

Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon* in *Passio Sanctorum Galactionis et Epistemes*

Scholars such as Morales and Chew have noted many similarities between the natures of the Christian martyrs with the protagonists of ancient novels. However, at first glance, the themes of Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon* do not seem to appropriate for Christian texts—especially martyr narratives. The novel is riddled with unchristian events and themes, including pederasty, murder, attempted premarital sex, adultery, kidnapping, and deceit, which, in theory, could make this novel aversive to a Christian audience.

Despite these features of Achilles Tatius' novel, *Passio Sanctorum Galactionis et Epistemes* used many of the same traits and themes that are in the second century Greek novel. *Passio Sanctorum Galactionis et Epistemes* is a martyr narrative that describes the lives and deaths of Galaction and Episteme, supposedly martyred in the third century in Emesa during the reign of Decius. Within the account, Leucippe, the mother of Galaction, was despondent because she was unable to bear a child for her husband Clitophon, an abusive husband. Onuphrius, a monk, preached to Leucippe, promising that she would bear a child if she became a Christian. She believed, was baptized, and soon became pregnant with Galaction. These events converted her husband, Clitophon, and their son Galaction was born and baptized into the faith. As a young man, Galaction met a beautiful woman—Episteme—and eventually converted and married her. Eight days after their wedding, Galaction convinced her to separate and serve in monasteries. Galaction was later captured by Roman officials and Episteme willingly gave herself to the officials to die with him. After a conversation with the ruler, torture, and a miracle where Episteme blinded everyone in the crowd, the enraged official ordered that Galaction and Episteme lose their hands, feet, and eventually their heads, thus bringing an end to the account.

Very little has been written about *Passio Sanctorum Galactionis et Epistemes*. In the martyr text, the parents of Saint Galaction are named Clitophon and Leucippe, the same names as the protagonists of Achilles Tatius' novel. Delehayé and Morales recognize this similarity, but state that the names are all that are similar between the characters of the martyr text and the protagonists of the novel. Morales writes, "Even less probable is the story in the *Acta Sanctorum* that the parents of St. Galaktion were called Leucippe and Clitophon. These anecdotes are most likely part of a strategy of appropriation of the novels into a Christian agenda, without which they might never have been preserved" (Morales, *Vision and Narrative*, 5). Morales also mentions the appropriation of these names as a part of Christian agenda because, according to Christian tradition, Achilles Tatius was later converted to Christianity and became a bishop. If these names were used for a "Christian agenda," what do the names Leucippe and Clitophon imply? Why include them in this particular martyr text if the names of the characters do not imply anything important for the rest of the text? The Clitophon of the martyr narrative is abusive while Leucippe and Clitophon are not even the main characters of the martyr narrative. The chance of the parents' names being Leucippe and Clitophon being coincidence is infinitesimal, especially since themes were appropriated from Achilles Tatius' novel to other Christian works, such as Eustathius Macrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias*, a Byzantine novel of the eleventh century.

The purpose of this presentation is to point out and analyze the similar themes and instances of *Passio Sanctorum Galactionis et Epistemes* with Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*. While many scholars, including Delehayé and Morales, agree that there is little use of reading the passion narrative of Galaction and Episteme with Achilles Tatius' novel, I argue that the martyr narrative uses many similar themes in the novel and traits that the protagonists

possess: the Christian women are portrayed as exceedingly beautiful, themes from Plato's *Symposium* that are prevalent in the novel appear within the martyr narrative, and Episteme's behavior towards death is incredibly similar to that of Leucippe. By revealing these similarities, further work can be done on *Passio Sanctorum Galactionis et Epistemes* in order to shed more light on the use of the ancient novel in Christian literature as well as how and why martyr texts used Greek and Roman literature within their respective works.

#### Bibliography

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