusations of cannibalism by painting pagans with the same brush. His work *Octavius* is a dialogue between Caecilius, a representative of right Roman *religio*, and Octavius, defender of Christianity. Caecilius brings up a scene of ritual abomination during one of his arguments that bears marked similarity to Tertullian’s in *Apology* 8.2-3. He states,

Now the story about the initiation of young novices is as much to be detested as it is well known. An infant covered with meal, that it may deceive the unwary, is placed before him who is to be stained

18. Lanzillotta, “Early Christians,” 89.

19. *Ibid.*, 91; Tertullian, *Apologies*, 7.8-14.

20. Lanzillotta, “Early Christians,” 92.

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*, 93-94.

with their rites: this infant is slain by the young pupil, who has been urged on as if to harmless blows on the surface of the meal, with dark and secret wounds. Thirstily—O horror! they lick up its blood, eagerly they divide the limbs. By this victim they are pledged together; with this consciousness of wickedness they are covenanted to mutual silence [Roberts and Donaldson].²³

Minucius here leaves out the incestuous banquet and transforms the initiation ritual into one that also binds the practitioners together in oath. Both Minucius Felix and Tertullian, upon whose text the former bases *Octavius*, twist the argument into a reversal of the charges.²⁴ Minucius, like Tertullian, points out the various myths in which Greco-Roman deities consume human flesh, and also makes use of examples of human child sacrifice in Africa; to this end, Minucius (through his character Octavius) refocuses the argument into one against pagan practices. However, since Minucius clearly relies on Tertullian's account to put words in the mouth of his fictitious Roman debater, his account cannot necessarily be taken as a reflection of actual charges brought about by non-fictional Roman accusers.

Lanzillotta's argument about the lack of specificity in pagan texts and the overwhelming detail in texts by Christian apologists concerning charges of anthropophagic rites is significant for my argument: he suggests that the trope of cannibalistic accusations originates among Christian authors rather than pagan ones. That is, he postulates that Christian authors brought up the charges themselves *without pagan accusations from which to defend themselves*.²⁵

23. "Iam de initiandis tirunculis fabula tam detestanda quam nota est. Infans farre coniectus, ut decipiat incautos, adponitur ei qui sacris inbuatur. Is infans a tirunculo farris superficie quasi ad innocuos ictus prouocato caecis occultisque uulneribus occiditur. Huius, pro nefas! sitienter sanguinem lambunt, huius certatim membra dispertiunt, hac foederantur hostia, hac conscientia sceleris ad silentium mutuuum pignerantur. Haec sacra sacrilegiis omnibus taetriora." Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 9.5.

24. Lanzillotta, "Early Christians," 94.

25. *Ibid.*, 101.

While Lanzillotta does provide a possible explanation for the popularity of this trope in Christian writings, I would argue that this supports what I, along with Philip Harland and Jonathan Rives, have argued about the role of cannibalism in a socio-literary context. What this signifies is that cannibalism is a way in which boundaries are established between groups. Such accusations firmly delineate camps of “right” practice and “wrong” practice and, as such, mark out a space of belonging for those making the accusation and for those forced to refute it, often while redirecting the focus to another group. In other words, not only did Christians turn the negative association of cannibalistic practices onto pagan activities, but they also refocused the function of the accusation itself so that it enforced the community of Christianity as a viable Other group. In responding to fictional accusations largely (uniquely?) propagated by Christians themselves, Christian authors established their community as one that is distinct from the surrounding non-Christian culture; but rather than embrace the implications of the accusation fully, these authors chose to paint pagans as the Other, non-dominant culture instead.

Keeping in mind the discussion of William Arens’s work above, in chapter three, it is clear that the role of cannibalism in antiquity functions in much the same way that Arens outlines in his book; that is, ritual cannibalism exists only in the literary world, and thus in the minds of those who wish to establish boundaries between insiders and outsiders. The fact that these allegations are repeated and recorded by ancient Christian sources suggests that even with negative connotations, the accusation and its refutation together function to bolster community identity. Both Harland and Rives have supported the examination of cannibalistic accusations in the context of the wider Greco-Roman world.²⁶ As I discussed briefly above, Harland’s treatment of the bandits’ banquets in the romances

26. Harland, “Men Eaters,” 56–75.

illustrates how expectations of foreign religious practices serve to distinguish the main characters from those who attempt to hurt them. The cannibalistic rituals practiced by the Boukoloï mark them as barbarian; Clitophon even expresses his regret that they had not been captured by Greek bandits (3.10). Foreigners in literature are marked as foreign by their practices and as barbaric by human sacrifice and cannibalism just as Jews and Christians are marked, and mark others, as Other using the same or similar tactics. Harland's contribution is significant in that it identifies the importance of the banquet in these identity-forming allegations: "ritual murder and the accompanying cannibalistic meal, symbolic of inverting piety and destroying society itself, stand out as the epitome of the anti-banquet."²⁷

Rives largely agrees with Harland's estimation of the function of cannibalism in ancient society, although Rives focuses only on human sacrifice.²⁸ Rives, discussing in chronological order the development of the accusation of human sacrifice, concurs that it serves as a boundary marker between good and bad religion, and as such, between normative/ruling cultures and other, subservient cultures and peoples. Rives observes that the Taurians and the Carthaginians were both subjected to the allegation that they sacrificed human beings, especially foreigners, in the case of the Taurians.²⁹ Like the views held by some Greeks about Jews being hostile to outsiders, the claim that certain "barbarian" peoples practiced human sacrifice reinforced that view and in turn maintained the division between right/Greek/civilized and wrong/foreign/barbarian. Rives emphasizes that this use of human sacrifice (and, I would argue, cannibalism as well) evolved over time, so that "people were able to manipulate its meaning in order to present

27. *Ibid.*, 74.

28. Rives, "Human Sacrifice," 65–85.

29. *Ibid.*, 67–68.

new and challenging ideas.”³⁰ That is, the same trope was applied to various groups throughout history, some with negative associations and others, as in Herodotus, with some degree of objectivity, so that human sacrifice was a marker of difference, but not necessarily of a lesser people.³¹ Such discussions left the hierarchization of sacrificial practices up to the audience, rather than stating it outright;³² examples can be found in both classical Greek texts and later in Roman ones, illustrating that even though at one point in time, Romans were considered “barbarians” by Greeks, the same language was appropriated by Romans once Rome became the dominant empire. This, for Rives, is the important fact to consider: that peoples or groups throughout history have turned the tables on previous dominant groups and made use of the same methods at creating and maintaining religious and cultural boundaries. Once Christianity gained more than a toehold in the Greco-Roman world, its writers, too, began using human sacrifice in their campaign to malign “pagan” religion.³³

Other Interpretations of Anthropophagy in John 6:51c-58

Now that we have established a general picture of how allegations of cannibalism function in ancient Christian writings, we should return to John 6:51c-58 to apply what we have learned. Porphyry’s³⁴ commentary on this section makes for an excellent starting point, since his direct contact with the text as a non-Christian provides a glimpse into how the Greco-Roman world might have reacted to John 6:51c-58. Porphyry is so appalled at Jesus’ statement as recorded

30. Ibid., 69.

31. Ibid.

32. Rives cites the *Minos* 315b–c, a (pseudo-)Platonic dialogue between Socrates and another person where cultural relativism is discussed, and Cicero’s *de Re Publica*, 3.13–15 (ibid.).

33. Ibid., 76.

34. 234–305 CE.

by John that he dismisses it outright, refusing to allow even for an allegorical interpretation:

Πολυθρύλητον ἐκεῖνο τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦ διδασκάλου ἐστίν, ὃ λέγει· <ἐὰν μὴ φάγητέ μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ πίητέ μου τὸ αἷμα, οὐκ ἔχετε ζωὴν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς.> τοῦτο φὰρ οὐθηριῶδες ὄντως οὐδ' ἄτοπον, ἀλλ' ἀτοπήματος παντὸς ἀτοπώτερον καὶ παντὸς θηριώδους τρόπου θηριωδέστερον, ἄνθρωπον ἀνθρωπίνων σαρκῶν ἀπογεύεσθαι καὶ πίνειν ὁμοφύλων αἷμα καὶ ὁμογενῶν καὶ τοῦτο πράττοντα ζωὴν ἔχειν αἰώνιον. Ποίαν γάρ, εἰπέ μοι, τοῦτο ποιοῦντες ὑπερβολὴν ὠμότητος εἰς τὸν βίον εἰσάξετε; ποίαν τούτου τοῦ μύσους ἐναγεστέραν κακίαν ἄλλην καινοτομήσετε; οὐ φέρουσιν ἀκοαί-οὐλέγω τὴν πρᾶξιν, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τὸ λεγόμενον νεώτερον τοῦτο καὶ ξένον ἀνοσιούργημα, οὐδὲ τῶν Ἐρινύων αἱ φαντασίαι ποτὲ τοῖς ἐκτόπως ζῶσι τοῦτο κατεμήνυσαν, οὐδὲ Ποτιδαῖται, εἰ μὴ λιμὸς ἀπάνθρωπος αὐτοὺς κατελέπτυνε, τοῦτο κατεδέξαντο· . . . τίς οὐχ ὁ λόγος οὗτος; κἄν φὰρ ἀλληγορικῶς ἔχη τι μυστικώτερον καὶ λυσιτελέχτερον, ἢ ὁσμὴ τῆς λέξεως διὰ τῆς ἀκοῆς εἴσω που παρελθοῦσα αὐτὴν ἐκάκωσε τὴν ψυχὴν τῇ ἀηδία ταραξάσα, καὶ τῶν ἀποκρύφων τὸν λόγον ἐσίνωσεν ὅλον παρασκευάσασα σκοτοδιναῖσαι τῇ συμφορᾷ τὸν ἄνθρωπον. βλέπετε φοῦν τί παθόντες συμπεῖθεσθαι τοὺς εὐχερεῖς ἀλόγως προτρέπεσθε, βλέπετε ποῖον οὐ μόνον ταῖς ἀγροικίας, ἀλλὰ καὶ ταῖς πόλεσιν ἐπιτεκόωμακε κακόν! Ὅθεν δοκεῖ μοι μῆτε Μάρκον μῆτε Λουκᾶν μῆτ' αὐτὸν τοῦτο γεγραφεῖναι Ματθαῖον, ἅτε δοκιμάσαντας οὐκ ἀστεῖον τὸ ῥῆμα, ἀλλὰ ξένον καὶ ἀπαῖδον καὶ τῆς ἡμέρου ζωῆς μακρὰν ἀπρωκισμένον.³⁵

That saying of the Teacher is a far-famed one, which says, “Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in yourselves.” Truly this saying is not merely beast-like and absurd, but is more absurd than any absurdity, and more beast-like than any fashion of a beast, that a man should taste human flesh, and drink the blood of members of the same tribe and race, and that by doing this he should have eternal life. For, tell me, if you do this, what excess of savagery do you introduce into life? What kind of evil more under a curse than this defilement

35. Macarius Magnes, *Apocritica* 3.15 is assigned to Porphyry by Adolf von Harnack, *Porphyrius, Gegen die Christen 15 Bücher. Zeugnisse, Fragmente und Referate* (Berlin: Abhandlungen der königlich preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1916), I.88 Fr. 69; the text is preserved in Macarius, *Monogenes* 3.15.

could you invent? Ears cannot bear it—I do not speak of the deed but also of this new and foreign deed of impiety. The phantoms of the Furies never revealed this to those who lived in strange ways, nor would the Potideans have accepted it unless they had been reduced by a savage hunger. What does this saying mean? For if it, allegorically understood, has some meaning more mystical and useful, the odour of the saying going inside through the hearing injures the soul. It disturbs the soul by its odiousness and harms the secret meanings—makes the entire person dizzy because of the offense. Observe, what has happened to you that you exhort people easily convinced in an irrational manner to be won by persuasion. Observe what kind of evil has gone careening about not only in the country but also in the cities. Wherefore it seems to me that neither Mark nor Luke nor even Matthew recorded this, because they regarded the saying as not a comely one, but strange and discordant, and far removed from civilized life.³⁶

For Porphyry, the literal meaning must make sense before allegorical meanings can be teased out.³⁷ Porphyry’s criticism of Christianity sets John’s Gospel apart from the other three canonical Gospels because of its abhorrent commandment to consume flesh and blood; no doubt this was viewed as especially disgusting to a philosopher who advocated vegetarianism in other texts. This text is preserved in Macarius’s *Monogenes*; Macarius interprets John 6:51c–58 as eucharistic in content, although Porphyry does not get so far as this, since he refuses to allegorize. Macarius’s comments on Porphyry’s critique hinge on the idea that infants consume milk made from their mother’s blood, presumably to illustrate a non-abhorrent incident of consuming the blood of another human being.³⁸ The example of Porphyry and Macarius serves to articulate two approaches to John 6:51c–58 in antiquity, albeit a few hundred years after the

36. Porphyry, F. 69; trans. from John Granger Cook, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 203.

37. Cook, *Interpretation*, 203 n. 216; cf. Jean Pépin, “Porphyre, exégète d’Homère,” *Porphyre, Entretiens sur l’Antiquité Classique* 12 (1965): 235–36.

