On Her Lips, From God:

Sexual Violence, Charismatic Speech, and Authority in Early Christianity

Elizabeth Meaghan Matheson

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Prepared By: Elizabeth Meaghan Matheson

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_____ Chair
Dr. Elaine Paterson

_____ External Examiner
Dr. Alicia Batten

_____ Examiner
Dr. Leslie Orr

_____ Examiner
Dr. Naftali Cohn

_____ Examiner
Dr. Andre Gagne

_____ Thesis Supervisor
Dr. Carly Daniel Hughes

Approved by: _____
Dr. Marc Desjardins, Graduate Program Director

10/16/2023 _____
Dr Pascale Sicotte, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences

ABSTRACT

On Her Lips, From God: Sexual Violence, Charismatic Speech, and Authority in Early Christianity

Elizabeth Meaghan Matheson, Ph.D.

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This dissertation is a feminist historical literary analysis of select early Christian narratives in which epistemology and charismatic speech are linked to sexual violence: the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (*HypArch*), the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* (*ATh*), and the *Acts of the Apostles* (*Acts*). I read these narratives in broader debates within early Christ communities about whose charismatic speech could obtain divine status. I argue that sexual violability and assault figures into the texts' representations of authority. Moreover, these sources rely on dominant ancient understandings of sexuality that normalized the sexual violability of marginal groups, including women, ethnic others, and enslaved persons.

The introductory chapter outlines my methodology, the context of speech and authority in early Christ assemblies, and dominant conceptions of sexuality and gender related to sexual violence. Chapter one addresses Eve's rape in *HypArch* and shows how this sexual violence undermines her prophetic role and place in the text's soteriological vision. In chapter two, I examine the narratives of Norea (*HypArch*), Eve's daughter, and Thecla (*ATh),* and demonstrate that, though early Christian sources assume the normativity of sexual violence, they also imagine moments in which characters (in this case, high-standing women) could resists such violence. The final two chapters consider sexual violence, charismatic speech, and authority in the representation of three enslaved persons in *Acts*, the Ethiopian eunuch (*Acts* 8), the prophetic enslaved girl (*Acts* 16), and Rhoda (*Acts* 12). Reading these scenes in the context of the sexually violent nature of ancient slavery, I show how Luke's rhetoric relies on the inherent sexualization of enslaved persons to bolster the image of the Way and the apostles while undermining the authoritative potential of these characters.

This dissertation reveals how some early Christian configurations of knowledge and charismatic power were tied to sexual status and often left the normalization of sexual violence unexamined. In making this assertion, I link understandings of sexual violence past and present that follow from the #MeTooMVMT, such as, how current victim/survivors are held in suspicion and how institutions and academic subfields, including early Christian studies, have been complicit in enabling a culture of predation.

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INTRODUCTION

> And to the angel of the church in Thyatria write…I have this against you, you allow that lewd woman Jezebel who calls herself prophet, she is teaching and leading my servants to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols. I gave her time so as to repent but she does not wish to repent of her fornication. Behold! I am throwing her onto a bed and all those adulterers with her I am throwing into great distress unless they repent of her deeds. (*Rev* 2:18a; 2:20-22)[1]

In the second chapter of *Revelation*, Christ, appearing in an exalted angelic form, tells the prophet John to write a series of letters to seven churches. One of these letters includes a warning to the church in Thyatria about a supposed false prophet named "Jezebel."[2] Like many contested teachers in ancient narratives, Jezebel is accused of leading Christ followers[3] away from a perceived orthodoxy into a life of moral depravity. In *Revelation*, Christ reports that Jezebel's

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[1] Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Θυατείροις ἐκκλησίας γράψον…ἀλλὰ ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ ὅτι ἀφεῖς τὴν γυναῖκα Ἰεζάβελ, ἡ λέγουσα ἑαυτὴν προφῆτιν καὶ διδάσκει καὶ πλανᾷ τοὺς ἐμοὺς δούλους πορνεῦσαι καὶ φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα. καὶ ἔδωκα αὐτῇ χρόνον ἵνα μεταωοήσῃ, καὶ οὐ θέλει μεταωοῆσαι ἐκ τῆς προνείας αὐτῆς. ἰδοὺ βάλλω αὐτὴν εἰς κλίνην καὶ τοὺς μοιχεύοντας μετ᾽αὐτῆς εἰς θλῖψιν μεγάλην, ἐὰν μὴ μετανοήσωιν ἐκ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς.

[2] Here, the author of *Revelation* is drawing on a name tradition from 1 and 2 *Kings*. In the Hebrew narrative, Jezebel, a foreign Queen, is called both a whore and a witch by Jehu on account of her worship of foreign deities. While the text does not document any type of salacious behaviour on the part of Jezebel, these deviant titles are engrained in her name. Jezebel does not read as queen, rather it reads as carnal, foreign, and perverse. As Tina Pippin explains, "The complex and ambiguous character of Jezebel in the Bible serves as the archetypal bitch-witch-queen in misogynist representations of women. Beginning in 1 Kings 16 through 2 Kings 9 and reappearing again in Apocalypse 2:20, Jezebel is the contradictory, controlling, carnal foreign woman" (Pippin 1999, 33). Therefore, in using the name Jezebel in *Revelation* 2:20, the author is not identifying a female foe by name, rather they are framing their female adversary with a history set to discredit her by mere association. For more on the history of Jezebel please see: Tina Pippin, "Jezebel Revamped," in *Apocalyptic Bodies: The Biblical End of the World in Text and Image* (London: Routledge, 1999); and, Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Queen Jezebel, or Deuteronomy's Worst Nightmare," in *Reading Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of their Stories* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002).

[3] I use the term Christ followers instead of Christianity (or another derivative) throughout this project to designate the groups of ancient people who used the analyzed sources for spiritual guidance. This title avoids the anachronism of Christianity and its allusion to a single, unified set of beliefs. Instead, the term Christ followers disrupts the assumption of the Christian master narrative where there were a set of correct, orthodox teachings that moralized their competitors by labelling their beliefs as heretical misunderstandings. As Karen King states in her article "Which Early Christianity?", diversity is inherent in all religions, and "an adequate framework for historical descriptions of early Christian diversity needs to recognize that all religions contain ever shifting, competing, and contradictory claims, plural possibilities, and alternative voices" (King 2008, 71). As King demonstrates further, while scholastic efforts have acknowledged this diversity, their efforts have created groups and identities of ancient persons which categorize and essentialize these persons into bounded identities. This scholastic move ultimately repeats and reinforces the very rhetoric of orthodoxy and heresy for which it is trying to account. The term Christ followers avoids this restrictive labelling while leaving space for fluid, competing, and contradicting beliefs among historically related persons. For more please see: Karen L. King, "Which Early Christianity?," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 66-84.

prophetic transgressions are tantamount to licentious behaviour. Here, the narrator pairs the false speaking of a female prophet with sexual promiscuity. This association of false speech and depraved sexuality extends to justified sexual violence in the passage when the author threatens a sexually violent retribution against Jezebel. The narrator states that Jezebel will be *thrown onto a bed* (*Rev* 2:20) in reprimand for her false teachings, alluding to a punitive, violent, sexual assault. The association of false speaking and indecent sexuality in this passage seemingly rationalizes the sexually violent reckoning. This disciplinary action unfolds as part of a divine revelation, making this sexual assault divinely sanctioned from the author's purview. That Jezebel suffers a divinely sanctioned sexual assault is jarringly noteworthy in and of itself. This dissertation, however, focuses on the relationship highlighted in this passage between sexual violence and gendered, charismatic speech such as prophecy. Jezebel's transgression in *Revelation* is her false claim to divine access. She claims to share knowledge she does not possess. This fraudulent claim justifies the divinely authorized rape.

When I began this project, I wanted to understand how sexual violence surfaced in the texts of early Christ followers and what the implication might be for its inclusion. I presumed that sexual violence, much like today, was pervasive in ancient culture and therefore should exist in some capacity in these sources. Narratives of rape and grotesque violence are not obscure stories in antiquity. They are preserved in major bodies of ancient literature such as Greek and Roman epics and romances, as well as the Hebrew Bible, a foundational source for early Christ followers.[4] I had a specialized interest in gendered speech in antiquity and recognized that gendered speaking informed modern discourses about sexual violence and believability. I asked whether a similar relationship between gendered speech and sexual violence might surface among early Christ followers. It is evident from the vignette shared above that yes, gendered speech and sexual violence do form a unique relationship in these sources. Jezebel, for example, was a charismatic

[4] Examples of these narrative will be discussed at length throughout this project.

speaker. By this I understand that she was a person who through different types of speech acts like prophecy, teaching, and even ritual performances such as baptism, claimed for herself privileged knowledge about the divine. Through these different types of performative speech acts charismatic speakers were set apart as those who were divinely chosen, and by extension, as those who garnered influence and authority. In the narrative above, it is this claim to authority and influence that John of Patmos attacks with sexually violent imagery. He aims to discredit Jezebel as a false prophet.

Epistemology, or Jezebel's ability to access divine truth and divine knowledge as a charismatic speaker, and John of Patmos' sexual violence are interrelated in this scene of retribution. As the author of *Revelation* uses images of rape as discipline to punish a false teacher, sexual violence similarly surfaces as a method of epistemological regulation in other sources; in other words, acts of sexual violation safeguard who can and cannot access divine truths. I adopt the term epistemology to speak about access to divine truth in these sources. In devotional communities, those who access the divine, or absolute entity, possess access to ultimate Truth and Knowledge about the world and the cosmos. Their actions then make claims about how humans come to know within these worldviews. These claims likewise come with assertions of authority. The term epistemological regulation refers to acts designed to safeguard divine access from certain persons within these communities who are deemed unfit to claim such authority. In other words, these persons would not be afforded what I refer to as epistemological access. These terms, epistemological regulation and epistemological access, are tools of contestation and debate.

This dissertation examines the associations between sexual violence and epistemological access in three texts of early Christ followers: the *Hypostasis of the Archons (HypArch)*, the *Acts of Thecla (ATh),* and the *Acts of the Apostles (Acts)*. Sexual violence occurs in a variety of capacities throughout these three narratives. There are narratives of explicit rape (*HypArch*), narratives of rape resistance (*ATh*), and narratives of systemic sexual violation (*Acts*). In all three

cases, sexual violence limits the epistemological access of those violated by claiming who can and cannot obtain truth and knowledge based on their sexual status. Sexual violence, or sexual violability, signals the viability of a person's ability to engage truth and divine knowledge in these sources. Through consideration of these texts, I identify a regulatory discourse where a person's sexual violability, real or presumed, ultimately safeguards divine truth and knowledge by undermining their ability to speak such truths. This discourse regulates who can or cannot speak with and on behalf of God. My analysis identifies how sexual violence was used among early Christ followers to demarcate whose speech was trustworthy when it came to uttering divine teachings, and it demonstrates that sexual violence was a tool used by early Christ followers to delimit acceptable types of power and authority within their own communities.

Epistemological[5] struggles have already been noted among early Christ followers through debates about prophecy, baptism, and teaching, and these categories are likewise at issue in the sources analyzed here. Debates regarding the authority garnered through these categories, at their foundation, were debates about epistemological access. Who could baptize, prophesy, or teach, depended on the suitability of their access to the divine. *1 Corinthians* is a rich example of this dynamic. It tells the story of a community that identified as spiritual people (πνευματικοὶ) possessing gifts that gave them access to divine truths and the remedial response of an absent teacher to those claims. *1 Corinthians* is one of a series of letters exchanged between Paul and the Christ following community of Corinth, a Roman city of substantial geographical consequence.[6] The text has garnered substantial scholarly attention by those studying issues of authority around prophecy, baptism, and teaching. Paul's teachings in this letter, especially chapter 14, greatly

[5] Laura Nasrallah explains that "these struggles [about right and correct prophecy] are especially concerned with epistemology, with what can and cannot be known, and with the authority gained and religious identity constructed from claims to perceive the communication and intervention of the divine in the present day". Her work, which I return to throughout this project, outlines how prophetic claims are bound to epistemological concepts. See: Laura Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly: Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 3.

[6] Ancient Corinth was positioned on an isthmus joining the Peloponnesian peninsula to mainland Greece. The city boasted two significant ports and was a center of commerce and trade.

informed later discussions of these issues among early Christian authors, and, therefore, is a foundational text to understand how these categories grew within the tradition. As it relates to this project, Paul's letter provides an historical context for my inquiry into debates about prophecy and authority among early Christ followers. It attests that epistemology, and epistemological access, were fraught topics among early Christ following communities, and that claims to phenomena like prophecy and other mechanisms of authority were contested because of their epistemic links.

My identification of a discursive relationship between epistemology and sexual violence here contributes to these broader studies about epistemic limits and authority in early Christ following communities. While the topic of charismatic speech, such as prophecy, is vital to my analysis, the texts I work with in this project are not the expected sources for discussions on prophecy in early Christ following communities, nor are they all primarily concerned with speech or speaking. Looking instead to bring new texts into that conversation, I purposefully put texts together that are outliers in scholarly conversations about prophecy in early Christ following communities. Except for *Acts*, both *ATh* and *HypArch* are atypical sources for studies on prophecy and charismatic speech. Bringing *HypArch* into this discussion is part of the novel contribution of this work. This was a purposeful choice, much in the same way that these sources are drawn from three different categories of biblical literature: the New Testament, the Apocryphal Acts, and the Nag Hammadi Corpus. Choosing to focus on sources beyond those expected confronts boundaries that may unwittingly limit our historical work.[7] Instead, these texts are all narrative

[7] By putting these sources in conversation with each other this project works outside of an orthodox/heterodox binary, or what Karen King calls the "master narrative of Christian origins" (2008, 67). According to King, this bifurcated master narrative persists on account of the categorization of practice and belief under terms like "Gnosticism" and "Montanism" for example. This categorization restricts academic approaches to early Christian history by reinforcing familiar pockets of discourse. "Essentializing categories" she states, "tend to reify the complex, overlapping, multifarious clusters of material that constitute the continually shifting, interactive forms of early Christian meaning-making and social belonging into homogenous, stable, well-bounded theological or sociological formation" (2008, 71). In attempting to classify behaviours, this categorization ignores the subject matter's inherent dynamism and reifies the orthodox agenda of right and wrong Christianity. Instead, this project takes King's suggestion to consider how textual resources coincide with another source, layer their meanings, their

sources that share a second century dating, which I addressed in the following chapters, and all record some estimation of sexual violence.

METHODOLOGY

This project is first and foremost an exercise in feminist historiography indebted to the work of feminist biblical scholars and their development of feminist hermeneutics. On the surface, this approach to biblical scholarship centers the experience of women within biblical texts and the communities that fashioned those texts, presuming that women's voices were never in fact silent despite any legacy of silence that has been inherited. Feminist biblical interpretation understands that women were active participants in history, not only present in the communities that produced what would become biblical texts, and that women were engaged and invested in the development of those worldviews. As such, feminist biblical scholarship looks to fill-in this history of women, and the discipline has advanced a variety of methods and analytical approaches to biblical sources to restore women's roles in these historical worlds.

Feminist biblical scholarship recognizes, however, that the concept of "woman" is fluid and multivalent. Woman, and the experience of women, is not universal nor should it be interpreted as such. What the concept of "woman" entails shifts and moves depending on the circumstances of each place and time.[8] One woman's experience can easily be unrecognizable to another depending on a host of factors like ethnicity, race, class, and their abled or disabled bodies. Recognizing these vital differences and understanding how they impact the excavation of

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contestations, and theological struggles. The result is a project that resists the allure of the well-balanced, anchored categories and positions itself in the dissonance of a discourse by considering the implications of meaning beyond traditional classifications. See: King, "Which Early Christianity?". This argument is developed further by King in: Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism*? (Cambridge: Belknap, 2003).

[8] The term wo/man is sometimes used to demarcate the plurality in the concept of women, as well as draw to the fore how the term limits the meaning of women within androcentric language. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza explains that she uses the term "in order to stand andro-kyriocentric language that claims to be generic language on its head. Hence, I use the term inclusively because in English the term wo/man includes men, she includes he, and female includes male… Finally, I use this way of signification in order to include subordinate men among those wo/men struggling for liberation." (2003, 229). See: Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Re-Visioning Christian Origins: *In Memory of Her* Revisted," in *Christian Origins: Worship, Belief and Society*, ed. Kieran J. O'Mahony (London: Sheffield Academic, 2003), 225-250.

women's history highlights the central role power, and access to it, plays in biblical interpretation. Katherine Shaner explains in her chapter on "Feminist Biblical Interpretation," that this area of research "as it has unfolded over the last few decades, consciously attempts to build solidarity among women while recognizing the ways that intersecting identities and differing access to power necessitates multiple yet overlapping definitions of women."[9] Feminist biblical interpretation acknowledges the role power plays in relegating women's experiences. The term woman is not a narrowing of analytical focus then, but an understanding of the collaborative effort needed to tell the history of many. As such, feminist biblical interpretation aims to draw women together in support of each other while fostering the space to account for the variance in experience, and more importantly, to allow for the multiplicity of women's voices to emerge in this scholarly work. This includes women in history, as well as female identified scholars.[10]

Situating the role power has in defining and demarcating women's experiences is at the fore of the methodological wedge feminist biblical scholars insert in their historical work. Ignoring this intersectionality,[11] as feminist biblical scholars have learned, has the potential to reify the same power dynamics feminist biblical interpretation seeks to disrupt by centering the role of women. Early efforts in feminist biblical scholarship were subject to critique for privileging white,

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[9] Katherine Shaner, "Feminist Biblical Interpretation," in *The Oxford Handbook of New Testament, Gender, and Sexuality*, ed. Benjamin Dunning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 23.

[10] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza accounts for this diversity by using a slash in the term wo/man. This conscious editing of the word disrupts its essentializing elements while drawing the reader's attention to those presumptions. For Schüssler Fiorenza, using wo/man signifies diversity instead of femininity. She explains in her work *Wisdom Ways* that "wo/man or wo/men is an unstable, fragmented category and one cannot assume that all wo/men are similar in their hopes and desires. Hence, it becomes important to ask which wo/men come to mind when one speaks of wo/men's perspective…Changing language patterns is a very important step toward the realization of new consciousness. Not femininity but diversity thus constitutes a "reading" from the perspective of wo/man" (2001, 58). See: Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001).

[11] Intersectionality is an analytical framework used to understand the layering, and creation of, different types of discrimination experienced by a person based on their socio-cultural identity. Kimberlé Crenshaw first used the term in 1989 and it has since emerged as a foundational approach to feminist scholarship. Misogynoir is an example of an intersectional form of discrimination. It refers to discrimination unique to black women that accounts for both racism and misogyny.

Christian, and middle-classed purviews.[12] This critique disrupted the privileging of white, Christian-centered analysis, but highlighting diverging modes of oppression therein, such as race, religious identity, and sexual orientation. This development articulated a needed shift in the analytical priorities of feminist biblical interpretation to account for oppression as an interlocking, overlapping system of social subjugation.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has proposed the term kyriarchy to address these multifaceted points of oppression, and it is a term I return to throughout my dissertation. Instead of terms such as patriarchy, racism, or ablism that articulate individual modes of oppression, Schüssler Fiorenza explains that kyriarchy addresses interwoven systems of oppression that overlap and shift across time and place. Where patriarchy articulates the subjugation of a woman by men in an androcentric world, it does not necessarily articulate the oppression those same women can propagate towards women of a different class, for example the maltreatment of enslaved women by freeborn women. Women can hold multiple subject positions within power relationships and categories like patriarchy or classism limit our ability to account for these numerous viewpoints of women as actors in the web of oppression. Kyriarchy offers an analytical tool that can account for this range of experience. Where patriarchy and classism speak to types of oppression, kyriarchy accounts for the whole. The term derives from the Greek *kyrios (*κύριος*)*,

[12] Judith Plaskow named the anti-Jewish thought present in early feminist biblical texts such as *The Woman's Bible* and contemporary Christian feminist work. See: Judith Plaskow, "Anti-Judaism in Feminist Christian Interpretation," in *Searching the Scriptures, Vol. 1*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroads, 1993), 1:117-130. Asian feminist theologian Kwok Pui-lan has critiqued the narrow viewpoint of feminist biblical interpretation in relation to race and ethnicity, emphasizing the need to account for numerous modes of oppression instead of prioritizing an assumed one. See: Kwok Pui lan, "Racism and Ethnocentrism in Feminist Biblical Interpretation" in *Searching the Scriptures, Vol. 1*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroads, 1993), 1:101-116. Womanist theology emerged in the 1980s to center the experiences of Black women in biblical interpretation. It is important to note that Black women's theological work predates this scholarship and that not all Black female biblical scholars identify as Womanist, nor claim to do Womanist work. Nyasha Junior's *Introduction to Womanist Theology* offers a detailed and accessible account of the history of womanism and biblical interpretation. Situating womanism in histories of feminist biblical interpretation and black women's biblical interpretation, Junior explores the diversity within this term that is frequently misrepresented as a synonym for Black women's scholarship. See: Nyasha Junior, *Introduction to Womanist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015). For her reflections on the presumptions that womanist is synonymous with Black female scholars in the academy see pages 57-75; 122-123 (Junior, 2015).

meaning lord, master, or in the case of biblical studies, God, or Jesus. The *kyrios* was the elite, freeborn person to whom others were indebted as owner, *paterfamilias*, governor, or deity. Kyriarchy borrows from this system of hierarchical and overlapping methods of social subordination. This term speaks to power relationships broadly over specific excavations of power such as gender or class. According to Schüssler Fiorenza "kyriarchy as a socio-cultural and religious system of domination is constituted by intersecting multiplicative structures of oppression. The different sets of relations of domination shift historically and produce different constellations of oppression in different times and cultures."[13] Kyriarchy names structures of domination that shift and change over time; it focuses on naming systemic oppression over individual modes of oppression, meaning that gender becomes one entry point into this interpretative work.

Another key facet of feminist biblical interpretation that I adhere in this work is the rejection of claims to academic objectivity or value-free analysis. As New Testament scholar Shelly Matthews argues, "history is written not in a vacuum but in a sociopolitical context,"[14] and feminist biblical interpretation recognizes itself as a socially located, historically situated project.[15] The primary tenets of this scholarship, including the rejection of the naturalized marginalization of women in biblical sources, for example, echo concern for women's liberation transpiring elsewhere in our contemporary world. Feminist biblical interpretation is part of current political discourses. Katherine Shaner explains that "at its core, though, feminist biblical interpretation is a politically useful interpretive strategy. It wrestles with inequalities and unjust power dynamics legitimated by and through biblical interpretation."[16] It recognizes that within our culture, biblical texts are authorizing and influential documents, and, therefore, inserting interpretative lenses

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[13] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 118.
[14] Shelly Matthews, "Thinking with Thecla: Issues in Feminist Historiography," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 17.2 (2001): 54.
[15] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship," *JBL* 107.1 (1988): 3-17.
[16] Shaner, "Feminist Biblical Interpretation," 22.

into biblical scholarship that centre women's equality and liberation is both an historical and contemporary intervention. It understands biblical interpretation as a politically significant act. Shelly Matthews states that, "what is said, or not said, about women in early Christian history necessarily affects this contemporary context."[17] This sentiment is echoed in the history of feminist biblical interpretation where early American activists frequently turned to the bible and biblical interpretation to cement their activism of liberation as abolitionists and suffragettes.[18] Academic trailblazers for contemporary feminist biblical interpretation, such as Phyllis Trible, Rosemary Radford Reuther, Delores Williams, and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, continued to view their work as political interventions for women's liberation in the 20th century.

This dissertation is likewise historically situated, asking questions that reflect contemporary concerns about gendered violence and systemic subjugation of those perceived as sexually violable. It reads biblical texts as cultural products and presumes that sexual violence is not an exceptional act of violation, but rather is systemic and therefore part of that cultural makeup. I build from the premise that sexual violence is a method of systemic oppression, that as gender, race, and class difference, it is a pervasive method of social subjugation that transpires beyond individual acts of oppression; in this case, that it exists beyond acts of rape and sexual assault. Terms such as rape culture have emerged to identify the interconnectedness of these concepts and how they work together to naturalize oppression.[19] While narratives of extreme sexual violence exist in the Hebrew scriptures, comparable stories of rape and sexual violation are seemingly

[17] Matthews, "Thinking with Thecla," 54.
[18] Celebrated historical women such as abolitionist and women's rights activist Sojourner Truth recognized the privileged role biblical interpretation played not just in the subordination of women and the justification of slavery, but in the liberation of those groups from that subjugation. Women such as Maria W. Stewart, the Grimke sisters, and Anna Julia Cooper, all turned to the biblical narratives and passages to justify their positions of liberation. For a longer discussion on forerunners to modern feminist biblical interpretation see: Junior, "Part I: Historical Background," in *Introduction to Womanist Theology* (especially 19-38).
[19] For more see the section *Spectres of Pervo* later in my Methodology section.

absent in the New Testament.[20] Taking a cue from feminist biblical interpretation and contemporary conversations about silence and sexual violence, I started this dissertation by purposefully asking not *if* sexual violence existed in the world of early Christ followers, but *how* it surfaced. My purview on sexual violence is indebted to the work of scholars like Roxane Gay, journalists like Rebecca Solnit, and activists such as Tarana Burke. While the #meTooMVMT catapulted the pervasive reality of sexual violence into mainstream consciousness, it was the work on university campuses to identify an epidemic of sexual violence that informed the nascent development of this project.

This work builds from several methodological approaches to feminist biblical interpretation. Rather than using a single method of analysis, it uses a toolbox of strategies employed across the work to excavate a particular expression of power and domination, namely sexual violence. At different times throughout the project different lines of questioning and analysis are more relevant than others. Because the concept of woman is fluid and shifting, a single method is insufficient to examine relationships to sexual violence, it is likewise intersectional.[21]

I primarily consider how these second century texts of early Christ followers "think with" women, enslaved persons, and sexual violence throughout this project. It is my first entry point into these sources as I establish how sexual violence surfaces to champion kyriarchal structures in each text. This concept of authors "thinking with" women first surfaces in biblical studies in the work of Peter Brown who borrows the concept from Levi-Strauss, identifying that figures of women in historical narratives are signifiers of the author's agenda rather than objective

[20] I stress the word seemingly here because I do, in fact, understand sexual violence to exists throughout the texts of early Christ followers, including the New Testament. In contrast to the narratives in the Hebrew Bible, sexually violent narratives are much less pointed and easy to identify.
[21] For more on intersectionality see Kimberlé Crenshaw, *On Intersectionality: Essential Writings*, New York, NY: The New Press, 2017.

representations of womanhood.[22] In feminist biblical studies, scholars employing this hermeneutical approach recognize that biblical texts are products of kyriarchy, and critically approach female figures within these sources as products of ideals rather than depictions of real women. In this work, recognizing that my texts are "thinking with" women helps to identify: one, that sexual violence is a regulatory mechanism of power; and two, there is a discursive relationship between it and epistemological access within these sources.

This approach to women's history is not without critique in biblical studies. Shelly Matthew's expands on Lévi-Strauss' invocation of the term, highlighting an important oversight in this form of analysis in biblical interpretation. In her work "Thinking with Thecla", Matthews maps how identifying women only as signifiers in texts, as objects authors "think with," reduces women's history to that of an employed symbol. She returns to Lévi-Strauss to explain that women can never wholly be reduced to signs despite this common occurrence in text, because as persons, they are likewise producers of signs and meaning. Unlike the words of a text, women make meaning beyond that of historical documents. Matthews argues feminist historiography, therefore, should include both questions of women's role as textual representations, and pursuits that excavate of their lived reality. Only accounting for the symbolic appearance of women in text, Matthews attests, continues to relegate women to the margins of history.

This project is working with narrative sources. All three texts are fictional accounts striving to articulate a specific worldview. Writing history from these types of sources is riddled with methodological limitations, such as those out by Matthews above. There are likewise limitations to unearthing women's history through possible female authorship including: unknown literacy rates; classed perspectives of the author; and pseudonymous authorship. Material culture, which

[22] Matthews, "Thinking with Thecla," 52. See also: Peter Brown, *Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); and Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1963).

once promised a rich viewpoint into women's history in antiquity, carries similar rhetorical veils of masculine projection and social convention that shape narratives and limit a scholar's access into lived women's experiences.[23] Recognizing these methodological roadblocks paints a bleak perspective into the pursuits of feminist historiography. As Ross Kraemer argues, however, surrendering the search ultimately reinforces women's absences from history. She states, "Should we, then, simply abandon the effort to write either a broad historical account of Christians through the mid-second century, or one focused specially on women (Whether Christian, Jewish, Samaritan, etc.)? … In doing so," Kraemer concludes, "it reproduces, reauthorizes, and reinscribes the exclusion of women from historical memory."[24] While the search for a women's history in the sources of early Christ followers is grim, the alternative is dire as it affirms the erasure of women from that history altogether.

My approach to these texts considers the work of feminist historical-literary analysis to navigate the concerns about reading narratives for history. I heed the suggestion of Elizabeth Clark to view the construction of women and sexed figures in my sources as participants in narratives of contestation and explore the social forces working in these stories.[25] While my work centers sexual violence (more on that in the following section), this project recognizes sexual violence as a mechanism of regulation regarding gendered, charismatic speech. It identifies sexual violence as a tool in the debates concerning authentic and inauthentic charismatic voices, especially in reference to women's access to the divine. Reading the texts as narratives of

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[23] For more on the methodological concerns plaguing the search for a lived women's history in antiquity see: Ross Kraemer, "Reconstructing Women's History in Antiquity," in *The Oxford Handbook of New Testament, Gender, and Sexuality*, ed. Benjamin Dunning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 39-58.

[24] Kraemer, "Reconstructing Women's History in Antiquity," 83.

[25] Elizabeth Clarke, "The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the 'Linguistic Turn'", Church History 67.1 (1998): 1-31. Clake explains, "On this view, texts are seen as engaged in contests, contests constituted in and through language but also by events and interest within the broader discursive field. Although the winners appear to dominate our literary remains, opposition voices occasionally surface—even from 1500 years ago—to challenge the paradigm that was in the process of being made dominant" (1998, 31).

contestation does not erase concerns about unearthing a women's history of the ancient world, but it does contribute to our understanding of how these communities negotiated and navigated their diversity.

Centering Sexual Violence: A Methodological Choice

This project disrupts assumptions about the past that perpetuate the naturalization of sexual violence as an unchallenged reality of ancient life. My approach to reading sexual violence in history emerges from feminist biblical interpretation that intervenes in the analytical space between the ancient material and contemporary scholar. It questions assumptions that understand patriarchy, misogyny, and kyriarchical relationships as historical givens, and pushes for a re-evaluation of those presumptions in modern scholarship. The following section, *Spectres of Pervo*, does exactly this by questioning the inclusion of work by known sexual predators. Since the #meToMVMT in fall 2017 there has been an increased focus on sexual violence in our society, and scholarship in Religious Studies has followed suit.[26] The Shiloh Project, for example, originally out of the University of Sheffield and now an independent website, exclusively focuses on the intersection of Religious Studies and rape culture.[27] It is a robust and growing website of global contributions on the topic. These contributions take the form of blog posts from academics and those working in religious spaces as well as a podcast and an upcoming edited volume on the *Bible and Violence*. The website hosts an annotated bibliography of publications on the topic of

[26] After the release of a publication detailing a long history of sexual violence perpetrated by film mogul Harvey Weinstein, the hashtag #meToo surged globally with millions of people engaging in a conversation about the pervasiveness of sexual violence. In the wake of this culture shift, beloved actors, comedians, and musicians were held accountable for their sexually violent acts in what was first called a reckoning and has since been polemically labelled "cancel culture". Fans reeled in the unseemly news of their favourite celebrities ousted as sexual predators. Tarana Burke, founder of the #metooMVMT, took to Twitter to reiterate the connection between these acts of violence and power as a reminder to those struggling to reconcile these realizations with their idols. She tweeted, "It will continue to be jarring when we hear the names of some of our faves connected to sexual violence unless we shift from talking about individuals and begin to talk about power. Sexual violence is about power and privilege." Her words were a reminder that the movement uplifting the voices of survivors is about holding power and its privilege accountable. See Tarana Burke (@TaranaBurke), Twitter post, 20 August 2018, 8:08 a.m., https://twitter.com/TaranaBurke/status/1031498206260150272.

[27] "The Shiloh Project: Rape Culture, Religion and the Bible", The Shiloh Project, https://www.shilohproject.blog/.

sexual violence and religion since 1980 as well as a toolkit for those engaging survivors in their work. Similarly, professional organizations such as the SBL and the AAR have hosted panels on the topics of religion and sexual violence, and have re-evaluated their policies on sexual assault and harassment.[28] These conference panels have evolved into books that take into account research subjects and sexual violence, but also pedagogical tools for university classrooms – a space on campus with its own unique relationship to rape culture.[29] Major publishing houses have also established book series focused on sexual violence and religion.[30] My work follows by purposefully centering sexual violence in my analysis. The topics of gendered speech and authority are likewise at issue in my work, woven throughout the analysis, but in choosing sexual violence as an entry point into my sources I contribute to its analysis as a unique proponent of kyriarchy. The many ways sexual violence intersects with Religious Studies as an academic discipline, and in its affiliation with devotional communities, has grown exponentially in the past five years.

