to the purported setting of his work, but reflective of his own period. For example "greeting formulas" employed in citations of royal decrees in 3 Maccabees provide modern scholars with evidence of the late Hellenistic date of the composition of the book. But the author recognised that these formulas lent verisimilitude to his invented documents. Johnson notes that "the care that the author has taken to emulate the official chancery style of his own day reflects neither carelessness nor ignorance on his part, but rather a deliberate stylistic choice, in order that the contemporary bureaucratic style most familiar to his audience might lend credibility to his pretended official documents."

For this reader, this sort of common sense observation is one of the major strengths of Johnson's study. It reflects an appreciation of the nuanced relationship between verisimilitude and veridicality, both of which, along with absurdist departures from both, are at the service of the ancient author in his "sacred" task of communicating "moral truth."

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Scott Fitzgerald Johnson: *The Life and Miracles of Thekla, a Literary Study.* Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, Trustees for Harvard University; Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2006.

and books that told me everything about the wasp, except why.
— Dylan Thomas, *A Child's Christmas in Wales*

The Christian world encounters Thekla as the heroic protagonist of an ancient romance, who forsook marriage and survived persecution to become first a disciple of Paul and then an apostle of Jesus Christ. In the eyewitness account of the pilgrim Egeria we find Thekla well established as patron (saint) of her famous shrine at Seleukia in south-eastern Isauria (modern Turkey) by the late 4th century (ca. 384 C.E.). Here, indeed, reading of her Acts was central to her liturgical celebration. Although Tertullian early (ca. 200 C.E.) condemned the story of Thekla as false and misleading (3 n6), the response of orthodox church Fathers, such as Methodius and Gregory of Nazianzus in the 4th century (3–4), was rather to embrace a tradition which could not easily be suppressed, given the fame of the narrative and the experience of countless pilgrims; but they "normalized" her story to the perspective of established Christian orthodoxy. This process is documented in the anonymous text which is the primary focus of the present study, a rewriting of the Acts as the *Life of Thekla* and a collection of the "miracles" worked at her shrine, the two works possibly prepared by various bishops of Seleukia and certainly complete by 470 C.E. (hereafter cited as the *Life and Miracles*, LM 5ff). This tradition has certainly not been neglected by modern scholarship. Dagron prepared the fundamental critical edition of the LM; and, more recently, Davis has reconstructed the cult of Saint Thekla on the basis of the ample literary and archaeological evidence. The common scholarly consensus awards Thekla a central place in the Christian romance tradition, against the background of the ancient Greek and Roman novel (see e.g. Aubin, as cited by Johnson from a collective work on ancient fiction and early Christian narrative). Johnson's special contribution in this study of the LM is to offer a close analysis of the transformation — the "rewriting" of the Thekla tradition which gave rise to this text.

The Thekla whom we encounter in the Acts deserves the popularity which the wide distribution of that text (from the 2nd century on) so eloquently attests. As the protagonist of what is arguably the primary Christian Romance, Thekla presents herself here