38. Macarius Magnes, *Monogenes*, 3.23.

composition of John. On the one hand, Porphyry reacts similarly to οἱ ἰουδαῖοι in John 6:52: he rejects the words that Jesus says as abhorrent. On the other, Macarius attempts to apologize for Porphyry's "misunderstanding" of the situation, first by giving an example of natural "cannibalism" and then by treating Jesus' statements as allegorical and referring to the Eucharist. That is, both Macarius's and Porphyry's responses reflect the expectations around the consumption of human flesh and its meaning as far as the ancient world is concerned. Porphyry comments on how uncivilized and foreign such a statement is while Macarius attempts to mitigate the strangeness by appealing to natural parallels.

J. Albert Harrill's contribution to the discussion further pinpoints the context in which John 6:51c-58 is understandable, especially because he recognizes that a preoccupation with sacramentalism has for too long governed scholarly approaches to a text that is reluctant on the subject. Harrill and I agree that the statement Jesus makes in this section is understood as shockingly literal by those who hear it:

The context makes clear that they [Jesus' audience] hear Jesus saying something literally obscene (disgusting to the senses): to indulge in cannibalism by consuming *his* flesh and blood. The offense of the saying triggers the decision by "the Jews" [sic] to kill Jesus (cf. 7:1; 5:18) and the desertion of "many disciples" (6:66). . . . This scene is one of factionalism. In this context, the forms of speech that would normally provide warrants for a particular kind of instruction (midrash) serve solely to emphasize Jesus' strangeness as the Other. This parody of a traditional epiphany belongs to the Fourth Gospel's regular subversion and reinterpretation of familiar symbolism. Indeed, subversion of familiar symbolism is *the* principal strategy of the Fourth Gospel.³⁹

Harrill concludes, and I concur, that what John does is repurpose the "cultural taboo of cannibalism" in order to create a community

39. J. Albert Harrill, "Cannibalistic Language in the Fourth Gospel and Greco-Roman Polemics of Factionalism (John 6:52-66)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127, no. 1 (2008): 135.

positively defined by it. Because a main theme of John is factionalism, wherein Jesus speaks out against various actors, creating schisms amongst those who hear his speeches (7:30-31, 40-44; 9:9, 16; 10:19-21), Harrill identifies parallels between John and other texts (both Jewish and classical) where cannibalism is used to describe warring factions. Jesus “provokes the misunderstandings in his audience deliberately,”⁴⁰ creating divisions both between himself and those around him and among his audience. As I have shown above, and as Harrill also points out, cannibalism (and human sacrifice) was a prominent way in which Greco-Roman polemicists talked about those who disagreed with them.⁴¹ John’s use of this technique, then, is not surprising. That he would repurpose the motif, flipping it on its head so that identification as a cannibal became a positive rather than a negative, is surprising. However, this repurposing is also typical of John’s proclivity to bend genres, as I will show below.⁴² Harrill observes that there are other examples of minority groups in the Hellenistic world reclaiming negative associations, such as the Cynic Diogenes who embraced the name when Plato called him a dog.⁴³ Thus, Harrill suggests that Jesus’ statement in John 6:51c-58 was intended to offend but also to subvert, since this is the pattern that John’s Jesus has followed throughout the Gospel:

John introduces motifs familiar from Jewish tradition only to subvert each by redirecting the symbol to an exclusive application to Jesus—ascend to heaven (1:51; 3:13; 6:62), living water (4:10; 7:37-39), Moses “lifting up” the serpent (3:14; 8:28; 12:32-34), Abraham’s children (8:31-58), the manna from heaven (6:31-42) . . . The positive appropriation of cannibalistic language, therefore, fits an overall exegetical pattern of Johannine irony, subversion, and polemic.⁴⁴

40. *Ibid.*, 149.

41. *Ibid.*, 150.

42. Harold Attridge, “Genre Bending in the Fourth Gospel,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121, no. 1 (2002): 14.

43. Harrill, “Cannibalistic Language,” 154; Diogenes Laertius 6.40, 6.61.

Harrill points out the various places in John where the way in which Jesus speaks triggers division and, in particular, creates boundaries between insiders and outsiders, occasions that largely, given the narrative context, mean divisions between Jesus' followers and οἱ ἰουδαῖοι.⁴⁵ I would argue that this subversion of motifs in order to establish clear divisions extends to texts outside the Jewish milieu, as can be said, also, of the Greco-Roman literature of John's era. The romance novels reflect cultural understandings of divinity, mortality, and the relationship between the two; the author of the Gospel would have been exposed to these cultural understandings as a person living in the ancient Mediterranean world. John was equally capable of redirecting these shared expectations to his own ends regarding Jesus' role on earth and his relationship to God. In other words, the author of the Gospel of John manipulates tropes common to the literary world of the ancient Mediterranean in order to make definite statements not only about insiders and outsiders, but also, relatedly, about Jesus' divinity.

Thus, the main place where I diverge from Harrill is in identifying the multiple meanings embedded in John 6:51c-58. Harrill concludes that the cannibalistic language in John 6:51c-58 is a kind of *shibboleth* that establishes boundaries between those who belong and those who do not, and further promotes desertion among those who are not worthy.⁴⁶ Certainly, some of those who had been following and listening to Jesus leave after the problematic statement (6:66). It is clear that John makes use of this preexisting boundary creator in order to repurpose it in his own way; it maintains its function as a community divider but at the same time subverts the expected

44. Harrill, "Cannibalistic Language," 155.

45. *Ibid.*, 155-56.

46. *Ibid.*, 157; Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 274-75 also puts forward this interpretation of Jesus' words.

sides. I suggest that this is not the only purpose of this motif, and that anthropophagic language in John 6:51c-58 in fact also has a strong link to heroines in the romance novels, whose cannibalistic adventures function to establish their divine identity. That is, while I agree with Harrill that John’s Jesus exploits the motif of cannibalism-as-identity-marker, I argue further that John’s use of the motif centers around identifying Jesus *as divine*. Certainly, John defines his implied audience as those willing to consume the flesh and blood of Jesus, but the consumption of that flesh and blood does more than simply articulate boundaries for that community; rather, it creates the association between Jesus and God because it *also* repurposes the heroic mode of divine identification. In other words, this trope is active on multiple levels. John’s insertion of a cannibalistic reference within the allusions to Jesus’ death in John 6:51c-58 becomes comprehensible in light of Nagy’s proposal that antagonism in literature corresponds to association in cult. The significance of this manipulation of tropes is apparent once the sacrificial meal itself is explored.

Antagonism Between Jesus and God

In the Gospel of John, Jesus’ antagonism⁴⁷ with the one whom he calls his father, that is with God, echoes what we witness in the Greek novels concerning the antagonism experienced between the heroines and the deities who sent them on their travels and who ultimately led most of them up to the point of death. Although I have touched on Lawrence Wills’s treatment of the subject above, his analysis of John’s Gospel as reflecting a paradigm for the hero cult warrants further discussion in this context. Wills compares the Gospel to the anonymous *Life of Aesop*, which is roughly contemporary with

47. It is important to note that my use of Nagy’s term “antagonism” does not imply hatred, anger, or enmity but merely God’s responsibility for the death of Jesus.

John.⁴⁸ The plot of the novel follows Aesop's life; it begins with the protagonist a mute slave, whose devotion to Isis is rewarded with the gift of speech. Eager to make use of his newfound ability, he relentlessly instructs those around him—including his owner—using witty phrases. When Aesop is eventually freed, he travels to Delphi where his teachings are not accepted with the same good humor that they were in Samos, where a shrine to him is established to show their appreciation for his help. Aesop criticizes the Delphic practice of ritualized chaotic division of sacrificial meat, so that the supplier of the sacrifice often does not receive his portion.⁴⁹ The Delphians respond badly to this criticism and condemn him to death; when Aesop is executed, a plague overwhelms the city. In order to rid themselves of the disease, the citizens consult an oracle of Zeus who tells them to offer sacrifice to Aesop in order to be free of the plague.

Aesop's antagonistic deity is Apollo, the leader of the Muses. Aesop's first misstep in the inevitable path to his downfall is that he sacrifices to the Muses instead of to Apollo and even goes so far as to have a statue of himself built. When Aesop reaches Delphi, it is with Apollo's help that the citizens frame Aesop for theft. At the end, Aesop asks the god for help, and Aesop is executed; but the plague hits the Delphians shortly thereafter. Wills writes,

It was the suggestion of Perry that Aesop's reverence for Isis and the Muses reflected a popular disenchantment with Apollo and the class he was identified with, the slave-owning class of the pretentious aristocratic philosopher. Gregory Nagy, however, argues that Apollo is throughout the patron deity of Aesop; the latter becomes estranged from the god, only to be reunited in death. This estrangement, in fact, is typical of hero cults in ancient Greece, where there is, according to Nagy, "antagonism in myth, symbiosis in cult."⁵⁰

48. Lawrence M. Wills, *The Quest of the Historical Gospel: Mark, John, and the Origins of the Gospel Genre* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 23–50.

49. This may sound familiar; this same ritual took place at Pyrrhos's death, discussed above in 3.2 and of course by Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 118–41.

Nagy’s treatment of the Aesop tradition is significant for this study of John because in it, Nagy is careful to point out the feedback loop present in the myth and ritual: Aesop’s death is the cause of the ritual institution he critiques while at the same time, his death in the narrative is caused by his critique.⁵¹ That is, everything is occurring at the level of narrative. It is this relationship that establishes the association of Aesop with Apollo. Thus *Life of Aesop*, too, reflects the understanding of the relationship between chosen human and god that is recorded in literature from the time of the epics to the turn of the millennium and after. In particular, the complicated cause-and-effect relationship between the antagonism, the ritual, and the divine identification found in *Aesop* as observed by Wills and Nagy is also found in the Greek romances. As I have illustrated above, this feedback loop of antagonism–sacrifice/cannibalism–divinity is a key manifestation of the type of relationship Nagy finds between heroes and gods in Homer’s epics. Likewise, I argue that this “antagonism in myth, symbiosis in cult” is also found in John.

Further, Wills notices similarities with the *ways* in which Jesus and Aesop die. In *Life of Aesop*, the Delphians put him to death in a way that makes him a *pharmakos*, a scapegoat.⁵² The act of putting a person to death is polluting, and the only way for this act to be purified is with the establishment of the hero’s cult. Wills’s outline of Jesus’ death shows the parallels between his sacrifice and the trope of heroic death in the Greco-Roman world. He points out that (likely pre-Pauline) formulas speak of Jesus or Christ as one who has died for the sins of others—in other words, as an expiation.⁵³ In particular, Wills observes that the oracle uttered unwittingly by Caiaphas in

50. Wills, *Quest*, 27.

51. Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 286.

52. *Ibid.*, 308.

53. Wills, *Quest*, 43; 1 Cor. 15:3; Rom. 3:25; 1 Cor. 5:7; see also Mark 10:45.

John 11:50 makes a significant point of contact with the heroic death narratives, where frequently the “sacrifice of the hero is demanded or predicted by an oracle.”⁵⁴ Caiaphas’s words, “It is expedient that one man should die for the people, so that the whole nation not perish,” make it clear to the readers (though ironically not to Caiaphas himself) that Jesus’ death is on behalf of the nation and can therefore be seen as expiatory. Jesus’ death at the request of certain factions of οἱ ἰουδαῖοι results in his worship by certain other factions of that same community.⁵⁵

Wills also observes that Jesus’ death in John occurs at the same time as the sacrifice of the Passover lambs in the Jerusalem temple.⁵⁶ As I have observed earlier, John’s Gospel avoids discussion of the expected Christian rituals of baptism and Eucharist and yet maintains a concern for the practice of ritual; Nagy, too, notices this feature in the heroic epics that are the focus of his work, the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*.⁵⁷ The fact that John shares his concern for right ritual practice with Homer suggests that the leap from literary death to cultic concern is indigenous. Likewise, John’s location of Jesus’ death at the time of that other, ordinary expiatory sacrifice further establishes Jesus’ death in a sacrificial, and therefore heroic, context. In other words, John’s concern with right ritual practice combined with the manner and timing of Jesus’ expiatory death, as prophesied by Caiaphas, creates an image of Jesus that shares significant points with the hero of the epic and with Aesop. Jesus’ and Aesop’s manners of death are therefore comparable; in this way, Jesus can also be viewed as a heroic *pharmakos*.

