

Early Christian and Jewish narrative. The role of religion in shaping narrative forms. Edited by Ilaria Ramelli and Judith Perkins. (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 348.) Pp. viii + 390. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015. €134.978 3 16 152033 4; 0512 1604
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This collection of essays is a further contribution to the well-established discussion of the lines of continuity and discontinuity between the Hellenistic novels or romances of the early imperial era and the Jewish and Christian works that share many of the same characteristics. It is a somewhat eclectic collection and, despite the subtitle and the editorial introduction which repeats it, it is not easy to discern a unifying thread, perhaps because of a lack of clarity as to quite what 'the role of religion' might mean. A number of the authors are well-known for the contributions that they have made elsewhere to the topic, and their essays are useful additions to these, but it seems evident that there has been little or no co-ordination between them, and opportunities for conversation or cross-referencing have been missed. This lack of co-ordination is most evident when Vincent Hunink provides a relatively brief (pp. 147–59) overview of the *Acts of Xanthippe, Polyxena and Rebecca*, concluding that they are 'a plain and interesting but in the end rather innocent narrative', and is immediately followed by Richard Pervo's much more extensive and productive analysis of the same text (pp. 161–204). Similarly, Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, the subject of an essay by Svetla Slaeva-Griffin, is a major player in a comparison with Philostratus' *Apollonius*, and the *Acts of Thomas* by Judith Perkins, and also makes a brief appearance in Kathryn Chew's comparison of 'Passion and conversion' in ancient Greek novels and what are dubbed 'Early Christian female virgin martyr accounts' (although these are all taken without discussion from the *Acta Sanctorum*). The *Acts of Thomas* is also the subject of a challenge by Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta to the argument that these have a Syriac origin, although the essay is largely a report of 'work-in-progress', and therefore does little to further the subject of the volume. From another perspective Karen King's comparison of the function of the endings of the Gospels of Mark and of Judas, and Laura Nasrallah's tracing of texts adopting the Pauline *persona*, while both of interest, strain the category of 'novel', although perhaps this may be justified after Lawrence Wills's exploration of the tense relationship between 'history' and 'novel' in Greek as well as Jewish writing of the period. The other essays are by Erich Gruen on *Artapanus*, by David Konstan on the *Testament of Abraham*, by Dennis MacDonald on Dionysian traits in the *Acts of John*, by Mark Edwards on the phenomenon of deferred fulfilment of prophecy in a broad range of contexts (described by the title as 'early Christian fiction'), and by Ilaria Ramelli, repeating the argument that she has made elsewhere that the correspondence between Abgar and Tiberius is both historical and the starting point for the subsequent development, traced in detail, of the later Abgar correspondence and legends.

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