as a strong woman and a strong believer, rejecting privilege and the prospect of marriage to follow Paul, but soon outshining him as a baptised adherent of, and propagandist for, that distinctively rigorist tradition of Christian asceticism associated with north Syria. If the Thekla of the Acts was indeed the Christian heroine encountered by the many pilgrims to her shrine at Seleukia, as seems likely, given the liturgical status of the Acts in the liturgy celebrated at the martyrium (according to the witness of Egeria ca. 384 C.E.), it is no surprise that her shrine was said to be surrounded by the cells of countless holy men and women. This Christian Romance, which proved so powerfully attractive to pilgrims and the resident holy alike, has attracted the close attention of scholars for a generation or more; the core narrative shows obvious affinities with Greek and Roman romance literature, and, beyond that, with ancient liturgical narratives of great antiquity from the pre-Christian Middle East. Much remains to be done here; but the core narrative of the Thekla tradition, as such, is not the primary focus of the present study. Johnson is concerned to track and describe the "rewriting" of that tradition which produced the LM (in the mid-fifth century). Johnson does so first by carefully comparing the narrative in the Acts with the account which appears in the later LM. This is a fruitful approach: close comparative study of various versions and/or translations of a hagiographic text is the only way to document the subtle — or radical — changes which take place over time or with changing contexts. The principal effects of the rewriting which produced the LM are very evident: the radical rigorist tradition associated with the Syrian "encratite" Christians was written out of the Acts, most evidently in the rewriting of the Beatitudes (24). Biblical language was replaced by theological terminology (33). Asceticism was also written out of the Acts (40). Beyond these important changes of theme or emphasis, the LM represents a wholesale transformation — a historiographic appropriation of a primary Christian Romance which has totally transformed the narrative, though many details survive intact. Johnson is, no doubt, correct in his well-substantiated argument that the anonymous author of the LM has adopted as the model for his narrative of Thekla the well-known ancient literary traditions associated with the collection of "wonders," with local history, and the celebration of a patron. Later we will see how this rewriting favoured an elite audience of clerics and professors. What is not, perhaps, sufficiently emphasised by Johnson is the extent to which the romance narrative has been lost — or suppressed — in the process. We must assume that the Thekla who continued to greet believers as her narrative was read liturgically at her shrine (i.e. the text of the Acts) continued to appeal also, perhaps predominantly, to a more mixed audience of pilgrims and holy people, for the most part non-elite, and as a group distinct from the social and intellectual elite towards whom the LM was directed. And since, as Peter Brown has so often emphasised, it is indefensible to suppose that there were distinct "popular" and "elite" versions of the Christian faith in Late Antiquity, this rewriting amounts to apostasy from the authentic Thekla tradition, the romance narrative which continues to move and instruct us! Johnson (67–112) underestimates, and perhaps misses, the full meaning of this historic process, so well attested in Christian Late Antiquity (e.g. Fortunatus's rewriting of the tradition associated with Saint Martin of Tours).

Johnson goes to great efforts to understand the social and cultural context of the rewriting evident in the LM. Here it is arguable that he has given us much more than we need: Erasmus's defense of biblical paraphrase, Goody's insightful argument regarding the impact of literacy on narrative traditions (apparently misunderstood — literacy establishes the separation of canon and commentary; it does not prevent the proliferation of versions!). Do we need — or benefit from — a brief survey of biblical rewriting in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Josephus, and the Targums? Perhaps more useful is

the long discussion of textual elaboration and the metaphrastic habit in Late Antiquity. But some key elements are missing here: for instance, Brock's useful observations on the theory and practice of translation (source and target-oriented translations). Even more handicapping is the absence of any generative view of narrative, either a narratological understanding of how the underlying narrative gives rise to different stories expressed in distinct texts, or the semeio-structural exegesis associated with the work of Greimas. Johnson's description of the context of metaphrastic writing in Late Antiquity is no doubt useful. But we need to know why, as well as how, the narrative of Thekla had to be changed. For this we must pay attention to what is written, rather than "what is written about" (in Frank Kermode's memorable phrase). Where is the authentic Thekla narrative to be found?

Similar criticisms might be made of Johnson's analysis of the miracle tradition preserved in the LM. In a long chapter on history, narrative, and miracle (113–71), Johnson first demonstrates the importance of the Herodotean model for collections of wonder tales (paradoxography) in the world of Late Antiquity, and then suggests how both Herodotus and ancient "wonder tales" served as models for the miracles of Thekla. As Johnson notes (113 n1 following Dagron) such literary models clearly belong to the "dynasty of professors" at Seleukia which forms the author's immediate social and cultural milieu — a blatant indication of the direction towards which the Thekla tradition is being appropriated! Thekla's miracles are rightly, to the mind of the present reviewer, described as manifestations of divine power, expressions of supremacy, vengeance, or humanitarian aid (120–46). In the miracle collection Thekla appears as healer, evangelist, and litterateur (147–69). The rather neglected dimension here is Thekla's role as patron, strongly emerging around 400 C.E. as the dominant role of Christian saints: many of the "miracles" focus on changes in the relational status of a petitioner with respect to the saint. Healing leads to conversion, for instance (158). But most other manifestations of Thekla's power are also what we would expect of a patron in Late Antiquity. Emphasised here is her special relationship to the author: she protects him (164) and furthers his career (167). Only occasionally is she represented as aiding the poor! By the later fifth century saints are too important to be left to the masses of ordinary believers; or rather, the experience of ordinary believers is passed over by the elite observer. How refreshing is the story of Dionysia, the last miracle in the collection (*Miracles* 46). Dionysia renounced her husband, children, household, "in a word everything," to become "a female monk and live at the shrine of Thekla" (145). The night after, Thekla sleeps with her, embracing her tightly, as witnessed by Dionysia's bedmate Susanna. The central power of the experience recounted here is rightly noted by Johnson. The analogous Christian traditions studied by Caroline Bynum (women mystics of the high Middle Ages) and Jane Schaberg (Mary Magdalene), like the experience of Dionysia, resonate with the Christian feminism embodied in Thekla, as she appears in the primary Christian romance narrative, the Acts of Thekla. The transforming power of Thekla, as experienced by pilgrims and holy men/women at her shrine perhaps exceeds the descriptive powers of our author to fully express. The author of the LM still remembers, however, that the transforming power of Thekla arises from the conjoined elements of the divine and human embodied in her, as they were in Jesus Christ (145–46).