54. Wills, *Quest*, 44.

55. Wills also notes, and I agree, that at this point in early Christian history the distinction applied by scholars between Jews and Christians does not make sense (*ibid.*).

56. *Ibid.*, 45; John 19:36.

57. Gregory Nagy, introduction to *The Iliad*, by Homer, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (London: Random Century, 1992), vii.

Wills also points out that there seem to be striking similarities between Aesop’s characterization and Jesus’: the travelling distributor of pithy wisdom is persecuted and eventually executed as a kind of scapegoat/*pharmakos*. Clearly much of Jesus’ narrative follows a very similar pattern, especially, Wills observes, if we consider Jesus’ relationship to his own community, οἱ ἰουδαῖοι.⁵⁸ It is especially appropriate for the current study that Wills here quotes Nagy:⁵⁹

By losing his identification with a person or group and identifying himself with a god who takes his life in the process, the hero effects a purification by transferring impurity. . . . In such a hero cult, god and hero are to be institutionalized as the respectively dominant and recessive members of an internal relationship.⁶⁰

This method of establishing such an eternal relationship can also be observed in the romance novels we have been discussing so far. In each case, the protagonists have experienced alienation from their communities. There are some differences worth articulating: whereas in the novels, the great beauty of the heroines gave them away as divine creatures, Aesop’s disfiguring ugliness is remarkable. John Winkler calls this satirical characterization of the main character the trope of the Grotesque Outsiders, one who is more capable of penetrating humanity’s veneer because of his or her marginal status.⁶¹ As such, this characterization marks the novel as satirical, but this, Wills is quick to point out, in no way effaces its usefulness in examining the finer points of the genre as a whole, especially since *Leucippe and Clitophon* might well fall into the satirical camp itself.⁶²

58. Wills, *Quest*, 28.

59. *Ibid.*, 28–29.

60. Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 307.

61. John Winkler, *Auctor and Actor: A Narratological Reading of Apuleius’ Golden Ass* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 276–91; Wills, *Quest*, 26.

62. Wills, *Quest*, 27; cf. Bruce D. MacQueen, *Myth, Rhetoric, and Fiction: A Reading of Longus’s Daphnis and Chloe* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

The overarching theme of alienation and execution in both *Aesop* and John also plays out in the romances; Aesop's satirical ugliness functions has a reversal of the goddesses' beauty, but further, the trope of the outsider is clearly visible in all the examples. In short, while Wills compares just *Aesop* and John for his comparison, for the purposes of this project, where consumption is also a factor, it is significant that the romances also follow this narrative pattern in which the protagonists experience exile.

In Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon*, the alienation comes not just from the couple's geographical distance from their families, but also from their emotional break with their home. The pair runs away to avoid the backlash from being discovered almost *in flagrante* by Leucippe's mother.⁶³ Their flight to the ship signals not just the physical distance between the star-crossed lovers and their families, but also their separation from a previously beloved community that has turned against them by their actions. In Xenophon's *Ephesian Tale*, Anthia and Habrocomes experience this unfortunate separation from their community in the form of a forced exile mandated by the oracle.⁶⁴ Although their parents are distressed at the thought of sending away their beloved children, they follow the oracle's directions; their obedience results in the perilous journey foretold by the oracle, and in particular, in Anthia's near-sacrifice by bandits in 2.13.1-5.

Callirhoe and Chaereas's tale also contains a subtler variation of this type of community alienation. Chaereas, for his part, does not experience the same type of exile, since the entire community, even Callirhoe's own father, exempts him from the punishment he earned through "murdering" his wife. Callirhoe, for all intents and purposes, is dead at the time that the couple begins their adventures. In one

63. Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, 2.25.3; 29.1-30.2.

64. *Ibid.*, 1.10.7-10.

sense, her “death” marks her formal alienation from her family and homeland even before she is kidnapped by pirates. She continues in her alienation even after she reluctantly shares her tale of woe with Dionysius and begs him to reinstate her to her family.⁶⁵ Thus, Chariton’s female protagonist, Callirhoe, fits very well into Nagy’s and Wills’s paradigm, in which the hero or heroine loses his or her community identity and becomes instead associated with a divinity.

Finally, *An Ethiopian Story* makes, as usual, for a more complicated example. Since the tale opens for the reader part of the way through the plot, we only find out much later that Charicleia has been alienated from her true community and family almost since birth. Similarly to Callirhoe and Leucippe, who both feared that they would be suspected of infidelity by their husband and mother respectively, Charicleia was exiled because of Queen Persinna’s own fear of the stain of adultery: The Queen, Charicleia’s true mother, felt compelled to send away her fair-skinned daughter who lacked her parents’ dark skin on account of being conceived while her mother was gazing at a portrait of Andromeda. The tokens of identity given to Charicleia by her mother might lessen the severity of the emotional alienation but do nothing to temper the reality of Charicleia’s decades-long exile from her family and homeland.

The parallels Wills draws between *Life of Aesop* and portions of John where Jesus specifically distances himself from his community, such as John 8:39–47, are therefore also parallels that exist in the romances. Although the latter are not as explicit in developing this theme of alienation as are *Life of Aesop* or the Gospel of John, their resulting association with divinities could not be clearer, as my previous discussion in chapter two has shown. The same pattern, Wills notes, is followed in the Jesus narrative, “especially if we begin

65. *Ibid.*, 2.5.9–12.

to consider the latter [sc. Jesus' expiatory death] in terms of an ambivalent relationship with his people, that is to the Jews [sc. οἱ ἰουδαίοι], Israel, or Jerusalem."⁶⁶ The notion of the expiatory death is complicated in the romance novels, but as Nicole Loraux has shown in her work *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman*, the slaughter of a woman in tragedy is *always* expiatory.⁶⁷ This is clearly the case, for example, with Iphigeneia.⁶⁸ Does Loraux's claim also apply to the apparent-deaths the heroines undergo in the romances? What expiation is required by the plots of the romances that these heroines' deaths should be necessary? The individual sacrificial circumstances are not expiatory in context. Charicleia and Theagenes are to be thanksgiving offerings, the firstfruits of war. Leucippe is a propitiatory and cleansing sacrifice⁶⁹ that appears later to also, to some extent, be initiatory, since Menelaus and Satyrus are tested by their performance of the sacrifice.⁷⁰ Anthia, for her part, is also to be a propitiatory (ἐξιλάσκομαι) sacrifice when she is set to be shot through with spears while hanging from a tree.⁷¹ We must therefore turn to the overarching narrative for an answer.

I would suggest that it is the original tension with the deities that necessitate the sacrifices of these heroines. Habrocomes mocks Eros with his arrogant resistance to the god's powers;⁷² Chaereas makes void his affections for Callirhoe with his murderous jealousy, and so can be said to inspire the wrath of Aphrodite; Leucippe's willingness to transgress normal virtue in the face of her affections for Clitophon offends Artemis. Finally, the comparison between Charicleia's

66. Wills, *Quest*, 28.

67. Nicole Loraux, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman*, trans. Anthony Forster (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 4.

68. Euripides, *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, 1378–84.

69. *Leucippe and Clitophon*, 3.12.2.

70. *Ibid.*, 3.19.3.

71. *Ephesian Tale*, 2.13.2.

72. *Ibid.*, 1.1.5; 1.2.1.

appearance and Andromeda’s would have evoked the myth of Andromeda in the minds of the readers.⁷³ Since Andromeda is the expiatory sacrifice ordered by Poseidon after her mother insulted the Nereids, Charicleia’s resemblance is therefore evocative of the sacrifice of another maiden at the behest of the gods. As such, the four novels pertinent to this project seem also to participate in the same narrative pattern shared by *Life of Aesop* and the Gospel of John. To this end, I would argue further that these novels hold particular significance for the interpretation of John’s Gospel since they share John’s anthropophagic overtones, which are absent in *Life of Aesop*.⁷⁴

The final aspect of this comparison between Jesus’ death and that of the hero comes in the form of the antagonism between him and his deity, in this case, God his Father. John’s Jesus does not speak out against his antagonist on the cross as does Mark’s in 15:34, but I would argue that this antagonism is nevertheless present in John. In the same way that the romance novels lay the blame at the feet of the gods for the protagonists’ dangerous travels, John also points out the ways in which God is responsible for Jesus’ death on the cross. As Jo-Ann Brant notes, even the very act of placing Jesus on earth, which God does, makes him vulnerable to death.⁷⁵ Although the Gospel appears to defend itself against pointing the finger at God by making villains out of those who misinterpret Jesus’ signs,⁷⁶ and by making Jesus appear comfortable with his role in the drama, it is nevertheless clear that all of Jesus’ actions are at the behest of his father, God.

73. *An Ethiopian Story*, 10.14.7.

74. The fable Aesop tells in 134–39, involving a rabbit who is eaten by an eagle despite an attempt at rescue by a dung beetle could be interpreted as having cannibalistic allusions, since Aesop is clearly the rabbit in the fable; but since his death is off a cliff and does not carry around it the language of sacrifice, I do not count it as applicable to this problem.

75. Jo-Ann A. Brant, “Divine Birth and Apparent Parents: The Plot of the Fourth Gospel,” in *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative*, ed. Ronald Hock et al. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 202.

76. *Ibid.*, 204.

That is, while Johannine “antagonism” between Jesus and God is not described in inimical terms, it persists in its core element, which is the death of the hero at the hands of the god.⁷⁷

In John, Jesus’ mission on earth is to make God known. Jesus, at every point, takes pains to explain that everything he does is in order to glorify God—this includes especially Jesus’ death. Jesus does the will of God up to and including Jesus’ trial, sentence, and crucifixion. Jesus’ death is part and parcel of how his earthly mission points directly to God; likewise, Jesus’ death on earth is part of God’s will.⁷⁸ As such, Jesus’ death ought to be examined in light of this mission and its significance. R. Alan Culpepper writes that the “earlier, traditional interpretation of Jesus’ death as expiation (John 1:29, 36; 1 John 2:2; 4:10) has been overlaid by a distinctively Johannine interpretation of Jesus’ death as the fulfillment of his mission to reveal the Father (1:18).”⁷⁹ However, the two interpretations of Jesus’ death need not be mutually exclusive. In viewing Jesus’ death as the pinnacle of God’s will for Jesus’ mission, the interpretation of his death as sacrifice is also subsumed within the framework that I argue governs John’s depiction of Jesus’ relationship to God and Jesus’ eventual death. That is, in presenting Jesus as dying at the will of God, John rubs up against the genre of the Greco-Roman novel through the common use of the trope of antagonism to describe the relationship of the hero, Jesus, to his patron deity.

77. This discussion of antagonism in John was originally presented at a conference called The Gospel of John as Genre Mosaic (June 23–26, 2014, Aarhus, Denmark) as “The Cup Which the Father has Given: Divine-Mortal Antagonism and the Christological Implications of Genre.” I am grateful to the conference participants for their valuable feedback.

78. Likewise, Rudolf Bultmann acknowledges that Jesus’ time on earth “is God’s revelation, the deed of the Father who glorified and will glorify, who wills that this life with its end be understood as *his* doing.” Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 429.

79. R. Alan Culpepper, “The Death of Jesus: An Exegesis of John 19:28–37,” *Faith and Mission* 5, no. 2 (1988): 64.

Three categories of Jesus’ statements are relevant to the present discussion of how Jesus’ death, God’s will, and Jesus’ divinity are related. I have arranged the categories according to the intensity with which they relate the three aspects of Johannine Christology—the will of God (A), Jesus’ death (B), and his association with the Father (C):

<i>Citation</i>	<i>Passage in John</i>	<i>Category</i>
John 3:14-15	And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.	C
John 4:34	Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work.”	A
John 5:17-19	This was why οἱ ἰουδαῖοι sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the Sabbath but also called God his Father, making himself equal with God. Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise.”	C
John 6:38, 51c	For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me . . . and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.	C
John 7:39	Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.	C
John 8:28	So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority but speak thus as the Father taught me.”	C
John 10:17- -18	“For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father.”	B

MY FLESH IS MEAT INDEED

- John 10:30-31, 37-39 “I and the Father are one.” οἱ ἰουδαῖοι took up stones again to stone him . . . “If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.” Again they tried to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands. C
- John 12:32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all [people] to myself. C
- John 14:9b-11, 13 He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, “Show us the Father?” Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves . . . Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. C
- John 18:11 Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?” B
- John 19:11 Jesus answered him, “You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore he who delivered me to you has the greater sin.” B

First are passages where Jesus indicates that his words and actions, including his signs, are determined by God’s will (A). In this category, no direct mention of Jesus’ death is made, nor is there a concrete allusion to the final action of Jesus’ submission to God, which is necessarily his death on the cross. However, implied in the statements herein is God’s responsibility for Jesus’ death, in that Jesus does nothing that the Father has not ordained. A clear example of this category is John 4:34, listed above. This statement comes in the middle of the episode of the Samaritan woman; she has just gone to her city and told people about her encounter with Jesus, and the Samaritans are about to come hear from Jesus, but verses 31-38 are an excursus on sowing and reaping brought on by a question of whether Jesus will eat. His response indicates that all other concerns are secondary to God’s will. While this pericope is not usually taken to refer to the crucifixion, it nevertheless indicates the pervasive

theme throughout John that Jesus’ purpose on earth is to do perfect obedience to the one whom he calls his Father.