Despite these surging contributions, New Testament scholarship and studies of early Christ followers have not offered significant contributions to the study of sexual violence on its

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[28] A the most recent annual meeting of the SBL in 2022, the *Metacriticism of Biblical Scholarship* group hosted a program unit that included presentations on the ethics of citation of sexual predators. The most recent update from the SBL regarding its policy on sexual violence and discrimination was approved by the board in October 2019 and updated in February 2023. See: "SBL professional Conduct Policy," SBL, https://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/Meetings/Professional_Conduct_Policy.pdf.
In 2016, the panel "Resisting Rape Culture in or with Sacred Texts: Canons, Title IX, Liturgy, and Hindu Mythology" was co-hosted by the SBL Gender, Sexuality and the Bible Section and the AAR Feminist Theory and Religious Reflections Group at their Annual Meetings in San Antonio.
The most recent update from the AAR regarding their policies on sexual violence and discrimination was approved by the board in September 2022. See: "Professional Conduct Procedures," AAR, https://aarweb.org/AARMBR/AARMBR/Who-We-Are-/Board-of-Directors-/Board-Resolutions-/Professional-Conduct-Procedures.aspx.

[29] The 2019 collection of essays *Rape Culture and Religious Studies* is the product of the joint AAR/SBL panel on sexual violence hosted in 2016. See: Rhiannon Graybill, Meredith Minister, and Beatrice Lawrence, eds., *Rape Culture and Religious Studies: Critical and Pedagogical Engagements* (London: Lexington Books, 2019).

[30] Routledge has a book series, "Rape Culture Religion and the Bible", which has ten monographs published since 2020 on several topics at this intersection of religion and sexual violence. See: "Rape Culture, Religion and the Bible", Routledge, https://www.routledge.com/Rape-Culture-Religion-and-the-Bible/book-series/RCRB.

own.[31] For example, of the ten monographs published in a recent Routledge book series *Rape Culture, Religion and the Bible*, three address issues of rape culture and #meToo in contemporary Christian communities, three address sexual violence in texts from the Hebrew Bible, and four focus on rape culture and masculinity.[32] When sexual violence surfaces in studies of early Christ following communities, it is a derivative topic contributing to larger arguments about kyriarchial systems such as empire, enslavement, and women's chastity. My work populates this sparsely filled space by focusing on sexual violence as a primary mode of oppression, and not a secondary mechanism of other types of domination or subjugation. Sexual violence in my analysis is not a characteristic of other expressions of power, but a unique manifestation of it demanding a primary focus. In this way I offer a new perspective of power and identity building in early Christ following communities.

Within Biblical Studies, the Hebrew Bible hosts the most substantial, sexually violent body of literature. It contains several explicit rape stories alongside group rape and dismemberment. As such, scholars of the Hebrew Bible have produced the most comprehensive studies on sexual

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[31] There are a few notable exceptions to this statement who serve as *the exception that proves the rule* so to speak. Recently published is a collection of essays edited by Christy Cobb and Eric Vanden Eykel that focuses on sexual violence in the texts of early Christ followers. See: Christy Cobb and Eric Vanden Eykel, eds., *Sex, Violence, and Early Christian Texts* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2022). Beyond this new collection of essays, there are a handful of articles and chapters in edited volumes that address sexual violence in a New Testament or early Christian sources. These include four chapters in *Terror in the Bible*. See: Monica Jyotsna Melanchthon and Robyn J. Whitaker, eds., *Terror in the Bible: Rhetoric, Gender, and Violence* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2021). Related articles include those by Dorothy A. Lee, Robyn J. Whitaker, Adela Yarbro Collins, and David Tombs. Shelley Matthews contributed an article on *1 Corinthians* and the image of a woman with a shaven head in *Sexual Violence and Sacred Texts* where she likewise notes the scarcity of analysis on sexual violence within New Testament scholarship and studies on early Christ followers. See: Shelly Matthews "'To Be One and the Same with the Woman Whose Head is Shaven': Resisting the Violence of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 from the Bottom of the Kyriarchal Pyramid," in *Sexual Violence and Sacred Texts*, ed. Amy Kalmanofsky (Cambridge: Feminist Studies in Religion Books, 2017), 31-52. Jennifer Glancy and Stephen Moore's article on *Revelation* is the only one of these sources that addresses sexual violence in the New Testament published before #meToo. See: Jennifer Glancy and Stephen Moore, "How Typical a Roman Prostitute is Revelations' 'Great Whore'?" *JBL* 130/3 (2011):551-569.

[32] Of those works that address sexual violence and masculinity, two take up the image of Jesus on the cross as an image of sexual violence. See: Chris Greenough, *The Bible and Sexual Violence Against Men* (New York: Routledge, 2023); and, David Tombs, *The Crucifixion of Jesus: Torture, Sexual Abuse, and the Scandal of the Cross* (New York: Routledge, 2023). Tombs' soon to be released book engages with the concept of Roman crucifixion as a form of sexual violence and braids in contemporary issues of survivorship and sexual violence against men.

violence in biblical literature.[33] The New Testament stands in contrast to the Hebrew Scriptures in this fact, as stories about rape and sexual violence are ostensibly absent.[34] The Nag Hammadi codices, like the Hebrew Scriptures, however, do contain explicit narratives of rape and sexual violence. Some version of the rape of Eve is included in three of its texts: *HypArch*, *On the Origen of the World* (*OnOrig*), and *the Secret Revelation of John* (*SRJ*). Given the intricate relationship between the Nag Hammadi codices and the study of early Christ followers, the stories of rape and sexual violence therein provide an important wedge when considering how sexual violence surfaced in the communities of early Christ followers that is seemingly unavailable through the New Testament sources alone. This is why I begin my project with an analysis of *HypArch* before

[33] Phyllis Trible's classic work *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* was one of the first texts to hold together biblical narratives through their shared stories of rape and gender-based violence. In her work she addresses four narratives: the rape and expulsion of Hagar; the rape of Tamar; the group rape and dismemberment of the Levite's concubine in Judges 19; and the murder of Jephthah's daughter (not a rape narrative). For Trible, the work of holding these narratives together is an ethical move of feminist biblical interpretation that witnesses the immense sadness and grief produced by these stories. Telling "sad stories" for Trible is *in memoriam* of survivors, and for survivors by reclaiming their history in these texts. See: Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984). Renita Weems' *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex, and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets* likewise makes significant contributions to the study of rape and sexual violence in biblical literature. Weems focuses on the language of love in the Hebrew prophets, which includes descriptions of divine love and compassion, and demonstrates how this language frequently transitioned into images of rape, assault, and even the mutilation of women. Her work analyzes linguistic metaphors to identify sexually violent power structures. See: Renita J. Weems, *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex, and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1995). The 2010 book *Sacred Witness: Rape in the Hebrew Bible* by Susanne Scholtz expands the narratives traditionally considered to reflect sexual violence in the Hebrew Bible to be more comprehensive and better reflect the ubiquity of sexual violence in these sources. For example, Scholtz includes chapters on the rape of enslaved women, marital rape, and rape and rape threats against men as a control mechanism. See: Susanne Scholtz, *Sacred Witness: Rape in the Hebrew Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2010). Most recently, Rhiannon Graybill's work *Texts After Terror: Rape, Sexual Violence, and the Hebrew Bible* expands the study of sexual violence in the Hebrew Scriptures by weaving modern narratives alongside ancient ones to, among other things, challenge presuppositions about sexual violence in scripture as being somehow different than, and set apart from, sexual violence in our modern world. Rhiannon Graybill, *Texts After Terror: Rape, Sexual Violence, and the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). These monographs plot some substantial points of conversation in this discipline, but behind these books are hundreds of articles and chapters expanding on sexual violation in the Hebrew Scriptures. For a detailed list of articles and journal contributions on this topic see the annotated bibliography under "Resources" at "The Shiloh Project": "Resources," The Shiloh Project, https://www.shilohproject.blog/.

[34] In *Rev*, John of Patmos threatens Jezebel with rape for her false prophecy (2.19-21), and while not included in the New Testament there are narratives of rape and sexual violence among other texts of early Christ followers such as Alexander's attempted rape of Thecla in *ATh*, and even the gruesome death of Euclia in the *Acts of Andrew* reflects sexual violence. Sexual violence seems to be absent, but at closer look presents itself in less direct ways.

bridging into *ATh* and *Acts*. *HypArch* provides an unambiguous entry point into reading sexual violence, and scholars have already broached the topic, providing a starting point from which to engage the topic of sexual violence therein.[35]

Beyond these studies of the rape of Eve in the Nag Hammadi Codices, I argue that the most sophisticated studies of sexual violence within the discipline of early Christian studies have come from studies of slavery and enslaved persons within early Christ following communities. As recent studies of sexual violence have attested, sexual violence permeates social spaces without always transitioning into physical violation. It is discursive and systemic, and cultural structures exist to sustain the normalization, and invisibility, of sexual violence. Studies on slavery and enslaved persons in antiquity provide methods for reading systemic elements of sexual violence in the ancient world through their focus on the cultural system of slavery, and in particular, the understanding of enslaved people as sexually violably *sōma*. My final two chapters focus on three speaking enslaved characters in *Acts* and argue that their characterization as enslaved informs Luke's use of these characters in his narrative. In particular, that the understanding of their bodies as sexually violable facilitates Luke's characterization of the three.

Slavery was ubiquitous in the ancient world, and this pervasive system of class oppression routinely surfaces in the texts of early Christ followers. There are enslaved characters, metaphors,

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[35] In her article "Ridicule and Rape, Rule and Rebellion: They Hypostasis of the Archons," Karen King explores the archons rape of Eve and attempted rape of Norea within her larger study of symbolic gender imagery in the Nag Hammadi sources. According to King, characterization of the archons as rapists and sexual predators participates in the text's larger characterization of the archons' failed masculinity, and by extension, the inferiority of the material world they presume to rule over. The archons are narrative substitutes for imperial power. Rape, and attempted rape, are narrative markers that contribute to the characterization of the archons as caricatures of true power. See Karen L. King, "Ridicule and Rape; Rule and Rebellion: The Hypostasis of the Archons," in *Gnosticism and the Early Christian World; in Honor of James M. Robinson*, ed. James E. Goehring and James McConkey (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1990), 3-24.
Celene Lillie extends this observation in her monograph *The Rape of Eve: The Transformation of Roman Ideology in Three Early Christian Retellings of Genesis*. Lillie expands analysis of rape narratives in the Nag Hammadi sources by including *OnOrig* and *SRJ* in her reading of the rape of Eve and focusing on sexual violence as an identity marker for Roman imperialism. Lillie ultimately reads the character of Eve in these sources as a person who lives beyond the trauma of oppressive authorities. See: Celene Lillie, The *Rape of Eve: The Transformation of Roman Ideology in Three Early Christian Retellings of Genesis* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2016).

of enslavement, and records of enslaved persons in these communities. Slavery was likewise an embodied ideology that naturalized violence until it was so routine as to be unseen in plain sight. It is in this space, the presumed and overlooked violence against enslaved people, that I read for occurrences of sexual violence in Acts. Like the embodied violence recorded in the parable of the overseer, the sexual violability of enslaved persons was a naturalized presumption in antiquity. As bodies, enslaved persons were available to all manners of sexual violation at the hands of their owners as, what Jennifer Glancy calls, sexual surrogates. Enslaved bodies were sexual tools to be used and wielded at their owner's behest. More so, the presumption of this sexual violability was pervasive among those who were freeborn.[36]

While navigating sexual violence as a regulating force on enslaved bodies, I have found the concept of embodied knowledge the most helpful for tracing the impact of a presumed sexual violability of enslaved persons within early Christ following communities. It is a method that Jennifer Glancy applies in relation to gender and slavery in "Early Christianity, Slavery, and Women's Bodies."[37] In this article, Glancy borrows the concept *habitus* from sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to "think about the way that the practice of slaveholding affected the development of Christian sexual ethics."[38] *Habitus* refers to the unconscious knowledge that's shapes and guides how bodies exist in the world. For example, how one learns to mature into a young man or woman, knowing when to "act your age" compared to knowing when it is OK to be playful and "immature", or knowing when a smile is appropriate or when to applaud loudly for another's accomplishments relies on *habitus*. These are examples of learned social practices that quickly transform into a second nature that was seemingly never learned at all. *Habitus* is the embodied practice remembered as nature that ultimately perpetuates the social world. It is the knowledge carried in bodies that becomes the invisible guide for our social actions. *Habitus* lets me think about the

[36] My third and fourth chapters provide a more robust description and exploration on the ancient system of slavery.
[37] Jennifer Glancy, "Early Christianity, Slavery, and Women's Bodies," *in Beyond Slavery: Overcoming its Religious and Sexual Legacy,* ed. Bernadette J. Brooten (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 143-158.
[38] Glancy, "Early Christianity, Slavery, and Women's Bodies," 146.

ways a presumed sexual violability shaped enslaved bodies and how those presumptions influenced emerging ideas, beliefs, and practices of early Christ followers. I take up this topic in chapters three and four, but for my purposes here, *habitus* provides a unique perspective to study sexual violence as a regulatory mechanism of power employed to, and remembered in, the body. It aids in my effort to identify unconscious meaning in Luke's rhetoric that ultimately informs the worldview preserved in his work.

Specters of Pervo: A Methodological Dilemma

The following section addresses a methodological and ethical problem that arose during this project regarding the work of Richard Pervo. At its foundation, this project of feminist biblical interpretation challenges assumptions about sexual violence in our ancient sources to disrupt the normalization of rape culture in our analysis. However, I require the work of Richard Pervo, a known sexual predator, to do this work.[39] Pervo's second century dating of *Acts* is integral for my analysis of *Acts* in chapters three and four, as well as placing *Acts* in conversation with the other second century sources analyzed in chapters one and two.[40] Without his widely accepted second century dating my project was impossible.[41] More so, however, the fourth chapter of this dissertation focuses on the dismissal of young girls' voices in relation to their sexual violability in

[39] In spring 2001, Pervo was convicted for possession and distribution of child sexual abuse imagery. Over 4000 images of girls aged 5-14 were discovered on his University of Minnesota computer. Pervo had used his University of Minnesota email address to acquire these pornographic images, and housed them on his hard drive as well as several CDs discovered throughout his office. The details of Pervo's crimes are well documented in the public domain See for example: Leslie Brooks Suzukamo, "E-mail address led police to U professor," Pioneer Press (St Paul's, Minnesota), July 21, 2001; and Margaret Zach, "Professor Pleads Guilty to Child Porn Charges," *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, Minnesota), May 2001.

[40] Pervo's voice is so engrained in *Acts* scholarship that his intellectual property is inseparable from the development of contemporary research on the text. Beyond my adoption of his re-dating of the text, he is cited by every scholar writing on *Acts* that is included in this bibliography. It is impossible to disentangle Pervo's contribution from any contemporary conversation on the *Acts*. The reality that his voice cannot be isolated from a discussion of gendered voices and the naturalization of sexual violence against young girls is cruelly poignant.

[41] Pervo's 2006 monograph, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* was a "watershed moment in New Testament and Early Christian studies." See: Shelly Matthews, "Fleshly Resurrection, Wifely Submission, and the Myth of the Primal Androgyne: The Link between Luke 24:39 and Ephesians 5:30," in *Delightful Acts: New Essays on Canonical and non-Canonical Acts,* ed. Harold W. Attridge, Dennis R. MacDonald, and Clare K. Rothschild (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 103. For Pervo's work see: Richard I. Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 2006).

Acts. Braiding the words of a sexual predator into an analysis of the sexual violence habituated on young female bodies and its link to the valuation of their voices is beyond insensitive or irresponsible, it is hypocritical.[42] Including Pervo's work in my own perpetuates rape culture, the very system of power I am looking to destabilize in my work. As a novice scholar, what follows is my imperfect solution to this ethical and methodological problem. I expand on what I am calling an ideology of talent that privileges exceptionality above all else. I understand this ideology of talent as a mechanism of rape culture and, as with other systems of power, it sustains the normalization of sexual subjugation.[43] Lastly, I use the concept of hauntology to fashion a resolution to this methodological dilemma.

An ideology of talent refers to the professional privilege that enables predation and insulates predators through a focus on the talent and exceptionalism of an individual. It manifests itself in the forms of endorsements, certifications, and accreditations from governing bodies that oversee professional groups. These commendations and awards protect predators by amplifying the value of their exceptionalism to peers and students.[44] In her Presidential Address to the SBL in 1987, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza identifies this power of endorsement by academic societies.[45] She explains that "interpretive communities such as the SBL are not just scholarly

[42] I would like to acknowledge my role as a volunteer with Girl Guides of Canada at this moment. Since fall 2016 I have organized a local Girl Guide unit. These guide members are between the ages of 9 and 11 and reflect the demographic of children most represented in child sexual abuse imagery (see below). Each week, I plan activities and events meant to grow their confidence and foster their voices as girls. The dissonance between this type of gender advocacy and my use of scholarship by a sexual predator who would harm girls just like them has been distressing. This footnote aims to acknowledge how I have been required to embody this hypocrisy in my day-to-day life through the ethics of academic citation and dissertation work alongside Pervo's wealth of publications post-conviction.

[43] Pervo is not the only scholar of biblical studies who has been convicted of crimes of sexual predation. CTR Hayward was convicted for possession of child pornography in 2016, and Jan Joosten was convicted for the possession of child pornography in 2020. I would also like to acknowledge that there are other names known to be sexual predators within private circles that cannot be named here. I also acknowledge that some of those names appear on this bibliography. The public record of Pervo, Hayward, and Joosten allow their cases to be spoken about without accusations of slander.

[44] The case of Larry Nasser is a prime example of how the ideology of talent works to protect individuals from accusations and accountability regarding sexual predation.

[45] The SBL has updated it policy on sexual violence as related to professional conduct in October 2019 and again in 2023. See footnote 28.

investigative communities, but also authoritative communities. They possess the power to ostracize or to embrace, to foster or to restrict membership, to recognize and to define what "true scholarship" entails."[46] She is speaking toward the full inclusion of feminist biblical interpretation here, however, her words also address the power structures that markedly validated Pervo's work after his conviction, publishing him two-fold.[47] These post-conviction publications include his second century dating of *Acts* to which I am indebted in this project.

The boost in Pervo's publications demonstrates how the ideology of talent intersects with a taxonomy of sexual violence where some acts of violation are deemed less severe than others. For Pervo's possession of child sexual abuse imagery[48] there is an assumed distance between the

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[46] Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation", 8.

[47] Without a university profile it is difficult to find the exact number of titles published by Richard Pervo, however, his Westnar Institute profile offers a summary of his published books, if not his journal or edited volume contributions. See: "Richard I. Pervo," Westnar Institute, https://www.westarinstitute.org/membership/westar-fellows/fellows-directory/richard-i-Pervo*/. This summary shows three titles before 2001 and six publications after. As WorldCat profiles attest, Pervo's presence in institutional libraries more than doubled between 2006-2018 with upwards of 190 copies of titles and editions being acquired by hundreds of libraries in a 12-year span, compared to the 140 copies of titles and editions acquired between 1979-2005, a 26-year span. "Richard I. Pervo," WorldCat, http://worldcat.org/identities/lccn-n86031900/. While it is true that, post-conviction, Pervo no longer worked as a professor at an institution meaning that he had no classroom responsibilities, it is evident that this new surge in his research was widely accepted and embraced by academic institutions. Pervo was no longer welcome to teach and hold a faculty position, but his books were able to fill library shelves.

[48] The terms child pornography and child sexual abuse imagery are umbrella terms for sexualized images of children. Within this categorization there are multiple distinctions that requalify and organize the images included in the terms. For example, they do indicate the sexual abuse of a child, however, what child exactly suggests varies. By definition it could include any sexually suggestive image of persons under the legal age of adulthood in any given jurisdiction. In Canada, that is anyone under 18 years of age. However, this age range is often broader than what is considered child sexual abuse imagery in practice by legal authorities and advocacy centres. The median age for the children in sexually abusive images is 9-12, with an average age of 9.96 years (29). Within this categorization the images are classified further based on a content scale ranging from one to 10. Level three, for example, classifies images of semi-nude children, or children in their underwear, where level eight indicates images of children engaged in sexual acts with an adult (22). According to a 2016 study conducted by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, 78.29% of images and videos examined were of children ages 12 or under; 63.4% of those children were estimated to be eight years old or younger; and, while both male and female children are found in these images and videos, 80.42% were girls. As for adults visible in the images and videos, 83.35% were men. So, while the terms child pornography and child sexual abuse imagery suggest an image of the sexual violation of a child in the most inclusive sense, in reality this is a crime disproportionately perpetrated against young girls by adult men. The thousands of images in Pervo's possession echo these statistics. For in-text citations see: Francis Fortin and Patrice Corriveau, "How Much is Out There, and Who Are the Victims?", in *Who is Bob_34? Investigating Child Cyberpornography,* trans. Käthe Roth (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015). For the study conducted by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection see: "Child Sexual Abuse Images on the Internet: A Cybertip.ca Analysis," Canadian Centre for Child Protection, https://www.protectchildren.ca/en/resources-research/child-sexual-abuse-images-report/. Reporting on

predator and the child because the actions transpire through the screen of a computer. This distance seemingly mitigates the cruelness of the offense. However, this is a false assumption and a mechanism of rape culture that is indebted to a discursive gradation of sexually violent acts. Roxane Gay explores this gradation in her 2018 collection of essays, *Not That Bad.*[49] The volume is a number of essays from survivors speaking about their experiences of sexual violence and the spectrum of personal fallout. It is evident from these essays that survivors' experiences vary, and how they react and respond to them also vary. There is no direct connection between the type of abuse and how it affects someone. In the introduction to this volume, Gay explores how the language she used to frame the group rape she was subjected to worked to dismiss the trauma she endured and wore on her own self-worth. Gay testifies,

> As I got older, I met countless women who had endured all manner of violence, harassment, sexual assault, and rape. I heard their painful stories and started to think, *What I went through was bad, but it wasn't that bad*. Most of my scars have faded. I have learned to live with my trauma. Those boys killed the girl I was, but they didn't kill all of me. They didn't hold a gun to my head or a blade to my throat and threaten my life. I survived. I taught myself to be grateful I survived even if survival didn't look like much.[50]

Gay continues to explain how this notion of *not that bad* diminished her personal trauma and created unrealistic expectations for her personal wellbeing, setting skewed parameters for how she was treated in relationships. The sentiment of her assault being *not that bad* changed her understanding of what was in fact *bad* at all. While Gay speaks about the phenomena of understanding assaults as *not that bad* from her personal experience, with its agenda she is addressing our inclination to evaluate and grade violence, and, by extension, limit what traumatic fallout is appropriate. We grade sexually violent acts so that some matter more than others, and some do not matter at all. What Gay's collection demonstrates is that sexual violence is sexual

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Pervo's arrest noted, "Schaub, called in to do a 'pre-search,' on images taken from Pervo's email logs, found 4,244 images, the majority of them girls ages 5 to 14 engaged in sex with adult men." See: Suzukamo, "E-mail address led police to U professor."

[49] Roxane Gay, "Introduction," in *Not that Bad*, ed. Roxanne Gay (New York: Harper Perennial, 2018), ix-xii.

[50] Gay, "Introduction," ix.

violence whether it is abuse, rape, harassment, or one of the other countless terms we use to classify it. Our existing language for sexual violence is a taxonomy of meaning that actively silences survivors by suggesting how much attention should be paid to certain acts of violence until many acts are not spoken about because they are *not that bad* to begin with.

It is vital, therefore, to remember how Pervo's acts contributed to the lived trauma of the children in those images. The Canadian Centre for Child Protection conducted an international survey which asked survivors of child abuse imagery to answer several questions about their experiences. It culled their answers for a better understanding of this type of abuse from the perspective of those abused. The report's first conclusion was that "Recording the sexual abuse of a child has significant, lifelong impact on the victim."[51] This finding articulates the direct impact of child sexual abuse images on the children in them and explores how the persistence of this style of abuse transpires into long-term trauma. The report explains that,

> The fact that images/videos of a child's sexual abuse were created at all, as well as the fact that they may still be possessed by the abuser and be publicly available for others to access, has an enormously negative impact on the individual. The impact can persist into adulthood and may significantly reduce the ability of survivors to cope with day-to-day stressors, maintain healthy relationships, and reach their full potential in educational and occupational pursuits.[52]

The results of this study turn the perspective of this crime from those who participate in the imagery to those victimized by the images. In a direct quote from a survey, the study offers the following anonymous personal testimony:

> My child sexual abuse imagery is out there for anyone to see, I will forever be taken advantage of. It's not something that will ever go away. Being the adult I am now, my photos are still out there, as long as the internet exists my photos will always be out there. Sites will be taken down but new ones are somehow being put back up. As far as I know there is just no way of permanently deleting those photos. There is no way I can finally be done with this abuse.[53]

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[51] "Survivors' Survey: Executive Summary 2017," Canadian Centre for Child Protection, https://www.protectchildren.ca/pdfs/C3P_SurvivorsSurveyExecutiveSummary2017_en.pdf.
[52] Canadian Centre for Child Protection, "Survivors' Survey: Executive Summary 2017."
[53] Canadian Centre for Child Protection, "Survivors' Survey: Executive Summary 2017."

The children in these images continue to experience the abuse immortalized in those photos and videos long after the physical assault has finished. It is an enduring trauma from which we veil ourselves because of the distance a screen provides from their young bodies. The trauma endured by the children involved is nonetheless present and real. The ongoing abuse these survivors experience long after the physical abuse has ended as detailed in the Survivors' Survey works to collapse that distance.

In my fourth chapter I argue that two *paidiskē* in *Acts*, Rhoda (*Acts* 12) and the prophetic enslaved girl (*Acts* 16), are silenced despite speaking truthful statements because of the presumed sexual violability of their enslaved bodies. This argument builds from my claim in the third chapter that slave culture is rape culture, a claim that points to these interconnected and mutually sustaining systems of power and oppression. The erasure of trauma experienced by survivors of child sexual abuse imagery allowed editorial bodies to enshrine Pervo's work after his conviction as something that was *not that bad*. Uncritically including Pervo's work here, in this dissertation, would likewise erase the young girls' trauma captured in those images on Pervo's faculty computer, not unlike what I am arguing in my fourth chapter that Luke is doing to the voices of Rhoda and the prophetic enslaved girl. By failing to confront this tension I would be complicit in the sentiment that certain types of sexual violation are simply *not that bad*, ultimately reinscribing the same system of oppression I seek to challenge in this work.

The current debate around sexual predators such as Pervo focuses on concerns of citation and how to ethically separate a scholar's predation from their contributions to the area of Biblical

Studies.[54] There have been public discussions on a variety of online forums addressing this topic,[55] and most recently a session of the *Metacriticism of Biblical Scholarship* at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in 2022 addressed this issue.[56] This is a privileged debate and I attest that it is moot. It presumes the possibility for erasure of names from scholarship that have already been integrated into our shared academic collective. It presumes the ability for all peers to participate in this erasure (ignoring, for one, the inability for the survivors among us to engage in these discussions of academic ethics while navigating their own trauma). Finally, it never actually resolves the ethical dilemma of predation and scholarship. Instead, it sweeps the names of known predators under the rug, where they can hide from plain view.

Hauntology, on the other hand, refers to the return, or enduring presence, of aspects of a cultural or social past and it helps me navigate this ethical dilemma in my own work.[57] It is not

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[54] It is important to distinguish these named scholars from unnamed scholars whose acts of sexual predation are known, yet only shared unofficially through "whisper networks." I am aware of some scholars present in my bibliography who have been forcibly retired for sexual violations that were "settled" behind closed doors. Pervo, Joosten, and Hayward are all publicly convicted of possession of child sexual abuse imagery and are therefore openly named. My discussion of Pervo is a drop in the metaphorical bucket of our current problem with sexual violence in this discipline, let alone in academia more broadly.

[55] This conversation has transpired in forms such as Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook. See for example: Mark Leuchter (@MarkLeuchter), Twitter post, November 21, 2021, 8:48p.m., https://twitter.com/MarkLeuchter/status/1462583729021456389 (19 tweet thread); and "The Ethics of Citation," Urbs and Polis, September 24, 2021, YouTube video, 1:16:00, https://youtu.be/1AId9acOCYY.

[56] Erik Vanden Eykel, an editor of the *Journal of Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies* and panelist for the session cited in footnote 55, offered the journal's policy as a middle ground, explaining that the journal insists on a critical citation that minimizes the inclusion of work by known sexual predators. Pervo is named alongside calls for social justice and a rejection of sexual violence. This policy seems to offer a tangible, ethical progress that prioritizes minimizing the scholarship while addressing the predation. He has publicly shared a copy of his paper from this panel on *Medium* where he outlines the context for this panel. See: Erik Vanden Eykel, "On Citing Monsters. Or Not," *Medium*, 28 November 2022, https://evandeneykel.medium.com/on-citing-monsters-or-not-827b91398208. The journal's policy as cited in his presentation follows: "The *Journal for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies* is dedicated to publishing scholarship oriented toward issues of social justice. Sexual violence of any kind is a scourge, and when it is allowed a place at any table, it works against the seeking of justice. Papers and submissions that insist on uncritically citing the publications of known sexual predators will not be considered for publication in JIBS. This includes but is not limited to the work of Jan Joosten, Richard Pervo and CTR Hayward." Eykel, "On Citing Monsters."

[57] My analysis of this methodological tension is a privileged one, as an ally instead of survivor I do not have to navigate the enduring trauma of childhood sexual abuse in my scholarship. As such, I consider this section to be advocacy work for survivors of childhood sexual abuse. In her contribution to the recent *Metacriticism of Biblical Scholarship* panel at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in 2022, M. Adryal Tong makes a kindred call to advocate for the children (likely now grown) in child sex

unlike a returning cultural echo whose origin has been forgotten, but still comes back having been put out into the world. The concept of hauntology comes from Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (to which I nod in the title for this subsection).[58] Where Derrida used these ideas in admiration of Marx and Marxism after the fall of communism in the late 20th century to attest to the persistence of Marxist thought having been something put into the world despite its seeming geopolitical erasure, I find his concepts helpful here to refer to the persistence of a scholar's ideas even after presumed erasure of the scholar through the absence of citation. For example, even if I refuse to cite Pervo in my third and fourth chapters, his second century dating of *Acts* is foundational to my analysis as well as widely accepted fact within the field. Neither his scholarly contributions, nor the ideology of talent that facilitated his scholarship and predation, dissipate if we do not cite his work. Thinking of this problem with the concept of hauntology helps me refocus on the kyriarchal systems that generated the work of sexual predators in the first place by realizing that we can never fully recall their voices from our scholarship. Only discussing predation in reference to citation will not remedy the epidemic of sexual predation among scholars of higher learning. In fact, speaking about sexual predation and scholarship only in terms of ethical citation gives the illusion of cultural victory over sexual violence when in reality it distracts us from critically dismantling systemic sexual violence as a proponent of kyriarchy. Pervo's legacy haunts my dissertation, but I consider my approach to that legacy as transformative. His legacy in my work becomes less of a scholarly phantom and more of a wraith, an omen or warning of academic allowances. Pervo was a forerunner for Hayward and Joosten, and his image will surface again and again when the sexual predation of other scholars inevitably materializes. Let citations of Pervo serve this role, constantly heralding a warning about sexual violence among our peers and

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abuse imagery. Tong demands that in any future action by the SBL centre the child survivors of sexual abuse. See: M. Adryal Tong, "Beyond and Ethics of Citation: What do Citations do?," *Medium*, 20 November 2022, https://medium.com/@madryaeltong/beyond-an-ethics-of-citation-what-do-citations-do-e0d1b4c96dd5

[58] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994).

the presence of rape culture in our work. As such, from this point onward in this project I write Pervo's* name with an asterisk. Like any asterisk, this points the reader to further information about Pervo* and his legacy of sexual predation.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: CHARISMATIC SPEECH AND AUTHORITY

This project centers the narratives of five female figures who possess charismatic talents (the Ethiopian eunuch is an exception to this but is a precursor to my analysis of the two enslaved girls in chapter four). Eve is a failed prophet and the prophetic enslaved girl a rejected prophet. Norea is a saviour and Thecla a teacher. Rhoda is a messenger, joyously announcing the arrival of God's chosen. All women speak truth and exhibit superhuman powers. They also share the fact that their charismatic speech is challenged and threatened. For Eve, Norea, and Thecla, this threat comes in the form of rape and attempted rape. For the enslaved girls in *Acts*, their truthful statements are dismissed as folly and fortune-telling. Women's charismatic speech was a contentious topic because of the claims to authority garnered through charismatic acts. These narratives of female charismatic speakers are part of those debates about women's authority and trustworthy speech.