Even the anonymous author of the LM has not forgotten completely the transforming power expressed in the core narrative, the Acts of Thekla. Johnson certainly understands Thekla's continuing central social role as patron and conduit of divine power for the anonymous author of the LM. We still need an analysis which will consciously highlight the essential elements of the core narrative of Thekla and show to what

extent they are still present in the "rewritten" narrative of the LM, or to what extent they have been displaced. Closer attention to the biblical basis of the tradition is needed here. Although the language of typology is clearly deployed in the LM (41), Johnson seems not to understand how the typological worldview of the Bible, and the biblical tradition, allows the old to become new in a way familiar from Midrash. Typological thinking seems much more important than Greek metaphrasis for the Christian tradition generally, though the influence of metaphrasis cannot be denied. A similar lack of sensitivity is evident in Johnson's discussion of the ever present language of "miracles" (Greek *thaumata*) in the LM. Dynameis is the word used in the Gospels and the Greek Christian tradition for "miraculous" manifestations of divine power modelled on the actions of Jesus. *Thaumata* (like the Latin *miracula*) was considered a suspect term, traditionally avoided in favour of the Gospel emphasis on such deeds as manifestations of divine power; the Greek *dynameis* (Latin *virtutes*) was the more appropriate term. The fondness of the author of this miracle collection for the language of wonders cannot be denied. The reader requires to be shown, however, how and to what extent the language of "wonders" used by the author of the LM, and so familiar from the Classical tradition, represents an authentic development of the older narrative of Thekla, the narrative still read at her tomb, or a subtle distortion, produced by and for a substantially dechristianised elite. Thekla is still represented in the LM as exalting the power (*dynamis*) of the Trinity (62). In Johnson's long discussion of "Greek wonders" (ch. four), there is only the most passing reference to this key concept; and even there he prefers to emphasise the much more congenial Gospel language of "signs" and "portents" (198 n91). The somewhat uncritically credulous and extrinsic attitude of the anonymous rewriter has here rather misled Johnson. We have to look carefully in these texts to find traces of the charismatic power so evident in the authentic Thekla.

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MATHEW KUEFLER, ed.: *The Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006. pp. 348.

Assembled on the twenty-fifth anniversary of John Boswell's ground-breaking, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (*CSTH*), this new collection presents sixteen mostly new essays, that analyse and expand upon Boswell's scholarship and personal legacy. Given the laudatory tones in which the contributors write of Boswell the immediate impression of the book is that it is making a subtle claim to being a new, collaborative addition to the corpus of queer literary and scholarly hagiographies. The two audiences I suggest would be most interested in this collection, medievalists and contemporary queer theorists, will be just as interested in reading this collection in such a light, and it is certainly something that Boswell himself would no doubt find endlessly amusing. Just as Sartre gave us *Saint Genet*, and David Halperin offered *Saint Foucault*, Kuefler and his contributors introduce us to *Saint Boswell*.

Kuefler's introduction constructs the "Boswell Thesis" (2) as the conflation of the numerous arguments in *CSTH*. Specifically, Boswell asserted Roman and Greek tolerance of certain same-sex eroticism, the misreading of anti-homosexual proscriptions into Christian scripture, and an initial Christian tolerance of homosexuality that changed, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, into condemnation. With all but a few exceptions the chapters are largely concerned with the first two ancillary arguments of the Boswell Thesis — the legitimacy of the historical study of homosexuality, the nature