In the second category, Jesus makes statements that specifically connect his impending death to the will of God (B). Here, Jesus’ death is concretely associated with God’s design for Jesus’ time on earth.⁸⁰ In this category, the antagonism typically seen between heroic figures and deities in Homeric texts and that also appears in modified form in the Hellenistic romances is visible. John 10:17-18, where Jesus states, “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father,” associates the will of God and Jesus’ death. Jesus is unequivocal that his death is not the responsibility of anyone on earth, but is rather part of God’s plan for Jesus, a plan to which Jesus apparently assents. John 18:11 likewise illustrates the relation of God’s will to Jesus’ death. In mentioning “the cup which the Father has given,” Jesus alludes to his death, an allusion that is particularly clear in the context of his arrest, as here.⁸¹ John 19:11 reiterates that no mortal authority is responsible for his death; in each case, John is clear that God’s will governs human behavior. Responding to Pilate’s attempt to get Jesus to speak in his own defense, Jesus counters, “You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above.” Thus, in John’s Gospel, even the human who sends Jesus to his crucifixion has no hand in the plans that God has set into motion. God alone directs the plot of Jesus’ life in such a way that it culminates in his death. In each of these examples, the fact that Jesus is obedient

80. See also Maarten J. J. Menken’s discussion of this in “John 6,51c–58: Eucharist or Christology?” in *Critical Readings of John 6*, Biblical Interpretation Series 22, ed. R. Alan Culpepper (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 192–93.

81. John 18:37 likewise points to Jesus’ entire time on earth as dedicated to his upcoming death: “For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth.”

does nothing to soften the fact that God intends for Jesus to die and that every action of Jesus corresponds to that divine plan.⁸²

The final category (C) explicitly links all three aspects of Johannine Christology of the cross: the death, Jesus' identification with God, and the will of God that Jesus die. These passages not only concretely associate Jesus' death as God's plan, but also indicate that it is through (i) this death and (ii) Jesus' submission to God's will that (iii) Jesus is glorified.⁸³ Three of the passages that I include in this category are the "lifting up sayings," three statements that point to Jesus' crucifixion as the moment of his exaltation.⁸⁴ The verses in question are John 3:14–15, John 8:28, and John 12:32, included in the chart above. In general, the phrase "lifting up" has a double meaning in John in that it refers both to the revelation of God on earth and to the physical crucifixion of Jesus' body; for John, the two events are inseparable. As John Romanowsky writes, "[Jesus'] death can only be understood insofar as the crucifixion is at the same time the exaltation and

82. It is possible that Jesus' obedience subtly points toward Jesus as a sacrifice in the Greco-Roman tradition. The trope of the consent of a sacrificial animal was prevalent in the discussion of Greek and Roman sacrifice, even if in practice, consent was not consistently sought (cf. F. S. Naiden, "The Fallacy of the Willing Victim," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 127 [2007]: 61–73). The idea of the nodding or bowing of the head of an animal led to the altar was a prominent trope attached to the process of ritual sacrifice. If Jesus' obedience to God's will reflects a development of the trope of antagonism between god and hero, as I have argued, then this development, in turn, might heighten the sacrificial motif also found throughout John's Gospel. Of all the depictions of Jesus' death in the canonical Gospels, the fact that John's Jesus alone bows his head at the moment of his death further associates Jesus' willingness to die with the idea of sacrifice. Naiden ("Fallacy") is convincing in his argument that willingness of sacrificial victim was not a sought-out component in Greek animal sacrificial practice, however there remain several literary sources that promote an idealized notion of assent in sacrificial victims. In other words, while I agree with Naiden that sacrificial practice did not require or indeed attempt assent in its victims, there existed a narrative of mythologized willing sacrifices in the literary imagination of ancient writers. See, for instance, Plutarch, *Lucullus*, 24.6–7; Plutarch, *Pelopidas*, 22; Porphyry, *De Abstemientia*, 1.25, etc. See Naiden, "Fallacy," 63 n. 16 for further examples of this idealized/mythologized trope.

83. Note that other passages in category (C) are listed in the table but not fully analyzed here. In John, references to Jesus' impending glorification are references to his death (Brown, *Gospel According to St. John*, 2:408–410).

84. John W. Romanowsky, "'When the Son of Man is Lifted Up': The Redemptive Power of the Crucifixion in the Gospel of John," *Horizons* 32, no. 1 (2005): 100–16.

glorification of the Son of Man; it is the moment in which Jesus as the Son of God most clearly reveals the father.”⁸⁵ Thus, these “lifting up sayings” point to Jesus’ identification with God *insofar as this identity is uniquely revealed through his death*. This preoccupation with identity can be seen from the context of the passages: in each of these sayings, the title “Son of Man” is used by Jesus in response to a question about who Jesus is.⁸⁶ I favor the understanding that the bronze serpent of 3:15 points clearly to the crucifixion;⁸⁷ just as those who observe the serpent held up by Moses recovered their health, so those who look at Jesus’ crucified body see him glorified, and therefore gain eternal life.⁸⁸ Again, the text is clear that this lifting up represents the will of God, since it uses terminology expressing obligation, not simply eventuality: “so *must* the Son of Man be lifted up.”⁸⁹

Likewise, in the context of John 8:28, Jesus is speaking about his identity with God and uses the “lifting up saying” here to articulate his divinity in terms of his crucifixion. It is only when they have lifted up Jesus on the cross that they will understand his true identity. As in 3:14–15, the present passage reiterates that Jesus can “do nothing on his own authority;” Jesus’ crucifixion is the will of God.

The third “lifting up saying” also conforms to this pattern: the identity of Jesus is at stake, and Jesus explains his identity in terms of his death, which is the moment at which his divinity becomes apparent. Prior to his statement in 12:32, Jesus has been discussing his death specifically: “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say, ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, for this purpose I have come to

85. *Ibid.*, 101.

86. *Ibid.*, 102; Francis J. Moloney, *The Johannine Son of Man* (Rome: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 1976), 214. See John 3:13–14; 8:28; 12:23.

87. Moloney, *The Johannine Son of Man*, 60–67; John Dominic Crossan, *The Gospel of Eternal Life: Reflections on the Theology of St. John* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1967), 64. For an opposing view, see Godfrey C. Nicholson, *Death as Departure* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 99–102.

88. Crossan, *Eternal Life*, 64.

89. Οὕτως ὑψωθῆναι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου . . .

this hour.” In contrast to the Synoptic accounts, in which Jesus does pray to the Father to take away the cup of death (Matt 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42), here Jesus dismisses the very thought, since his entire purpose on earth is to die in this way. The will of God that Jesus die is paramount, but it also marks Jesus as divine. And after his lifting up statement, the crowd remains confused, still unclear about Jesus’ identity despite the fact that Jesus just told them everything they needed to know. That Jesus speaks of his death in this passage is undisputed, since when Jesus says, then, “and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all [people] to me,” the text is clear to note that “he said this to show by what death he was to die.”

In each of the three examples of “lifting up sayings” Jesus’ crucifixion is used to describe Jesus’ true identity. This lifting up, then, is “the hour”⁹⁰ at which Jesus and God’s antagonism is realized, and at the same time, is the moment in which Jesus and God are associated. Again quoting Romanowsky, “the cross is where the Son of Man is exalted because it is where he most fully reveals the Father.”⁹¹ What Romanowsky and other scholars, such as Francis Moloney, have neglected to observe is the cultural context in which John’s use of this literary mechanism occurs. John’s use of Jesus’ death to point to Jesus’ divinity corresponds with the use of the trope of antagonism found in the romance novels, where likewise the heroic figure is persecuted by a deity and is associated with the divine as a result. In this context, the differences between the Johannine and romantic uses of this trope make apparent John’s unique theology of the cross.

Nagy’s observations about the heroes and their relationships to the gods of the epics are therefore applicable here. Just as Apollo

90. The Johannine use of “the hour” to refer to Jesus’ death is discussed by G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Gospel of Life: Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 46–47.

91. Romanowsky, “When the Son of Man is Lifted Up,” 110.

and Achilles are locked in this potentially deadly relationship, so too is Jesus’ life in the hands of God. In acknowledging that it is uniquely God’s will that he die, in his agency in that act and in his willingness to die, Jesus again confirms his divine identification. To this end, John 6:51c–58 is especially important to the relationship that is created over the course of the Gospel between Jesus and God since it points to the ultimate event of antagonism between god and hero.

John 6:51c–58 foreshadows Jesus’ death by referring to the giving of Jesus’ flesh for the life of the world. Bultmann states that the language used in 51c is especially suggestive of Jesus’ death,⁹² since other early Christian texts make use of δίδωμι ὑπέρ, as John does, when referring to Jesus’ gift of his life.⁹³ Thus, although John does not use the same sacrificial terms employed by the romance novels, there is, nonetheless, a sacrificial overtone to John 6:51c–58 in that these verses reference Jesus’ death *on behalf* of others. The most significant term used to describe Jesus’ death in 6:51, δίδωμι ὑπέρ—ὁ ἄρτος δὲ ὃν ἐγὼ δώσω ἢ σαρξὶ μου ἐστὶν ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ζωῆς—implies the giving over or handing over of something. In non-Christian contexts, the term δίδωμι is used to refer to ritual offerings that are given over to a god.⁹⁴ In the New Testament, especially when used in conjunction with ὑπέρ, the term connotes Jesus’ expiatory death on the cross. Harkening back to Isaiah 53, the phrase functions to point to Jesus as one who suffers death on behalf of other people.⁹⁵ Raymond Brown’s commentary on John is

92. Bultmann, *John*, 234–35.

93. Gal. 1:4; 2:20; Rom. 8:32; Eph. 5:2; Titus 2:14; Luke 22:19.

94. E.g., *Iliad* 12.6; *Odyssey* 1.67. Interestingly, the same verb can also be used to describe the handing over of a daughter to become a wife (e.g., *Iliad* 6.192; *Odyssey* 4.7). Such a use complements the idea that chastity in *Chaereas and Callirhoe* is the sacrificial offering. See note 186 in chapter three.

95. Ellen B. Aitken, *Jesus’ Death in Early Christian Memory: The Poetics of the Passion*, *Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus: Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments* 53 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: Academic Press, 2004), 31.

explicit in associating the term with Jesus' death and specifically his crucifixion, although he further associates it with the Eucharist. C. K. Barrett also agrees that 51c presents a clear reference to Jesus' death.⁹⁶ Both Barrett and Bultmann agree that the further commandment in verse 52, which escalates the commandment to include blood and not just flesh, further emphasizes the scene's reference to Jesus' death. However, in my view both Bultmann and Barrett fall short in that they conclude that this reference to death, concretized by the inclusion of the blood, ultimately evokes the Eucharist. While this is not an unreasonable association, the use of δίδωμι in correlation with ὑπὲρ is found throughout the New Testament in verses whose context is not eucharistic, but rather, sacrificial.⁹⁷

The best example of this is found in Ephesians 5:2: “καὶ περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ, καθὼς καὶ ὁ χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν τῷ θεῷ εἰς ὁσμὴν εὐωδίας.” Here, Jesus is referred to as a “fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” after he has given himself up (παρέδωκεν ... ὑπὲρ). This metaphor⁹⁸ works to transform Jesus into a sacrificial offering. Sacrifice is a vehicle⁹⁹ for understanding and interpreting Jesus' death, a vehicle that takes on a life of its own, influencing and injecting meaning into a wide range of texts and concepts. This use of sacrificial language, rather than simply remaining a way of describing Jesus' death, becomes reversed: Jesus' death is understood only through the sacrificial metaphor, and so the use of sacrificial

96. C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (London: SPCK, 1978), 283.

97. Helmut Koester suggests that the association between sacrificial imagery and the Last Supper comes relatively late (“The Historical Jesus and the Cult of the Kyrios Christos,” *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 24, no. 3 [1995]: 13–18).

98. And this is not, we should note, a simile—Jesus is not *like* a sacrifice.

99. See I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), esp. 95–100.

language such as δίδωμι ὑπέρ stands as a placeholder for his death, consistently and subtly alluding to that event.