In Roman antiquity, charismatic speech, which refers to human speech that is divinely inspired, presented in a myriad of forms including prophecy, divination, casting of lots, dreams, visions, and other names people gave to interactions with otherworldly powers. I am using charismatic speech as a heuristic category in this project to draw together phenomena that were already considered related experiences. The wide-ranging list of possible communication tools points to the ubiquity of charismatic speech as well as its unbounded nature. Here I outline what I mean by charismatic speech, providing examples from the ancient context in which the texts I examine were produced. My aim is to establish that this phenomenon was wide-ranging and a part of various cultural practices in which Christians participated. This fluid conception of charismatic speech allows me to hold together texts that otherwise would not categorically fit. In identifying the dynamic character of charismatic speech, prophets, teachers, and ritual specialists,

for example, can be considered together as representatives of the same phenomenon instead of examples of distinct and unrelated talents. Further, I articulate how such forms of communication could also be tied to broad epistemological claims, namely the will of the divine being and the state of the cosmos and its unfolding. These points are critical to my larger argument because they establish a pattern where a person's access to higher forms of truth and knowledge was demonstrated, or contested, through the acceptance of their charismatic speech.

In her work on ancient Greek divination, Kim Beerden offers a definition of charismatic speech in antiquity that takes stock of the phenomenon's fluid diversity.[59] While she uses the term divination where I apply charismatic speech, I find her discussion helpful and understand her use of divination in much the same way as I use charismatic speech. Her definition follows:

> divination is that human action of production–by means of evocation or observation and recognition—and subsequent interpretation of signs attributed to the supernatural. These signs can be anything which the supernatural is perceived to place in the world with the intention to communicate, whether evoked or unprovoked, whether visible, auditory, tactile, olfactory or gustatory: in all cases the individual must recognize a sign as coming from the supernatural in order to consider it as a divinatory sign.[60]

Otherworldly communication could manifest in any form via any method recognized as such by humans. Lots, fortunetelling, possession, and prophecy, among others, are different names for the same phenomenon: communication that discerns and articulates the will of the gods.

Sources from early Christ following communities likewise attest to this understanding of charismatic speech. This fluid notion of charismatic speech exists in some of the earliest, and most circulated, literature of early Christ followers. Notions of gifts of the spirit like prophecy, teaching, prayer, and hymns were associated with other forms of divination such as speaking in tongues and revelation. Early Christ followers were debating how to authenticate these gifts, and by extension, any authority they might carry. These categories are routinely associated with each other in this literature. Paul, for example, links prayer (προσευχόμενος) and prophecy

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[59] Kim Beerden, *Worlds Full of Signs: Ancient Greek Divination in Context* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013).
[60] Beerden, *Worlds Full of Signs*, 20.

(προφητεύω) together in *1 Corinthians* 11, suggesting a relationality between the two (*1 Cor* 11:4-5).[61] Later, he names hymns (ψαλμὸν), teachings (διδαχήν),[62] revelation (αποκάλυψιν), speaking in tongues (γλῶσσαν), and interpretation (ἑρμηνείαν) in relation to one another in the same letter (*1 Cor* 14:26). Ross Kraemer points out, in her discussion on women's religion in the ancient Mediterranean, that each of these actions (which Paul takes up in reference to participation in organized assembly) result from divine inspiration.[63] In *Acts*, the title of prophet is used alongside that of teacher and apostle. Barnabas and Paul, for example, are called prophets (προφῆται) and teachers (διδάσκαλοι) in *Acts* 13:1, and apostles (ἀποστόλοις) later in *Acts* 14:4. Judas and Silas are also called apostles (ἀποστόλοις) in *Acts* 15:22, and then prophets (προφῆται) in *Acts* 15:32 indicating an affiliation between the terms. In his discussion of the term prophecy in early

[61] Antionette Clarke Wire unpacks the assumed relationality between prayer and prophecy by Paul in this passage within the context of the entire letter. She explains, "that prayer is prone to become ecstatic speech might explain why Paul mentions praying along with prophesying as the functions for which women's heads are to be covered" (1990, 140). Paul's objective here is to separate speaking in tongues from prophecy within the Corinthian community. This assumes that there was an approximation from which to distance the two. Wire demonstrates how speaking in tongues was frequently described as the "language of prayer" (140), a description supported by the language Paul invokes to describe speaking in tongues (singing, speaking, blessing, thanking). She continues to explain that Paul invests so much of his letter to separating prophecy and speaking in tongues, suggests he understood what he was saying to need persuasion and explanation; that it would likely be received with trepidation or suspicion. In other words, Paul's argument attests to the committed integration of prophecy, speaking in tongues, and prayer within the early Christ following community at Corinth. For more see: Antionette Clarke Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1995), 140-146.

[62] Ross Kraemer explains that the translation of διδαχήν as lesson or teaching skews the association of the term with inspiration. Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Unreliable Witnesses: Religions, Gender, and History in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 251.

[63] Kraemer, *Unreliable Witnesses*, 243-274 (especially, 251-252). The following are two other examples of studies on the Corinthian prophets. Antoinette Clark Wire's *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction Through Paul's Rhetoric* is a landmark study on the epistle where she convincingly argues that most of the prophets in Corinth to whom Paul was writing were women. Through analysis of Paul's rhetoric in the letter, Wire reconstructs the practices of these women prophets offering a rich perspective into first century prophetic practices were bound up with topics such as prayer and speaking in tongues. See: Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*. Christopher Forbes' work, *Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Environment*, likewise uses Paul's correspondence with the Corinthian community to build his argument about inspired speech. Forbes' work responds to the scholarly position that the dispute between Paul and the Corinthians was rooted in Paul's refutation of Corinthians' life before adopting Paul's worldview about Christ. Instead, Forbes argues that speaking in tongues and prophecy, as represented in early Christ following communities, was foundationally different than the phenomena of inspired speech in popular Hellenistic religions through its intelligibility and its affiliation with the tradition of Hebrew prophets. See: Christopher Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Environment* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995).

Christian writings, David Aune demonstrates how authors identified with other signifiers while depicting themselves as prophets.[64] This reflects a multidimensional understanding of charismatic speech, one that included several examples of divinely inspired speech such as prophet, apostle, prayer, and teacher.

Archeological evidence from early Christ following communities likewise points to an interrelated understanding of concepts such as prayer, prophecy, and teaching. In the catacomb of Priscilla in Rome there is a fresco depicting a woman leader with raised arms in prayer known as an *oran*. She is painted alongside images of the Good Shepard and possible images of Mary holding the infant Jesus. In her study on images of the *oran*, Karen Jo Torjesen explains that this pervasive image of a person in prayer was associated with prophesying and preaching. Torjesen analyzes these images, which are uniquely represented as women in the artwork of early Christ followers, to trace women's roles as teachers and leaders. In doing so, Torjesen explains that prayer was a "fluid concept capable of multiple meanings such as adoration, petition, prayer, prophecy, and piety."[65] "Even prophesy" she continues, "encompasses a wide range of liturgical expressions, including ecstatic speaking, blessing, teaching, and revealing."[66] Images like the one in the Catacombs of Priscilla document a fluid understanding of charismatic speech in the second and third centuries that encompassed actions beyond basic prayer. These examples of charismatic speech overlapped and referenced others in a layered and dynamic way. Prophecy was never simply prophecy. It could include dreams, revelation, and speaking in tongues to name a few.

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[64] David Aune has a classic resource on prophecy in early Christianity that catalogues numerous types of prophetic experiences through several different communities. He provides an inventory on Greco-Roman oracles, Ancient Israelite prophecy, and prophecy in early Judaism before providing seven detailed chapters on prophecy from Jesus through early Christianity. Each example of prophecy explored is typed and designated in a clinical fashion. It is a rich index of prophecy in the first few centuries of Christianity that provides vital information of contemporary prophetic expressions. However, his detailed record of prophecy fails to account for the dynamic exchange transpiring between prophecy and other forms of charismatic speech identified above. See: David Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 196.

[65] Karen Jo Torjesen, "The Early Christian Orans: An Artistic Representation of Women's Liturgical Prayer and Prophecy," in Women, Preachers, and Prophets through Two Millenia of Christianity, ed. Beverly M. Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Berkely: University of California Press, 1998), 46.

[66] Torjesen, "The Early Christian Orans," 47.

Similarly, prayer was never solely prayer. It too could include prophetic utterances, leadership, and pedagogical roles, among others. Understanding phenomena like prophecy and prayer as expressions of charismatic speech acknowledges that these actions of communication between the human and superhuman world were broad, overlapping, and elastic.[67]

Torjesen's study on the *orans* speaks to another foundational aspect of charismatic speech, namely, charismatic speech as a venue to demarcate worldly authority and make epistemological claims, such as privileged access to divine truth. Torjesen explains that liturgical prophecy --a concept she develops through a close analysis of the orans—included teaching roles and positions in specialized offices. These positions of influence emerged from the authority these women garnered from their fluid prophetic talents. She supports these observations with textual evidence that women's liturgical authority was "confirmed by ordination and institutionalization."[68] Women who held roles like the liturgical prophecy recorded in the image of the *orans* gleaned an expertise and importance in their communities. This connection of charismatic speech alongside roles of authority is echoed in the examples from *Acts* above where Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas are named as apostles and prophets. Similarly, in *1 Corinthians* 12:28-29 Paul names prophets as only second in authority to the apostles, placing immense credence on the role. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza argues that the authority of the apostle (alongside other titles) was rooted in a person's ability to interact with otherworldly powers such as the Holy Spirit. In this way, apostolic authority, like prophecy and teaching, reflects acts of charismatic speech. She states:

> The authority of the apostle, prophet, teacher, or missionary was based on the direct intervention of the Spirit and an experience of the resurrected Lord's presence. Revelation, preaching, and teaching were its primary functions. Although we have but scattered references to prophecy in the New Testament, these references testify to the ubiquity of this phenomenon in the early Christian movement. Prophets, and prophecy, were found in every Christian center of the Greco-Roman world. Prophets evidently

[67] Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly*, 8.
[68] Torjesen, "Early Christian Orans," 49.

> wielded great authority and influence in the first centuries as spokespersons for the resurrected Lord, illuminating the present situation of the community theologically.[69]

Schüssler Fiorenza attests to a fluid, interrelated understanding of prophecy, prayer, and teaching among early Christ followers, and further explains that these charismatic speech acts were inherently linked to roles of authority within those communities. Otherworldly communication was coded with a superior power that translated into worldly authority and claimed exclusive privilege for the speaker. Official ritual offices routinely surface alongside other forms of charismatic speech, pairing worldly authority with charismatic communication.

Charismatic authority could also take on a pedagogical form such as when a prophet or visionary shared teachings and messages with the community. They instructed others on how to best live, act, and worship. This nods forward to my first and second chapters where Eve, Norea, and Thecla's ability to teach is central to their depiction as charismatic speakers. Likewise, the *Gospel of Mary*, for example, characterizes Mary Magdalene as a prophet as she recounts a visionary experience of the Lord in a teaching moment with the other disciples. Mary is an authority among the chosen here, and shares with them lessons the Savior shared exclusively with her. Her possession of this unique knowledge informs her role as a teacher and authority in the text. This narrative braids her visionary experience with authority through the epistemological access it granted.

As Karen King explains in her work on the *Gospel of Mary*, there is a lot at stake in these claims to prophecy and the messages of these figures.[70] If these messages were accepted as true by a community, epistemological claims were likewise claims to immense power. She writes, "Because of the wide acceptance of their authority as messengers of the gods in antiquity, prophets and their prophecies potentially had enormous power to direct people's lives, political events, and

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[69] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroads, 1994), 295.
[70] Karen L. King, "Prophetic Power and Women's Authority: The Case of the Gospel of Mary (Magdalene)," in *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity,* ed. Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 21-41.

public opinion. Prophecy represents a dramatic claim to authority, both for the prophet and for the message. Hence serious issues of power and authority were at stake in distinguishing true from false prophets."[71] As such, charismatic speech was a fraught topic among early Christ followers and early Christians.

However, what charismatic speech was accepted as true, real, or valid was contested, and claims for or against prophecy and charismatic speech became tools in the struggle for authority. As Laura Nasrallah explains, claims to prophecy and divine truth delineated the parameters of knowledge for a community, and in setting those epistemological boundaries through promotion of "true" and "right" prophecy while distancing "wrong" or "false" charismatic speech, authors defined a community's identity by demarcating "correct" beliefs and practice. In doing so, authors also claimed a privileged authority for themselves within the community through their demonstration of exclusive knowledge. How these authors separated prophetic claims into "true" and "false" is most interesting. Nasrallah demonstrates that a rhetoric of rationality and madness was at work in debates about prophecy and charismatic speech in antiquity to taxonomize these claims into more and less truthful. Terms such as sound mind (ἐρρωμένη διάνοια), reasoning (λογισμός), folly (μωρία), and madness (μανία) were deployed to discredit competing claims to prophecy while propping up and championing others.[72] Nasrallah explains, "texts participate in a discourse of madness and rationality as they attempt to delineate the realms of knowledge and the means of knowing that are accessible to and permitted for a given community."[73] In other words, characterizing charismatic speech as "sound prophecy" or "frenzied possession" were polemical choices in the struggle over authority and power.

Central to my argument, however, is that gender played a large role both in claims about who could and could not speak with authority derived from charismatic speech.[74] For example, *1*

[71] King, "Prophetic Power and Women's Authority," 29.
[72] Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly,* 6.
[73] Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly,* 6.
[74] See Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*. This work by Wire opened up research on female leadership in early Christ following communities and paved the way for works such as: Mary-Rose

Corinthians 11:3-12, *1 Corinthians* 14:34-35, and *1 Timothy* 2:11-13 all restrict women's voices in churches and tie these silences to women's submission to men's authority. Similarly, the North African theologian Tertullian recounts how a female prophet in his community offered up her prophecies to a chosen group to determine the veracity of her revelations, ultimately qualifying her own authority over the matter.[75] The woman's visionary experiences were mediated by an inner circle who decided if her prophecies corresponded with their teachings. This mediation mitigated her power and authority as prophet by negating any competing or untoward ideologies before they were shared with the larger group. She had no power of interpretation, and her voice was channeled through their authority. Authors such as Hippolytus and Epiphanius likewise railed against the prophetic teachings of influential female prophets such as Priscilla, Maximilla, and Quintilla whose teachings are lost to us outside of the work of their competitors and detractors.[76]

By contrast, figures such as Phoebe, a deacon (*Rom* 16:1), Junia, an apostle *(Rom* 16:7), and heads of household like Mary the mother of John (*Acts* 12:12) and Lydia (*Acts* 16:14), held positions of authority and influence. Among these influential women were numerous female prophets. Anna, an elderly widow, is a named prophet in the *Gospel of Luke* (2:36). Characterized as especially devout, never leaving the temple but praying day and night, she prophesies about Jesus when he is presented at the temple by his parents. Philip's daughters are also identified as prophets in *Acts* (21:9), and in later centuries authors attest to a tradition of female prophecy

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D'Angelo, "Women in Luke-Acts: A Redactional View," *JBL* 109.3 (1990): 441-461; Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings*: *Women's Religions Among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Karen Jo Torjesen, *When Women were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993); King, "Prophetic Power and Women's Authority"; Carolyn Osiek, Margaret Y. MacDonald, and Janet H. Tulloch, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2006). These studies, among others, have established that women were teachers, prophets, and leaders in early Christ following communities. So, while the canonical texts preserve prescriptions that aim to limit women's vocal activity within devotional spaces, scholarship has demonstrated that these prescriptions do not represent an uncontested view among these groups.

[75] Tertullian, *An*. 9.4

[76] Epiphanius, *Pan*. 49; and, Hippolytus, *Haer*. 8.12

affiliated with this sorority.[77] Both Anna and Philip's daughters are taken up in detail in my fourth chapter. "Jezebel", the slandered teacher in *Rev*, is likewise identified as a prophet, and Ammia of Philadelphia is a female prophet mentioned in Eusebius' *Church History*.[78]

Prophetic titles garnered these women levels of authority and remembrance in their communities. This authority could include official roles in rituals such as overseeing baptisms and blessing eucharistic celebrations. For example, Myrta is a female prophet who also performs a ritualistic role in the *Acts of Paul*. Her prophecy about Paul's success in Rome doubles as a eucharistic blessing as her revelation is immediately followed by the shared meal (*AP* 9). As a prophet, Myrta has the authority to perform this eucharistic role in her community. Cyprian, a third century bishop of Carthage, tells of a woman who displayed bouts of ecstasy and identified herself as a prophet. Like Myrta, this woman likewise assumed a ritual authority alongside her prophetic one, performing baptisms and eucharistic celebrations.[79]

Women's voices were not the only ones held with suspicion. As I demonstrate in my third and fourth chapters, the ability of enslaved figures to speak with charismatic authority (authority garnered through charismatic speech) was likewise contentious and drew on a cultural foundation that questioned an enslaved person's ability to speak truth. The higher functions of enslaved adults were considered undeveloped and their reasoning skills more like that of a child than an adult. This is reflected in some of the language used for enslaved persons such as paîs (παῖς) and *paidiskē* (παιδίσκη) which also signal youth and childhood. As such, enslaved persons' reasoning skills were considered compromised and treated with skepticism when drawn upon by the freeborn. This was more than a simple distrust by the freeborn; enslaved persons in ancient Greece were presumed to be unable to speak the truth without torturous intervention. Page

[77] Both Eusebius and Epiphanius record traditions of female prophets that acknowledge the prophetic talents and authority of Philip's daughters. While Epiphanius names the women as followers of Quintilla or Priscilla, Eusebius refers generally to Montanus and "the women." See Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.17.1-5; and Epiphanius, *Pan.* 49.2.1-2.
[78] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5:17:2-4.
[79] Cyprian, *Epistles* 74.10.

duBois explains that the *basanos*—literally meaning touchstone – was an Athenian legal term for a test derived to extract truth from enslaved persons.[80] Like its original meaning, the body of the enslaved person under question was treated to torturous processes meant to extract truth that was otherwise inaccessible, much the way metal and ore were worked to process a purer, more desired substance. An enslaved person was unable to speak truth without these physical interventions that understood their body as an avenue to truthfulness. Moreso, this process understood the enslaved person's body as a way to a supreme, more pure truth that rivalled that of a free man, but only under physical violation. Much as ore cannot transform into something else without the intervention of the touchstone, the enslaved person cannot access truth without the *basanos*. "The *basanos*," DuBois explains, "assumes first that the slave always lies, then that torture makes him or her always tell the truth, then that the truth produced through torture will always expose the truth or falsehood of the free man's evidence."[81] This process of truth-telling entangles epistemological access, who could and could not access truth, with physical violation on enslaved bodies. While enslaved persons existed throughout early Christ following communities, and, as I will demonstrate are recorded in numerous sources, when they claimed to speak with the authority of the divine through acts of charismatic speech, their words were qualified and even dismissed as untrustworthy.

OUTLINE

In chapter one, I analyze the archons' rape of Eve in *HypArch* and argue that Eve is a prophetic figure in the text whose prophetic abilities are severed with the archons' assault. In this chapter, I demonstrate the logic of sexual violence as a tool of epistemological regulation by focusing on the phrase the archons "raped the seal of her voice". The seal of her voice positions Eve within a prophetic lineage and is a textual signal to a tradition where prophets and prophecy are associated with seals and sealing. Here, prophecy is an example of charismatic speech. The

[80] Page DuBois, *Torture and Truth* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 36.
[81] DuBois, *Torture and Truth*, 36.

archons metaphorically rupture Eve's vocal seal, and in so doing sever her prophetic access to the world above. This analysis shows that sexual violence is not only connected to charismatic speaking and epistemological access but can also regulate and rupture access to it.

I continue this analysis in chapter two by turning to the story of Norea, Eve's daughter, who, unlike Eve, successfully resists the archons' attempted rape. Norea's resistance to this attack is emphasized by the prophetic revelation that she receives in its wake. Where the archons' rape of Eve severs her prophetic connection, Norea's resistance to a similar assault ensures her prophetic revelation. In the second half of this chapter, I incorporate Thecla's resistance to Alexander in *ATh* into the analysis. Like Norea, Thecla successfully escapes an attempted rape and emerges as a divinely chosen figure, self-baptizing and teaching. As in *HypArch*, Thecla's charismatic capacity reaches its full potential only after the heroine thwarts rape. For both texts, resistance to sexual violence is integral for the growth of these women as charismatic leaders and authorities – Norea the prophet, Thecla the baptizing teacher. Where in the case of Eve, rape compromises her prophetic ability, escaping it shores up both Norea's and Thecla's charismatic power.

In chapter three, I read slave culture as a rape culture where the cultural understanding of enslaved people as sexually violable bodies marginalizes them from certain social privileges. I argue that Luke, the author of *Acts*, builds from this cultural understanding of enslaved persons as sexually violable, regardless of their sexual activity, in his depiction of charismatic speech in *Acts*. The Ethiopian eunuch, for example, is an enslaved person identified by his sexualized status as a eunuch and is positioned as a favourable convert to the Way. Luke uses the enduring legacy of castration on the male body to juxtapose the Ethiopian eunuch's questions to Philip's divinely sanctioned teachings. I argue that Luke builds his vision of apostolic authority in this scene at the expense of the sexually violated body of an enslaved person.

In my fourth and final chapter, I continue this analysis of enslaved figures in *Acts* by focusing on the narratives of two silenced *paidiskē*: the prophetic enslaved girl in *Acts* 16, and Rhoda in *Acts* 12. Like the Ethiopian eunuch, Luke uses these enslaved girls to support his vision of apostolic authority with narratives of dismissal, silencing the otherwise truthful statements of the enslaved girls. Their truthful announcements are dismissed in the narrative as foreign possession or madness, characterizations rooted in assumptions about their sexual violability as enslaved persons. Despite Luke's efforts to stifle the pronouncements of these enslaved girls, their claims to veracity continue to linger in the text, resisting Luke's attempts to exclude them from charismatic participation. The truthful claims of these enslaved girls endure and signal a resistance to an acceptance of their culturally prescribed sexual violability.

The consequences of this analysis are two-fold. The first speaks to a specific time and place in history and contributes to the robust scholarship about early Christ following communities by identifying a discourse of sexual violence that served to regulate power and authority among early Christ followers. It demonstrates that sexual violence was employed to delineate which persons were best suited to offices and positions of authority within these communities. The second consequence of this work has a larger reach into the modern world. It documents how canonical Christian sources, sources with substantial authority and influence across the globe, employ sexual violence to regulate who can and cannot speak with authority about devotional topics. In other words, it shows how some sources shaping the moral and ethical values of billions of people normalize sexual violence. It is an observation that would easily resonate with communities struggling for gender equity within authoritative bodies, and those communities grappling with clerical sexual abuse.

CHAPTER 1 - EVE: THE RAPE OF A PROPHET IN THE HYPOSTASIS OF THE ARCHONS

This chapter reads Eve as a prophet in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (*HypArch*). She is a character who can channel otherworldly truth and knowledge into the material realm, demonstrating otherworldly power while identifying the false rule of the archons. In this way, Eve stands in conflict with the archons' version of truth where they are the supreme powers over the material world. This conflict, between the archons' version of reality and the true reality of the world above, is the foundation for the entirety of the text. Throughout the narrative, the premise of unjust subjugation and the eventual escape from this subjugation sustains the text's worldview. In this way, Eve's access to otherworldly power is an epistemological challenge to the archons' version of truth as her access to truth and knowledge proves to be superior to their own—she can access truth and knowledge that is inaccessible to the archons despite their claims to it. As a prophet, Eve stands in direct challenge to the archons' version of power and reality. Therefore, when the text explains that the archons' rape the "seal of Eve's voice," it describes how the archons rupture Eve's connection to the world above, shoring up their rule over the material world without contest.

Eve's voice is central to her contest with the archons. For example, her prophetic voice does work in the text that showcases the archons' limitations of power. Therefore, the characterization of the archons' rape of the seal of her voice speaks directly to her challenge over them. Through her voice, she rejects their dominance over the material world. This imagery likewise builds from cultural assumptions about women's genitalia and their mouths as synecdochically connected. Applying an effect to one area, by extension, influenced the other. In raping Eve, the archons by extension compromise her link to the world above; they rupture her prophetic voice. Their sexual violence works to shore up their version of reality by eliminating her challenge to it. Here, the archons' rape of Eve is a form of epistemological regulation. In raping

her metaphorical body, they compromise her voice and eliminate her ability to channel superior truth and knowledge into the world that would challenge them. Through rape, they silence a rival.

The following chapter lays out this argument by first exploring the association between women's mouths and their genitalia in the ancient world, establishing a connection between the two orifices that was both moralized and medicalized. It then places Eve within the framework of prophetic figures through the language used to describe the archons' rape and her actions in the text. Eve establishes herself as a prophetic figure who demonstrates otherworldly power in the material world. Lastly, I show how the sexualization of prophecy in antiquity informs the sexually violent attack to which Eve is subjected. In particular, I argue that the sexualization of prophecy allowed for the text's narrative of sexually violent retribution. This argument holds together concepts of prophecy, sexual violence, and epistemological access, and ultimately reads the archons' rape of Eve as a retaliation for her ability to challenge the archons' version of reality. Their sexually violent attack eradicates her challenge to their power.

HYPOSTASIS OF THE ARCHONS: THE TEXT

The *HypArch*, also known as the *Reality of the Rulers* (*RoR*) and the *Nature of the Rulers* (*Nat.Rul),* exists only in codex II as tractate IV of the Nag Hammadi Corpus (NHC II, 4),[82] followed by *On the Origen of the World* (*OnOrig*), a text with which it has strong narrative similarities. *HypArch* is, thus, preserved in a fourth century Coptic manuscript, but the original text was likely composed in Greek a century or more earlier. There is no scholarly consensus on the date of *HypArch's* production, although the second and third centuries have been proposed. Other scholars suggest reading the text solely as a fourth century manuscript.[83] There is evidence

[82] For a broad introduction, analysis, and commentary to *HypArch*, see: Roger A. Bullard, *The Hypostasis of the Archons: The Coptic Text with Translation and Commentary* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970); Bentley Layton, "The Hypostasis of the Archons or the Reality of the Rulers," *HTR* 67.4 (1974): 351-425; Bernard Barc, *L'Hypostase des Archontes: Traité Gnostique sur L'Origine de L'Homme, du Monde et des Archontes* (Belgium: Les Presses de l'université Laval, Québec, 1980); Roger Bullard and Bentley Layton, "The Hypostasis of the Archons," in *The Coptic Gnostic Library: A Compete Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codicies*, ed. James M. Robinson (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2002), 2.4: 220-336.
[83] Hugo Lunghaug and Lance Jennott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

in the work that the author was familiar with texts from the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, Midrashic literature, and Paul as a spiritual authority.

My analysis reads the text as a second century, Christian[84] document and considers its narrative in the context of debates transpiring in the second century concerning prophecy and women's spiritual authority. These debates provide a constructive context for reading this narrative and further understanding Eve and Norea's role in the text. In the earliest years of the Christ followers' movements, women's participation in organized group settings was contested. The canonical sources preserve examples of this discord. Restrictions included in *1 Corinthians* and *1 Timothy* limit women's voices in devotional group settings and tie these observed silences to women's submission to men's authority.[85] By contrast in *Romans*, Pheobe is a named deacon trusted by Paul, and the *Acts of the Apostles* includes several influential named women such as Lydia in *Acts* 16:14 and Mary in *Acts* 12:12, who lead households where Christ followers gathered. Secondary scholarship has likewise identified diverse examples of women's authority within these communities, alongside disputes about their devotional practices and ability to hold official and unofficial offices within the group.[86]

I read *HypArch* within this context of debate concerning women's authority, and in particular, as a text making claims about women's prophetic potential. *HypArch* juxtaposes the prophetic truths received by Eve and Norea against the false, corrupt claims of the archons. Who

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[84] *HypArch* is classified with several other ancient sources as representing Sethian thought. Sethianism is a term first preserved in the 2nd century works of Irenaeus to describe a group of Christ followers he deemed incorrect. Much scholarship exists about this group, both constructive and critical. While it is a part of the history of scholarship of this text, it is not a category employed for this discourse analysis. For more see: King, *What is Gnosticism?*.

[85] *1 Corinthians* 11:3-12; *1 Corinthians* 14:34-35; and *1 Timothy* 2:11-13.

[86] A longer discussion on the debates about women's authority and prophetic potential is found earlier in this dissertation. A brief sampling of related resources is included here. See: Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*; Torjesen, "The Early Christian Orans; Torjesen, *When Women were Priests*; Karen L. King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle* (Sonoma, CA, Polebridge Press, 2003); King, "Prophetic Power and Women's Authority"; Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch, *A Women's Place*; and N. Clayton Croy, and Alice E. Cooper, "Mantic Mary? The Virgin Mother a Prophet in Luke 1.26-56 and the Eary Church," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 34.3 (2012): 254-276.

could and could not speak to God, communicate for God, or recognize divine attributes and meaning, was a regulated talent that informed kyriarchial structures within devotional communities. Discussions about prophecy erected boundaries for the purpose of regulating divine access and restricting access to divine knowledge in the hands of those chosen communicators. Prophecy that was accepted as truthful was an epistemological and authoritative defining act. Prophecy that was false, or misleading, was counterfeit and contained spiritually corrupt claims. As I will argue below, Eve and Norea's prophetic acts make claims about their access to truth beyond the archons' knowledge, as well as the ability of sexual violence to regulate epistemological access.

Before entering my analysis of the text, a further understanding of its narrative is required. While the text draws from familiar biblical sources, such as Genesis, the construction of its worldview is unique and not especially familiar beyond the Nag Hammadi corpus. The following summary lays out the logic of the source to support the reader with forthcoming analysis.

HypArch has two defining sections: an exegetical reading of the creation narrative in Genesis; and, the prophetic revelation Norea, the text's putative hero, receives from an angel. It is this revelation that outlines the truth about the spiritual and material world and the ruling powers. By establishing Eve and Norea as challengers to the archons' false rule, *HypArch* demonstrates their epistemological validity against the spiritually corrupt claims of the archons. The narrative opens with quotations from *Colossians* (1:13) and *Ephesians* (6:12), refers to the great apostle (Paul), and frames its narrative as a teaching text by suggesting that the author is responding to a query about the nature of the worldly rulers. The text reads, "Concerning the reality of the authorities, the great apostle, through the spirit of the Father of truth, referred to the authorities of darkness and told us 'Our struggle is not against flesh and [blood] but against the authorities of the world and the spirits of wickedness.' I have sent you this writing because you

have asked about the real nature of the authorities." [87] Directly following these opening lines begins the retelling of the *Genesis* creation myth. Here, we meet an arrogantly misguided archon boasting to the world that it is the one and only god, a scene I will return to later in the chapter.[88] In the revelatory portion of the text, we learn that this archon is the byproduct of a cosmic accident where Sophia, a divine figure from the world above, wanted to create something without her male consort. From her efforts, the material world accidentally emerges and in this shadow realm of matter, the arrogant beast of an archon is born. He now rules over this shadow realm in delusion with his like-minded offspring, unaware of his birth story or the real limits of his power. Here, upon boasting of his false sense of divine superiority, Incorruptibility, a power from the world above, responds to these claims by naming this archon Samael, which the text tells us means blind god.[89] While looking down onto the material realm, Incorruptibility's image reflects on the water.[90] When the worldly archons look at the image, they immediately lust after it. The archons are caught up in this type of feverish lust three times in the text: first, when they see the reflection of Incorruptibility on the waters;[91] second, later in the narrative, when the group of them come upon Eve;[92] and, third, when this same group of archons find Norea.[93] Like their delusion about the nature of the cosmos, aggressive sexual lust is a characteristic that comes to define the archons and these scenes will be taken up in detail in this chapter, or the next.

As the narrative continues, the archons fashion a man out of the soil in their image to capture the divine image of Incorruptibility they saw reflected on the water. Their goal in creating this being is to grasp the ungraspable image of Incorruptibility through their creation. The

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[87] NHC II, 86: 20-27, ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲑⲩⲡⲟⲥⲧⲁⲥⲓⲥ ⲛⲛⲉⲍⲟⲛⲥⲓⲁ ⲉⲙ̄ ⲡⲡⲛⲁ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲓⲱⲧ ⲧ̀ⲛ̄ⲧⲙⲉ ⲁⲫⲁⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ⲃⲓ ⲡⲛⲟⲃ ⲛ̄ⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲛⲉⲍⲟⲛⲥⲓⲁ ⲛ̄ⲡⲕⲁⲕⲉ ⲇⲉ ⲡⲛ̄ⲱⲱⲇⲉ ⲩⲟⲟⲡ ⲧ̀ⲁⲛ ⲟⲩⲃⲉ ⲥⲁⲣⲍ ⲉⲓ [ⲥⲛⲟ]ⲩ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲉⲩ ⲧ̀ⲟⲩⲃⲉ ⲛⲉⲍⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ ⲙ̄ⲡⲕⲟⲥ[ⲙⲟⲥ] ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛⲉⲩⲙⲁⲧⲓⲕⲟⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲡⲟⲛⲏⲣⲓⲁ [ⲁⲉⲓ]ⲇⲉⲛⲉ ⲛⲁⲉⲓ ⲉⲕⲱⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲑⲩⲡⲟⲥⲧⲁ[ⲥⲓⲥ ⲛ̄<ⲛ̄>]ⲉⲍⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ⸗

[88] This scene echos the sentiment expressed in *Isa* 45:5 but the God of the Hebrew Bible, "I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God."

[89] NHC II, 87: 1-3, I will expand on this scene later in the chapter.

[90] This mirrors the first scene in the creation narrative where God's face hovers over the waters of the unformed earth, *Gen* 1:1.

[91] NHC II, 87: 13-15

[92] NHC II, 89: 20-31

[93] NHC II, 92: 19- 31

archons, however, are still ignorant of the limits of their powers, and when they blow on the mudman's face, they are unable to animate their creation. The Spirit, a power from the world above, sees the creation lying listlessly on the ground and animates him. In doing so, the Spirit establishes itself within the creation and names this being Adam on account of it found lying on the ground. Here the text follows major markers of the *Genesis* creation myth. Adam names the animals and takes up residence in a garden.[94] The archons allow Adam to eat freely from any tree, except one, from which, eventually, he and Eve do eat.[95] As in *Genesis*, this action spurs the pair's banishment from the garden of paradise. Before this banishment, however, Eve is made from Adam's side and acquires the spirit instilled in him from when he was animated by the Spirit. Through her birth, the text says Eve leaves Adam with only a soul.[96]

In contrast to *Genesis*, after this exchange of spirit between Adam and Eve, Eve speaks to Adam, making him rise as the Spirit did before her. It is a feat the archons themselves are unable to perform that demonstrates Eve's power and connection to the world above, and will be taken up at length later in the chapter. Eating from the forbidden tree is framed as an act of liberation here. The serpent is not a deceptive character looking to lure Adam and Eve away from the perfection of God. Instead, the serpent is called the Instructor, one who teaches Adam and Eve about the truth contained within the fruit of the forbidden tree. This Instructor encourages Eve to eat and learn from the proscribed fruit. Eve eats from the tree and feeds it to Adam and as a result, the two come to understand truths about the world. Subsequently, they are kicked out of the garden by the archons. After this banishment, they have four children. The fourth child, Norea, is the text's saviour, and the only child not found in *Genesis*.[97] She receives the angelic revelation about the true creation of the world which makes up the second half of the text. It is here, with

[94] *Gen*. 2:19-20
[95] *Gen*. 3.
[96] *Gen*. 2:18-23
[97] The other three named children of Adam and Eve are Cain, Abel, and Seth, NHC II 91:11-31.

Norea's revelation from the angel Eleleth, that *HypArch* wholeheartedly diverges from the Genesis creation myth and presents its cosmogony.

Eleleth's teaching describes the origin of the material world and elaborates on the archons' creation. He explains that Sophia, a power from the world above wanted to create something without her male counterpart. The byproduct of this attempt was an androgynous beast, but because the beast was of matter, a veil was created between the world above and the material world below. The androgynous beast took this shadowy material realm for himself and boasted of his supreme power over it. We have seen this pronouncement play out during the opening of the text, when Incorruptibility names the archon Samael. According to Eleleth's revelation, the archon created seven children in his likeness and taught them his lie of supreme power. Upon hearing this, Zoe the daughter of Sophia, yielded her fiery breath to bind this chief beast and cast him into the abyss, a scene I explore in the next chapter. Sophia enthroned Sabaoth, one of the beasts' androgynous children who had repented his actions to Zoe and Sophia, as ruler over the shadowy realm. For her effort, Zoe was placed at the right hand of this new ruler of the material realm as a bridge between the world above and the world below while instructing them on the truth of the world above. Eleleth explains that human death was created in this moment, when the cast out archon became envious for the power he once had. The text reads, "When Yaldabaoth saw Sabaoth exalted in such great glory on high, he envied him, and his envy became something androgynous. This was the beginning of envy. Envy produced death, death produced children, and death put each in charge of a heaven."[98] His envy for the power now held by his replacement created human death. The text concludes with Eleleth telling Norea that her offspring will know this truth, and that their divine parentage will immunize them from this death. Several of these plot points will be analyzed further, throughout this chapter, and the next.

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[98] NHC II 96:3-9, ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲣⲉⲓⲁⲗⲇⲁⲃⲁⲱⲑ ⲁⲉ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ ⲉⲩⲯⲟⲟⲡ ⲉ̄ⲙ̄ ⲡⲉⲓ ⲛⲟⲃ ⲛ̄ⲉⲟⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ ⲡⲉⲉⲓⲇⲓⲥⲉ ⲁⲩⲕⲱⲥ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲡⲕⲱⲥ ⲯⲱⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲉⲣⲅⲟⲛ ⲉⲩⲟ ⲛ̄ⲥⲟⲟⲛⲧⲥⲓⲙⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲡⲉⲓ ⲯⲱⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ⲁⲣⲭⲏ ⲙ̄ⲡⲕⲱⲥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲡⲕⲱⲥ ϧⲡⲉ ⲡⲙⲟⲩ ⲁⲡⲙⲟⲩ ⲁⲉ ϧⲛⲟ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲩⲯⲏⲣⲉ

WOMEN'S MOUTHS: A SITE FOR SEXUAL VIOLATION

When the archons rape Eve the text describes the assault as the rape of "the seal of her voice."[99] This rape scene is gruesome, depicting a group rape on the first human woman, and nestled in it is this phrase drawing her voice into the imagery of sexual violation. The text reads,

> When they [the archons] saw his [Adam] female partner speaking with him, they became aroused and lusted after her. They said to each other, "Come let's ejaculate our semen in her," and they chased her. But she laughed at them because of their foolishness and blindness. In their grasp she turned into a tree, and when she left for them a shadow of herself that looked like her, they defiled it sexually. They defiled the seal of her voice, and so they convicted themselves through the form they had shaped in their own image.[100]

The scene depicts a spiritual escape for Eve where her spiritual self transforms into a tree becoming untouchable to the archons. In this transformation, Eve does abandon her material self to be assaulted, and it is in violating this version of Eve that the archons' rape the seal of her voice. The phrase indicates that Eve's voice is likewise violated in the archons' attack. In other words, in assaulting her sexed body, the archons affect her voice as well. The phrase is peculiar, but this connection between sexual violence and women's mouths is not unique in antiquity. Both Ovid's *Metamorphosis* and the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* preserve narratives where a woman is silenced by having her tongue removed after being sexually violated. Sexual violence, metaphorically and physically, silences in these stories.[101]

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[99] NHC II 89:28-29, ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲩϫⲱⲥⲙ̄ ⲛ̄ⲧⲥⲫⲣⲁϫ[ⲥ] ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲥⲥⲙⲏ.

[100] NHC II 89:19-31, ⲣⲟⲩⲛⲁⲩ ⲁⲉ ⲁⲧⲉⲩ ⸗ ⲱⲃⲣ̄ⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲥⲱⲁϩⲉ ⲛⲙ̄. ⲙⲁⲩ ⸗ ⲁⲩⲱⲧⲟⲣⲧⲣ̄ ⲥⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲃ ⲛ̄ⲱⲧⲟⲣⲧⲣ̄ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲩⲙⲉⲣⲉⲓⲧⲥ̄ ⲡⲉϫⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲉⲣⲏⲩ ⲁⲉ ⲁⲙⲏⲉⲓⲧⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ⲧⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩϫⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛ̄ⲥⲡⲉⲣ ⸗ ⲙⲁ ⲉⲃⲣⲁⲓ ⲉϫⲱⲥ ⸗ ⲁⲩⲣ̄ ⲁⲓⲱⲕⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲥⲥⲱⲃⲉ ⲛ̄ⲥⲱⲟⲩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲥⲛ̄ ⲧⲟⲩⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧ ⸗ ⲟⲛⲧ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲩⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲃⲗ̄ⲗⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲥⲣ̄ ⲟⲩⲱⲛⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲟⲧⲟⲩ ⲁⲥⲕⲱ ⲛⲧⲉⲥⲃⲁⲓⲃⲉⲥ ⲉ[ⲥ]ⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ⲃⲁⲧⲟⲟⲧⲟⲩ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲩϫⲟⲩⲙ[ⲉⲥ] ⲥⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲥⲱⲩ ⸗ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲩϫⲱⲥⲙ̄ ⲛ̄ⲧⲥⲫⲣⲁϫ[ⲥ] ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲥⲥⲙⲏ ⲱⲓⲛⲁ ⲉⲩⲛⲁⲣ̄ ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲕⲣⲓⲛ[ⲉ] ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲟⲩⲁⲁⲩ ⲥⲙ̄ ⲡⲟⲩⲡⲗⲁⲥⲙⲁ ⲙ[ⲛ̄ ⲡⲉⲥ] ⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲁⲥⲉⲓ.

[101] Karen King draws on Ovid's narrative of Apollo's attempted rape of Daphne as an intertextual reference for spiritual Eve's transformation into a tree during this rape scene. Like Daphne, spiritual Eve transforms into a tree to escape the clutches of her would-be rapist. However, unlike Daphne, material Eve remains subject to the sexual violence of her predator. For King, this is reminiscent of contemporary descriptions of disassociation during assault described by some survivors. King sees a divergence in the archons' rape of Eve and Apollo's attempted rape of Daphne when it comes to violent male authority. For King, this critique of misplaced, male power is integral to the worldview of *HypArch*, and it is missing in the *Metamorphosis*. See King, "Ridicule and Rape," 15.

In book VI of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, Philomela, a princess of Athens, is raped by her sister Procne's husband, King Tereus of Thrace, after he escorts her to Thrace under the pretense of visiting her sister.[102] When Philomela threatens to tell Procne about the assault, Tereus proceeds to cut out Philomela's tongue to keep her silent. This scene brings the grotesque nature of rape to an even more disturbing level when Tereus not only butchers Philomela's mouth, rendering her mute, but then becomes erotically stimulated again, leading him to rape Philomela for a second time. This second rape emphasizes the seemingly unsurmountable power disadvantage faced by Philomela. Tereus leaves the battered and partially dismembered Philomela imprisoned in a cabin, isolated from the world, unable to scream for help. Tereus's attempt to silence Philomela fails, however, as she weaves the story of her assault into a tapestry which ultimately informs Procne of the violence and betrayal. She communicates not through language, but a highly gendered, domesticated art. Upon receiving that tapestry and learning of her husband's violations, Procne herself is rendered mute, unable to find the words to express herself.[103] Procne enacts revenge on her sister's behalf by killing, cooking, and serving her son by Tereus to him in a meal. The sisters reveal the cannibalistic truth to Tereus and eventually turn into songbirds to escape his wrath. Through the grisly narrative, Ovid juxtaposes themes of rape, silence, and power to create a tale of sorority and female transformation.

The *Acts of Andrew* (*Acts Andr.*) likewise includes a narrative which ties together sexual violence and the physical assault of a woman's mouth. In this narrative, an enslaved woman Euclia is tasked with having intercourse with her male owner, Aegeates, in lieu of her mistress and his wife, Maximilla. After hearing Andrew's teachings about Jesus, Maximilla adopts a chaste lifestyle and uses Euclia as a type of surrogate or body double without her husband's knowledge so that Maximilla can maintain her chastity. When Aegeates discovers the ruse, he becomes enraged and tortures Euclia by cutting out her tongue then mutilating her body. The text reads "As for Euclia,

[102] Ov. *Met*. 6.424-674
[103] Ov. *Met*. 6.581-585

he cut out her tongue and cut off her hands and feet, ordering that she be cast out, and after remaining some days without nourishment she became food for the dogs (22:4)."[104] As punishment for her role in the sex scheme and for openly speaking about it, Aegeates tortures and murders Euclia. The dynamic is slightly different than the archons' rape of Eve and Tereus' rape of Philomela in that Euclia seems to be a willing participant in the arrangement. As an enslaved woman, however, Euclia's consent was null in fulfilling her owners wishes. The power dynamic between Euclia, Maximilla, and Aegeates puts this sexual encounter within the bounds of a sexually violent act. This is affirmed in Aegeates' ability to violate and mortally neglect Euclia when he learns the truth.

Ovid is clear in his recount of Tereus' rape of Philomela that this attack rendered her mute. Tereus makes it impossible for Philomela to speak after his second assault by cutting out her tongue. In the *Acts Andr*., Euclia dies after Aegates cuts out her tongue, amplifying the erasure of her voice. Unlike Philomela and Euclia, however, Eve's voice is not rendered mute by the archons' assault. With the birth of her daughter Norea, which I will consider in more detail in the following chapter, Eve announces that "He has produced for me a virgin to help many generations,"[105] a line unquestionably marked as Eve's direct speech in the text. The rape of Eve does not do any damage to her ability to speak, yet at the same time the text marks her voice as a target of the assault when it states that the archons "raped the seal of her voice." If Eve was not rendered mute by the attack, what are the implications of the phrase, and why is it a consequence of the archons rape? I demonstrate below that this connection relies on a linkage between women's voices and mouths, with their reproductive body in the ancient world.

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[104] Edgar Hennecke, "The Acts of Andrew," in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 2.XIII: 101-151.

[105] NHC II, 91:35- 92:2, ⲁⲉ ⲁⲫⲭⲡⲟ ⲛⲁ[ⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲡⲁⲣ ⲑⲉ] ⲛⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲃⲟⲏⲑⲉⲓⲁ [ⲫⲛ̄] ⲛ̄ⲅⲉⲛⲉⲁ ⲛ̄ⲅⲉⲛⲉⲁ ⲛ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ.

Women's Mouths a Synecdoche for Female Genitalia

Women's mouths were a synecdoche for their genitalia in the ancient world, forever entwining these two bodily orifices. Medical philosophies of the body supported this conception of women's bodies. Women's mouths and reproductive organs were understood to be physiologically connected, where treatments of one area would extend to the other. The direct influence of a woman's mouth on her reproductive body, or her vagina's effect on her mouth, was ancient medical science. Therefore, when the text draws Eve's voice into its description of the archons' rape, it is drawing on this symbiotic relationship between women's mouths and their genitalia. In assaulting her sexual body, the text extends this violence as having an impact on her voice.

The head, and in particular the mouth, was perpetually identified with genital and reproductive organs. As Dale Martin explains, while contemporary language reflects the long-established connection with words like "lips" and "mouth" serving as an innuendo for labia and uterus, ancient physicians so connected the two regions that what was happening in one region would directly affect what transpired in the other. Aristotle suggested that a uterus should be moist during intercourse the way a mouth would salivate for food when hungry. Another physician told women trying to conceive to avoid baths or wetting their heads after sex so as not to deter a seed from taking inside their bodies. And women who competed in singing competitions were believed to stop menstruating.[106] More so, diagnosis for one area was often linked to the other. Nose bleeds in women, for example, were considered a surplus of menses and were treated as such.[107] Women's heads were entangled with their reproductive anatomy and genitalia.

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[106] Maud Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome (*Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 96.

[107] Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 237-238. For more discussion on the association between heads and women's genitalia in the ancient world see Thomas Laqueur, *Having Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990); and, Howard Eilberg-Schwartz and Wendy Doniger, eds., *Off with her Head! The Denial of Women's Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

This connection extended beyond the physical body into the social world where women's speech became a synecdoche for their sexuality. These two areas, speech and sexuality, routinely surfaced in the reflections of moralists on women's social behaviour. Ultimately, what a woman said, or how she said it, was an ancient exposure akin to nakedness according to these sources. For example, in her study on ancient rhetoric and the construction of masculinity *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome*, Maud Gleason explains that public speaking was a way to fashion and sustain masculinity. She likewise attests that the opposite was true for women, that speaking in public for women was a dangerous affair.[108] In her chapter titled, "Aerating the Flesh," Gleason recounts a narrative recorded by Plutarch where the moralist champions Pythagoras' wife for her short retort to an onlooker when her arm escaped her sleeve while in public. She quickly counters the unsolicited comment on her exposed arm and stops the interaction. The following are Plutarch's reflections on the exchange: "The arm of a virtuous woman should not be public property, nor her speech, *and she should as modestly guard against exposing her voice to outsiders as she would guard against stripping off her clothes*. For in her voice as she's gabbing can be read her emotions, her character, and her physical condition."[109] Plutarch's musings on the scene demonstrate the relationality integral to women's sexuality and their speech in the second century. In his reflection on the scene, Plutarch equates women's speech with their sexuality, stating that neither should be borne in public. Women's voices were gateways to internal exposures on par with nakedness. Speaking in public was a threatening event that left them open and vulnerable on account of the sexualized implication of women's voices.

This association between women's sexuality and their speech extended into later Christian history with Clement of Alexandria recounting Plutarch's above reflections in his Stromata.[110] However, during the Christological controversies, the conflation between a woman's mouth and her sexuality emerged as prime theological fodder. In her article, "Word and Flesh: The Bodies

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[108] Gleason, *Making Men*, 98.
[109] Plutarch, Mor. 142D, emphasis from Gleason, *Making Men*, 98.
[110] Clem. Strom. 4.522C

and Sexuality of Ascetic Women in Christian Antiquity," Virginia Burrus demonstrates how the bodies of virgins were used by early church fathers to demarcate orthodox theology against competing ideas. The perceived untouched sexual state of a virgin extended to the scripture and theological ideas she would recite, suggesting a symmetry between her sexuality and the integrity of what she spoke. As the virgin came to represent orthodox Christianity, the sexed harlot emerged as her heretical counterpart. In the way that the virgin refrained from sexual activity and spouted correct doctrine, the harlot was especially sexualized and spoke false teachings. For both female figures, speaking had direct implications regarding their sexuality. Burrus explains,

> If the virgin represents a community whose boundaries are intact, the heretical harlot expresses the threatening image of a community whose boundaries are uncontrolled. Just as she allows herself to be sexually penetrated by strange men, so too she listens indiscriminately and babbles forth new theological formulations carelessly and without restrain: all the gateways of her body are unguarded.[111]

The harlot's voice surfaces to reflect the actions of her sexed body. Her sexual acts directly impact the product of her voice, and by extension, her spiritual integrity. Entangled together in the figures of the pious virgin and heretical harlot are concepts of sexuality, voice, and spiritual authority.

What the early church fathers are doing here is extending the logic of Greco-Roman moralists, like Plutarch, that assumed right and correct behaviour through the actions of speech. In particular, the logic that women's speech reflected their sexual state, and that their sexual activity (present or absent) could be deduced through their vocal actions. There was an understanding that the moral quality of a woman could be realized through the symbiotic relationship between her mouth and reproductive organs. Goodness, sexuality, and speech were formidably intertwined. However, we see this logic already transpiring in sources from the second century, that the spiritual quality of a woman was entangled with her speech and sexuality. The archons' rape of Eve in *HypArch* neatly demonstrates this logic. In raping Eve, the archons rape

[111] Virginia Burrus, "Word and Flesh: The Bodies and Sexuality of Ascetic Women in Christian Antiquity," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 10.1 (1994): 36.

the seal of her voice. The sexually violent effects of the archons target her sexed body and by extension compromise her voice with the same actions. More so, the sexually violent actions that compromise her voice likewise interrupt her spiritual abilities. In raping Eve, the archons disrupt the spiritual work channeled through her voice. As we will see in the next section, they destroy her prophetic capacity.

EVE: A PROPHET

As depicted in *HypArch*, Eve is a prophet.[112] She plays host to an authorizing force from the world above that grants her abilities beyond those available in the material world and this relationship with the world above is reciprocal.[113] Eve's prophetic abilities provide her with evidence of the false rule of the archons and grant her a privileged status in the material world demonstrated through superhuman feats. Both her actions in the text and the text's language to describe her support this prophetic title. In particular, the description of Eve's voice as "sealed" points to a rich history of prophecy and divine authorization. This prophetic station granted her knowledge and abilities beyond that available in the material world. She used these superhuman

[112] I understand the term *prophecy* to refer to the experience of human communication with an otherworldly force in the broadest sense. This includes, but is not limited to, prophecy, divination, fortune telling, dreams, visions, prayers, healings, and speaking in tongues. Kim Beerden's definition of divination provides the framework for my conception of prophecy. She explains, "divination is that human action of production–by means of evocation or observation and recognition—and subsequent interpretation of signs attributed to the supernatural. These signs can be anything which the supernatural is perceived to place in the world with the intention to communicate, whether evoked or unprovoked, whether visible, auditory, tactile, olfactory, or gustatory: in all cases the individual must recognize a sign as coming from the supernatural in order to consider it as a divinatory sign." Divination and prophecy are two (of many) terms used to identify the same phenomenon. I choose the term prophecy over others because of the moralizing discourses populated of perceived "lesser" prophetic acts in my subject material. Considering all communication with superhuman forces as part of a prophetic matrix is my effort to not reinforce this moralizing language. See my introduction for more on my use of the term prophecy. Beerden, *Worlds Full of Signs*, 20, 26.

[113] Eve's identity, alongside the forces from the world above that intercede in the material world, is slippery and difficult to discern at times. Eve's identity can be evasive as it is entangled with figures whose names are that other than Eve. For example, the female spiritual presence that embodies the snake was once part of Eve before her disassociation from the archons' attack. The different names of the embodied figure and spiritual figure gestures to the importance placed on the division of the spiritual and material persons in many Nag Hammadi sources such as *HypArch*. This division reflects a worldview that understands the body as a false reality separate from the spiritual self. Accounting for these distinctions, I anchor the figure of Eve in this analysis through the character's pairing with Adam throughout the text to avoid conflating this figure with others in the narrative.

abilities to pay witness to the false rule of the archons. In turn, the archons rape Eve, destroying her prophetic connection and her ability to supersede their power with her otherworldly abilities. In the case of *HypArch*, the text employs Eve as a prophet, describing her as a bridge between this world and the world above. It also signifies this prophetic status to the reader at the moment that archons rape her, an attack that ultimately dissolves Eve's prophetic position.

The Seal of Eve's Voice

When the text explains that the archons' rape the seal of Eve's voice in their group rape, it signifies that in raping Eve, the archons are attacking her prophetic abilities. Situating the phrase, *the seal of Eve's voice*, within the history of seals in antiquity, Eve's voice emerges as a site of divine knowledge that challenges the archons' version of reality where they are the supreme rulers. The use of seal imagery to describe her defiled voice signifies both Eve's role as a prophet in the text and the archons' aim to corrupt it.

Seals in antiquity had several different functions primarily working to certify that which they sealed. They were an ancient custom where impressions were left intentionally on objects, documents, and letters. The word, seal, can suggest either the object that formed the uniquely designed mark or the mark itself. The custom was widespread in the ancient world with elite Roman families and persons, legal officiants, and other civic offices possessing their own uniquely designed seal. Seals existed as cones, cylinders, impressing tools, and rolling devices where they would be pressed into a malleable surface, often clay, or have a small amount of a soft substance poured onto a document and then impressed by the device. The mirrored impression provided a one-of-a-kind marking that was difficult to reproduce. In this way seals functioned as both official and personal security for documents and letters, often travelling between hands, while they also

attested that what arrived was something sent from the named sender. They were certification against tampering or forgery, used for both personal and civic authentication.[114]

The term seal appears in various sources that can be affiliated with *HypArch* by content, date, or manuscript collection. In these sources seal imagery is invoked to ariculate and develop rituals such as baptism,[115] or to validate prophetic messages. However, I read the use of seal in HypArch as a marker of prophecy and situate it within that literary history. In the Hebrew Bible, for example, the imagery of seals is invoked to talk about the exchange of divine knowledge either directly from God or through a divinely sanctioned messenger. The metaphor of the seal being drawn upon to speak to the authentication of a heavenly message as seals functioned to certify letters and documents in daily life. In Isaiah, the image of a seal is used to describe prophetic

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[114] "Sphragís [seal], sphragízō [to seal], katasphragízō [to seal up]." *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Abr. ed., eds., Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 1127-1129.

[115] Within the Nag Hammadi codices there is an initiation ritual referred to as the Five Seal Baptism. It is a ritual associated with visionary ascent and descent and the acquisition of esoteric knowledge. Mention of this ritual is included, with various level of detail, in seven texts: SRJ, Three Forms of First Thought, The Gospel of the Egyptians, Melchizedek, Marsanes, The Apocalypse of Adam, and Zostrianos. As it relates to this analysis, the archons' rape of Eve intersects with the description of this ritual in Three Forms of First Thought (or Trimorphic Protennoia) via the texts' shared notions of speech and gender. The three forms of first thought are voice, speech, and word. John Turner describes these three forms as follows, "The Voice is said to be the unpolluted spring from which flows Living Water, characterized as a radiant light. The Word, bearing Living Fruit, pays the tribute of this Fruit to the Living Water, which it pours out upon Protennoia's 'Spirit' which originated from the Living Water but is now trapped in the soul below." Turner's description demonstrates how both gender and speech characterize the Five Seal Baptism suggesting that it would be a good conversation partner for this analysis of Eve. However, the seal referred to in *HypArch* cannot be that of the Five Seal Baptism because of the archons' ability to destroy the seal of Eve's voice. This would be an impossible feat by worldly underlings if the seal was the spiritual marker described by the Five Seal Baptism ritual. Instead, I suggest that the seal of Eve's voice be read next to seals in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, where the term is used to demarcate heavenly distinction and divine certification. For more on the Five Seal Baptism in Three Forms of First Thought see: John Turner, "To See the Light: A Gnostic Appropriation of Jewish Priestly Practice and Sapiential and Apocalyptic Visionary Lore," in *Mediators of the Divine: Horizons of Prophecy and Divination on Mediterranean Antiquity,* ed. R. Berchman (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 63-113. The development of seals in association with baptism is not unique to the Five Seal Baptism. *The Shepard of Hermas,* for example, was a widely circulated second century visionary text that repeatedly refers to baptism as a seal. For more on the Shepard of Hermas see: Carolyn Osiek, *The Shepard of Hermas: A Commentary*, ed. Helmut Koester (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1999). Similarly, in the Acts of Paul and Thecla, Thecla uses the term seal as a synonym for baptism in *ATh* 3.25. The following chapter discusses this scene in more detail, but also see: Jeremy Barrier, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla: A Cristical Introduction and Commentary* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009). While these texts articulate a history of association between baptism and sealing, I read the occurrence of seal in *HypArch* as one that fits with the tradition of seals as markers of divinity and the divine's chosen on earth. I read the seal of Eve's voice as a marker of prophecy.

imagery, where divine knowledge is shared and compared to a sealed document.[116] In this sense, the prophetic images are certified from God in the same fashion as an officially sealed document would be; in other words, there is no doubt to the authenticity of the vision. In some instances, seals are used in relation to divine knowledge being withheld from those who are not ready to receive it, as a sort of protection device, or as a revelatory lock ensuring the divine information remains contained and untampered. In *Daniel*, for example, God commands Daniel to withhold secret knowledge until the end of days. It is information that must not be exposed until a particular time, and Daniel must contain it.[117] Here, the seal is used to ensure that the knowledge remains protected.

In *HypArch*, the Coptic term for the seal of Eve's voice is *sphragis*. While the text is written in Coptic, this word *sphragis* is Greek (σφραγὶς). Greek vocabulary supplied the foundation for much of the developing Coptic language. *Sphragis* is recorded thirty-two times in the New Testament, and of these thirty-two usages, thirty continue with the theme established in the Hebrew Bible associating the word seal with the divine, or divine certification.[118] Revelation accounts for twenty-two of the thirty-two usages with its infamous narrative of the seven seals in its apocalyptic vision.[119] The other ten occurrences of *sphragis* exist in the *Gospel of John* (*John*), *Romans* (*Rom*), *1 and 2 Corinthians* (*1-2 Cor*), *Ephesians* (*Eph)*, and *2 Timothy* (*2 Tim*).[120] The usages vary in content among these texts, but in each instance, the term seal is used to describe something that is divinely authorized or approved.

Consider *John* 6:27, and *2 Tim* 2.19, for example. *Sphragis* explicitly refers to the seal of God, expressing a form of divine certification. In *John*, the term emerges from the lips of Jesus saying, "Do not work of the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which

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[116] NRSV Isaiah 29:11, "The vision of all this has become for you like the words of a sealed document."
[117] NRSV *Daniel* 12:4, "But you, Daniel, keep the words secret and the book sealed until the time of the end."
[118] The two reference that use σφραγὶς but not in this fashion are *Rev* 20:3, and *Matt* 27:66
[119] All the references to seal in Revelation, as well as the single use that is an exception *Rev* 20:3
[120] *Matt* 27:66 uses the term in regards to sealing up the tomb of Jesus, which doesn't fit the pattern being explored here.

the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal."[121] Here Jesus is describing the Son of Man as having been authenticated with the seal of God, or, in other words, that the Son of Man comes with the authority of God. In *2 Tim*, *sphragis* is employed to describe the direct speech of God, described as a foundation in lieu of false prophets. The text reads, "But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this inscription (σφραγῖδα) 'The Lord knows those who are his,' and, 'Let everyone who calls on this name of the Lord turn away from wickedness.'" Much like a letter would carry the seal of the individual who wrote or certified its contents, so too does God's direct speech bear a seal signifying its Owner in this inscription.

Eph and *2 Cor* 1:22 use the concept of a seal of God but in a slightly different fashion, articulating the relationship between the true believer and the Holy Spirit through seal imagery. In both passages, the impression of the Holy Spirit is described as a seal on the true believer. Here, seals and the Holy Spirit are cooperative markers of a true believer, working to certify a person's belief. In contrast, *Rom* 4.11 and *1 Cor* 9.2 use *sphragis* more broadly, but still in association with the divine. Both letters employ the term seal to describe the spiritual association of a person, ultimately indicating some form of spiritual authentication or authority. *Rom* 4.11 for example, adopts the imagery of circumcision as a seal of God, while in *1 Cor*, Paul adopts seal imagery to describe his relationship between his Corinthian audience and the authenticity of his apostleship.

With two exceptions[122], each time *sphragis* appears in the New Testament it is a marker of divine approval or authentication. Whether as a descriptor of the coming apocalypse, carrying prophetic messages of the end of days, or as God's authentication marked onto people who have accepted His message, seals carry with them images of divine association, and by extension spiritual authentication. What can be deduced from this consideration of seals, is that there was an established history in the ancient world associating seals with the divine, carrying with them

[121] *Jn* 6:27, ἐργὰζεσθε μὴ τὴνβρῶσιν τὴν ἀπολλυμένην ἀλλὰ τὴν βρῶσιν τὴν μένουσαν εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, ἥν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὑμιν δώσει˙ τοῦτον γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ ἐσφράγισεν ὁ θεός.
[122] New Testament usages of *sphragis* not taken up in the body of the text are *Rom* 15:28 and *John* 3:33. Paul uses the term in *Rom* 15 as a way of describing completing a mission to the Gentiles. The term is applied in John as an affirmation by those who accept the message of God's messenger.

meaning of heavenly authentication and connection. More so, seals were signifiers of prophetic communication and endorsement. Eve's voice demonstrates this history of seals and prophetic communication. What the archons rape then, is a divine marker, attribution, or authentication. In raping the seal of her voice, the archons mar that divine certification and strip her of her prophetic power. By targeting her sexual body, her voice is likewise under attack. Their rape then restricts her spiritual abilities and she is "cut off" from the divine part that once, quite literally, dwelled within her. The seal of Eve's voice signifies her spiritual certification from the world above in *HypArch*.

The Power of Eve's Voice

If Eve's voice before her assault carries a heavenly certification that it carries truth and knowledge from the world above – truth and knowledge that knows of the archons' qualified station and understands the limits to the archons' power and authority – then her voice holds a potential power over the archons. As I will argue in the following section, Eve's voice demonstrates abilities beyond the archons' capabilities. It does things that they cannot. In this sense, Eve's voice is a manifestation of the truth about reality that reveals the omnipotent shortcomings of the archons. Eve's voice qualifies and challenges the archons' reality, and in raping Eve, they undermine her voice. The archons' rape of Eve then, the rape of the seal of her voice, targets a cosmic vessel bearing power beyond their own. Eve's female voice becomes a space where cosmic truth is being contested through the imagery of rape and sexual violence.

Another Nag Hammadi source*, On the Origin of the World* (*OnOrig*),[123] also includes the rape of Eve and can offer the insight needed to better understand this rape scene and the logic behind the phrase *the seal of her voice*. *OnOrig* appears after *HypArch* in codex II of the Nag

[123] NHC II.5, *OnOrig* is a modern title given to the unnamed source in the Nag Hammadi library that takes up issues of creation and elaborates on the origins of the world. The text is best preserved in NHC II, but fragments do exist in the British Library, as well as a poorly preserved fragment in NHC XIII. For more on the text, see: Louis Painchaud, *L'Écrit sans Titre: Traité sur L'Origine du Monde (NH II,5 et XIII,2 et Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(1)) (BCNH "Textes" no 21)* (Québec: Les Presses de l'université Laval, 1995).