Other instances where this phrase, δίδωμι ὑπέρ, occurs include Galatians 1:4, 2:20; Romans 8:32; Titus 2:14; and Luke 22:19. Each of these cases implies expiation through Jesus’ sacrificial death, but *only* the Lukan reference pertains to the Eucharist. There is no reason, therefore, to assume eucharistic undertones to δίδωμι ὑπέρ in John 6:51. Rather, the phrase clearly connects Jesus’ statement to the sacrificial language used elsewhere in the New Testament to refer to his expiatory death.

If we accept that Jesus’ words in John 6:51c–58 are an allusion to his crucifixion, at this point, we can cast our nets for comparisons in the literature of the ancient Mediterranean world. As I noted above in my discussion of Wills’s work on the hero Aesop, the hero’s death as a *pharmakos*, one who dies on behalf of the community, forms a parallel here. Aesop’s death does not necessitate cannibalism on the part of those who, afterwards, establish his cult, but the pattern of his death alerts us to other possible comparisons, namely, the heroines of the romances. Indeed, the fact that the language is sacrificial locates Jesus’ statement more firmly in the milieu of the sacrificial deaths of the heroines of the romance novels than in a eucharistic context. The presence of sacrificial and consumptive language should be examined alongside other uses of sacrificial and consumptive language in the realm of literature. John 6:51c–58 is therefore linked by this terminology to the sacrificial terminology used in the romances.

The heroines are especially appropriate as a lens with which to examine the meaning of John 6:51c–58 since their deaths are also both allusions and illusions: they allude to the deaths of the heroes of the epics at the same time as they are illusory and do not actually take place. That is, the sacrifices of the heroines in the novels do not actually occur but rather appear to occur; in this way, they do actually

take place in the narrative reality created by the words describing the horrific act. John 6:51c-58 alludes to a future death and at the same time evokes the illusion of that death having taken place already, as I will discuss below. This has the effect of creating in the imaginations of the readers the anticipation that these sacrifices will or have already occurred. The points I wish to make are as follows:

1. Jesus in 6:51c-58 discusses his death and consumption of flesh in a way that brings to mind most vividly the corporeality of death. In this way, the language used by John resembles that used by Achilles Tatius in *Leucippe and Clitophon*. Although the verbs used in John 6:51c-58 are not extraordinary verbs of eating or drinking, as I have shown in chapter one, the commandment to consume human flesh is certainly unusual if not abhorrent. Further, John's Jesus uses sacrificial language that, though different in terms of vocabulary from the novels, is consistent with the metaphor of sacrificial death in New Testament texts.
2. Such explicit discussions of gory sacrifice stand out in the ancient literature, which, as I discussed above, is usually more discreet about references to sacrificial practice, preferring to couch blood and gore in the language of banquet and aroma.
3. I argued in chapter three that Achilles Tatius's motivation for making Leucippe's "sacrifice" more shocking was to create a sense of un-reality in the minds of the readers that simultaneously reinforces the fact that the sacrifice happens. The forceful language used creates a situation in which the unthinkable is made startlingly real: Leucippe is simultaneously killed and is alive.
4. I therefore suggest that John's statement regarding Jesus' flesh and his commandment to consume it functions in a similar way.

We have already concluded that this section of John prefigures Jesus' death in a way that calls to mind the extremely physical reality of a fleshly death. As such, this graphic reminder of Jesus' impending crucifixion as *pharmakos* is made real in John 6:51c-58 through the use of this allusory and illusory language. That is, just as the romances use such descriptions to imply both the death and false-death of their heroines, so too does John vividly place in the minds of his readers the imminence of Jesus' death. The imagined deaths of heroines in tragedies create multiple simultaneous meanings in the minds of the readers. The anticipation of the act makes the event just as real as if it had actually occurred. The sacrificial death and consumption of the heroine takes place at the narrative level. Thus, when Jesus alludes so strongly and graphically to not only his own death but also the consumption of his flesh, the anticipated death seems to take place before the mind's eye of the audience; the killing and the eating take place as the reader ingests the words Jesus speaks.

Jesus' Death and God's Glory: Contemporaneity in John 6:51c-58

The reference in John 6:51c-58 to Jesus' sacrifice and consumption makes narratively real Jesus' identification with God. In his statement, Jesus points to his sacrifice and references the sacrificial consumption of his flesh, which in turn suggests the resolution of his antagonistic relationship with God. These claims can be made in part because of John's peculiar manipulation of time, a phenomenon that Bultmann names contemporaneity,¹⁰⁰ and in part because of John's use of the simultaneity of divine and mortal identities that we also saw at play in the romances. Jesus' death and the consuming of his body by his followers is one of a series of conceptual overlaps that are found

100. Bultmann, *John*, 198.

in many aspects of John's Christology and that also appear in the expression of divinity put forward by the romance novels. It is fitting then to view John 6:51c-58 from the vantage point of two intersecting concepts: the simultaneous identities of mortal and divine, and the contemporaneous events of sacrifice and immortality, both of which John shares in common with the romances.

At first glance, it seems impossible for Jesus to be alive and eternal on the one hand and be killed and consumed on the other, yet both of these possibilities occur simultaneously in John 6:51c-58. As I illustrated above, Jesus' use of *δίδωμι ὑπέρ* evokes the metaphor of sacrifice. This allusion to his sacrificial death brings about his sacrifice, which takes place in the minds of his audience at the very moment he utters the words. His identity as the Son of God, the one sent from heaven, is reinforced in his seemingly contradictory statement in 6:51c-58.¹⁰¹ This statement is understandable once we tease out the ways in which John makes use of simultaneity of being and contemporaneity of time. In this way, the antagonism, the association of hero and god, and the event of the cult meal in both the romance novels and in John overlap each other both in ontology and in time.

This simultaneity of ontology is also well represented in other aspects of John's Christology. Menken points out that Jesus is *both* the bread *and* the one who gives it; "Jesus *gives* what he *is*."¹⁰² This collision of Jesus' death and his association with God is also present in the "I am" sayings and also other statements that he makes associated with them: "Jesus is life (11:25; 14:6), and he gives life (15:21; 6:33; 10:28; 17:2). He is the resurrection (11:25; 14:6), and raises believers (6:39, 40, 44, 54). . . . He is light (1:9; 8:12; 9:5), and he gives light (1:5, 9)."¹⁰³ That these simultaneities manifest themselves not

101. Peter, because of the Bread of Life Discourse, correctly identifies Jesus as "the Holy One of God" / "ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ" in 6:69.

102. Menken, "Eucharist or Christology?" 194.

just in corresponding ontological and donatory statements, but also in actions, gives a framework within which John 6:51c-58 is understandable as a christological statement. That is, it makes sense that Jesus casts himself simultaneously as both the one who gives the bread and the bread itself in the context of Jesus’ other statements concerning his dual identity; his statements in John 6:51c-58 lend themselves naturally to christological interpretation in this context.

This simultaneity is corroborated by the strange sense of time in John’s Gospel. John has no future: everything occurs in the present. This is discussed by Bultmann, referring to the evangelist’s lack of future eschatology:¹⁰⁴ “the completion of the eschatological event is not to be awaited at some time in the future; it is taking place even now in the life and destiny of Jesus.”¹⁰⁵ John’s Gospel has no future: the time of God is already here in the presence of Jesus (John 4:23). Likewise, then, Jesus’ death is not a future event with regard to John 6:51c-58; it is rather an imminent, present event that *is* rather than *will be* since it is the salvific act that is the zenith of the revealer’s presence on earth. In the same way that he was not created and has always existed, (John 1:1-4), Jesus’ death is not a moment in history but an ongoing ontological, salvific, and eschatological reality. Most important for our study are Bultmann’s statements about Jesus’ death: “*past and future are bound to each other*. That the hour of death is the hour of glorifying God rests on the fact that the entire work of Jesus serves the revelation.”¹⁰⁶ This bears repeating: Jesus’ death in John takes place at every moment, and at the same time is beyond time, because Jesus’ signs point to God’s glory that is only manifest

103. *Ibid.* These statements are further matched by Jesus’ actions, such as the resurrection of Lazarus in 11:1-44 and the healing of the man born blind in chapter nine.

104. Bultmann, *John*, 107, 167.

105. *Ibid.*, 128; in 190 n.1, Bultmann recommends Doris Faulhaber, *Das Johannesevangelium und die Kirche* (Kassel: Stauda, 1938), 89f on the Johannine concept of the “now.”

106. Bultmann, *John*, 429.

in Jesus' death. This revelation is contemporaneous with Jesus' work on earth and thus with his mortality. Thus, John's references to Jesus' crucifixion throughout his Gospel, but in particular in 6:51c-58, do not allude to future events in a linear narrative of historical events, the way such allusions might function in the Synoptic Gospels, but rather they remind the reader of an event that is both concurrent and a-temporal. Like Jesus' very existence, his death is outside of time itself.

In earthly time the 'coming' of the Revealer and his 'going away' are separate events, in eschatological time they are contemporaneous . . . The Evangelist will make this paradox clear by means of the concept of Jesus' *δοξασθῆναι*, which took place in his activity in the past, but which comes to fruition only in his death.¹⁰⁷

Likewise, I argue, we must not attempt to understand Jesus' statements in John 6:51c-58 as part of a linear description of his activities, outside of the context of John's continued use of Jesus' signs as pointing simultaneously to God's glory and Jesus' expiatory death on the cross. Not only do these events take place in a simultaneous way, their *meanings* colliding, but they also take place in a contemporaneous way, *their temporal location colliding*. Jesus' statements about the consumption of his flesh coincide with his divinity in John's temporal landscape at the same time as they intersect with the event of Jesus' expiatory sacrificial death.¹⁰⁸ That is, the fact that these contemporaneous (time) and simultaneous (identity) statements exist in John as a method to communicate Jesus' divinity and association with God the Father support the function of these tropes in John 6:51c-58 where they are at work as christological markers. Just like the heroines in the romance novels, then, Jesus is

107. *Ibid.*, 198.

108. To put this in the language of the Hellenistic sacrificial tradition, one might say that this is a sacrifice that requires "on the spot" or *οὐ φερά* consumption of meat. Cf. Scott Scullion, "Olympian and Chthonian," *Classical Antiquity* 13, no. 1 (1994): 98ff.

capable of actualizing his death and consumption through statements about himself, which are therefore also about his divine nature. That Jesus makes such offensive claims about the consumption of his flesh concurrently with the allusion to his salvific death is the expression of John’s Christology: the act of his death occurs in the moment that its implications are ingested. As Jesus commands the ingestion of his dead body, he appropriates the identity of his Father and is divine.

I argue that this exhortation to consume Jesus’ flesh represents the contemporaneity of literary death and heroic cult *aition* in the same way that this reference to sacrifice and *θυσιᾶ* functions in the romances. The commandment to eat Jesus’ flesh and drink his blood in John 6:51c-58 acts as a focusing lens, bringing together aspects of the heroic role that are disparate in the epics but that collide and intersect by the time of the romances; the climax of the antagonism between God and Jesus (that is, Jesus’ death) is foreshadowed in John 6:51c-58 and at the same time the cult is established through the sacrificial act and associated consumption of the cult meal. This understanding of John 6:51c-58 fits well within John’s existing christological concerns. In multiple places throughout the Gospel, John articulates the love between God, Jesus, and the world in such a way that necessitates Jesus’ death; the Father’s gift of the Son to the world is in fact the gift of his death. Menken observes that each time the terms “give” or “gift” are used in John with reference to this relationship, Jesus’ death is implied: “The structure of John’s christology . . . makes it clear that Jesus’ act of giving himself as bread (6:51c) constitutes the climax of the Father’s act of giving Jesus as bread (6:32).”¹⁰⁹ The association between God and Jesus is cemented in this way. This is all the more clear given the parallel sentences describing the giving of the bread. At first, in verse 32, Jesus is the

109. Menken, “Eucharist or Christology?” 193–94.

bread that comes from heaven, sent by the Father; but later, in 51, Jesus himself becomes the giver of the bread. It is in the reference to death and the consumption of his flesh that Jesus and God become associated, just as heroes and gods become associated through cult.

Although Menken's analysis of John 6:51c-58 has thus far been helpful for this study, since it supports my argument about the contemporaneous reality and potentiality of Jesus' death as well as my proposal that the section should be read christologically in this light, I do not concur with his conclusion about the meaning of the anthropophagic eating encouraged by John's Jesus. Menken proposes that for a christological reading of this section to stand, the eating and drinking must be considered metaphorical. He argues that a literal reading of the section demands a eucharistic interpretation, since it is only in this context that the cannibalistic overtones can be mitigated:

a literal understanding of "to eat" and "to drink" in vv. 53-58 . . . is possible only when "flesh" and "blood" indicate eucharistic elements; when these terms here refer to the crucified Jesus . . . the verbs have to be understood in the same metaphorical way as "to eat" in vv.50, 51ab. "To eat Jesus' flesh and drink his blood" then means: to believe in him as the one who dies for the whole world. Or, in slightly different words: to believe that in Jesus' violent death God is acting for the life of the world.¹¹⁰

I argue rather that a metaphorical reading is not necessitated by excluding the Eucharist from our discussion of John 6:51c-58. Having established points of contact with other literature from the ancient Mediterranean, and based on an analysis of the complex ways in which heroes and their cults are established, I suggest that Jesus' flesh and blood are the flesh and blood of a hero killed for the lives of his people and that this flesh and blood is not just the *aition* that establishes the cult but is also the sacrifice consumed by

110. *Ibid.*, 195.

worshippers. The consumption cements the cult that in turn solidifies the association between Jesus and God; this association originates in the antagonism present throughout John, an antagonism that culminates in Jesus’ death as a *pharmakos*.¹¹¹

The function of Jesus’ words as cult *aition* dovetails with the conclusions other scholars have drawn about Jesus’ role as the giver of cultic law. As Berenson Maclean has observed, the “institution of *cult* is the decisive indication of heroic status,”¹¹² something that she argues, and I agree, Jesus does with words. Cult, in essence, is made up of actions that create and define a community of worshippers.¹¹³ As discussed in the first chapter, John differs from the other canonical Gospels in that it is not explicit about typically sacramental practices such as baptism and Eucharist. Nevertheless, John’s Gospel is preoccupied with cultic actions, with the establishment of a cultic community in the pattern of the heroic cults. Jesus’ discussion of right worship (προσκυνέω, προσκυνητής) in John 4:20–24 indicates not only that John is interested in cult, but also that that cult is brought about by knowing.¹¹⁴ Berenson Maclean proposes that the focus on remembrance in the Farewell Discourse (John 13:31–17:26) points to this logocentric cult, where words and signs previously articulated by Jesus make sense only later, in light of his death, and where the act of remembrance is a rite that establishes the community of worshippers and therefore a heroic cult in line with what we find in *Heroikos*.¹¹⁵ That the remembrance of Jesus’ signs in the past and

111. This makes the interpretation of the so-called misunderstanding of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in v. 52 very curious; it is after their incredulity that Jesus reemphasizes his statement. But it seems to me that their “misunderstanding” is ironic in that it is not, in fact, inaccurate. What Jesus is doing is promoting a (narrative) consumption of his flesh and blood; their disgust at this premise is understandable, but for more than cannibalistic reasons, since in fact Jesus is declaring himself equal to God with those words. To some extent, then, οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι here are objecting to Jesus’ divinity.

112. Berenson Maclean, “Jesus as Cult Hero,” 199.

113. *Ibid.*, 201.

114. *Ibid.*, 203–204.

their reinterpretation in the present or future engages worshippers in the act of cult supports my supposition that John 6:51c-58 represents a cultic meal of the hero at the level of narrative; the remembrance of words in John as an act of cult ritual emphasizes the idea that John's cult exists in the narrative realm, just as those of the romance novels do. John 6:51c-58 makes sense when it is interpreted in light of Jesus' death, an event to which the scene deliberately points. Thus, Jesus' death as cult *aition* makes comprehensible the words he utters about the consumption of his flesh. Indeed, in light of how cult appears to work in John, that utterance is in itself a cultic act. The establishment of the cult is therefore of paramount importance in understanding the meaning of Jesus' commandment to eat his flesh and drink his blood. In other words, this commandment functions as cult *aition*.

Conclusion: Cult Meals and Jesus' Words

I have established that Jesus' statement in John 6:51c-58 alludes not only to his sacrificial death but also to his bodily sacrifice since it uses the specifically sacrificial formula of δίδωμι ὑπέρ. In other words, this section of John embeds a sacrificial ritual in narrative. I have likewise determined that Jesus' exhortation in this pericope is not a *description* of the early Christian practice of the Eucharist. His exhortation to eat his flesh and drink his blood is not a description at all; rather the words spoken affect his identification with God. I propose that narrative does not necessarily reflect historical reality, but rather that words used to articulate meaning create reality at the level of narrative: Jesus' words in verses 51c and 53-57 function as a ritual in ink. Jesus' words are the cult *aition*, establishing his association with God in the narrative reality. As such, John 6:51c-58 functions to articulate Jesus' divine identity.

115. Ibid., 203-207.

The narrativity of the ritual, of this *aition*, operates on two levels in John,¹¹⁶ since Jesus’ words are twice removed from the historical world: once because this consumption of flesh and blood is embedded in a narrative of Jesus’ life and teaching, and twice because within that narrative it is embedded in the speech of the character of Jesus. Thus two narrative realms are present in this passage: a sub-narrative describing Jesus on the shore, discussing the bread of life, and a metanarrative, which is Jesus’ statements about the bread of life. Jesus’ words represent a ritual that takes place at the level of story even when that ritual does not ever actually take place either (a) in the sub-narrative (i.e., Jesus’ flesh is never narratively consumed) or (b) in historical reality (i.e., this eating of Jesus’ flesh, metaphorical or otherwise, is not a reference to any actual ritual).¹¹⁷

John’s use of sacrificial language links Jesus’ statement with his own imminent sacrificial death. The cultural expectations around sacrifice differ depending on the context; victim, deity, and occasion all contribute to the shape and tone of the ritual. I have argued above in chapter three that the human sacrifices that (almost) occur in the romance novels are left deliberately ambiguous. The language used to describe the impending sacrificial deaths of the heroines is vague in order to scandalize the readership, since it leaves open the possibility of a cannibalistic banquet post-sacrifice. Although *θυσία* is certainly the unmarked term for sacrifice, implying no expectations one way

116. Adele Reinhartz has also described the Gospel of John as operating on more than one level in her book, *The Word in the World: The Cosmological Tale in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

117. An example of the force of narrative meaning imposing itself on historical events is the crucifixion of Jesus. It is the narrative that creates meaning and symbolism around that event; the historical event itself represents the execution of a criminal, one among many. The historical event makes no statement about the significance of this one death. It is only in the narrative world that Jesus’ death on the cross is given meaning: notions of sacrifice, of God’s will, and of salvation only exist in the world of narrative, that preserved in the Gospels and that created by the emerging Christian community. The historical Jesus died, but the character of Jesus in the narrative died for a theologically significant reason. In other words, to a certain extent, even Jesus’ *sacrificial* death on the cross exists only in the narrative realm.

or the other, it allows for the consumption of meat more readily than the marked term σφάγια, which is not used in the romances to describe these sacrifices. Likewise, John's use of the construction δίδωμι ὑπέρ, while it implies sacrifice, does not seem—in the New Testament texts that use it—to *require* a meal, but as Ephesians 5:2, John 6:51, and even Luke 22:19 illustrate, consumption of the flesh that has been given for the purpose of sacrifice is a distinct and likely possibility, since the terminology reflects an unmarked, ordinary sacrifice. In this way, too, John is like the romances: it leaves open, and indeed, in the case of John 6:51c–58, strongly implies the possibility of a feast of Jesus' sacrificed body. Coupled with an understanding of the performative and transformative quality of the speech act, Jesus' words in John 6 certainly promote an association between words, sacrifice, and consumption; when examined then in light of Nagy's conclusions about how divine identification is linked to antagonism and sacrifice, it seems clear that this section of John establishes Jesus' association with the god who is responsible for his death. Thus, on the one hand, Jesus' speech in John 6:51c–58 brings about the sacrificial death of Jesus in narrative; on the other hand, the language of consumption references the cult meal that is the means of identifying god with hero.

That John 6:51c–58 associates Jesus' sacrificial death with the consumption of his flesh agrees with what we know of Greco-Roman sacrificial practice. Dennis Smith is clear in his discussion of the banquet in the ancient world about the inseparability of sacrifice and cult meal. The meal that takes place at a sacrifice is actually an integral part of that sacrifice and not an afterthought. Some cults have specific prohibitions on removing the meat of a sacrificed animal from the precincts; in these cults the barbecue portion of the ritual is clearly associated with the slaughter of the animal. Other cults are less specific about where the meat should be consumed, and as such,

meat could be taken away to prepare and eat or to sell at market. Smith warns against separating the consumption of the flesh from the butchering of the animal even in the latter situation.¹¹⁸ Citing Homeric sacrifices, which “invariably” conclude with a meal,¹¹⁹ and Dio Chrysostom, who wrote, “What sacrifice is acceptable to the gods without the participants in the feast?”¹²⁰ Smith concludes that unmarked, *θυσία*-type sacrifices, include the festal meal; the meal is included in and is an integral part of the *θυσία* and is not, therefore, an extraneous activity. In other words, it should be expected that in unmarked *θυσία* sacrifices, the event of a meal of the sacrifice is inseparable from the act of slaughter that is so frequently the focus of study. Jesus’ sacrifice, as it turns out, is no exception. The Gospel of John participates in this expectation that a meal is needed for a complete sacrifice.

John 6:51c-58 fits with an understanding of the function of sacrifice that includes the meal as a requisite part of the ritual; in the pattern of the heroic cults where the sacrificial banquet pattern establishes the identification of the hero and the deity, the identification of Jesus with God cannot occur without the consumption of the sacrificial meat, which is Jesus’ flesh. Anthropophagy in John 6:51c-58 is therefore not simply a refiguring of an identity-forming marker for the community. It is not just a transformation of the common finger-pointing done by ancient philosophers and theologians, as traced by Rives, Lanzillotta, and others. Certainly, John 6:51c-58 ought to be examined in light of these other socio-historical functions, but the heroic characterization taking place in the Gospel requires that the scene be evaluated in the context of other such literary anthropophagic events. Harland

118. Smith, *Symposium*, 68.

119. *Ibid.*

120. *Orationes* 3.97.

and others have identified the role of this type of feast in Othering barbarians and creating or establishing boundaries between Greeks and barbarians; while it can be argued that John makes use of this cultural understanding of cannibalistic *θυσία*, the *reason* that this cultural understanding makes sense in John is because it also makes use of the cultural understanding of the relationship between a hero and his god.

We know that the divine–mortal antagonism Nagy identifies in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* manifests itself most prominently at sacrificial banquets. Pindar’s *Paeon* 6 describes the sacrifice that takes place at a Delphic festival, and almost in the same breath, records the death of Achilles at the hands of his associated god, Apollo. The antagonism between Achilles and Apollo is therefore closely related to the Delphic *theoxenia*, a banquet at which the gods, as guests, and the sacrificers, as hosts, share the meal together.¹²¹ Pindar’s *Paeon* 6, which was composed for the purpose of Delphic *theoxenia*, is a glorification of Apollo. The paean describes animosity among the gods (6.50–53), which is retold by the Muses (54–58). The paean describes a sacrifice in 62–64 but then breaks off. The next section still extant, 78–80, describes how Apollo, disguised as Paris, kills Achilles in battle.¹²²

The fact that this antagonism between hero and god is established in a paean composed for recitation at a sacrificial banquet at which both gods and human beings participate in the meal has important parallels with the pattern of antagonism and sacrifice found in the

121. Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 60; for an overview of *theoxenia*, see M. Jameson, “*Theoxenia*,” in *Ancient Greek Cult Practice from the Epigraphical Evidence*, ed. R. Hägg, Proceedings of the Second International Seminar on Ancient Greek Cult, November 22–24, 1991 (Stockholm: P. Åströms Förlag, 1994), 35–57.

122. Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 60–61. This quarrel is also described in *Iliad* 24.25–30. Nagy also remarks that Apollo also “had a quarrel” with Hera and Athena, the deities associated with Paris. This seems to support a parallel between the quarrels of the gods on the one hand and their associated mortal counterparts on the other (61–62).

romances, and, more significantly, in John 6:51c-58. Nagy observes that the antagonism between deity and human is articulated most clearly at a sacrificial meal—a sacrificial meal shared by the god and the mortal together. This corresponds to the argument I am making regarding the romances and John 6:51c-58 in particular, where the gods are not only present at the sacrificial banquet-in-narrative, but also participate as sacrifice. Thus, in the romances, the gods responsible for the plights of the heroines also participate in the sacrificial meal, since the heroines as divine beings also themselves play the role of the sacrificial offering. John’s Jesus, too, is both the god offering up the meat and the meat itself—he is the giver and the gift: “My flesh is meat indeed.” In this way, the participation of the gods in the sacrificial meal that aligns the identities of hero and deity is manipulated and its significance reemphasized. The divine-mortal overlap reflected in the *theoxenia* Pindar’s *Paean* 6 records is manipulated in the romances and in John so that the consumption of *the deity* is what accomplishes the divine identification of the hero.