Hammadi library. The texts share many narrative points and exegetical goals, suggesting that the two are related in some fashion even if they do not necessarily share a redaction history.[124] For example, both texts are exegetical readings of *Genesis* 1-3 highlighting their own etiological priorities. Both texts, however, turn the cosmological logic of *Genesis* on its head, and instead of a purposeful creation narrative, *HypArch* and *OnOrig* present a creation filled with chaos and misplaced power. A major diversion from *Genesis* is the depiction of the God of *Genesis*, called Yaldabaoth/Ialdabaoth, as a false, ignorant demigod who rapes, lies, and is generally a brute. Similarly, Eve is not responsible for the fall of humanity in these retellings but is instead framed as the protoheroine for humanity who is gruesomely raped by the false god and his goons. There is robust evidence of Jewish, Christian, and Egyptian influences in *OnOrig*, like *HypArch*, leaving its classification as both wide-reaching, and difficult to isolate.

OnOrig and *HypArch* both describe the worldly powers rape of Eve as the raping of the seal of her voice. Unlike *HypArch*, which offers no elaboration on the peculiar expression, *OnOrig* offers additional lines of explanation for the vicious attack. The text reads "They defiled her in ways natural and obscene. First, they defiled the seal of her voice, which had said to them, 'What exists before you?' In this way, they meant also to defile those who say that they were born at the end of the age through the word, through the true human."[125] Here, the text is making connections between the rape of Eve and the correction to the chief archon's claim that he was indeed the one and only God. In *OnOrig*, Pistis is the female being from the world above that corrects the archon and calls him Samael, or blind god.[126] At this moment, Pistis expounds on Samael's claim and attests that an enlightened, immortal human does exist before him. In her analysis of the rape of Eve in these sources, Celene Lillie explains that *OnOrig* seems to offer two-fold reasoning as to why the archons rape Eve. Lillie writes:

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[124] Sources that say *OnOrig* knew of *HypArch*, or that both worked independently with the same sources. For more on this conversation see: Nicola Denzey Lewis, *Introduction to "Gnosticism": Ancient Voices, Christian Voices* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[125] NHC II, 117:4-11
[126] NHC II, 103:15-18

> The rulers, authorities, and angels seem to defile 'the seal of her voice' for several reasons. The first is to punish the voice that both spoke out against them and brought things into being—whether it is the voice of Pistis that told Samael the 'blind god' he was wrong or the voice that became 'a thing' or 'a work,' thus causing Adam to stand. The second reason is to halt the speech of those born of the true human through the word—for it is the word or speech that brings these children into being which they are trying to silence, and additionally the verbal witness of those children concerning their true parentage. The rulers, authorities, and angels are trying to punish words that speak the truth as they attempt again and again to cast the truth as a lie.[127]

Lillie connects this punitive silencing of the archons to our contemporary pathos of silencing survivors of rape and sexual violence. This purposeful silencing enacted by the perpetrator and those in positions of power to cast doubt on the survivor's words to make their claims seem untrustworthy and fictitious, protects the perpetrator from retribution and sustaining established power dynamics. Considering this chapter's analysis, however, it is the second reasoning of the rape named by Lillie in the above quote that is particularly interesting. Lillie argues that the archons rape the seal of Eve's voice to stop the speech of the children of the true human, speech that "brings these children into being." The term "children" here is referring to spiritual progeny–people with whom Eve shared her cosmic knowledge and truth. Sharing her knowledge would illuminate these people to the reality of the spiritual world above and populate humanity with spiritually aware beings. In raping the seal of her voice, the archons are preventing Eve from challenging their claims to truth. Here, Eve's voice has the potential to teach cosmic truths and share esoteric knowledge. She has the potential to reproduce this knowledge through teaching and sharing it with others, fostering spiritual offspring through revelation shared via her voice. The rape of the seal of her voice in *OnOrig* assures its readers of two things: Eve's voice was pedagogically fecund and possessed prophetic ability, and that the archon's rape aimed to forever sabotage those possibilities.

In the *HypArch*, however, it is Norea, not Eve, who is associated with future generations of enlightened humans.[128] Yet, in the moments Eve speaks, her voice embodies action, leadership,

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[127] Lillie, *The Rape of Eve*, 217.
[128] NHC II, 96:17-97:23

and guidance; these moments exhibit a character ripe with pedagogical overtones. Eve's voice does work in the text and demonstrates a knowledge beyond that of the archons. It functions as a voice certified with knowledge beyond that of the material world. Consider, for example, the move of her disassociated spirit when it possesses the body of the snake, its sole objective while embodied is to educate bodily Eve about the knowledge revealed to those who eat from the forbidden tree. The text reads,

> Then the female spiritual presence came in the shape of the serpent, the instructor. The serpent taught Adam and Eve and said, "What did Samael [say to] you? Did he say, 'You may eat from every tree in the garden, but do not eat from [the tree] of knowledge of good and evil'?" The woman of flesh said, "Not only did he say 'Do not eat,' but also 'Do not touch it. For the day you eat it, you will surely die'." The serpent, the instructor, said, "You will not surely die, for he said this to you out of jealousy. Rather, your eyes will open and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil."[129]

This scene, while mirroring much of the narrative preserved in *Genesis*, marks the forbidden consumption of fruit from the tree of knowledge as a moment of liberation, when Truth about the cosmos and its powers re-enters humanity. Spiritual Eve, named the instructor, educates bodily Eve (and by extension humanity) towards a cosmic liberation.

It is also significant that the image of snakes shares a history with female prophets in antiquity. For example, according to legend, Apollo conquered a great snake at the base of Mount Parnassus where it then remained guarding the deity's oracle at Delphi. The term for this great snake (*pythōn*) also simply means 'snake' and as I expand on in my fourth chapter while analyzing the prophetic enslaved girl of *Acts* 16, this term likewise suggests the Pythian oracle herself, or oracles similar to her. In her analysis of *Acts* 16, Christy Cobb includes a description of a funerary monument where both a tree and a snake feature prominently alongside a female prophet. She offers this description, "An example of a snake being connected to female oracles and religious

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[129] NHC II, 89:31-90:9, ⲁⲉⲛⲃⲓ ⲧⲡⲛⲉⲩⲙⲁⲧⲓⲕ[ⲉ ⲉⲙ] ⲫⲁⲣ ⲡⲣⲉⲩⲧⲁⲙⲟ ⲁⲛⲱ ⲁⲩⲧⲁ[ⲙⲟⲥ ⲉⲩ] ⲭⲱ ⲙⲙⲟⲥ ⲁⲉ ⲟⲩ ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩ[ⲭⲟⲟⲩ ⲛⲏ] ⲧⲛ ⲁⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲛ ⲱⲏⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ <ⲉⲧ>ⲉ[ⲙ ⲡⲡⲁⲣⲁ] ⲁⲉⲓⲥⲟⲥ ⲉⲕⲛⲁⲟⲩⲱⲙ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲁ[ⲉ ⲉⲙ ⲡⲱⲏⲛ ⲛⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛ ⲡⲉⲑⲟⲟⲩ ⲙⲛ ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲩ ⲙⲡⲣⲟⲩⲱⲙ ⲡⲉⲭⲉ ⲧⲥⲃⲓⲙⲉ ⲛⲥⲁⲣⲕⲓⲕⲉ ⲭⲉⲟⲩ ⲙⲟⲛⲟⲛ ⲡⲉⲭⲁⲩ ⲭⲉ ⲙⲛⲟⲛⲱⲙ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲙⲡⲣⲭⲱⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲩ ⲭⲉ ⲉⲙ ⲡⲉⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛⲁⲙⲟⲩ ⲱⲙ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲉⲏⲧⲩ ⲉⲛⲛ ⲟⲩⲙⲟⲩ ⲧⲉⲧⲛⲁⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲉⲛⲁⲙⲟⲩ ⲁⲛ ⲛⲧⲁⲩⲭⲉ ⲡⲁⲉⲓ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲛⲏⲧⲛ ⲉⲩⲣ ⲫⲑⲟⲛⲉⲓ ⲙⲁⲗⲗⲟⲛ ⲉⲛⲉⲧⲛⲃⲁⲗ ⲛⲁⲟⲩ ⲉⲛ ⲛⲧⲉⲛⲧⲛⲱⲟⲡⲉ ⲛⲑⲉ ⲛⲛⲓⲛⲟⲏⲧⲉ ⲉⲧⲉ.

ritual can be seen on a marble Greek funerary sculpture dating to 125BCE. Featured on this stele is an elite woman facing the viewer and wearing a long-pleated gown. To the right of a woman is a tree with a snake coiled around it… The woman uses her left hand to reach out toward the snake, likely to feed the snake with her open hand. The scene appears to be set at a temple."[130] The funerary image preserves several characteristics of the Eve narrative in *HypArch*: there is an elite woman prominently featured in a temple-like setting, a tree, and a snake who the woman feels she can approach. Here, there is a female prophet demonstrating a kindred relationship with a snake settled around a tree. In *HypArch*, the spiritual presence that disassociates from Eve when the archons attack first transforms into a tree, and then into the serpent instructor who teaches Adam and Eve about the tree of knowledge. While this scene undoubtedly draws from the creation narrative in *Genesis*, it likewise imbues the character of Eve with imagery of female prophecy recognizable beyond the Hebrew scriptures.

Before the archons rape Eve and she disassociates from her carnal body, we find the strongest example of Eve's voice as evidence of the divine realm in the material world. Lines after she is fashioned from Adam's side, Eve instructs Adam to rise from the sleep the archons placed him under: "The woman of spirit came to him and spoke with him, saying, 'Arise, Adam.' When he saw her, he said, 'You have given me life. You will be called the Mother of the living.'"[131] After being fashioned from Adam's flesh, Eve (the woman of spirit assumed from Adam) pulls him back into consciousness where they can meet each other for the first time. In this scene, Eve draws Adam back into awareness of reality, a feat the archons themselves could not do.[132] Eve's voice is employing power beyond the limits of the archons, rulers over the material world, and demonstrating an association with the world above in her ability to invoke action in Adam with

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[130] Christy Cobb, *Slavery, Gender, Truth, and Power in Luke-Acts and Other Ancient Narratives* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019), 175.

[131] NHC II, 89: 11-14, ⲁⲩⲱ ⲧⲥⲁⲓⲙⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛⲉⲩⲙⲁⲧⲓⲕⲏ ⲁⲥⲓ ϣⲁⲣⲟⲩ ⲁⲥϣⲁⲍⲉ ⲛⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲩ ⲡⲉϫⲁⲥ ⲍⲉ ⲧⲱⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲁⲁⲙ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲣⲉⲩⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲥ ⲡⲉϫⲁⲩ ⲍⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟ ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁⲍϯ ⲛⲁⲉⲓ ⲙ̄ⲡⲱⲛⲍ ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲙⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲣⲟ ⲍⲉⲧⲙⲁⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲟⲛⲍ

[132] The archons are unable to animate Adam after they fashion him into a man from mud. It requires the Spirit from the world above to spark life in the body, NHC II, 88: 11-15.

only her words. Lillie reads these lines as evidence for the productive nature of Eve's voice and connects this moment to the efficaciousness of the divine word in *Genesis* 1.3-30 that creates the world.[133] What we see in these examples mirrors the expectations invoked with the use of seal imagery that characterizes Eve's voice and the archons' rape. Eve's voice is certified, marked, and associated with the world above, and her spiritual character materialized in her speech. Her voice channels cosmic power that supersedes the archons' abilities, and as such opposes their claim to supreme power. Eve is a prophet. In raping her, the archons shore up their claim on reality and supreme power by eliminating Eve's opposition to it. Raping the seal of her voice disqualifies Eve from her prophetic station in the material world.

Sexualization of Prophecy

Prophecy in the ancient world was a sexualized category. The human subject was understood as taken, seized, or invaded by an otherworldly source. This cosmic power relationship was viewed through a sexual lens, even invoking imagery of divine rape. *HypArch* extends this understanding of prophecy when it depicts the archons' rape of Eve, rupturing her connection with the world above. In doing so, it demonstrates how the sexualization of prophecy also allowed for a logic of sexual retribution in instances of prophetic competition. In other words, as a prophetic actor, Eve's spiritual authority was already entangled in notions of sexual intercourse. In raping Eve, the archons usurp that dynamic and supplant her spiritual connection. The archons' rape of Eve demonstrates how the struggle for control over truth and authority mounted through prophetic opposition, capitalized on sexual imagery already present in prophetic activity to destabilize that competition.

A prophet's connection with the divine was understood to transpire through physiological terms echoing understandings of heteronormative, penetrative sex. The human body was imagined as the receptor of an invading divine force that in many cases produced physical

[133] Lillie, *The Rape of Eve*, 199.

reactions. Ancient physicians and philosophers spoke about the mechanics of prophecy as a physical substance, given by the divine source, which entered or penetrated the body of the seer as if this substance were like the vapours that brought on sickness and intoxication. In his monograph on the Corinthian prophets, Dale Martin explores this conceptualization of sexualized prophecy in a subsection aptly called "The Dangers of Prophecy."[134] Writing about the physicality of divine invasion into the prophet, Martin exclaims that it is difficult to avoid the sexual overtones of the experience. "It is easy," he says, "to understand how prophecy could be conceived in terms redolent of sexual intercourse. The analogy is seldom explicit; but one can hardly read accounts of physiological prophecy, especially descriptions of prophecy enacted by a male god on a female seer, without detecting the sexual connotations of the language."[135] He continues further in the same section stating that "the physiology of prophecy could be analyzed by analogy with the physiology of sex because prophecy was thought of as the penetration of the body of the priestess by the god or some other, perhaps inanimate, invading force. The moment of prophecy was the moment of invasion. Thus, people were especially vulnerable and endangered when open to the forces of prophetic inspiration."[136] This was a logic echoed in Christian literature which I return to in detail in chapters two and four.[137]

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[134] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 239-242.
[135] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 239-240.
[136] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 241.
[137] Later Christian authors echo this sexualized understanding of prophecy when considering how the Pythia communicated with Apollo at Delphi. Origen, for example, recounts how the spirit of Apollo would enter through the Pythia's vagina as she was sitting astride her tripod. This spirit being the source of her prophetic ability, would fill her up until her body was forced to utter divine truths uncontrollably. This scene is incredibly erotic, associating not only the inspirational process with penetrative, divine sex, but prophecy itself to a sort of orgasmic utterance. When one considers that the popular understanding of the Pythia's prophetic delivery was that of frenzied nonsensical language, this uncontrolled, spastic image of Pythian prophecy is very akin to that of sexual climax. He writes, "It is said of the Pythian priestess, whose oracle seems to have been the most celebrated, that when she sat down at the mouth of the Castilian cave, the prophetic Spirit of Apollo entered her private parts; and when she was filled with it, she gave utterance to responses which are regarded with awe as divine truths." See Origen, *Against Celsus*, 7.3. Origen is writing in the third century, years after the high point of Delphic worship, however, his logic builds on these notions of the material effects of divine communication and extends this image of prophetic utterance as the result of an erotic exchange.

Ruth Padel's work on ancient Greek drama demonstrates how the porousness of women's bodies made them exceptionally susceptible to divine invasion as if their bodies were naturally suited to this type of seizure. Divine openness placed men in compromised and dangerous positions, she explains, but likewise demonstrated a well-established understanding of women's bodies as open to takeover. She states that "women are perceived as open to other deities… but when a possessing deity is male there is often a sense of divine rape; as in most Greek myths."[138] So not only are women's bodies read as naturally open to intrusion, but this openness and availability immediately transforms into a sexualized act when drawn on to articulate prophetic aptitude. Women were ready spaces for otherworldly seizure, and it was a seizer tied to sexual violation.

More so, this sexualization of prophecy allowed for a logic of sexual retribution for prophetic competition. Consider the archons' rape of Eve next to John of Patmos's threat that Jesus will throw "Jezebel"[139] onto a bed in *Rev* 2:19-21. In this scene, John is writing to a group of believers in Thyatira who are following a woman he refers to as Jezebel. Jezebel, he exclaims, is a false prophet who refuses to repent of her competing spiritual views. He frames her teachings in sexual language calling them fornications and says that in retribution for these lewd acts he will throw her on a bed. The rationale being that her false prophetic teachings are akin to immoral sex acts, and therefore justify a punitive rape as a reprimand. The introduction opens with this passage, but I will include it here for closer reference. It reads,

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[138] Ruth Padel, "Women: Model for Possession by Greek Daemons," in *Images of Women in Antiquity,* ed. Averil Cameron and Amélie Kuhrt (London: Croom Helm, 1983), 12.

[139] Here the author of Revelation is drawing on a name tradition from *1 and 2 Kings*. In the Hebrew narrative, Jezebel, a foreign Queen is called both a whore and a witch by Jehu on account of her worship of foreign deities. While the text does not document any type of salacious behaviour on the part of Jezebel, these deviant titles are engrained in her name. Jezebel does not read as queen; rather, it reads as carnal, foreign, and perverse. As Tina Pippin explains, "The complex and ambiguous character of Jezebel in the Bible serves as the archetypal bitch-witch-queen in misogynist representations of women. Beginning in *1 Kings* 16 through *2 Kings* 9 and reappearing again in *Apocalypse* 2:20, Jezebel is the contradictory, controlling, carnal foreign woman" (33). Therefore, in using the name Jezebel in *Rev* 2:20, the author is not identifying a female foe by name, rather they are framing their female adversary with a history set to discredit her by mere association. For more on the history of Jezebel see: Tina Pippin, "Jezebel Revamped"; and Frymer-Kensky, "Queen Jezebel, or Deuteronomy's Worst Nightmare.

> And to the angel of the church in Thyatria write…I have this against you, you allow that lewd woman Jezebel who calls herself prophet, she is teaching and leading my servants to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols. I gave her time so as to repent but she does not wish to repent of her fornication. Behold! I am throwing her onto a bed and all those adulterers with her I am throwing into great distress unless they repent of her deeds. (*Rev* 2:18a; 2:20-22)[140]

Within *Rev* John of Patmos is a prophet and the text recounts a vision he received from Jesus (1:1-3). In the second chapter, there is a female prophet who espouses competing views about truth via prophecy and John threatens her with rape. He is her theological competitor and, in an effort, to discredit her, he turns to threats of sexual violence. This is an example of how people conceived of, and responded to, prophecy via a discourse of sexually potent imagery in antiquity.

Like Jezebel, Eve voices an alternative understanding of the world and its powers, and like Jezebel, Eve is the target of sexual violence. This sexually violent act severs Eve's prophetic connection. Her voice no longer demonstrates the power it did in the text before the archons' rape. The archons' rape of Eve is retribution for her prophetic knowledge that challenges their version of reality; a false version of reality where they are supreme beings who rule over the cosmos.

PROPHECY AND RAPE: TOOLS OF EPISTMOLOGICAL REGULATION

At its foundation, *HypArch* depicts the struggle of humanity as subjugated under the false power of worldly rulers. Human subjugation under the archons' power is depicted as an epistemological struggle between the archons' version of reality and the revealed truth of power through the world above.[141] This worldly subjugation is released via the reception of a prophecy from the world above through a saviour, Norea. Her prophecy affords humanity knowledge and

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[140] Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Θυατειροις ἐκκλησίας γράψον˙ …ἀλλὰ ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ ὅτι ἀφεῖς τὴν γυναῖκα Ἰεζάβελ, ἡ λέγουσα ἑαυτὴν προφῆτιν καὶ διδάσκει καὶ πλανᾷ τοὺς ἐμοὺς δούλους πορνεῦσαι καὶ φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα. καὶ ἔδωκα αὐτῇ χρόνον ἵνα μεταωοήσῃ, καὶ οὐ θέλει μεταωοῆσαι ἐκ τῆς προνείας αὐτῆς. ἰδοὺ βάλλω αὐτὴν εἰς κλίνην καὶ τοὺς μοιχεύοντας μετ᾽αὐτῆς εἰς θλῖψιν μεγάλην, ἐὰν μὴ μετανοήσωιν ἐκ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς.

[141] This narrative of cosmic struggle in *HypArch* is similar to narratives of cosmic struggle found in other Nag Hammadi sources. Texts such as the *SRJ*, *OnOrig*, and *TriPro* among others, contain narratives of the world as a place of subjugation from which humans look to flee. In seeking liberation from the material world and its false rulers, humanity can acquire knowledge of the spiritual world and through this knowledge find liberation from the material world's burden.

truth about their subjugation and articulates the wrongful assumption of power by the worldly rulers. These revealed teachings provide humanity with knowledge that the archons do not understand about themselves. According to the text, the archons are oblivious to the limits of their role in the world while, through the reception of revelation, humanity understands the truth of the archons' false power.

In this section, I demonstrate how the use of prophecy and sexual violence in the narrative participate in the characterization of oppression by, and ultimately liberation from, false power. I show how prophecy and sexual violence are mechanisms used by the text to articulate this epistemological struggle for control of truth. For instance, prophecy makes claims about supreme power and who accesses truth, while rape and sexual violation are characteristics of imperial, worldly subjugation in antiquity. Together, these themes participate in the text's narration of struggle and resistance through a discourse of power and subjugation. In this sense, to understand the archons' rape of Eve as one of retribution that mediates her prophetic power, is to understand how prophecy was a direct challenge to the archons' version of truth. Both prophecy and sexual violence are integral to the text's depiction of struggle and liberation through who can, and cannot, control the truth about worldly power.

HypArch: An Epistemological Contest

The title of the text primes the reader for this epistemological contest between earthly rulers and heavenly realities with the Greek word *hypóstasis* (ὑπόστᾶσις, translated as hypostasis)[142] used in its Coptic form. The term encompasses notions of substance and nature, of essence and the true reality of a thing, and as such brings a conversation about the archons'

[142] The term ὑπόστᾶσις is a technical Greek term with unique medical and philosophical usages. Both Stoics and Neo-Platonists used the term for specific philosophical ideas expressing reality and spiritual essence. Generally, the term refers to a being, essence, or reality, however, there is considerable nuance within the space of these terms. This is reflected in the diversity of translations of the title for this Nag Hammadi source. The title usage of ὑπόστᾶσις arises from its record at the end of the tractate (97, 22-23), and then the emphasis of its concept expressed in the opening lines of the narrative (86, 26-27). See: Marvin Meyer trans., "The Nature of the Rulers," in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts* (New York: HarperOne, 2007); and Bromley, "hypóstasis [being, essence, reality]", in *TDNT,* 1237-1239.

essential being to the fore. The application of the term hypostasis suggests then that the archons' fallacious claim to rule the material world is rooted in their fundamental makeup. The archons' power and authority are qualified because of what they are, and what they believe themselves to be. The narrative creates this image of the archons and their power by stressing the limits of their authorial reach over that which they believe themselves to dominate. The archons are framed as fools unaware of their shortfalls, or the supreme power of the world above. The shallow reach of their authority is repeatedly displayed through their inability to wield influence over material things. The archons' inability to acknowledge these limitations is a farce that plays out through the entire text. Repeatedly, the reader sees the archons' attempt to exert power over something and fail without being aware of their failure.

The first image of the archons in the text, for example, describes the chief archon's boast to be the one and only God—a boast that is quickly corrected by Incorruptibility. The text reads, "The leader of the authorities is blind. [Because of his] power, ignorance, and arrogance he said with [power], 'I am God; there is no other [but me].' When he said this, he sinned against [the realm of the All]. This boast rose up to Incorruptibility. And a voice answered from Incorruptibility and said, 'You are wrong, Samael'—which means 'blind god'."[143] Upon hearing the chief archon make this claim, Incorruptibility identifies the false claim and calls the archon Samael, meaning "blind god". With the first image of an archon in the text, we see these worldly powers posture themselves against higher deities and reach for a reality beyond their abilities. The title of "blind god" is apt, given that the archons are simply unaware of their true station. It is a concept that they just cannot grasp.

In another passage, when the archons later try to animate Adam they are unable. Their mudman lays listless on the ground. The text reads, "Samael blew into his face, and the human

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[143] NHC II 86:27-87:4, ⲡⲟⲩⲛⲟⲃ ⲁⲉ ⲟⲩⲃⲗ̄ⲗⲉ ⲡⲉ [ⲉⲧⲃⲉ] ⲧⲉ[ⲫ]ⲃⲟⲙ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ ⲧⲉⲫⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧⲃⲟⲟⲩⲛ [ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ ⲧⲉⲫⲙ̄]ⲛ̄ⲧⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲁⲥⲓⲅⲛⲧ ⲁⲫⲭⲟⲟⲥ ⲅⲛ̄ ⲧⲉⲫ ⲃⲟⲙ ⲁⲉ] ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲗⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ ⲗⲁⲁⲩ [ⲁⲁⲛ̄ⲧ ⲛ̄ⲧ]ⲁⲣⲉⲫⲁⲉ ⲡⲁⲉⲓ ⲁⲫⲣ̄ ⲛⲟⲃⲉ ⲉⲅⲣⲁⲓ [ⲉⲡⲧⲅⲣⲫ̄] ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲡⲉⲉⲓⲱⲁⲁⲉ ⲧⲱⲃ ⲱⲁⲃ ⲣⲁⲓ ⲉⲧⲙⲛⲧ̄ ⲁⲧⲧⲁⲕⲟ ⲉⲓⲥ ⲟⲛⲥⲙⲃ ⲁⲉ ⲁⲥⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲅⲛ̄ ⲧⲙⲛⲧ̄ⲁⲧⲧⲁⲕⲟ ⲉⲥⲭⲱ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ⲁⲉ ⲕⲣ̄ ⲡⲗⲁⲛⲁⲥⲑⲉ ⲥⲁⲙⲁⲛⲗ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲡ[ⲉ] ⲛ̄ⲃⲃⲗ̄ⲗⲉ.

acquired a soul and stayed upon the ground for many days. The rulers could not make him arise, because they are powerless. Like storm winds they kept on blowing, that they might try to capture the image that appeared to them in the waters. And they did not know what its power was."[144] The power they are unaware of here is the power of Incorruptibility as a deity from the world above. Their unawareness of this power is echoed in their ceaseless blowing. A significant event then happens in the text: it is only when the female spiritual presence takes an interest that Adam is animated. It is an achievement that the archons claim for themselves, blissfully unaware of the true source of Adam's invigoration.[145] Even when Eve is created and Adam lays unconscious from the reproductive operation on his side, it is Eve who reanimates Adam, not the archons. The text reads, "They cut open his side… like a living woman. Then they repaired his side with flesh in place of her, and Adam had only a soul. The woman of spirit came to him and spoke with him, saying, 'Arise, Adam.' When he saw her, he said 'You have given me life. You will be called the Mother of the living.'"[146] From the moment she enters the narrative, as previously taken up, Eve demonstrates a power over the archons and it is a power that reveals the boundaries of their godly influence. Despite their position as worldly authorities in the text, the archons' claim to power and ability is an empty affirmation in *HypArch*.[147] It is a repeated failure of which they are unaware.

Karen King understands this characteristic of the archons in *HypArch* as one informed by ancient conceptions of gender. According to King, the archons are caricatures of ideal masculinity. They are presented as failed political power (albeit they are unaware of this fact), and as figures

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[144] NHC II 88:3-10, ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲫⲛⲓⲭⲉ ⲉⲁⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲙ̄ ⲡⲉⲫⲁⲟ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲙ̄ⲯⲩⲭⲓⲕⲟⲥ ⲁⲓⲍⲙ̄ ⲡⲕⲁⲁ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲁ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲟⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲩⲱ ⲃⲛ̄ⲃⲟⲙ ⲃⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲩⲛⲟⲃⲫ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲧⲟⲩⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧ ⲃⲟⲙ ⲁⲩ ⲡⲣⲟⲥⲕⲁⲣⲧⲉⲣⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲓⲁⲁⲧⲏⲟⲩ ⲇⲉ ⲉⲩⲛⲁ ⲃⲱⲣⲃ ⲁⲡⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲧⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲩ ⲡⲁⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲁⲟⲩⲱⲛⲁ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲁⲛ̄ⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲛⲉⲩⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲇⲉ ⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲫⲃⲟⲙ.
[145] NHC II, 88:10-17
[146] NHC II 89:7-15, ⲁⲩⲟⲩⲉⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲫⲥⲡⲓⲧ ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲥⲁⲓⲙⲉ ⲉⲥⲟⲛⲁ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲁⲁⲁⲙ ⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲙ̄ⲯⲩⲭⲓ ⲕⲟⲥⲧⲁⲣⲫ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲧⲥⲁⲓⲙⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛⲉⲩⲙⲁⲧⲓⲕⲏ ⲁⲥⲓ ⲱⲁⲣⲟⲫ ⲁⲥⲱⲁⲇⲉ ⲛ̄ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲫ ⲡⲉⲇⲁⲥ ⲇⲉ ⲧⲱⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲇⲁⲙ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲣⲉⲫⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲣⲟⲥ ⲡⲉⲇⲁⲩ ⲇⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟ ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩϯ ⲛⲁⲉⲓ ⲙ̄ⲡⲱⲛⲁ ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲙⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲣⲟ ⲇⲉⲧⲙⲁⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲟⲛⲁ
This pattern, where the archons' power is surpassed by the text's female characters, is perpetuated throughout the Norea narrative as well. It will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Two: On Norea and Thecla, when taking up Norea's destruction of Noah's ark.
[147] For a discussion on this topic and the gendering of the archons see King, "Ridicule and Rape," 8-11.

without any self-control, especially regarding their sexual impulses. For King, this demonstrates how the text employs ancient concepts of gender to articulate its larger worldview about the body and subjugation. Maleness and femaleness, whether idealized presentations or not, consist of signifiers that articulate meaning, and in the case of *HypArch*, gender presentation signifies an oppression of the material world. She explains,

> Rape is used here as a metaphor for the wickedness (excessive sexual desire, agitation, violence, etc.) of the archons and the power of enlightened spirituality to escape. The use of rape as a metaphor suggests the state to which the Gnostic felt subjected in the body: pollution fear, vulnerability, degradation, pain. The caricature of the archons simply supports this view. The Gnostic is the body was subject to oppression, humiliation, physical abuse, pollution, exploitation.[148]

In other words, the archons inability to access power, or recognize their inability to do so reinforces the text's worldview of worldly subjugation and bodily limitations, and its configuration of gender informs those conclusions as well. Rape, according to King, is a metaphor of this gendered dynamic that emphasizes the archons' limitations as rulers. While I read the text's use of rape and sexual violence differently than King, the archons' ability to subjugate Eve through a sexually violent attack mirrors the cosmic struggle that King underlines in this narrative; it is the struggle between otherworldly truth and worldly deception.

This inherent tension within the archons' station, their claim to power but inability to grasp it, establishes the cosmic struggle between humans and the archons, the false and incompetent rulers, that the text looks to resolve. While the archons cannot wield the power to which they have laid claim, they exist as authorities, even if false ones, over the material world. Powerful spiritual figures from the world above do appear to engage in the goings-on of the material world, Incorruptibility, Eleleth, the female spiritual presence, but the archons' embodiment of false power is a constant force with which humanity must contend. The human figures of the text must grapple with the false authority of the archons and struggle to establish spiritual autonomy by identifying the limitations of their corporeal captors.

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[148] King, "Ridicule and Rape," 18.

Prophecy and Power

Norea said, "Who are you?" …
The angel said, "I am Eleleth,
Understanding, the great angel who stands
before the holy Spirit.
I have been sent to speak with you
and rescue you from the hand of the lawless ones. And I
shall teach you about your root.[149]

In the above scene, Norea has just been rescued by the angel, Eleleth, from an attempted rape by the archons. This scene, and Norea's role in *HypArch*, will be addressed in detail in the following chapter. Here, however, this scene demonstrates the moment when knowledge about the world above enters human consciousness through Eleleth's imminent revelation to Norea. This knowledge articulates the truth about the limited power of the archons and maps a soteriology that allows humanity to supersede their worldly subjugation. The salvation narrative of the text hinges on the prophetic reception of truth about the world above in this moment. As the conflict playing out in the text articulates, the struggle for power and authority, having salvation indebted to prophetic actions, likewise makes claims about truth and power.

Prophecy is an act of authority through its representation of divine knowledge in the world. Conversing with higher powers imbues that person with divine association and authorization. Claiming to speak for a god is to demonstrate one's divine power and authority in the world. A primary theme of this text, as I have argued, is to emphasize the limitations of false archontic power for its ancient readers, and it is a goal that relies on divine revelation. The above passage demonstrates how humans eventually escape from the archons' subjugation through Norea's reception of other worldly revelation. I have argued that, like Norea, Eve is also a prophetic figure in this source. For example, her words channel power that the archons cannot access from the world above when she commands Adam to rise, her voice is characterized as having been sealed, reflecting the long history of prophecy and seal imagery in antiquity, and

[149] NHC II 93:6-13, ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲛⲱⲣⲉⲁ ϫⲉ ⲛⲧⲕⲛⲓⲙ…ⲡⲉϫⲁⲩ ϫⲉ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲉⲗⲉⲗⲏⲑ ⲧⲙⲛⲧⲥⲁⲃⲉ ⲧⲛⲟⲃ ⲛⲁⲅ ⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲡⲉⲧⲁⲩⲉ ⲣⲁⲧϥ ⲙⲡⲉⲙⲧⲟ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙⲡⲡⲛⲁ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲛⲧⲁⲩⲧⲛⲛⲟⲟⲩⲧ ⲉⲧⲣⲁⲱⲁϫⲉ ⲛⲙⲙⲉ ⲛⲧⲁ ⲛⲁⲩⲙⲉ ⲉⲧⲃⲓϧ ⲛⲛⲓⲁⲛⲟⲙⲟⲥ ⲁⲩⲱ ϯⲛⲁⲧⲁ ⲙⲟ ⲉⲧⲉⲛⲟⲩⲛⲉ

spiritual Eve teaches the truth about the tree of knowledge when embodied as the serpent. Eve speaks with authority and knowledge from the world above that surpasses any knowledge possessed by the archons in the material world. Through her prophetic voice, Eve is an affront to the archons' version of reality through her access to truth about the world above. Employing prophecy as the method to uncover the truth about the archons ultimately juxtaposes the archons' version of truth with that from the world above. Who possesses true knowledge about the world is expressed in this text through these representations of prophecy and demonstrates a deep concern for the topic. In this way, *HypArch* is participating in debates over the veracity and nature of divine revelation and prophetic speech that populated much early Christian discourse.

In her book, *An Ecstasy of Folly: Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity*,[150] Laura Nasrallah identifies that prophecy was already governed by a discourse that sought to mitigate prophets' competing claims to truth in antiquity. Her argument demonstrates that prophecy was a site where power was contested, and that invoking prophecy as an avenue to truth was itself making claims about who has access to superior truth and knowledge. According to Nasrallah, one could discredit a prophet and by extension their authority, with claims of madness and irrationality. Rationality,[151] a steadfast measure for truth and probability, suggested formidable knowledge and likely truth. If a prophet was deemed to be irrational (out of their mind), it not only discredited them as a person, but their prophetic knowledge as well. How prophecy was framed situated the validity of the prophetic narrative. Claims to rationality and irrationality regulated who could and could not possess valuable knowledge. Labels of irrationality barred some from accessing knowledge, and labels of rationality legitimized the claims of others. In other words, what was at stake in these claims to prophecy was power and authority and the means to regulate what those two concepts involved. Nasrallah explains,

> Arguments about the phenomenon that encompasses divination, prophecy, dreams, visions, and ecstasy…are launched in contexts of struggle and debate. These struggles are

[150] Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly*.
[151] For a discussion on how Nasrallah engages the concept of rationality in the ancient world, see: Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly*, 5-11.

> especially concerned with epistemology, with what can and cannot be known, and with the authority gained and religious identity constructed from claims to perceive the communication and intervention of the divine in the present day.[152]

Prophecy, while integral to the fabric of many ancient traditions, was a contentious topic, and Nasrallah identifies a discourse of epistemological regulation designed to temper the power and authority that accompanied these claims to divine communication. In this sense, identifying something as a truthful prophecy, dream, vision, or as an irrationality was, at its core, about power and the control of truth.

In *HypArch*, prophecy is the mechanism the text uses to depict the reception of soteriological knowledge in the world and demonstrate who does, and does not, have access to true power and authority. It is through prophecy that humanity challenges the power and authority held by the archons. This works, because prophecy is a claim to cosmic authority through the prophet's direct connection with divine powers. It makes epistemological claims by defining how someone has access to truth and knowledge, and in *HypArch*, prophecy poses a direct challenge to the archons' version of truth that supports their false claim to power. Prophecy as the mechanism of salvation fits neatly into the text's dynamic struggle for power and authority. In antiquity, however, tools existed to mitigate the authority and power garnered from such a privileged position by those other than the prophet. As Nasrallah's work records, discourses existed that exclusively tempered a prophet's claim to power and authority. In *HypArch*, however, a prophet's power and authenticity are jeopardized through discursive uses of rape and sexual violation, not through accusations of madness. Instead, it is the archons' untempered, violent lust that surfaces as an affront to prophetic power in the text.

Sexual Violence and Subjugation

Where prophecy is a mechanism of liberation from worldly oppression in *HypArch*, sexual violence severs prophetic ties that challenge worldly power. The archons are portrayed as ignorant

[152] Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly,* 2.

and foolish regarding their power, yet these descriptors do not suggest harmlessness. The archons are also described as lustful and randy beings who rape and demand sexual gratification from subordinate beings in the text. For example, in a scene that I will take up in more detail in the following chapter, the head archon is characterized by his anger when Norea first rejects their sexual advances. The text reads, "The arrogant ruler turned, with his might, and his expression was like a blazing [fire]."[153] He is enraged by her indignity to him. The archons are sexually violent perpetrators who crowd, trap, and corner violently and menacingly. As seen above, before they group rape Eve, they plot together, agreeing on their attack. The archons are cunning and malicious in their assaults, even if they are not supreme beings. Sexual violation is a tool that the archons use to express their power over the material world; it is a metaphor for the subjugation they possess over humanity in their struggle for liberation.

This association between sexual violence and subjugation is well documented in Roman myths and the state's ideology of territorial power. Sexual violence was a glorified characteristic of the Roman state's ability to conquer and rule. In depicting the archons as sexually violent and ignorantly cruel beings, *HypArch* codes the archons' worldly powers with this Roman ideology and presents a critique of that worldview through its sexually violent practices.[154] Celene Lillie demonstrates how this sexual subjugation is bound to Roman state identity as conqueror and ruler. In her work, *The Rape of Eve: The Transformation of Roman Ideology in Three Early Christian Retellings of Genesis*, Lillie traces a discourse of sexual violence in Roman ideology that is coded in images of imperial triumph and aggression over the vanquished other.[155] Through her

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[153] NHC II 92:27-29, ⲁⲡ[ⲁⲅ]ⲑⲁⲁⲉⲃ ⲛ̄ⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛ ⲕⲟⲧⲥ′ ⲉⲛ̄ ⲧⲉⲥⲃⲟⲙ ⸗ ⲁ̣ⲅ̣ⲱ [ⲁ]ⲡⲉⲥ ⸗ ⲡⲣⲟⲥⲱⲡⲟⲛ ⲯⲱⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲛ̄ [ⲟⲩ..]
[154] See Karen, L. King, *The Secret Revelation of John* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006). In her analysis of the *Secret Revelation of John* (SRJ), a Nag Hammadi source, King demonstrates how its narrative while trafficking in tales of divine power and other worldly revelation, offers a critique of Roman power and Roman society with the text itself emerging from a Roman social-historical location. In its construction of a cosmic utopian ideal, the text confronts the Roman system of power and privilege without naming it as such. Roman power was a direct conversation partner for the text's cosmological vision.
[155] This study is indebted to Lillie's work not only in the content covered, both of us taking up the narratives of rape and sexual violence in the *HypArch*, but in how Lillie maps a path for historical scholarship to talk about the ancient rape narratives with a socially responsible conscious. For example,

examination of five Roman founding narratives, the rape of Ilia/Rhea Silvia, the rape of the Sabine women, the rape and suicide of Lucretia, the rape of Verginia, and the pursuit of Daphne by Apollo, Lillie demonstrates how the imagery of conquest and war are mapped onto the bodies of women in Roman myth.

Consider the narrative rape of Ilia/Rhea Silvia, the mother of Romulus and Remus, founders of Rome. Her body is sexually violated by none other than the god of war, Mars.[156] This, however, is only the first transgression of her body by Roman officials; she is also tortured and imprisoned when found out to be pregnant. Ilia/Rhea Silvia was a Vestal, a symbolic protector of Rome. When the pregnancy from her attack was discovered, it was evident that her vow of chastity was broken, and with it, her devotion to the continuation of the state was also compromised. This broken vow brought with it punishments of shame, and Ilia/Rhea Silvia is tortured with a rod and imprisoned. The loss of her virginity, evidenced in her pregnancy, is read by the king as an affront against the state. In raping Ilia/Rhea Silvia, a conquest had been made over the symbolic protection she preserved as a Vestal. She, at once taken by the personification of war, has her bodily integrity invaded again with punishments at the hand of the king. The body of Ilia/Rhea Silvia is conquered and then punished as a traitor. Mars' rape of the grandmother of Rome is twice framed in images of war: first by War himself, closing in on her in a grove to ravage and assault her body; and secondly, by the retribution she received at the hand of the king for said assault.

A second narrative of rape at the core of Roman origin lore is the rape of the Sabine women. In this legend, newly established Rome was a military force, but a city solely of men,

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she acknowledges the absence of an actor in the phrase "the rape of Eve", however concedes that she was unable to reconcile a better statement for the collective narratives examined and their diverging perpetrators, and regrets being unable to resolve this in her phrasing. Similarly, she explains that using the term rape over an equally acceptable translation of the term (ɤɷəӣ) such as defile, is a way to confront the academic desire to actively avoid the reality of sexual violence. This avoidance in scholarship, she states, is "another way of perpetuating structures and systems that promote, reward, and tolerate sexual violence" and calling these acts of sexual violence rape disrupts those patterns of silence by acknowledging the reach of this violence both in history, and in our twenty-first century setting. Lillie, *The Rape of Eve*.

[156] Even in accounts where Mars is not directly named as the perpetrator "the language used by Livy, Dionysius, and Ovid to describe her violation is the language of battle and violence—language that associates these acts, irrespective of the actor, with Mars." Lillie, *The Rape of Eve*, 34.

unable to propagate their success for future generations without women. When Romulus' attempts to negotiate intermarriage between Romans and neighbouring cities fail, a second plan develops. Rome invited its neighbours within its city limits for a festival, and when the signal was given, every Roman seized any of the visiting women for themselves. The scene reads as utter chaos. Women and girls were haphazardly grabbed, fondled, captured, and forced into marriages with strangers. These first women of Rome were at once defeated enemies and the cities progenitors. The capture and rape of the Sabine women is a narrative delicately balancing a history portraying Roman power while displaying its conquered. "These women of Rome's past" Lillie writes, "are the objects of a system of domination whereby some benefit by the violence done to others."[157] The assaults of these women for the propagation of Rome as a city-state is framed entirely in the language of military domination and places rape into a conversation about power, territorial dominion, and state identity. These foremothers of Rome are victims of assault on a massive scale that makes them both founding ancestors and displayed captives.

When women are raped in these founding narratives, Lillie argues, their bodies are routinely positioned as parallels for the success of the nation and each assault is framed with the language of battle. In the same way that ancient authors would speak about war and the military history of Rome, so too do authors such as Livy, Dionysis of Halicarnnasus, and Ovid record sexually violent acts in the history of Rome as moments of conquest. Rape and sexual violence in early Roman histories read as acts of mastery and subjugation, or as tales of the triumphant over the defeated. As Lillie argues, conquest and rape are not only related to each other in the ancient world, but their relationship is at the very heart of Roman ethnic and political identity.

Lillie reads the rape of Eve in its three instances within the Nag Hammadi library as a challenge to this very form of Roman subjugation. She understands the archons' role in these sources as characters for imperial rule, with which the text's original readers would have been

[157] Lillie, *The Rape of Eve*, 106.

familiar. What Lillie's argument demonstrates is that in *HypArch* (alongside *SRJ* and *OnOrig*), sexual violence is a metaphor for worldly subjugation. Rape and sexual violation are tools that shore up power. By enforcing oppression on a subject, sexual violence ensures dominance as a form of power over others. Like prophetic experiences then, sexual violence is a mechanism for expressing and negotiating power. In analyzing *HypArch*, holding these concepts in tension: power, prophecy, and sexual violence is vital to mapping how the narrative articulates its vision of human redemption away from the false archons. By learning truth—of the origin of the cosmos, of the errors of the rulers who have trapped humanity—the readers are offered this salvation. In creating its cosmogony, the text relies on narratives of rape and sexually violent acts of subjugation. It also articulates an escape from this world of oppression through prophetic revelation, first by Eve, and then her daughter, Norea. Prophecy and sexual violence are fundamental to how the narrative outlines the problems of the archons' power and how it envisions human beings escape from their domineering authority. They also impact the struggle for power, authority, and truth. At play with each other and the larger goals of the narrative, prophecy and sexual violence are not additive details, or rhetorical flourishes, but rather are central to the persuasive agenda of the text and its worldview.

CONCLUSION

Prophecy and sexual violence both negotiate epistemological access in *HypArch*. Prophecy, as a form of charismatic speech, claims a direct connection to truth and knowledge of the world above for Eve. She embodies this knowledge in *HypArch*, doing work in the text that the archons' cannot which challenges their claim to supreme power over the material world. Sexual violence regulates the archons' control of subjugation over the material world. In raping Eve, they efface her claim of superior truth and knowledge against them and assure their claim to supreme power over the material realm. Sexual violence regulates Eve epistemological access by rupturing her connection with the world above. This telling of cosmic contestation is achieved by locating Eve's challenge to the archons' in her voice. In doing so, the text is able to employ a

sexually violent narrative to oppose Eve's claims because of the cultural logic that connected women's sexual bodies and their mouths. In raping one, the archons' defiled the other.

The story of Eve in *HypArch* is sullen. She is a prophet, exhibiting power in a world looking for liberation from false rule only to be raped and robbed of her challenge to that false power. However, as we will see in the next chapter, the story of Eve's has some retribution through the narrative of her daughter Norea. Norea's story is informed by the same logic that defined Eve's rape; She is a prophet whose voice is powerful, commanding knowledge from the world above into the material world, and the archons' attempt to rape her. Yet, unlike Eve, Norea uses the power of her voice to escape the archon's sexually violent attack and usher in the escape from subjugation humanity seeks. As such, the following chapter continues to explore the concepts of prophecy, sexual violence, and epistemological access, however, it does so in two narratives of rape resistance, demonstrating how liberation from oppression could be imagined through the rejection of sexual violation.

CHAPTER 2 - ON NOREA AND THECLA: READING RESISTANCE TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE HISTORY OF EARLY CHRIST FOLLOWERS

In the stories of Norea and Thecla we have two narratives of rape resistance that are directly tied to each heroine's growth into a charismatic figure. Virginity, or one's commitment to it, is a central theme for each narrative. While these texts are unique from each other in literary genre and reception history, in each one resistance to sexual violence signifies the heroine's status as a divinely chosen person. Norea channels her voice to reject the archons' attempted rape and uses its cosmic power to demand divine intervention on her own behalf. As a result, Norea receives a soteriological prophecy promising an end to the archons' unjust rule over the material world; she becomes a prophet. Thecla likewise channels her voice to reject sexual assault by a high-standing male citizen in Antioch and frames this rejection through her newfound identity as a follower of Christ who is taught by Paul. Because of this rejection, Thecla is subjected to several civic trials and attempted executions from which she is miraculously saved by divine intervention. These trials culminate in Thecla's own self-baptism. She emerges from these trials as a woman with the ritual authority to self-baptize and teach. In each of these sources, Norea's and Thecla's ability to thwart attempted rape catalyzes their ultimate transformation into divinely chosen figures with charismatic talents.

What follows in this chapter is an analysis of each text, demonstrating how interconnected the heroine's rape resistance is to their status as divinely chosen figures. The worlds of each text are distinct from the other, and, therefore, each narrative of resistance looks different from the other. For Norea, her voice is vital to her resistance of the archons as it connects her to the power of the world above whereas Thecla's identity as a follower of Christ is central to her rejection of Alexander and provides protection during her ensuing civic trials. These texts, however, do not strive to overturn the normativity of sexual violence in the ancient world. In fact, they both reinscribe sexually violent power structures at different moments within their narratives. While Norea and Thecla can oppose their predators, this resistance is not universally available to

everyone in the texts. In *HypArch* for example, Eve is subjected to a gruesome group rape. In *ATh*, Thecla is attended to, and supported by, enslaved persons whose status, as persons routinely subjected to sexual violence, goes unchallenged. *ATh* instead utilizes the power dynamic inherent in ancient slavery through its inclusion of enslaved characters in the story, ultimately leaving resistance to the normalized sexual violence endured by enslaved persons as a nonthought. Resistance to sexual violence is possible in *ATh*, but only for high-born women such as Thecla.

The goals of this chapter are twofold. The first is to continue with the analysis of sexual violence as connected to speech and divine knowledge that started with my analysis of Eve in chapter one. The second is to place narratives of resistance together to demonstrate where the rejection of sexual violence was imaginable and contribute to a history of survivorship in our ancient sources. On their own, each of these narratives are outliers whose stories happen to contain narratives of rape resistance. When held together, however, these sources provide evidence that, among early Christ-following communities, it was possible to imagine worldviews where characters, in their pursuit of God's work, were able to resist unwanted attacks of sexual violation. Moreso, these texts tell the story of higher powers that supported resistance to sexual violence and rewarded it with divine favour.

NOREA: DAUGHTER, PROPHET, SAVIOUR

Norea is the second human woman in *HypArch*, the daughter of Eve, and the undisputed saviour of the text. Her birth marks a narrative turning point in the *HypArch*,[158] and in following her journey the reader learns the truth about the archons and the nature of the "real" world above. In my previous chapter, I noted that Norea's actions usher in the coming of a new age of humanity. In the story, Norea is the prophetic bridge between a future salvation (in which humanity is free from archonic power) and now (where they remain under it). She is so essential to *HypArch's*

[158] All textual references in this section take place within the following lines of the text. As a textual guide for Norea's narrative in *HypArch* see the following: the birth of Norea, NHC II 91.34-92.3; Noah's ark NHC II 92.4-18; the archons' attack NHC II 92.18-93.13; Norea's revelation NHC II 93.13 onwards.

narrative that she even becomes the narrative voice for a substantial part of the text, which offers a first-person recount of a revelation that she receives. For this reason, some scholars refer to *HypArch* as the Book of Norea.[159] Likewise, the threat of rape and sexual violence is integral to Norea's characterization. As soon as she arrives in the narrative, the text positions Norea within a gendered, intergenerational struggle against rape and sexual violence. To discuss the story of Norea in *HypArch* as a prophet and saviour is to consider the implications of sexual violation.

As a named figure in early Christian literature, Norea is rare. Among the Nag Hammadi codices there are only three which include mention of Norea: *HypArch* (Norea, Orea), *OnOrig* (Noraia, Oraia),[160] and the 52 lined *Thought of Norea*.[161] Irenaeus includes Norea as one of the four named children of Adam and Eve in his *Against the Heresies*[162], and Epiphanius has two mentions of Norea in the *Panarion*.[163] Even with these few mentions, scholars have associated her name with no less than thirteen different forms and corresponding female characters from a variety of literary traditions in ancient sources. These include, but are not limited to: Norea, Noraia, Orea, Oraia, Horaia, Nora, Noria, Nuraita, Nhuraita, Na'amah, Esterah, and Azura.[164] Within these names there are at least seven different recorded possible meanings including: light, fire, pleasing, lovely, star, and maiden.[165] The current consensus holds that the name Norea emerges out of a convergence of Na'amah, the name of the sister of the Hebrew patriarch Tubal-

[159] Karen L. King, "The Book of Norea," in *Searching the Scriptures, Volume Two: A Feminist Commentary*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossword, 1994), 67.
[160] NHC II 102: 10-11, 24-25.
[161] NHC IX 2
[162] Irenaeus *Haer*. 1.30.9, Irenaeus speaks about the first generations and names Norea in relation to Seth's birth.
[163] Epiphanius *Pan*. 26.1.3; 39.5.2-3: the Book of Noria, and Horaia as the wife of Seth.
[164] Birger A. Pearson, "Revisiting Norea," in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, ed. Karen L. King (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1988), 265.
[165] Pearson, "Revisiting Norea," 265-267.

Cain who appears in *Gen* 4:22,[166] and Oreia.[167] As I explained in the last chapter, there is broader evidence that the author was familiar with some sources from the Hebrew Bible, as well as Midrashic literature.[168] This understanding of Norea's name implies familiarity with Jewish scriptures and exegesis in the *HypArch*.[169] I will treat *HypArch* as a source from the second century adopted by Christ followers, given the textual nod to *Colossians* and *Ephesians*, as well as the apostle Paul, in the opening lines of the text (NHC II, 86:20-27).

Central to Norea's role in this source is her ability to thwart the archons' attempted rape. When Norea is born, for instance, her mother Eve refers to her as "a virgin to help with many human generations."[170] Immediately after this, the narrator calls Norea "the virgin the forces did not defile."[171] As a moniker, "virgin" alludes to the archons' rape of Eve by pointing out that Norea will not be sexually violated by the archons. Where the archons were able to assault Eve, they will not be successful in their attempt to assault Norea. Identifying Norea as a virgin at her birth foreshadows the future altercation between Norea and the archons as well as the archons' failure. The text positions Norea within a gendered, intergenerational struggle against rape and sexual violence as soon as she arrives in the narrative. Eve is brutally raped by a group of archons, and when the archons approach Norea, they demand sex from her because of their sexual past with her mother. The archons feel entitled to rape Norea because they raped her mother. The scene

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[166] For more on the name history of Norea see: Pearson, "Revisiting Norea," 265-275. His argument is echoed and affirmed by Bentley Layton. See: Bentley Layton, "The Hypostasis of the Archons, or 'The Reality of the Rulers'," *HTR* 67.4 (1974): 351-425; Also see: Helmut Koester, *History and Literature of Early Christianity: Volume Two, Introduction to the New Testament* (Berlin: de Gruyter, [1982] 2000); and King, "The Book of Norea".

[167] Both names are recorded as Tubal, Cain's sister in *Gen* 4:22, Naamah, in the Hebrew Bible, and Oreia, in the Septuagint. They have the same meaning.

[168] The text as it currently exists is a Christian source with mention of the great apostle (Paul) and allusions to New Testament letters *Colossians* and *Ephesians*, however it is believed to arrive in this form from a text typical of Jewish thought. This tradition can be seen, for example, in the history of Norea's name. Similarly, some scholars draw allusions from Egyptian traditions within the text suggesting Alexandria as a place of composition. See Brian Glazer, "Goddess with a Fiery Breath," *Novum Testamentum* 33.1 (1991): 92-94.

[169] Koester, *History and Literature of Early Christianity,* 218.

[170] NHC II 91:35- 92:2, ⲭⲉ ⲁⲛⲁⲡⲟ ⲛⲁ[ⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲡⲁⲣ ⲑⲉ] ⲛⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲃⲟⲏⲑⲉⲓⲁ [ⲉⲛ̄] ⲛ̄ⲅⲉⲛⲉⲁ ⲛ̄ⲅⲉⲛⲉⲁ ⲛ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ

[171] NHC II 92:2-3, ⲧⲁⲉⲓ ⲧⲉ ⲧⲡⲁⲣⲑⲉⲛⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲛ ⲇⲩⲛⲁⲙⲓⲥ ⲭⲁⲥⲙⲉⲥ

reads, “the rulers went to meet Norea, for they planned to seduce her. Their leader said to her, ‘Your mother Eve came to us.’”[172] When she rejects their assault the text continues, “The arrogant ruler turned, with his might, and his expression was like a blazing [fire]. He was bold toward her and [said], ‘You must serve us sexually, as your mother Eve did.’”[173] The archons associate their attempted rape of Norea with their group rape of Eve. Both sexual assaults are connected not only because the archons perpetrate them, but also because they are directed at a mother and daughter as signified in Eve’s announcement at Norea’s birth.

Norea, however, escapes the archons’ physical assault. She resists their advances by demanding divine intervention with a vocal force the text describes as having the power of God.[174] The text reads: “…Norea turned with the power of [God] and called in a loud voice to the holy one the God of All.”[175] Her vocal intervention invokes cosmic help in the form of the angel Eleleth. This event transforms Norea’s speech into a prophetic revelation. When the angel appears in the narrative, he first reprimands Norea for demanding cosmic intervention, but then goes on to teach her about the reality of the archons’ false power and the truth about the world. He gives her divine knowledge about how humanity will be liberated from the illusion of the archons’ power in the material world. The revelation she receives from the angel ends with the promise that a saviour, from her genealogical line will appear and free the world from the archons’ rule. Norea, thus, emerges as a prophet who can demand divine intervention and receive special knowledge about humanity.

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[172] NHC II 92: 18-21, ⲁⲩⲧⲱⲙⲧ̀ ⲉⲣⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲃⲓ ⲛⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛ ⲉⲩⲟⲩⲱϣ ⲁ̄ⲣ ⲁⲡⲁⲧⲁ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ⲡⲉ ⲭⲉ ⲡⲟⲩⲛⲟⲃ ⲉⲧ̄ⲛⲅⲏⲧⲟⲩ ⲛⲁⲥ ⲭⲉ ⲧⲉⲙⲁⲁⲛ ⲉⲩⲅⲁ ⲁⲥⲉⲓ ϣⲁⲣⲟⲛ

[173] NHC II 92:27-31, ⲁⲡ[ⲁⲩ]ⲑⲁⲁⲅⲃ ⲛ̄ⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛ ⲕⲟⲧϥ′ ⲅⲛ̄ ⲧⲉϥⲃⲟⲙ̀ ⲁⲩⲱ [ⲁ]ⲡⲉϥ̀ⲡⲣⲟⲥⲱⲡⲟⲛ ϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲛ̄ [ⲟⲩ..]ⲁⲧ̀ ⲉϥⲕⲏⲙ̀ ⲁϥⲧⲟⲗⲙⲁ ⲉⲃⲟⲩⲛ̀ ⲉⲣⲟⲥ [ⲡⲉⲭ]ⲁϥ ⲛⲁⲥ ⲭⲉ ⲅⲁⲡⲥ ⲡⲉ ⲉⲧⲣⲉ̄ⲣ ⲃⲱⲕ̀ ⲛⲁⲛ [ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ] ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲕⲉⲙⲁⲁⲩ ⲉⲩⲅⲁ

[174] NHC II 92:33 -92:34

[175] NHC II 92:32 -92:34, [...ⲁ]ⲛⲱⲣⲉⲁ ⲁⲉ ⲕⲟⲧ̄ⲥ ⲅⲛ̄ ⲧⲃⲟⲙ ⲙ̄ⲡ [... ⲁⲥⲁ]ⲓϣⲕⲁⲕ̀ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲅⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲃ ⲛ̄ⲥⲙⲏ [ⲉⲅⲣⲁⲓ ⲉ]ⲡⲡⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲧⲏⲣϥ̀

Prophecy and Rape Resistance

In what follows, I consider the association between Norea's prophetic capabilities, her sexed body, and her ability to narrowly escape an attempted rape and retain her virginity. Most importantly, I stress that when we understand Norea as a prophetic figure, we can also see how her presentation is caught up in ancient understandings of prophetic speech, ones that were deeply gendered. Ancient prophecy was often conceptualized in terms of phallocentric, penetrative intercourse that reinscribed ancient conceptions of gender and social hierarchy.[176] Similarly, the physiological understanding of women's bodies in the ancient world, as the inverse of male anatomy,[177] supported the notion of prophecy as the divine penetration of the human body. Therefore, finding an attempted rape entangled with the prophetic call of a female figure is not curious, but points to a tensive link between prophecy and sexual violence, both concepts that rely on the phallocentric logic of ancient sexuality and gender. The attempted rape that immediately precedes Norea's divine call hints at this understanding of prophecy as phallic penetration. As such, the text takes measures to shield Norea's prophecy from any negative implications associated with this penetrative conception of prophecy by naming her as a virgin, and then repeatedly emphasizing the title. Norea's role in the soteriology of the text, as the figure who receives the revelation of truth about the archons' power, is inseparable from her sexualization both by the archons and as her role as a prophet.[178]

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[176] For more on the association between prophecy and penetrative sex please see my discussion in the previous chapter "Eve: The Rape of a Prophet." For more on how sex was conceptualized as a penetrative/penetrated relationship in the ancient world see: Judith Hallett and Marilyn Skinner, eds., *Roman Sexualities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

[177] For more on this one-sex model that was prevalent in antiquity see: Laqueur, *Making Sex*. Especially see chapter two, "Destiny is Anatomy," 26-62.

[178] Female prophets existed in both the Hebrew and Greek scriptures. There are seven female prophets in the Hebrew Bible: Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah, and Ester. In the New Testament, Anna and Philip's daughters are named prophets and I take up their narratives further in later chapters.

As argued in my examination of Eve in *HypArch*,[179] this text is making claims about women's prophetic potential through its retelling of the *Genesis* creation narrative. While I have read Eve as a damaged prophet, an analysis that builds on a play between the sexualized nature of prophecy and the archons' rape, below I will argue that Norea's ability to resist the archons' attack shores up her prophetic role in the text.[180] Her access to otherworldly knowledge, in other words, is linked to her rape resistance. Within the narrative, Norea's angelic encounter echoes other prophetic calls,[181] and serves to validate the ensuing revelation. Norea's prophetic call, however, is distinctive in how the call begins, specifically that she orders her own divine intervention. When the archons are about to rape her, Norea demands divine intervention to protect her from their attack rather than the expected cosmic intervention of an unsolicited miracle. Norea sparks her own rescue. Eleleth appears with her demand, and Norea's angelic lesson follows:

> But Norea turned with the power of [God] and called in a loud voice to the holy one, the God of All, "Help me with these unrighteous rulers and rescue me from their hands—now!" An angel came down from heaven and said to her, "Why are you calling to God? Why are you so bold toward the holy Spirit?" Norea said, "Who are you?" The unrighteous rulers had left her. The angel said, "I am Eleleth, Understanding, the great angel who stands before the holy Spirit. I have been sent to speak with you and rescue you from the hand of the lawless ones. And I shall teach you about your root.[182]

This scene presents Norea receiving an angelic revelation.[183] It details an exchange between this world and the next where an individual is singled out with the gift of esoteric knowledge or

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[179] For a longer discussion on how I am framing prophecy in *HypArch*, and more generally, see my discussion of prophecy in the previous chapter on Eve. It refers to Kim Beerden's definition of divination to explain how I employ the concept of prophecy. See: Beerden, *Worlds Full of Signs*, 20.

[180] For more on prophecy among early Christ followers see: David Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

[181] For more on prophetic calls see: Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 97-99.

[182] NHC II 92:31-93:13 [...ⲁ]ⲛⲱⲣⲉⲁ ⲁⲉ ⲕⲟⲧⲥ ⲉⲏ ⲧⲃⲟⲙ ⲙ̄ⲡ [... ⲁⲥⲁ]ⲱⲕⲁⲕ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲛⲟⲃ ⲛ̄ⲥⲙⲏ [ⲉⲅⲣⲁⲓ ⲉ]ⲡⲡⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲧⲏⲣⲫ ⲁⲉ ⲉⲣⲓ ⲃⲟⲏⲏⲓ ⲛⲁⲉⲓ ⲁⲛⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲇⲓⲕⲉⲓ ⲁ ⲛ̄ⲅⲛⲁⲩⲙⲉⲧ ⲁⲛⲟⲩⲃⲓⲇ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲩⲛⲟⲩ ⲁⲡⲁⲅ ⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲛ̄ⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛⲩⲉ ⲉⲡⲉⲥⲛⲧ ⲡⲉⲇⲁⲫ ⲛⲁⲥ ⲇⲉ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲟⲩ ⲧⲉⲱⲩ ⲉⲅⲣⲁⲓ ⲉⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲟⲩ ⲧⲉ̄ⲣ ⲧⲟⲗⲙⲁ ⲉⲅⲣⲁⲓ ⲉⲡ ⲡⲛⲁ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲡⲉⲇⲉ ⲛⲱⲣⲉⲁ ⲇⲉ ⲛⲧⲕⲛⲓⲙ ⲛⲉⲁⲛⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲇⲓⲕⲓⲁ ⲥⲉⲅⲱⲟⲩ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ⲡⲉⲇⲁⲫ ⲇⲉ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲉ̄ⲗⲉ̄ⲗⲏⲑ ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲥⲁⲃⲉ ⲡⲛⲟⲃ ⲛ̄ⲁⲅ ⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲡⲉⲧⲁⲉⲉ ⲣⲁⲧⲫ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲙⲧⲟ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙ̄ⲡⲡⲛⲁ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲩⲧⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲟⲛⲧ ⲉⲧⲣⲁⲱⲁⲇⲉ ⲛⲙ̄ⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁ ⲛⲁⲃⲙⲉ ⲉⲧⲃⲓⲇ ⲛ̄ⲛⲓⲁⲛⲟⲙⲟⲥ ⲁⲩⲱ ϯⲛⲁⲧⲁ ⲙⲟ ⲉⲧⲉⲛⲟⲩⲛⲉ.