Jesus’ command to consume his flesh and drink his blood is therefore best understood in the context of other heroic expiatory sacrifices and cult meals. Jesus the *pharmakos* is led to his death by the will of God, his father, with whom he is identified. His death is brought about by the animosity of those whom he meets on earth but is ultimately the responsibility of God: it is the will of God that Jesus dies. Moreover, Jesus’ death is expiatory. He is the *pharmakos* who is sacrificed on behalf of (ὑπέρ) the people. This firmly locates Jesus in the heroic tradition of the literature of the Hellenistic world. This tradition includes the practice of the sacrificial meal, which, as I have argued, is part and parcel with the act of sacrifice in unmarked cases. In Homeric literature, as Nagy has shown, the cultic meal frequently articulates the height of the antagonism that exists between the god and the hero; likewise in John 6:51c-58, Jesus’

sacrificial death and the consumption of his flesh *as sacrificial meat* coincide. At this pivotal moment in John's intensely present-time narrative, Jesus becomes identified with God, his narrative antagonist, through that consumption. At its core, then, John 6:51c-58 is the culmination of Jesus' statements concerning his divinity. His flesh is the meat to be eaten by those for whom he was sacrificed; indeed, it is the only way for this christological statement to become realized.

What John does in 6:51c-58 is not only a conflation of various ideas about identity and divinity present in the Hellenistic context in which the text was produced, but also the manipulation of those tropes in a way that is provocative. Harold Attridge has identified John's propensity to "bend" popular genres and tropes in this way. Attridge specifically cites John 6:51-58 as a locus of this type of manipulation, although he does not identify the genres that I have taken pains to demonstrate in this study. He recognizes that the statements Jesus makes in this section are "deliberately provocative" with their graphic language,¹²³ and serve to "confront not only the characters in the text, but the hearer of the Gospel with the stark reality of the cross and perhaps also with the memory of the cross in the meal that Jesus' followers share."¹²⁴ I agree with Attridge that this section points directly to Jesus' death on the cross in a way that emphasizes his corporeality but I disagree with his apparent (though cautious) understanding of this section as referring to the Eucharist. Instead, I have applied Attridge's identification of the function of genre-bending in John to the Greco-Roman context in the form of the Hellenistic romances; as such, and as I have argued throughout, John here manipulates the expectations around the establishment of a hero cult in literature and the related association of the hero with the divine. John manipulates these expectations so that he becomes the

123. Attridge, "Genre Bending," 15.

124. *Ibid.*

sacrificial meal that creates his divine association with God his father while at the same time enforcing a communal cohesion through anthropophagic, and indeed, theophagic, activity. John manipulates the expectation of the hero as *pharmakos*, as expiatory sacrifice, so that the antagonism of the deity brings about the (human) sacrifice of the hero and also brings about, in Jesus’ case, the consumption of that expiatory sacrifice. Thus, for John, Jesus’ death is not enough: for Jesus to be divine—for him to be identified with the Father—the expected cultic meal must be consumed.

To understand how Jesus’ words bring about the narrative reality of both his sacrifice and consumption, it is useful to think of John 6:51c–58 in the context of other types of performative speech. A speech act is differentiated from ordinary speech in that it *does* something rather than *describes* something. Thus, “performative enunciations are expressions that are equivalent to actions: the verb itself is the accomplishment of the action which it signifies.”¹²⁵ Approaching John in this way presupposes that text can be understood as language; viewing text as language or as a potential speech act is a development from the anthropological or philosophical speech act theories,¹²⁶ but one that has precedent.¹²⁷ J. L. Austin’s

125. H. S. Versnel, “The Poetics of the Magical Charm: An Essay in the Power of Words,” *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 141, eds. Paul Mirecki and Marvin W. Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 146.

126. See especially J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words*, eds. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975); Isaiah Berlin et al., *Essays on J. L. Austin* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973); S. J. Tambiah, “The Magical Power of Words,” *Man* 3 (1968): 175–208.

127. In particular, Dietmar Neufeld, “Reconceiving Texts as *Speech Acts*: An Analysis of the First Epistle of John” (PhD diss., McGill University, 1991), who gives an excellent overview of Austin’s contributions on pages 85–103; J. Eugene Botha, *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman: A Speech Act Reading of John 4:1–42* (Leiden: Brill, 1991); Hugh C. White, “Introduction: Speech Act Theory and Literary Criticism,” *Semeia* 41 (1988): 1–24. Another consideration is how to approach performative utterance or speech acts when such statements are made within a narrative, and are therefore not historical utterances but literary ones. As a ritual in ink, John 6:51c–58 differs from the “I do” of a marriage ceremony and further differs from what Botha and Paul Ricoeur discuss (Botha, *Samaritan Woman*, 74; Paul Ricoeur, “The Model of Text:

work on speech acts defines the phenomenon as having three possible elements, the most relevant for this study being the illocutionary act, which is the act *in* saying something.¹²⁸ A useful and much-used example is the statement “I do” spoken aloud during a marriage ceremony, which is not just the confirmation of the act of marrying.¹²⁹ In other words, this statement does not describe but enacts; making this utterance brings about the state of matrimony. Key to Austin’s theory and to my application of it to John 6:51c-58 is the fact that the statement participates in intelligible social rules—in other words, that the statement reflects culturally agreed-upon intentions and attitudes, or “mutual contextual beliefs.”¹³⁰ Thus, the context in which a speech act is made is significant: Jesus’ use of key terms to locate his statements within the language of sacrifice and death influences (a) its ritualized content and therefore its function as a speech act, and (b) how hearers of the statement ought to understand it.¹³¹ Some characters within the narrative of John 6 are confused by Jesus’ statement: οἱ ἰουδαῖοι (6:52) and some disciples (6:60). They have made the wrong cultural associations. Others do share these “mutual contextual beliefs” and understand the ramifications of Jesus’ statement (6:69).

Jesus’ statement functions as a declarative illocutionary act, one that alters the narrative reality in being uttered.¹³² It does this using

Meaningful Action Considered as a Text,” *New Literary History* 5 (1973): 97). While Botha and Ricoeur preserve the relationship between the speaker (or author) and the addressee, the reader in this case, this study remains concerned with the narrative level only, and not the authorial voice, as such. In other words, the character of Jesus is the speaker of the utterance, not John as author. For more on narrative-level speech act analysis, see Botha, *Samaritan Woman*, 85.

128. Austin, *Words*, 98–108.

129. Originally used by Austin, *Words*, 5 and *passim*.

130. Neufeld, “Texts as *Speech Acts*,” 102; Botha, *Samaritan Woman*, 71; K. Bach and L. M. Harnish, *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979), 5–6.

131. Aitken, *Jesus’ Death*, 24.

132. John R. Searle, “A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts,” in *Language, Mind, and Knowledge*, Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science 7, ed. Keith Gunderson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975), 344–69.

shared cultural reference points that draw connections with how gods and mortals interact through sacrifice. It further accomplishes this alteration through the use of threatening language (“unless you eat . . . you have no life in you”) and the deferral of future promises to create suspense (“whoever feeds on this bread will live forever”).¹³³ Remember that the sacrifices of the heroines in the novels take place in the narrative because of their anticipatory and deliberately ambiguous language; likewise, in John 6:51c-58, anticipation is used to realize sacrifice in the words of Jesus. In other words, in the moment when Jesus makes his controversial statement, his bodily sacrifice and the consumption of his sacrificed flesh as banquet both take place.

Jesus’ words, then, enact the cult sacrifice and meal. John 6:51c-58 participates in the contemporaneity of time throughout John to bring about Jesus’ death through an allusion to it in this pericope; by referencing his death as *pharmakos*, on behalf of others, John’s Jesus makes real and imminent the act of his own sacrifice and consumption. This language also references the sacrificial banquet of the Greco-Roman hero, identifying Jesus with God. It is the death of the hero that creates the association with the god through cult and banquet. The antagonism between hero and god that permeates a narrative translates into association through cultic practice, as Nagy has shown. The example of Pindar’s *Paeon* 6 illustrates that this antagonism is most explicit at the sacrificial banquets at which both gods and human beings participate in the consumption of the meat. The link between antagonism, ingestion, and divine beings has important parallels with the pattern of antagonism and sacrifice found in the romances, and, more significantly, in John 6:51c-58. In uttering the words, “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and

133. Botha, *Samaritan Woman*, 104–105.

drink his blood, you have no life in you,” Jesus effects his sacrifice, and in doing so, makes narratively real the action that associates him with the divine. In other words, John 6:51c-58 accomplishes Jesus’ identification with God through Jesus’ performative speech, which collides the death of Jesus at the will of an antagonistic deity with his sacrificial consumption that is the *aition* of his cult.

Conclusion: “Equal to God” (John 5:18; Iliad 20.447)

Identity and ontology are major themes in both John’s Gospel and in the Hellenistic romance novels, as the present study articulates. Gregory Nagy’s seminal work on the relationship between extraordinary humans and deities is here applied to the Gospel of John, a text that participates in many of the conventions of the ancient literary world. Tracing the ways in which the narrative relationship between heroes and gods has been developed in Hellenistic literature such as the romance novels provides an innovative way of understanding Jesus’ simultaneously divine and mortal ontology. In doing so, I have created the space to examine the modes of consumption in John 6:51c-58 outside of eucharistic interpretations.

John’s Gospel is much more preoccupied with Jesus’ correct identity than are the Synoptic Gospels. In the prologue and throughout the Gospel, John takes pains to emphasize both Jesus’ fleshly and divine qualities: it is in this light that Jesus’ signs and statements should be interpreted. Thus, John 6:51c-58 should be examined as a christological statement in line with the other signs John uses to identify Jesus with God, and not, therefore, as a

eucharistic scene. The consuming of Jesus' flesh and blood in this scene is the literary performance of a ritual meal that participates in the ancient world's understanding of heroic figures and their association with antagonistic deities.

To clarify the import of this perspective, I use the romance novels as parallel texts that demonstrate the significance of such a close identification between a god and an extraordinary mortal and likewise implicate both the antagonism and the association in the narrative world. As most of the novels were likely composed after the Gospel of John, it should be clear that I am not arguing for a direct (or even indirect) literary dependence. Rather, I am making the suggestion that the romances preserve a way of thinking about how divinity is conferred on extraordinary humans, a way of thinking that seems, from its prevalence dating back to the Homeric texts and continuing in popularity in the novels, to have survived and thrived through the time period in which John was writing. We can use the novels as a window through which to view the *Weltanschauung* that to some extent shaped John's approach to identifying divinity in Jesus. The authors of the novels use established tropes from Homeric and classical literature to cast their heroines as potential goddesses. As exceptionally beautiful, shining human beings, the heroines of the romances are consistently viewed and worshipped as goddesses by the characters they encounter on their travels. These travels, however, occur at the behest of the overseeing deities whom the heroines so closely resemble. The novels thus represent a development of Nagy's argument concerning the relationship between gods and heroes in ancient Greek literature: "antagonism in myth, symbiosis in cult."¹

It is especially clear that the novels reflect the kind of relationship Nagy describes when we consider that virtually all of the romantic

1. Gregory Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 286.

heroines face potential death as sacrificial offerings; it is this act that fully cements the heroines' identification with the goddesses. Nagy has shown that there is a direct association among the hero's glorification, his death, and the sacrificial feast in Homeric texts.² The ambiguous language used in these sacrificial scenes manipulates the expectations around whether the divinely beautiful heroines will be consumed as part of the sacrificial meal; the deliberate avoidance of terms normally used to describe non-alimentary sacrifices (e.g., σφάγια) allows for the terrifying anticipation of the consumption of these goddess-women, as we witness in *Leucippe and Clitophon* 3.15. What the novels illustrate in particular is a shift that occurs in the concept of antagonism in myth, symbiosis in cult: whereas in the classical literature a distinction existed between mythology and historical reality, such that antagonism and symbiosis occurred in separate spheres of reality, in the novels of the Hellenistic period, both the antagonism and the symbiosis occur at the level of narrative. The novels thus act as a focusing lens through which we can view the narrative relationships between human beings and gods.

This conflation of the antagonism, the identification, and the meal functions in the novels both to highlight the intimacy and resolve the discomfort inherent in the divine-mortal relationship. The fact that divine identification, divine antagonism, and divine consumption occur simultaneously and contemporaneously in the novels paves the way for us to understand more fully how the statements made in John 6:51c-58 can function. In John 6:51c-58 we see the culmination of the relationship between God and the hero, who in this case is Jesus. The antagonistic nature of Jesus' relationship with God is visible through the fact that God is ultimately responsible for Jesus' expiatory death (John 5:19; 10: 18; 18:11b) in a way parallel to the fact that

2. Ibid., 60.

Apollo is ultimately responsible for Aesop's expiatory death in *Life of Aesop*.³ Using sacrificial language (δίδωμι ὑπέρ), John evokes Jesus' impending death, conflating Jesus' glorification with his death in a set of statements that exhort his followers to consume his flesh and blood. John's Gospel is notorious for its bizarre sense of time, and this a-temporality is exploited in this pericope: Jesus' sacrificial death and the consuming of his body occur contemporaneously.⁴ Just as in the romances, Jesus' fleshly body is consumed in the moment that the words in 6:51c-58 evoke the image of his sacrifice; the sacrifice of his body both occurs and does not occur. Thus, like the heroines of the romances, in the end, Jesus both does and does not die; he is in fact immortal God.