[183] This motif is common in ancient Jewish and Christian literature. Some examples women receiving divine instruction included Aseneth, Mary in the *Gospel of Luke*, and even the martyr Perpetua who receives divine communication in the form of dreams.

instruction. This is not simply a divine call for Norea, however, but a demand by Norea for divine intervention, and the forces from the world above answer her command. Norea's demand evidences that her speech channels the power of God even before her prophetic encounter with Eleleth. In this sense, she is more than a divinely chosen individual who is granted divine favour through prophecy, she is divine kin, taking on powers reserved for otherworldly beings. As mentioned above, after the angel appears the text turns to Norea's first-person account of the revelation. We learn, in Norea's words, the fate of humanity. There are two lessons included in this revelation Eleleth gives her. The first is about the nature of the archons, their false power, how they came to be, and affirmation that their misplaced power will be corrected in the future. The second lesson is about Norea's nature and how humanity will prevail over the archons' false rule through her offspring.[184] Eleleth's words to Norea that "all who know this way of truth are deathless among dying humanity,"[185] suggest that this message should be shared, and the shift to Norea's first-person retelling of the angelic revelation suggests that she is, indeed, sharing that message through the text. In this way, Norea is rendered a prophetic figure, scripted to save humanity because her words reveal divine truths.

It is also consequential that Norea is female as well as a prophet in *HypArch*. Her gender is integral to the text's framing of her prophetic role. I have addressed, in the previous chapter, how gender impacts the text's presentation of the cosmological struggle between the archons—marked as male—and the human protagonists, Eve and Norea, marked as female. I demonstrated that prophecy in the ancient world was framed through the logic of phallocentric, penetrative sex. Language was borrowed from medical literature to speak about the prophetic experience, and the impact of material forces on the prophetic body, such as fumes and divine breath. The Pythia, for

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[184] NHC 96:19-31

[185] NHC 96:25-27; ⲟⲩⲟⲛ ⲁⲉ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲛ̀ⲧⲁⲥⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛ ⲧⲉⲓⲥⲟⲇⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲉⲓ ⲥⲉⲯⲟⲟⲡ ⲛ̀ⲛⲁⲑⲁⲛⲁⲧⲟⲥ ⲉⲛ̄ ⲧⲙⲏⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲣ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲯⲁⲩⲙⲟⲩ ⲛ̀. The framing of this source as a teaching text is also expressly outlined in the prologue by an unnamed narrator who states that the text is responding to questions the intended reader had about the reality of the archons, NHC II 86:20-27. This characteristic, of *HypArch* being an intended teaching text, will be taken up again later in this chapter.

instance, is said to have consumed vapors that would rise from the rock under her tripod. When brought into her body, these vapors catalyzed divine communication between the seer and Apollo.[186] So as medical writers and philosophers would consider the penetrability of the human body to explain ailments, the prophetic body was likewise understood through a framework of penetration and physical transgression.[187] Within this phallocentric logic of ancient dominant ideologies of gender and sexuality, female bodies were understood to be more open and porous and therefore also more open to divine possession.[188] Some prevalent views of prophecy followed this common ideology of sex framed in terms of an active and passive binary wherein the penetrative position was deemed masculine, the penetrated, feminine. While both men and women are recorded as ancient prophets, the porosity of female bodies could imply that women might be more vulnerable to prophetic experience.

This porosity likewise made women's prophecy more suspect, as their openness made them more vulnerable to the nefarious influence of the spirit world or other malevolent forces alongside benign and benevolent powers. As Ruth Padel explains in her article on women in Greek antiquity, "Women: Model for Possession by Greek Daemons," women's bodies were understood to be more open to spiritual seizure and this openness posed a threat to Greek society which male

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[186] Origen of Alexandria reflects on this process in *Cels* 7.3. He uses sexual rhetoric to frame the process of these invading fumes to discredit Pythian devotion. See the longer discussion of the Pythia which takes up Origen's claims in chapter four: "Prophecy and Paidiskē" where the ancient prophet is discussed at length in relation to the prophetic enslaved girl of *Acts* 16. For more on the Pythia in general, see: Guilia Sissa, *Greek Virginity*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), especially Part I and Part II.

[187] As Dale Martin explains, this language brought with it sexual implications that shaped the understanding of the prophetic category as a sexual one. He states, "one can hardly read accounts of the physiology of prophecy, especially descriptions of prophecy enacted by a male god on a female seer, without detecting the sexual connotations of the language… [P]rophecy was thought of as the penetration of the body of the priestess by the god or some other, perhaps inanimate, invading force" (239). He calls the moment of prophecy a "moment of invasion" describing a very literal instance of physical entry into a person's flesh (241). Martin goes on to state that those most vulnerable to these prophetic invasions in the ancient world were those whose physical bodies were open to this intrusion. See: Martin, *The Corinthian Body*.

[188] For more on how women's bodies were primed to host spirits and daemons see Padel, "Women: Model for Possession by Greek Daemons," 3-19. Padel demonstrates how the understanding that women's bodies were more open than men's led to an understanding that women were more likely to be possessed by spirits in Greek literature.

citizens worked to contain. She states, "Women, body and mind, are regarded generally in classical literature as more open to passion and daemonic infiltration: a piece of male perception which is part of the more general notion that women endanger men by being enterable."[189] A woman's openness was a source of male anxiety and was conceived of through apprehension. The uncertainty indicated by Padel here, that women's physical openness was a threat to men and Greek society, extends into the early Christian imagination about women's propensity for spiritual reception. The Greek word *daimon*, which referred to any sort of spiritual entity, shifted into that of a malevolent figure in the earliest years of Christianity. "Around the second century AD the word *daimon"* Padel explains, *"*ceased to refer to a being who could also be call a *theos*, 'god', and became more like our word 'demon', something unalterably evil."[190] Padel notes this difference for her reader so as not to carry later Christian innovations onto earlier Greek concepts and meanings; however, the distinction is essential for identifying the concern and suspicion surrounding women's prophecy among early Christ followers. Women's physical and mental permeability meant that they were open to both good and bad spiritual appropriation, and it is a logic that has a long history in the ancient world. To safeguard against accusations of demonic inspiration, many early Christ followers heralded a prophet's virginity and sexual abstinence as proof for the integrity of their revelation.[191] This claim assured the prophet was impervious to unwanted forces by affiliating the penetration of her sexual anatomy (or lack thereof) with the penetration of a possessing power.

HypArch makes this move to protect Norea, and her future role as prophet as soon as she enters the text by twice calling her virgin. As mentioned above, Eve announces Norea's birth by stating "He has produced for me a virgin to help many human generations," and the narrator

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[189] Padel, "Women: Model for Possession by Greek Daemons,"11.
[190] Padel, "Women: Model for Possession by Greek Daemons," 12.
[191] Karen King's work on the Gospel of Mary demonstrates how the *Gospel of Mary* uses other methods than virginity and chastity to shore up the integrity of Mary's revelation. See: Karen L. King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 2003).

immediately follows with "Norea is the virgin whom the forces did not defile."[192] Later in the narrative, when Eleleth is speaking with Norea, he explains that the archons were unable to assault her because of her connection with the "virgin Spirit." The text reads, "these authorities cannot defile you or that generation, for your home is with Incorruptibility, where the virgin Spirit dwells, who is superior to the authorities of chaos and their world."[193] Eleleth does not directly call Norea a virgin here, but explains that the archons' inability to rape her is due to her association with the world above and the virgin Spirit, aligning her with superior powers that are also marked by the title of *parthenos*.

Anne McGuire understands Norea's virginity differently. She argues that *HypArch* connects Norea with the world above when it names her as a virgin on account of the use of the Coptic term *boēthia*, or assistance, in Eve's announcement of her birth.[194] McGuire contends that the term alludes to Norea's vocal potential and how it will intervene in the world on humanity's behalf (through her shared revelation) as figures from the world above have vocally intervened in the material world, as in the case of Incorruptibility calling the chief archon Samael. According to McGuire, Norea's naming as a virgin is directly tied to her acts of speaking and naming which mirrors how the world above intervenes and assists the material world.[195] I agree with McGuire's assertion that Norea is affiliated with the world above through her speech acts and explore this further the next section. The occurrence of her prophetic voice alongside the archons' attempted rape and the emphasis on her status as a virgin, however, suggest that the text is aware of the

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[192] NHC II 91:35- 92:3, Ⳮⲉ ⲁϥⲭⲡⲟ ⲛⲁ[ⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲡⲁⲣ ⲑⲉ] ⲛⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲃⲟⲏⲑⲉⲓⲁ [ⲉⲛ̄] ⲛ̄ⲅⲉⲛⲉⲁ ⲛ̄ⲅⲉⲛⲉⲁ ⲛ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ… ⲧⲁⲉⲓ ⲧⲉ ⲧⲡⲁⲣⲑⲉⲛⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲛ ⲇⲩⲛⲁⲙⲓⲥ ⲭⲁⲃⲙⲉⲥ

[193] NHC 93:27-32, ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲉⲉⲓⲉⲃⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲭⲁⲃⲙⲉ ⲁⲛ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ ⲧⲣⲉⲛⲉⲁ ⲉⲧⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲩ ⲧⲉⲧⲙ̄ⲟⲛⲏ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲉⲥⲱⲟⲟⲡ ⲉⲛ̄ ⲧⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧ ⲧⲁⲕⲟ ⲡⲙⲁ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲡⲡⲛⲁ ⲙ̄ⲡⲁⲣⲑⲉⲛⲓⲕⲟⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲩ ⲡⲉⲧⲃⲓⲁⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ⲉⲃⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ ⲙ̄ⲡⲭⲁⲟⲥ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲡⲟⲩⲕⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ.

[194] Anne McGuire, "Virginity and Subversion: Norea Against the Power in the Hypostasis of the Archon," in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, ed. Karen L. King (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International,1988), 239-258. I build from McGuire's work in my analysis of *HypArch* and read speech in the text as a marker of other worldly power. However, my work extends McGuire's observations by considering the occurrences of sexual predation in the text alongside these speech acts. Ultimately, I demonstrate that sexual violence is likewise part of this dynamic of other worldly power articulated by McGuire, surfacing as a method to regulate truth of the world above within the material world.

[195] McGuire, "Virginity and Subversion," 248.

sexualizing overtones of prophecy and the potential pitfalls for a female prophet. In naming Norea a virgin, the text moves to shield her from those undesired implications of prophetic penetration and protect the integrity of her prophecy. When the archons are unable to rape Norea, the text is likewise shoring up her role as a prophet by naming and protecting her virginity.

HypArch is not alone in its effort to protect the prophecy of one of its female characters by emphasizing her chastity. There is a long tradition of chaste prophets in Hellenistic practices, such as the Sibyls and the Pythia, who, while not identified as virgins, lived a life of sexual abstinence. Sibyl was likely the name of a single prophet originally, but later the name came to describe female ecstatic prophets more generally. The Sibyls were characterized as crones, a type of aged and frail woman. This would have made the Sibyl a "functional virgin" according to Clayton Croy and Alice Connor,[196] which suggests that these women were sexless prophets. Similarly, the Pythia, while originally an office held by a virgin, was later filled exclusively by mature women who would be dressed in the style of a virgin.[197] Both the Sibyls, the aged Pythia served as a chaste prophet. This association between chastity and female prophecy likewise surfaces in the sources of early Christ followers. As I will discuss at length in chapter four, Luke, the author of the *Gospel of Luke* and the *Acts of the Apostles*, demonstrates a deep anxiety about the sexualizing potential of prophecy and goes to great lengths to keep his female prophets from being subject to its erotic overtones. For example, the prophet Anna is a widow (*Lk* 2:36), Philip's prophetic daughters are virgins (*Acts* 21:9), and Mary's virginity is doubly protected by Luke refusing to name her as a prophet despite her prophetic actions early in his gospel (*Lk* 1:38).[198] While Luke preserves examples of female prophets among early Christ followers, their abstinence becomes characteristic of their prophetic integrity. Luke is not alone here. The author of *ATh* stresses the virtue of Thecla's virginity by the repeated failed attempts to violate her bodily

[196] N. Clayton Croy, and Alice E. Connor, "Mantic Mary? The Virgin Mother as Prophet in Luke 1.26-56 and the Early Church," *JSNT* 34 (2012): 264, doi:10.1177/0142064X11415326.
[197] Croy and Connor, "Mantic Mary?," 263.
[198] See also Michael Pope, "Luke's Seminal Annunciation: An Embryological Reading of Mary's Conception," *JBL* 138.4 (2019): 791-807.

integrity in the text by those in Antioch. Virginity is central to Thecla's characterization as divinely chosen in the narrative and is a core argument for the text. By the fourth and fifth centuries, women's sexual integrity developed into a symbol for their integrity in Christ as orthodox writers such as Athanasius, Ambrose, and Jerome, employed the symbol of a Christian virgin as a synonym for correct, orthodox beliefs. By contrast, a harlot, as a sexually open woman, represented heretical or false teachings.[199] Characterizing female figures as virgins, chaste, or sexless figures, ancient authors worked to ward off attacks aimed to discredit their roles as prophets and divinely chosen figures.

Norea's prophetic authority, then, implicitly derives from her feminine subject position. Reading Norea with the gendered connotations of ancient prophecy in view we might understand the archons' sexual objectification of her as related to her role as a prophetic saviour, and thus, as linked once more to their successful assault of her mother. The archons attempted rape of Norea is built on the expectation that Norea's femininity (as Eve's) renders her sexually violable, and even potentially subjugated. In naming Norea as a virgin, however, the text safeguards Norea from this sexual exposure while shoring up the integrity of her prophecy. And yet, Norea's gender has a positive valence too, a vital characteristic in her demonstration of spiritual authority. The following section turns to this positive valence, and demonstrates how Norea's gender, as presented through her voice, connects her to the powers from the world above in the text.

A Voice "With the Power of God"

When Norea challenges the archons' attempted assault, she beckons divine assistance and begins her prophetic journey. This vocal opposition to the archons is connected to rape and sexual violation, as well as to Norea's access to truth as a prophet through the knowledge acquired in her angelic encounter. Both factors, prophecy, and rape resistance, turn on Norea's ability to speak,

[199] See Virginia Burrus, "Word and Flesh: The Bodies and Sexuality of Ascetic Women in Christian Antiquity," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 10.1(1994), 27-51.

and as discussed above, her speech channels divine authority when she demands help to escape the archons sexual attack. Similarly, Norea's female gender facilitates her divine association as figures from the world above are almost uniquely female characters in *HypArch*. For example, Incorruptibility, the female spiritual presence, Sophia, and Zoe are all female characters with central narrative roles.[200] Therefore, Norea channels the power from the world above to reject the archons' authority in the text, she mirrors the actions of these female deities who have power over the archons, and she does so through her speech acts. This connection between Norea's rape resistance as a model of divine power builds from ancient conceptions of women's speech and mouths. It reflects an understanding of women's mouths as a synecdoche for their reproductive parts, as seen in my analysis of Eve. Female voices were extensions of their sexed and gendered bodies and for Norea, this characteristic also linked her to the cosmic power from the world above. As such, Norea's voice is the site for her divine agency in the narrative, and it is an agency contingent on her female gender.

Throughout the text, when faced with the archons' false claims, Norea's voice is a constant demonstration of her intuitive understanding of true power. When the archons attempt to rape Norea and justify that assault through their rape of her mother, Norea resists the archons' threats of sexual violence by meeting them head on, cursing them, and naming them rulers of darkness.[201] She responds to their attempted assault with strong words of rejection. The text reads, "But Norea turned to them and said, 'You are the rulers of the darkness, Damn you! You did not have sex with my mother but with one of your own ilk. For I am not from you. I am from the world above.'"[202] Here, Norea makes truthful claims that the archons themselves do not know, namely, that they raped the fleshy body of Norea's mother Eve while her spiritual presence had escaped into a

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[200] The exception to this female gendering of the powers from the world above are the cosmic forces referenced in Norea's rape intervention. Both the God of All and Eleleth are gendered male and are brought into the narrative at the same time. However, only Eleleth has any significant action in the text, communicating directly with Norea and telling her the truth about the archons' powers.

[201] NHC II 92:22-23

[202] NHC II 92:21-26, ⲁⲛⲱⲣⲉⲁ ⲇⲉ ⲕⲟⲧⲥ̅ ⲉⲣⲟ ⲟⲩ ⲡⲉⲭⲁⲥ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲇⲉ ⲛ̅ⲧⲱⲧⲛ̅ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛ ⲙ̅ⲟⲕⲁⲕⲉ ⲧⲉⲧⲛ̅ⲥⲟⲩⲟⲣⲡ̀ ⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲙ̅ⲡⲉⲧⲛ̅ⲃⲟⲩ ⲱⲛ ⲧⲁⲙⲁⲁⲩ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲛ̅ⲧⲁⲧⲉⲧⲛ̅ⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛ ⲧⲉⲧⲛ̅ ⲱⲃ̅ⲣ̅ⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲟⲩⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲁⲛ ⲉ̀ⲋ̅ ⲛⲁⲡⲥⲁ ⲛⲧⲡⲉ.

tree.[203] She understands that what the archons raped when they attacked Eve was the material form that they themselves previously created when forming Adam.[204] She infuriates her predators with this claim to truth even while their threat of sexual assault looms over her. Held together in this moment of action are an epistemological challenge to the archons' version of truth -- Norea knows more about the world than they do -- and Norea's rejection of sexual submission.

Norea's actions here recall the image of Incorruptibility likewise correcting the archons' false claims at the beginning of the text. In this passage, Norea's naming the archons as "rulers of darkness" mirrors Incorruptibility's naming of the chief archon, Samael, or blind god.[205] *HypArch* opens with the chief archon, being ignorant of his limited power, claiming "I am God; there is no other [but me]."[206] As the text continues, "This boast rose up to Incorruptibility, and a voice answered from Incorruptibility and said, 'You are wrong Samael' — which means 'blind god.'"[207] Incorruptibility's correction characterizes the archon as ignorant from the onset of the text. As a divine figure from the world above possessing divine knowledge, Incorruptibility intervenes in this moment to correct the archon's misunderstanding of his position. Norea resists their attack by naming them with a similar reference to their darkness. Her words cut directly to the heart of their illusion.[208] In this speech, Norea demonstrates a knowledge of the world that the archons' themselves do not possess. Repelling their attempted rape, she demonstrates an understanding of power that suggests her cosmic intuition even before she receives revelation from Eleleth. Her words push back against the archons while portraying knowledge she should not yet possess. She resists the archons' false claims and assault by speaking and demonstrates a connection to the world above.

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[203] NHC II 89:25-26
[204] NHC II 89:29-31. See also Adam's creation in NHC II 87:23-88:10.
[205] NHC II 87:3-4
[206] NHC II 86:30-31, ⲁⲛⲟⲕ̀ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲙ̅ⲛ̅ ⲗⲁⲁⲩ [ⲁⲍⲛ̅ⲧ ⲛ̅ⲧ].
[207] NHC II 86:32-87:4, ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲡⲉⲉⲓϣⲁϩⲉ ⲧⲱⲥ ϣⲁⲥ ⲣⲁⲓ ⲉⲧⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲧ̀ ⲁⲧⲧⲁⲕⲟ ⲉⲓⲥ ⲟⲛⲥⲙⲉ ⲁⲉ ⲁⲥⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲫ̅ⲛ̅ ⲧⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲧ̀ⲁⲧⲧⲁⲕⲟ ⲉⲥⲍⲱ ⲙ̅ⲙⲟⲥ ⲁⲉ ⲕ̅ⲣ̅ ⲡⲗⲁⲛⲁⲥⲑⲉ ⲥⲁⲙⲁⲏⲗ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲡ[ⲉ] ⲛ̅ⲃ̅ⲃⲗ̅ⲗⲉ
[208] Darkness is also used in the opening of *Colossians* and framed as a space from which God saved humanity, *Col* 1:13.

Norea's speech also mirrors another figure from the world above, Zoe, as I will explain below, when the former destroys Noah's ark. After the announcement of her birth by Eve, Norea's first interaction in the narrative is with Noah.[209] The archons have commissioned Noah to build an ark and Norea (Orea) wants to board the vessel. Noah, however, denies her entry, and this slight enrages Norea. She blows on the ark, causing it to be consumed by fire. Her actions destroy the ship and Noah is forced to build a second version. This scene foreshadows the superiority of Norea's power over the archons, demonstrating how quickly she can destroy their commissioned vessel. Her breath causes Noah's ark to burn up by its sheer force. It is this application of a fiery breath against the power of the archons that mirrors the story of Zoe, an otherworldly figure who likewise wields a fiery breath against the archons.

Zoe is the daughter of Sophia, who is also the accidental mother of the archons. According to Eleleth's revelation, Sophia attempted to create something without her male counterpart and her experiment resulted in the creation of the archons, and the material world. The text reads, "What she produced came to be something material like an aborted fetus. It took shape from the shadow, and it became an arrogant beast resembling a lion. It was androgynous, as I already said, because it came from matter."[210] This creation, named Yaldabaoth, is an unruly being who sees the great expanse of the material world and thinks of himself as the ultimate power over it. As in the narrative we have previously discussed involving Incorruptibility, Yaldabaoth announces himself as the one God, and is corrected by a heavenly voice calling him "Samael."[211] In this sense, Eleleth's revelation is an extended retelling of what we have already seen above, where Incorruptibility corrects this archon and names him blind god.[212] With this correction, Yaldabaoth demands proof that he is not, in fact, the one true God stating: "If anything exists before me, let

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[209] NHC II 92:14-17

[210] NHC 94:14-19, ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡⲉⲥⲙⲟⲩⲟⲩⲣ ⲁⲫⲱⲡⲉ ⲛⲛⲟⲩⲉⲣⲅⲟⲛ ⲉⲛ ⲑⲩⲗⲏ ⲛⲑⲉ ⲛⲛⲟⲏⲉⲟⲩⲉ ⲁⲫⲭⲓ ⲧⲩⲡⲟⲥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲛ ⲑⲁⲉⲓⲃⲉⲥ ⲁⲫⲱⲡⲉ ⲛⲟⲩⲑⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ ⲛⲁⲩⲑⲁⲇⲏⲥ ⲛⲛⲓⲛⲉ ⲙⲙⲟⲩⲉⲓ ⲟⲩⲉⲟⲩⲧⲥⲓⲙⲉ ⲡⲉ ⲛⲑⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲉⲓⲱⲣⲡ ⲛⲁⲟⲟⲥ ⲭⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲫⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉⲛ ⲑⲩⲗⲏ.

[211] NHC 94:19-26

[212] NHC 87:1-4

me see it."[213] The proof provided by Sophia, however, is lost on the ignorant being. Sophia's actions are characterized as misguided defiance in the text that result in a cosmic mess. Zoe enters the narrative here to harness her mother's creation, wielding angels against the obstinate archon. The narrative reads, "Zoe, daughter of Pistis Sophia, called out and said to him, 'You are wrong Sakla,' whose name is understood to be Yaldabaoth. Zoe breathed into his face, and her breath became for her a fiery angel, and that angel bound Yaldabaoth and cast him down into Tartaros, at the bottom of the abyss."[214] Zoe is powerful and acts swiftly. Through her fiery breath she binds the obstinate and ignorant archon, controlling his unbridled power.

Both Zoe and Norea are positioned with power over the false worldly rulers in the text, and this power is demonstrated through a consuming, fiery breath. Zoe, who, like Norea, conjures the power of her breath and transforms it into a fiery angel,[215] which ultimately dominates and controls the wild archon.[216] Zoe is a divine figure from the world above, and it fits the text's purview that she, being from a higher realm than the archons, would have power over them. Norea, however, is human,[217] and her consuming breath is unexpected.[218] As with her vocal opposition to the archons, Norea's fiery breath links her to a female deity from the world above.

Norea's vocal opposition to the archons and her consuming fiery breath derive from the same source. While speaking and breathing may appear to be distinct oral functions, in the logic

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[213] NHC 94:27-28, ⲱⲡⲉϫⲁϥ ϫⲉ ⲉⲱϫⲉ ⲟⲩⲛ̄ ⲃⲉ ⲱⲟⲟⲡ ⲉⲓ ⲧⲁ ⲉⲅⲏ ⲙⲁⲣⲉϥ ⲟⲩⲱⲛⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲁⲉⲓ.

[214] NHC II 95:5-10, ⲁⲩⲱ ⲍⲱⲏ ⲧⲱⲉⲉⲣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲡⲓⲥⲧⲓⲥ ⲧⲃⲟⲫⲓⲁ ⲁⲥⲁⲱⲕⲁⲕ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲡⲉϫⲁⲃ ⲛⲁϥ ϫⲉ ⲕⲣ̄ ⲡⲗⲁⲛⲁ ⲥⲁⲕⲗⲁ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲡⲉϥ ⲟⲩⲉⲱⲙ ⲡⲉ ⲓⲁⲗⲧⲁⲃⲁⲱⲑ ⲁⲥⲛⲓ ⲫⲉ ⲉⲅⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲙ̄ ⲡⲉϥⲉⲟ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲡⲉⲥⲛⲓⲫⲉ ⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲛⲁⲥ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲉϥⲟ ⲛ̄ⲕⲱⲉⲧ.

[215] The text says that Norea "blew (ⲁⲥⲛⲓⲫⲉ) on the ark and made it burn up(ⲁⲥⲣⲟⲕⲉⲥ̄)"(NHC 92.16) and the text explains Zoe's "breath became for her a fiery angel (ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲡⲉⲥⲛⲓⲫⲉ ⲱⲡⲉ ⲛⲁⲥ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲉϥⲟ ⲛ̄ⲕⲱⲉⲧ)(NHC 95:8-9)."

[216] For a longer analysis on the fiery breath of Zoe and a comparison with ancient Egyptian deities, see: Glazer, "Goddess with a Fiery Breath."

[217] Norea's mother is Eve, but her paternal lineage is more ambiguous allowing a reading of the third person masculine singular pronoun "he" to be read as a reference to the God of All. The text reads: "Adam had sex with his partner Eve again. She became pregnant and bore Seth for Adam. She said, 'I have given birth to another person through God, in place of Abel.' Eve became pregnant again and gave birth to Norea. Eve said, 'He has produced for me a virgin to help many human generations.' Norea is the virgin whom the forces did not defile. NHC II 91:35- 92:2, ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡⲉϫⲁⲥ ⲭ̈ⲉ ⲁⲫϫⲡⲟ ⲛⲁ[ⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲡⲁⲣ ⲑⲉ] ⲛⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲃⲟⲛⲑⲉⲓⲁ [ⲉⲙ̄] ⲛ̄ⲅⲉⲛⲉⲁ ⲛ̄ⲅⲉⲛⲉⲁ ⲛ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ.

[218] For more on this mirroring between Norea and Zoe, and how it relates to the redaction history of the narrative, see Barc, *L'Hypostase des Archontes,* 124-125.

of ancient medicine, both somatic actions were supported by *pneuma*,[219] "the vital principle associated with the soul… and with the higher forms of intelligence."[220] In this sense, Norea's speaking and breathing, derive power from the same source.[221] Norea's mouth, as seen in her resistance to rape, channels the power of the world above into the material world and demonstrates the false rule of the archons. Her gendered voice facilitates her divine connection which allows her to thwart the archons' attack and bring about her soteriological revelation.

Epistemology and Sexual Violence

Norea's voice connects her to the world above through its gendered characterization and through the knowledge it conveys about the truth of the false power of the archons. As such, Norea demonstrates a power superior to the archons in the text; her voice challenges the archons' version of reality, that they are the supreme powers over a material world. In this way, Norea's vocal actions make epistemological claims. As a character who is gendered female, her voice is likewise connected to her sexual and reproductive anatomy in the ancient imagination. Therefore, an

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[219] It should be noted that there is a difference between the technical Greek term *pneuma*, and the terms used in this Coptic narrative for spirit and breathing. The Coptic term used here for breath is ⲛⲓⲫⲉ (*nife)*, not *pneuma*. *Pneuma* is used in this text to signify other worldly powers and spiritual entities such as the female spiritual principle (NHC II 89.11) and the archons named as spirits of evil (NHC II 86.25) for example. Acts of animate breathing in the text such as when the archons blow on Adam's face (NHC II 88.3), when Norea blows on Noah's ark (NHC II 92.16), and when Zoe tackles the archons (NHC II 95.9) use the term *nife,* meaning breath (n.) or to blow (v.). This demonstrates a distinct difference from the use of the term *pneuma* in *HypArch*. While it is a Greek term that is adopted into the Coptic language, the scope of its definition in Greek is not wholly maintained in the Coptic usage. The discussion above about the physiological and philosophical conceptions of *pneuma* refer to the medial imagination affixed to the Greek term and not the philological usage of the term. Instead, I am drawing on the history of the medical concept that encompasses breath and breathing, *pneuma*, and not the use of the term to designate a spirit in the text.

[220] Gleason, *Making Men*, 85.

[221] *Pneuma* was thought to pervade both the physical body and the material world and was the essence of higher human functions like rational thought. It was a blend of something like air and fire, and it carried with it what many ancient philosophers and medical writers considered the source of life that existed in all parts of the body. These pneumatic functions of the body were interconnected and interdependent. Sperm, for example, was understood as a mixture of blood and *pneuma*, and when recklessly and frequently discharged had the potential to distress the quantities of *pneuma* in other parts of the body, compromising the body's ability to function. Sense perception was also controlled by *pneuma*, where the substance produced senses such as sight, smell, and hearing. Voice, like breath, was itself a manifestation of *pneuma*. For more see: Galen, *On the Use of the Parts*, K4.183; and *On the Seed*, K4.588. Dale Martin also takes up these points. See: Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 201-202.

assault on that sexed anatomy would extend its affect to her voice and mouth according to ancient medical logic. This dynamic is prefigured in the archons' rape of Eve, where the archons' group rape targets Eve's voice, and as I have argued in the previous chapter, this group rape ruptures Eve's prophetic potential. Similarly, the archons' attempted rape of Norea is an attempt to sever the connection to the world above located in Norea's voice. The archons target three figures in the text. All three figures are female, have some association with power from the world above, and their voices feature in their interaction with the archons. The archons' sexual predation then, is a policing mechanism, regulating truth and shoring up their version of reality. Rape and sexual violence as they are practiced by the archons in *HypArch* are part of the text's epistemological logic, regulating who can and cannot access knowledge about the material world and the world above.

Within *HypArch*, the archons target three figures with sexual predation. As I have discussed at length, the archons rape Eve and attempt to rape Norea. Before the archons rape Eve in the text, however, they target Incorruptibility with their predatory behaviour. Near the beginning of the text, not long after Incorruptibility challenges the chief archon for his false statement of power, Her image is reflected onto a body of water as She peers down on the material realm. The archons lust after this reflected image and try to grasp it for their own but fail.[222] The text reads, "Incorruptibility looked down into the region of the waters. Her image appeared as a reflection in the waters, and the authorities of darkness fell in love with her. But they could not grasp the image that appeared to them in the waters, for they were weak, and what is only of soul

[222] The Coptic term here *merit* (ⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧ) is frequently translated as desired or loved. However, this is the same Coptic term used to describe the archons feelings as they pursue Eve, *mereit* (ⲙⲉⲣⲉⲓⲧⲥ, 89: 21). In that scene it is evident that the feeling coming over the archons is sexual desire, or lust. Translating the term as love or simply desire does not accurately demonstrate the sexually aggressive component at play in the archons desire for Incorruptibility. Especially when paired with the archons want to grab and take the image as their own. *Merit* in these scenes is depicting a forceful, sexual drive on the part of the archons.

cannot grasp what is of spirit."[223] As seen in the previous chapter, the archons failure to grasp the image of Incorruptibility drives them to create Adam. The archons explicitly state in the narrative that in creating Adam in their own image and the image of Incorruptibility that they saw on the water, they looked to grasp the ungraspable image and keep it for their own.[224] The text reads,"'[Come], let's grasp the image by means of the form we have shaped [so that] the image may see its male partner [and fall in love with it].'"[225] As they will do later upon seeing Eve and Norea, the archons aggressively pursue Incorruptibility for their own sexual desire.

What connects these three female figures, beyond the archons' predatory behaviour toward them, is their representation of otherworldly knowledge in the text. These figures possess knowledge that stands in contrast to the archons' delusion of supreme power, and as such, their knowledge challenges the archons' version of truth. As I have argued, Eve and Norea are both prophets, possessing knowledge that challenges the archons' power. As representatives of the world above, or in the case of Incorruptibility a deity from that higher world, their actions in the material world completely disrupt the archons' illusion of supreme power. In this sense, the conflict between the archons and these three female beings is an epistemological struggle. It is a struggle over truth and knowledge, of who or what is the supreme power.