Jesus' exhortation to consume his flesh and drink his blood represents the contemporaneity of literary death and heroic cult *aition* in the same way that this reference to sacrificial death functions in the romances. The simultaneity of mortal and immortal identity and the contemporaneity of sacrifice, death, and consumption collide and intersect in Jesus' words, telescoping the disparate roles of hero and god Nagy identifies in the epics. It is in this statement of consumption and death at God's behest that Jesus and God are identified, in the same way that first in the epics and later in the novels, the antagonistic gods become associated with heroes through the consumption of the cultic sacrificial meal.

The conclusions of this project are bolstered by the work of other scholars in the field. First, Wayne Meeks's 1967 monograph, *The Prophet King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*,⁵ uses

3. Lawrence M. Wills, *The Quest of the Historical Gospel: Mark, John, and the Origins of the Gospel Genre* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 43–44.

4. Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 429.

5. Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*, *Novum Testamentum* 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1967).

references in John to Moses and the Exodus tradition to argue for a simultaneity of the roles of prophet and king in the character of the Johannine Jesus;⁶ although Meeks does not articulate his conclusions using the same vocabulary as I have, his understanding is that the two roles both overlap and interpret each other in this context, and thus produce entirely new characteristics while building off of both older and adjacent Jewish traditions of mortal-divine interaction. Meeks demonstrates that Jesus is characterized as God's direct agent through the use of references from the Hebrew Bible.⁷

In particular, he shows that the Bread of Life Discourse in John 6 points directly to Jesus' relationship with God in its use of the Exodus tradition and its manna/bread dichotomy.⁸ Here Meeks joins those who recognize that John 6:51c-58 is not an explicit eucharistic description but rather a christological statement, although he maintains that such an allusion to the Eucharist might be "taken for granted."⁹ Finding parallels in early Jewish and Christian literature as well as in the Hebrew Bible, Meeks argues that the bread imagery in John 6, specifically the scattering and the gathering up of fragments of bread in 6:12-13, ought to be interpreted in light of the sacrificial imagery later on in the chapter and in light of older references to God, who gathers up Israel, along with his prophets.¹⁰

Meeks specifically connects Jesus to Moses, and through his analysis of Moses' role as prophet, Meeks emphasizes Moses' intimate relationship to God, and thus Jesus' intimacy with the divine. Meeks, however, does not extend his study to explain Jesus' divine ontology, a question that remains unanswered despite Moses' decidedly close relationship with the divine.¹¹ The current project therefore takes the

6. *Ibid.*, 25.

7. *Ibid.*, 286-92.

8. *Ibid.*, 91-98, 292.

9. *Ibid.*, 93.

10. *Ibid.*, 98.

association between God and Jesus further than Meeks's study does, even while approaching John's relationship to other literature in a similar way. The allusions to the Exodus tradition in John 6:51c-58 certainly point, as Meeks suggests, to a christological interpretation of the pericope. In expanding the repertoire of texts used to understand Jesus' ontology to include the contemporary romances, I have highlighted the simultaneity inherent in Jesus' divine and mortal identification.

It is significant that Meeks's conclusions match up well with my own arguments. John is a text that clearly makes use of Jewish literary and cultural tropes. In this respect, the current understanding of early Judaism together with Christianity as parts of an overarching Hellenistic world, which produced and shared narratives, traditions, and attitudes, makes it particularly appropriate to use novelistic tropes to illuminate John 6:51c-58. In joining with scholarship since Martin Hengel's *Judentum und Hellenismus*¹² in rejecting the false dichotomy between "Judaism" and "Hellenism" this project does not attempt to omit or ignore Jewish facets of John, but rather to broaden the cultural repertoire available to us in interpreting its theology. In particular, the pericope in question illustrates not only the complexity of the cultural and narrative exchange in the Hellenistic world, but also the importance of turning to texts produced outside of Jewish and/or Christian communities to uncover more about the theological concerns of John's Gospel.

11. Meeks notes that Moses' ascents specifically seemed to cause discomfort around the idea that Moses was at risk of inciting people to idolatry because of his special relationship with the divine (ibid., 141, 211) and that, at least in Samaritan sources, "belief in" Moses alongside belief in God was theologically significant (238-40).
12. Martin Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus: Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2. Jh. v. Chr.*, WUNT 10 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1969); since then, to name only two of many examples, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, ed., *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), and Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1990).

Kasper Bro Larsen, a second supporting example, has done just that. As he points out, it is crucial "that we see the New Testament texts, including the Fourth Gospel, as inherent players in a larger Panhellenistic *koine*, both with regard to content and form."¹³ Larsen's study applies this reasoning to the trope of the Recognition Scene, and argues that this narrative device describes what Larsen calls the "hybrid" identity of Jesus as both God and mortal.¹⁴ Using methods similar to those adopted in the present study, Larsen's work views John as "part of an ancient literary milieu where generic conventions and expectations were diffusing on various levels."¹⁵ That is, both Larsen and I understand John as participating in the literary world of the ancient Mediterranean. Our parallel approaches lead us to similar conclusions about Jesus' divine nature: that it is neither completely $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi$ nor entirely $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$, as the previous century's debates would have it.¹⁶

Larsen, skipping over the more recent literary descendants of the epics (the novels examined in this project), makes use of one particular trope in Homer's works, the Recognition Scene, or *anagnorisis*, as a way to understand John's depiction of how characters in the Gospel know God through Jesus and experience Jesus' physical presence. The key element in a recognition scene is the idea of revelation—that there is a hidden truth that is gradually made known through various clues. Jesus' divinity is the hidden truth in this analysis; like Odysseus, his full identity is kept hidden, although unlike Odysseus, this is not because Jesus himself keeps it a deliberate secret.¹⁷ Larsen's conclusions, like my own, understand John as

13. Kasper Bro Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger: Recognition Scenes and the Gospel of John* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 8.

14. *Ibid.*, 219.

15. *Ibid.*, 20.

16. Cf. chapter one.

17. Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 61–62.

participating in the literary expectations of the Hellenistic world, in particular with regard to how Jesus is imaged as divine. While Larsen uses the trope of recognition and I examine sacrifice as divinizing act, both projects share a methodology that supports the interaction of Johannine Christology with the workings of the divine–mortal relationship in Greco–Roman religion.

Both of these works, though written decades apart, share certain methodological elements with the current project: both Meeks and Larsen seek to interpret John’s christological elements in light of the culture of literary tropes that informed the Gospel. Meeks locates John in a Jewish milieu that would have understood Jesus’ role vis-à-vis God in terms of previous Jewish leaders’ relationships to the divine. Larsen, on the other hand, interprets John as a text that shares affinities with Homeric literature, especially in how it envisions Jesus as divine. My own work engages with similar ways of approaching John 6:51c–58. As a text that is the product of the Hellenistic world, John necessarily both makes use of and subverts common narrative tools of the eras; as a text whose aims are overwhelmingly christological, John articulates Jesus’ divinity in multiple ways, manipulating both Greek literature and the Hebrew Bible in order to clarify Jesus’ identification with God.

This “subversion of familiar symbolism”¹⁸ is a technique that John frequently uses to communicate his meaning.¹⁹ In John 6:51c–58, sacrificial associations are manipulated to point to Jesus’ divinity. But further confirmation of this subversion, and particularly of the subversion of the correspondence between antagonism in myth and association in cult²⁰ is found one chapter earlier, when John again

18. J. Albert Harrill, “Cannibalistic Language in the Fourth Gospel and Greco–Roman Polemics of Factionalism (John 6:52–66),” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127, no. 1 (2008): 149.

19. See also, Harold Attridge, “Genre Bending in the Fourth Gospel,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121, no. 1 (2002): passim and Wayne Meeks, “The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91, no. 1 (1972): 65–66.

uses loaded terminology to describe Jesus. In John 5:18, οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι say that Jesus makes himself equal to God: ἴσον . . . τῷ θεῷ. This identification is made shortly after an earlier sign that Jesus performs, the healing in 5:1-9 of a man at a pool. These words, in this context, are reminiscent of the epic use of a similar phrase, which in the *Iliad* is δαίμονι ἴσος, one that Nagy identifies as foreshadowing the death of the hero specifically: Nagy writes that "the deployment of this epithet coincides with the climax of ritual antagonism between god and hero."²¹ It is used of various characters in the *Iliad*, some of whom come dangerously close to rousing the gods' anger and are spared, and some of whom continue to provoke the animosity of the gods and are killed.²² These words in John 5:18 thus anticipate what is upcoming in 6:51c-58: Jesus' death at the hands of an antagonistic deity and the sacrifice and banquet that associate Jesus with God.²³

This study brings to the forefront these points of contact between John's Gospel, the novels, and the modes of association between gods and heroes in the ancient world. John's interaction with the social and literary conventions of the Hellenistic world shows how the author both adhered to and subverted ideas about how gods and extraordinary humans relate. In John 6:51c-58 Jesus speaks the words that realize his sacrificial death and that enact the sacrificial banquet, all within the narrative. These words of consumption, and in particular of the consumption of divinized flesh, find affinities with the sacrifice and consumption of the heroines of the romances, whose divinity is simultaneous with their identity as human beings and whose association with the god is contemporaneous with their

20. Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans*, 121.

21. *Ibid.*, 143.

22. *Ibid.*, 143-44; e.g., Patroclus in *Iliad* 16.786-89 and Achilles in *Iliad* 20.447; 22:359.

23. Wayne Meeks discusses this phrase in his essay, "Equal to God," in *In Search of the Early Christians: Selected Essays*, eds. Allen R. Hilton and H. Gregory Snyder (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 91-105. He remarks on page 95 that the phrase in John 5 bears no resemblance to similar phraseology in "pagan" circles, following Bultmann, *John*, 183 n. 1.

anticipated deaths. Given how instrumental the sacrificial meal is in identifying the hero with the deity in Homer, the romances, as literary descendants of Homer's epics, have provided a telling context in which to examine John 6:51c-58.

This study focuses on a specific scene in the Fourth Gospel but its method necessarily invites speculation about other major thematic aspects of John's Gospel and theology, such as the nature of sacrificial death, the divine-mortal relationship, and the significance of Jesus' presence on earth. This project therefore has significant implications for the ongoing debates about the nature of Jesus' signs, his flesh and glory, and the mechanisms of his incarnation and death. In particular, my identification of John 6:51c-58 as a ritual in ink, distinct from historical practices of early Christian consumption (i.e., the Eucharist), has far-reaching ramifications. This passage not only manipulates Greco-Roman understandings of hero-god association in cult and in narrative in order to establish Jesus as divine, but does so entirely at the narrative level. As a rite that takes place entirely *in the text*, Jesus' sacrifice and consumption in 6:51c-58 represents a type of performance that could shed light on a number of other such literary events, since rituals in ink are a prevalent trope in early Christian and Jewish literature that have not been evaluated in their own right. This neglect has manifested itself in the difficulty in interpreting texts that make use of this technique. Specifically, works such as *Joseph and Aseneth*, *Perpetua and Felicitas*, and a number of apocalyptic texts would benefit from further study in light of this observation.²⁴

In demonstrating that John 6:51c-58 contributes to the overall christological message of John's Gospel, the perceived theological tension between this section and the rest of John is resolved. Rather, this pericope is a major contributor to broader Johannine ideas about

24. My forthcoming monograph, *Hierophagy: Transformational Eating in Ancient Literature*, begins to approach these texts and others from the perspective of "rituals in ink."

Jesus' divinity; the fact that it in turn draws on notions of divinity from the Greco-Roman world as preserved in the romance novels illustrates how integral Hellenistic literature and its tropes are in understanding early Christian theological ideas. Early Christian texts necessarily reflect the modes of thinking and cultural expectations of the ancient Mediterranean, and viewing John through this lens is an enterprise whose implications have only begun to be brought to light. Likewise, in contributing to this method of interpretation, this project encourages the continued use of interdisciplinarity when interpreting ancient Jewish and Christian texts.

Finally, this project articulates the significance of consumption and banqueting as parts of sacrifice. The motif of sacrifice is central to Christianity, and as I have shown, is central to John in establishing Jesus' divinity. Sacrifice is therefore not just a metaphor; understanding sacrificial motifs as contributing to the construction of narrative reality could lead to new appreciations of how eating and drinking function in the early Christian imagination.

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