The text's characterization of the archons' attempt to regulate this knowledge through targeted sexual violence follows the logic we have seen throughout my analysis, where prophecy and otherworldly communication are framed through the ancient logic of gendered, penetrative sex. The text's characterization of the archons as sexually violent beings mirrors the epistemological language we have seen thus far concerning gendered bodies and charismatic speaking. For example, in the previous chapter on the archons' rape of Eve, I demonstrated how

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[223] NHC 87:12-18, ⲁⲧⲧⲉⲕⲟ ⲃⲱⲥⲧ ⲁⲡⲓⲧⲛ̄ ⲁⲙⲙⲉⲡⲣⲟⲥ ⲛⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲁⲡⲉⲥⲓⲛⲉ ⲟⲩⲱⲛⲅ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲅⲛ̄ⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲛⲉⲍⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ ⲙ̄ⲡⲕⲁⲕⲉ ⲙⲉⲣⲓⲧⲥ̄ ⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲩⲱ ⲃⲛ̄ⲃⲟⲙ ⲇⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲅⲉ ⲡⲓⲛⲉ ⲉⲧⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲩ ⲧⲉⲛⲧⲁⲍⲟⲩⲱⲛ <ⲅ> ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲅⲛ̄ⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲧⲟⲩⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲃⲃⲉ ⲇⲉ ⲙ̄ⲯⲩⲭⲓⲕⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲱ ⲧⲉⲅⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛⲉⲩⲙⲁⲧⲓⲕⲟⲥ ⲁⲛ.
[224] NHC II 87:10-88:3
[225] NHC II 87:33-35, ⲁ[ⲙⲅⲉⲓⲧⲛ̄ ⲙⲁ] ⲣⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲅⲟⲩ ⲅⲙ̄ ⲡⲛ̄ⲡⲗⲁⲥⲙⲁ ⲇ[ⲉⲕⲁⲁⲥ] ⲉⲩⲛⲁⲛⲁⲩ ⲁⲡⲉⲩⲱⲃ̄ⲣⲉⲓ[ⲛⲉ...].

women's mouths were a synecdoche for their vaginal and reproductive organs in the ancient world.[226] That what transpired in the genital region of the female body was viewed as having a causal consequence on the oral region, and vice versa.[227] Ancient physicians such as Galen, Soranus, and Isidore, understand women's vaginal health as having direct implications on their mouths and heads.[228] Reading this partnership of mouths and vaginas within the purview of *HypArch*, the archons' instinct to rape these charismatic female figures can be read as an instinct to mute their challenge to the archons' version of truth. In other words, in sexually violating these female characters, the text suggests that the archons would likewise violate these charismatic figures' ability to articulate truth. This move would subsequently shore up the archons' version of reality. As the text associates Norea with powers from the world above, and by extension her access to truth about the world, through her gendered voice, so too are speech and gender irrevocably linked in the logic undergirding the archons' sexually violent impulses. Sexual violence, gender, and voice characterize the epistemological discourse in *HypArch*.

THE ACTS OF THECLA

ATh is a second century[229] Christian text that, like *HypArch*, centers a female protagonist who is at once a leader chosen by God and someone who wards off an attempted rape by a high-standing, worldly figure. This resistance to sexual violence emphasizes Thecla's role as one of

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[226] For more discussion on the association between heads and women's genitalia in the ancient world see: aqueur, *Making Sex*; Eilberg-Schwartz and Doniger, *Off with her Head!*, especially chapters "Veils, Virgins, and the Tongues of Men and Angels" by Mary-Rose D'Angelo, and "The Nakedness of a Woman's Voice, the Pleasure in a Man's Mouth: An Oral History of Ancient Judaism" by Howard Eilberg-Schwarts; and, Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 237-238.
[227] Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 36.
[228] Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 35-36.
[229] Scholars frequently cite Tertullian's treatise *On Baptism as* an attestation for the second century dating of *ATh*. In this work, Tertullian teaches against the textual authority of *ATh*, declaring that it was written by an anonymous presbyter in Asia Minor who falsely attributes the story of Thecla to Paul's missionary travels. In debunking the text, Tertullian is writing against women who were using the source as authorization for their own ability to baptize. However, the manuscript history of Tertullian's treatise *On Baptism* is contested, so what Tertullian states about Thecla and the anonymous author is not reliable. In fact, what Tertullian knew about a Thecla figure is likewise unsure. For a more detailed discussion on the manuscript history of Tertullian's *On Baptism* as it relates to Thecla and *ATh*, see Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Unreliable Witnesses: Religion, Gender, and History in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 121. For a more detailed manuscript history see: Barrier, *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, 117-120.

God's chosen missionaries committed to a life of virginity as taught by Paul. While *HypArch* and *ATh* are categorically distinct texts, holding the two narratives in conversation demonstrates that within the imagination of early Christ followers, moments of resistance to sexual violence were possible and preserves a history of difference that tells the story of survivorship. While both texts articulate these narratives of resistance to sexual violence, however, they do not overturn the normativity of sexual violence in their passages. In both texts, Norea's and Thecla's resistance to sexual assault happens alongside narratives that presume the sexual violation of others. In *ATh* this presumption is systemic, as the text reproduces the system of ancient slavery in its narrative which normalized the sexual violations of enslaved persons. *ATh* challenges assumptions about sexual violation through Thecla's story while subsequently reproducing the logic it overturns in Thecla through its characterization of the enslaved class.

Thecla: A Divinely Chosen Figure

ATh, also known as *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, narrates the trials of a woman named Thecla who adopts a life of virginity after hearing the teachings of Paul.[230] It travelled both as a part of the larger *Acts of Paul* (AP) and on its own as an independent source. It is preserved in several ancient languages including Greek, Latin, Syrian, Armenian, and Slavonic manuscripts, demonstrating its broad reach and appeal to a diverse ancient audience.[231] Thecla, unlike Norea, was an influential character in early Christianity. Not long after the text was in circulation, Thecla emerged as the ideal model for Christian virginity. For example, Methodius, a fourth century. bishop and ecclesiastical author, places Thecla as the head of a choir of virgins who espouse the

[230] All textual references from *ATh* are taken from Jeremy Barrier's 2009 critical edition, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, who takes his numbering from Écrits apocryphes Chrétien, Willy Rordorf in collaboration with Pierre Cherix and Rudophe Kasser, trans., "Actes de Paul," EAC (ed. François Bovon and Pierre Geoltrain; Index by J. Voicu; Bibliotheque de la Pleiade; Saint Herblain: Gallimard, 1997), 1127-77. For more on Barrier's organization of the text see: Barrier, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla: A Critical Introduction and Commentary*, XVII.

[231] Kraemer, *Unreliable Witnesses,* 121. For a more detailed manuscript history see: Barrier, *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, 26-30.

values of living a life of chastity in his *Symposium*.[232] This imagery characterizes Thecla as the leader amongst Christian virgins. Gregory of Nyssa, a Cappadocian father likewise writing in the fourth century, aligns Thecla's reputation as the Christian virgin *par excellence* with his sister Macrina. Gregory explains that his sister has the secret name of Thecla, suggesting that Macrina's divinely marked life was presupposed at her birth through this association with Thecla.[233] Similarly, Pseudo-Athanasius in his fifth century. hagiography of Amma Syncletica, a desert mother, opens his work describing Syncletica as "the true disciple of Thecla," making comparisons of the two women through their virginity as suitors of Christ.[234] Thecla was the authority for women's devotional experiences, and it was an authority established in her virginity, a characteristic echoed through representations of the proto-martyr.[235] In contrast, Norea the prophetic virgin and saviour in *HypArch*, was lost to the world for the better part of two millennia, having almost zero influence. Her name is only briefly mentioned three times by two authors. Thecla is not only mentioned by several authors, and her narrative greatly transcribed, but her presence in early Christian material culture is likewise significant. Veneration of Thecla was so robust that it included a substantial pilgrimage site in Seleucia, Asia Minor, the site of her death in *ATh* (4.18). According to Stephen Davis, recent excavation of *Hagia Thecla*, the name of this pilgrimage site, "uncovered the fifth-century remains of three basilicas, a large public bath, and a number of cisterns."[236] "The main basilica at the site," he continues, "measured over 80 meters in length."[237] This large archeological footprint attests that the site was a popular destination for

[232] Methodius of Olympus, *Symp*., II.I.
[233] Gregory of Nyssa, *V. Macr*., 962 B/C.
[234] Pseudo-Athanasius, *Vit. Sync*., 8.
[235] Thecla's trials in an arena where she pays witness to Jesus Christ publicly situate her as a forerunner for later martyrdoms that follow a similar script. For more on how Thecla's story is comparable to later martyrologies see: Stephen J. Davis, *The Cult of Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[236] Davis, *The Cult of Thecla*, 6.
[237] Davis, *The Cult of Thecla*, 6.

fifth-century pilgrims, and confirms that devotion to Thecla was significant.[238] Thecla's story as a divinely chosen virgin supplied a vital narrative for women's devotional practices.

ATh has two sections that mirror each other in their plot development. The first takes place in Iconium, Thecla's hometown, and the second transpires in Antioch, a missionary destination. The Iconian section of the narrative establishes the framework for the rest of the story, as it centers Thecla's choice to live a life of virginity and characterizes it as favourable to God. As the narrative explains, Paul has travelled to the city to teach and missionize (3.1-3.4). Thecla hears Paul's preaching from the house of Onesiphorus, a local Christ follower, through her open window and is enamoured by his teachings on virginity and celibacy in the name of Jesus.[239] These teachings are supported by other lessons, but Paul's section on virginity follow:

> Blessed are those who have kept the flesh chaste, for they will be a temple of God. Blessed are the self-controlled, for God will speak to them…[240] Blessed are they who though having a wife, are as those not having a wife, for they will inherit God…[241] Blessed are the bodies of the virgins, for they shall be well pleasing to God and they will not lose the rewards of their purity, because the word of the father shall be to them a work of salvation in the day of his son, and they shall have rest forever (3.5- 3.6).[242]

Virginity is identified as a practice tied directly to God, and is a virtue emphasized throughout the narrative. Thecla hears Paul teach this lesson on the virtues of virginity from her window and is transformed by the message. Transfixed by his words, she commits herself to a life of virginity (3.7). This connection between the heroine's virginity and her status as a divinely favoured figure is something that both *ATh* and *HypArch* share. Thecla's virginity, like Norea's, is key for their roles as agents of a divine message. Moreso, it is tied directly to each character receiving divine

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[238] For more on the Late Antique tradition of Thecla see: Davis, *The Cult of Thecla*, 2008.
[239] Carly Daniel-Hughes demonstrates how these beatitudes draw from *1 Corinthians* 6-7, as well as the *Gospel of Matthew*'s sermon on the mount. In doing so, *ATh* presents Paul's message as one of abstinence and celibacy as tied to his eschatological teachings. See: Carly Daniel-Hughes, "The Apostle of Failure: Queer Refusal, the Corinthian Lettes, and Paul's Unflattering Characterization in the Acts of Thecla," *Biblical Interpretation* (published online ahead of print 2022): doi.org/10.1163/15685152-20221688
[240] *1 Cor*. 7:9
[241] *1 Cor* 7:29
[242] *ATh* 3.5-3.6, μακάροι οἱ ἁγνὴν τὴν σάρκα τηρήσαντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ναὸς θεοῦ γενήσονται. μακάροι οἱ ἐγκρατεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοῖς λαλήσει ὁ θεός… μακάροι οἱ ἔχοντες γυναῖκας ὡς μὴ ἔχοντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομμήσοθσιν τὸν θεόν…μακάρια τὰ σώματα τῶν παρθένων, ὅτι αὐτὰ εὐαρεστήσουσιν τῷ θεῷ καὶ οὐκ ἀπολέσουσιν τὸν μισθὸν τῆς ἁγνείας αὐτῶν˙ ὅτι ὁ λόγος τοῦ πατρὸς ἔργον αὐτοῖς γενήσεται σωτηρίας εἰς ἡμέραν τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀνά παθσιν ἔξουσιν εἰς αἰῶνα αἰῶνος.

gifts: Norea, prophecy, and Thecla, her ability to self-baptize and teach. The reader learns that Thecla is from an affluent family and part of the elite civic class of Iconium, a fact she later tries to leverage in her own defense in Antioch (4.1) which I return to in a later section. She is engaged to an important man named Thamyris, who accuses Paul of seducing his fiancée and undermining his engagement to her with teachings of virginity (3.13). Thamyris' accusations lead to civic distress and Paul's imprisonment (3.15-3.17). In Thecla's attempt to liberate Paul from prison, she is put on trial herself for her refusal to abandon Paul's message of celibacy and sentenced to an execution championed by her own mother who exclaims "Burn the lawless one! Burn the one who is no bride in the midst of the theatre, in order that all the women who have taught by this one might be afraid" (3.20).[243] Her commitment to Paul's teachings of virginity upends her social world and throws the civic balance of Iconium into turmoil. With the help of divine intervention in the form of a miraculous hailstorm, Thecla escapes death by funeral pyre (3.22). Newly freed from the Iconian authorities after the immense destruction of the miraculous storm, Thecla tracks down Paul and declares her allegiance to his ministry, following him to his next destination: Antioch. Virginity as a teaching in Christ, as well as Thecla's commitment to that teaching is the central throughline of the Iconian narrative.

In Antioch, the point of focus for my analysis, Thecla is met with more public trials that culminate in her spectacular self-baptism in water filled with carnivorous seals (4.9). This self-baptism solidifies her role as one of God's chosen and the events that culminate in this moment rely on Thecla's commitment to preserving her virginity The textual events follow similar narrative plot points as those in the Iconian part of Thecla's story. Her Antiochian public trials, for example, are the result of her rejection of a notable, civic figure, in particular, her rejection of an elite man named Alexander. Where Thecla is put on trial for her refusal to marry Thamryis in Iconium, her physical rejection of Alexander's sexual advances in Antioch publicly offends the

[243] *ATh* 3.20, Κατάκαιε τὴν ἄνομον, κατάκαιε τὴν ἄωθμφον ἐν μέςῳ θεάτποθ, ἵνα πᾶσαι αἱ ὑπὸ τούτου διδαχθεῖσαι γυναῖκες φοβηθῶσιν.

civic figure, and her state sanctioned executions are Alexander's attempt to rectify that moment of humiliation (4.2). These attempted executions ultimately fail on account of miraculous interventions like the Iconian hailstorm that extinguishes the fire beneath her execution pyre. In Antioch it is the protection of a female lion in the arena that saves Thecla from a death *ad bestias* (4.8). The apex of these Antiochian public trials is Thecla's self-baptism at a moment when her death seems imminent. The text reads,

> Then they sent in many wild beasts, while she stood and extended her hands and was praying. But as she was completing the prayer, she turned and saw a great ditch full of water, and said 'Now is time for me to wash myself.' And she cast herself into the water saying, 'In the name of Jesus Christ I baptize myself for the last day.' And looking on, the women and all the crowd cried out saying 'Do not cast yourself into the water,' so that even the governor was weeping, because seals were about to eat her. But Thecla therefore cast herself into the water in the name of Jesus Christ. But the seals looking upon a light of fiery lightening floated up as corpses. And there was a cloud of fire around her, so that neither the beasts could touch her, nor could they see her naked (4.9).[244]

This scene confirms the miraculous interventions in Thecla's previous execution attempts as divine favour, as she not only demonstrates an authority to baptize herself, something Paul refused to do after her escape from execution in Iconium (3.25), but this self-baptism is divinely conferred through the miraculous protection of Thecla's person from the ravenous seals, and her modesty from the onlooking crowd. Thecla's unrelenting commitment to safeguarding her virginity is at the core of her devotional authority; she is one of God's chosen because of this continued preservation against all odds. Stephen Davis explains, "In *ATh*, Thecla's commitment to chastity seems to lie at the root of her charismatic power; her physical purity is presented as the source of her divine favour."[245] Thecla's untouchable body, both at the pyre in Iconium and in the arena in Antioch, embodies this charismatic power. For Davis, her indestructible body, one

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[244] *ATh* 4.9, Τότε εἰβάλλοθσιν πολλὰ θηρί, ἑστώσης αὐτῆς καὶ ἐκτετακυίας τὰς χεῖρας καὶ προσευχομένης. ὡς δὲ ἐτέλεσεν τὴν προσεθχήν, ἐστπάφη καὶ εἶδεν ὄπυγμα μέγα πλῆρες ὕδατος, καὶ εἶπεν Νῦν καιρὸς λούσασθαί με. καὶ ἔβαλεν ἑαυτὴν εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ λέγουσα Ἐν τῷ ὀωόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ὑστέρᾳ ἡμέρα βαπτίζομαι. Καὶ ἰδοῦσαι αἱ γυναῖκες καὶ πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος ἔκλαθσαν λέγοντες Μὴ βάλης ἑαυτὴν εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ, ὥστε καὶ τὸν ἡγεμόνα δακρῦσαι, ὅτι τοιοῦτον κάλλος φῶκαι ἔμελλον ἐσθίειν. ἡ μὲν οὖν ἔβαλεν ἑαθτὴν εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ· αἱ δὲ φῶκαι πυρὸς ἀστραπῆς φέγγος ἰδοῦσαι νεκραὶ ἐπέπλευσαν. καὶ ἦν περὶ αὐτὴν νεφέλη πυρός, ὥστε μήτε τὰ θηρία ἅπτεσθαι αὐτῆς, μήτε θεωρεῖσθαι αὐτὴν γυμνήν.

[245] Davis, *The Cult of Thecla*, 26.

routinely unmarred by perilous events and therefore one whose purity is preserved, is the manifestation of her divine association.[246] The trials that follow Thecla throughout the narrative are likewise facilitated by her commitment to virginity and spurs her conflicts with civic authorities in both Iconium and Antioch when she refuses sexualized associations with two different elite men. Like Norea when she thwarts the archons assault in *HypArch*, Thecla not only resists Alexander's attempted rape, but emerges as a divinely chosen figure.[247] Where Norea becomes a prophet receiving revelation from an otherworldly figure, Thecla's self-baptism is divinely conferred through a series of cosmological events that protect the heroine. These otherworldly interventions confirm Thecla as a ritual authority and are direct associations with her commitment to a life of virginity.

Rape Resistance, Divine Favour, and Social Class

Thecla's rejection of Alexander's unwanted touch in *ATh* 4.1 continues this central tension in the text. Thecla's commitment to virginity, as tied to her chosen life following Paul, is consistently under threat. Her refusal of Thamryis and rebuke of Alexander typify social threats that might compromise her virginity. Unlike her refusal of marriage to Thamryis in Iconium,

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[246] Davis, *The Cult of Thecla*, 26.

[247] This attempted assault by Alexander is mirrored later in the text during Thecla's final trial in *ATh* 4.10. In this scene, Alexander has tied Thecla by her legs to two bulls with the goal of having her torn apart by her legs, a punishment set to destroy Thecla via a sexualized act. At this point in the narrative the proconsul is indifferent about continuing to enact punishment on Thecla, leading Alexander to take control of her execution. According to Barrier, this scene echoes the sexualized power struggle describe in 4.1 when Thecla physically rejects Alexander. Barrier explains, "Here Alexander finally takes the death and shame brought upon him into his own hands, taking the legal reigns from a passive proconsul and attempts to pay back Thecla for her dishonoring him by denying his sexual advances (4.1). Initially Alexander tried to bind her and failed, but now he can bind her. Initially Alexander made sexual advances on her, but now he is able to inflame the genitalia of the bulls with the result of the destruction of Thecla's legs being pulled apart (this is exactly what he was denied in 4.1)." In attempting to destroy Thecla in this manner, Alexander is reenacting the very scene that caused his shame, however, this time he is seeking redemption. However, he fails to assault Thecla again and she escapes death when he miraculously fumbles the flame and burns the rope securing Thecla to the bulls instead of scorching the bulls' genitalia. As in 4.1, Thecla again survives an attempted sexual assault by Alexander. See Barrier, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, 167.

however, Thecla's physical rebuff of Alexander in Antioch is an escape from an act of sexual violation.

Thecla's sexually violent encounter with Alexander transpires as soon as she and Paul enter Antioch in *ATh* 4.1 and from the onset of this encounter notions of social class inform both Alexander's and Thecla's understanding of sexual violability. Social station is integral to this scene of attempted rape. Alexander is introduced in the text through his civic role and influence within the city. He is a high-born and prominent figure. The text reads, "a certain Syrian named Alexander, a leading member of the Antiochenes, having accomplished many matters in that city by all of his leadership" (4.1).[248] This influential man, upon seeing Thecla, desires (ἠπὰσθην) her and plies Paul with money and gifts. Alexander's turn to Paul, and his offering of money and goods, indicates that Alexander believes that he can purchase Thecla from her male associate, her *leno,* or pimp. As he has become passionately enamored (ἠπὰσθην) with her, he mistakes Thecla for a woman who can be bought, he mistakes her for a *meretrix*, or prostitute.[249]

Thecla, as the reader is aware, is not a prostitute, but a woman of elite upbringing from Iconium. With that classed status comes an expectation of modesty, or *pudor*, that was unavailable to enslaved women such as prostitutes. *Pudor* encompasses the display and reputation for modesty in dress, deportment, and behaviour. It was a mode of being that upper-class women were expected to embody in their day to day lives. In an honour/shame society, such as the ancient Mediterranean, enslaved people were written out of this system of social capital and therefore had no claim to reputations of modesty, such as chastity.[250] Instead, prostitutes in

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[248] *ATh* 4.1, "σθριάρχης τις Ἀλέξανδρος ὀνόματι Ἀντιοχέων πρῶτος πολλὰ ποιῶν ἐν τῇ πόλει ἐκείνη ἐν ὅλη τῇ ἀρχῇ αὐτοῦ

[249] For more on sex work in antiquity see: Carly Daniel-Hughes, "Prostitution," in *The Oxford Handbook of New Testament, Gender, and Sexuality*, ed. Benjamin Dunning (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 645-660.

[250] This concept is taken up in greater detail in my third chapter, "Slave Culture as Rape Culture: Sexual Status and Class in the Acts of the Apostles." For more on pudor see: Jennifer Glancy, "Early Christianity, Slavery, and Women's Bodies," in *Beyond Slavery: Overcoming its Religious and Sexual Legacy,* ed. Bernadette J. Brooten (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 148. For more on enslaved women in honour/shame societies see, Carolyn Osiek, Margaret Y. MacDonald, and Janet H. Tulloch, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2006).

antiquity were social foils for the honour of upper-class women, as their readily available sexualized bodies diverted the attention of elite men, such as Alexander, away from upper-class women and children. Many were enslaved women,[251] and classified as *infames*, or those whose profession attributed to their lacking in reputation such as actors and gladiators.[252]. As an upper-class woman, Thecla accessed social capital through an honour system that was beyond the reach of, among others, prostitutes. Alexander's mistake about Thecla's identity is heightened by the truth about Thecla's station as it plays on the social tension between her honour, as an upper-class woman, and the dishonour she may be subjected to having been mistaken for a prostitute.

The conflict at this moment is embroiled in notions of sexual violability and mistaken social class. The concern triggered in the reader by Alexander's mistake is indebted to the author's emphasis on Thecla's elite social status throughout the narrative. Her classed status is a vital characteristic at this moment as Alexander's mistake has the potential to disrupt the social protections of that class for Thecla. If he is successful in his assault, Thecla's claim to honour would be compromised. This juxtaposition between Thecla's upbringing and Alexander's mistake, as it pertains to her sexual violability invokes the image of a *pseudomeretrix*, a stock character in ancient comedies such as *Poenulus* and *Rudens* by Plautus.[253] The *pseudomeretrix* is a noble woman who has been mistaken as a prostitute.[254] She is characterized as having impeccable virtue

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[251] Jennifer Glancy explains that while most prostitutes were enslaved women, this was not a universal fact. She synthesizes material on the topic in her monograph, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, and explains that those free women who were prostitutes likely entered the profession under duress. However, the professional category of prostitute was a complex civic category that included imperial taxes and Roman holidays, and while it was undoubtedly part of the slave economy and its violence, the profession preserved a unique social history. For more see: Jennifer Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2006), 54-57.

[252] Catherine Edwards, "Unspeakable Professions: Public Performance and Prostitution in Ancient Rome," in *Roman Sexualities*, ed. Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 66.

[253] Annalisa Rei, "Villains, Wives, and Slaves in the Comedies of Plautus," in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture: Differential Equations*, ed. Sandra R. Joshel and Sheila Murnaghan (London: Routledge, 1998), 92-108.

[254] This dynamic is also found in ancient romances such as Chariton's Chaereas *and Callirhoë* (1st c. CE), and Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon* (2nd c. CE). *ATh* follows many of the major plot points of the ancient novel, most notably how integral marriage is to the plot of the narrative. The ancient romance was a popular genre of literature that told the story of two separated lovers who worked to be reunited against terrible odds. In the case of *ATh*, the roles of the separated lovers are filled by Paul and Thecla. Ancient

while subjected to the inflammatory reality of ancient prostitution. The shame and dishonour of her situation as a mistaken sex worker is contrasted through a moral otherness that sets her apart. This exaggerated virtue foreshadows the inevitable rectification of the mistake, and the recognition of the woman's true status. The narrative has Thecla follow these same plot points in Antioch: she is mistaken as a prostitute (4.1), is persistent in her chastity and virtue despite the public persecution she faces (4.2, 4.9), and in the end the city of Antioch recognizes her virtue as well (4.13).[255] Comedic tropes surface in many texts of early Christ followers beyond *ATh*.[256] Therefore, finding this stock character in *ATh* fits the cultural language demonstrated elsewhere in texts circulated by early Christ following communities. While I do not suggest that this scene should be read in a comedic fashion, the identification of the familiar trope of the *pseudomeretrix*

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romances, as *ATh*, were harrowing tales of mistaken identities, perilous voyages, and routine sexual threats. A central theme throughout these narratives was the lengths the heroine had to go to preserve her chastity. She was always young and beautiful, and continually lusted after by the numerous powerful men she encountered. In successfully escaping these licentious men, the heroine of the ancient romance preserves the integrity of her eventual marriage. In the end, lovers are always reunited, and thanks to the heroine's heroic effort, happily married. These marriages that conclude ancient romances signified both domestic and imperial harmony. According to Judith Perkins in her work, The *Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*, the testing and perseverance of the marital relationship sustained ancient social structures as well as the individual's commitment to that vision of the social world. These tales, while presenting a dramatic love story resolved in marriage, affirmed the logic and desires of the elite social class and social worldview they created. The ancient romance sustained the ideology of Roman culture and its civic values. For more on the ancient romance in relation to surfacing Christian identities see: Judith Perkins, "Marriages as Happy Endings," in *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era (*London: Routledge, 1995), 41-76; and Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride*: *Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

According to Melissa Aubin's work, "Reversing Romance? The Acts of Thecla and the Ancient Novel," *ATh* is purposefully subverting this social dynamic identified by Perkins and Cooper by disrupting the reader's expectation of the plot through its resistance to the institution of marriage and ultimately positioning Thecla against the city state. See: Melissa Aubin, "Reversing Romance? The Acts of Thecla and the Ancient Novel," in *Ancient Fiction and early Christian Narrative*, ed. Ronald F. Hock, Chance J. Bradley, and Judith Perkins (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 257-272.

[255] This understanding of Thecla as a *pseudomeretrix* may explain the continuation of corporeal violence levied at Thecla even after she announces her citizenship. It is a continuation of violence that has puzzled scholars. In his notes for 4.1, Jeremy Barrier outlines the concern that Thecla's claim to Iconian citizenship (a claim I analyze further on in this section) should have been enough to mitigate her execution sentence to something less severe than *ad bestias*. See: Barrier, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, 141 n.12. While Thecla's citizenship should have qualified the punishment enacted by the Antiochian governor, this level of punishment and violence against prostitutes, as persons known as *infames*, was readily accepted. For more see: Edwards, "Unspeakable Professions." The *pseudomeretrix* trope may provide some light as to why Thecla's citizenship is a moot point if she is believed to be a prostitute.

[256] J. Albert Harrill, "The Comedy of Slavery in Story and Parable," in *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006).

indicates that the author wanted readers to draw familiar connections in the work; namely, they wanted readers to center cultural associations of social class, virtue, and sexual violability.

In this narrative, Thecla's virtue is expressed through her virginity as a commitment to the teachings of Paul as a follower of Christ, which differs from the type of classed virtue expected from the *pseudomeretrix* stock character. *ATh* uses the stock character trope to chronicle Thecla's trials in Antioch, but Thecla's virtue shifts from a marker of her class, as per the *pseudomeretrix* character, to a marker of her new identity as a follower of Paul's teachings of Christ. The unwavering virtue she expresses, that which ultimately allows those Antiochians persecuting her to realize her exceptionality, is framed through her identity as a follower of Christ. Whereas the unwavering virtue of the *pseudomeretrix* character is rooted in her class as a highborn woman mistaken for a sex worker, for Thecla this steadfast demonstration of virtue is framed by her commitment to Paul's teaching of Christ. While Thecla's virtue in this text mirror's the expectation of virtue of her social class, it is expressed through her relationship to Christ. In this sense, Thecla's commitment to virginity in *ATh* differs from the type of modesty and chastity expected from a high-born woman embodying *pudor*. Public nudity, for example, would undoubtedly compromise a highborn woman's claim to modesty;[257] however, in *ATh*, despite Thecla's highborn status, and her commitment to chastity, Thecla's nudity does not compromise this goal. As Melissa Aubin demonstrates, while Thecla is committed to chastity throughout the narrative, nudity is recoded in *ATh* to signify her power in contrast to the power of civic authorities.[258] For example, Aubin demonstrates that throughout the narrative, each time Thecla removes gendered objects from her body, such as bracelets (3.18), she emerges as an empowered force against her

[257] Jennifer Glancy offers a pointed example of this from Seneca's play, "The Trojan Women," where the character of Queen Hecuba directs the women of the fallen city to lower their clothes, exposing their bodies. This defrocking of the elite women of Troy with the falling of the city symbolizes their immediate change in status from highborn women to spoils of war. Glancy explains that "Seneca visually dramatizes reduction of status by contrasting the modest dress of a free woman and the shameful exposure of an enslaved woman." The public display of a woman's body was associated with the lowly status of enslaved women in antiquity. See: Glancy, "Early Christianity, Slavery, and Women's Bodies," 147-148.
[258] Melissa Aubin, "Reversing Romance?," 257-272.

antagonists whose comparable denuding signifies their frailty. She explains, "whereas Thecla's nudity signifies her power, the nudity of her adversary signifies his impotence."[259] This association between nudity and empowerment also appears at Thecla's trials in Antioch when she rejects the clothes offered to her by the governor stating: "the one who clothed me while I was naked among the beasts shall clothe me with salvation."[260] Echoing the observation of Margaret Miles, Aubin reads this rejection of clothing as a demonstration of agency by Thecla, one that underscores her divinely chosen status.[261] Thecla's virginity then is tied directly to her identity as a follower of Paul, and her commitment to this virtue ultimately reveals her divinely chosen status and Alexander's mistake to his peers in Antioch. While Thecla mirrors the *pseudomeretrix* stock character, the virtue through which Thecla affirms her identity is coded as a Christ follower. The virtue anticipated from an upper-class woman mistaken as a prostitute in the *pseudomeretrix* stock character transforms in *ATh* to become the virtue embodied by a female Christ follower as taught by Paul. Thecla's *pseudomeretrix* dilemma is transformative. By the end of her trials she has emerged as an exemplary model of female devotion. Yet, while it follows an anticipated conflict established through the expectations of class, the conflict is resolved through virtues it recodes as those of a Christ follower.

In her book *Corporeal Knowledge*, Jennifer Glancy explores how ancient *habitus*, a concept she adopts from sociologist Pierre Bordieu to distinguish an embodied knowledge,[262] informs the development of early Christ following communities. In the chapter "Embodying Slavery from Paul to Augustine," she focuses on the effects of a slaveholding *habitus* on the concept of virtue and morality in these communities. Glancy argues that an apparent equal claim to virtue among both free and enslaved persons within early Christ following communities was

[259] Aubin, "Reversing Romance?," 268.
[260] *ATh* 4.13, Ἡ δὲ εἶπεν Ὁ ἐνδλυσας με γυμνὴν ἐν τοῖς θηρίοις, οὗτος ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κρίσεως ἐνδύσει με σωτηρίαν.
[261] Aubin, "Reversing Romance?," 270; Margaret Miles, *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West* (Boston: Beacon, 1989), 58.
[262] For a longer discussion on *habitus* and Glancy's use of this concept in early Christ following communities, please see my third chapter "Slave Culture as Rape Culture."

undermined by the slaveholding *habitus* of the ancient world and that the classed meanings, to be freeborn or enslaved for example, were inscribed onto the morality codes of these emerging groups through the embodied practices of daily life. The central role that women's chastity took in these communities and their texts, she suggests, is an embodied manifestation of this slaveholding *habitus*. Glancy explains,

> The Christian body developed an obsessive concern with female chastity. This preoccupation was, I believe, a corporal expression of a slaveholding *habitus* that translated a cultural expectation for elite women into a moral qualification that tended to exclude from the highest spiritual ranks, women of humbler social statuses, especially slaves. By elevating self-abasement, Christian writers challenged classical conceptions of virtue. However, as a rule those Christians who were actually enslaved did not benefit from this moral revolution. I argue that many Christians simply discounted the possibility that female slaves could know a certain kind of virtue in their bodies.[263]

The flip side of Glancy's observation is that highborn women, women whose bodies could access those cultural expectations of chastity, had easier access to the highest moral ranks in these early Christ following communities. While Glancy demonstrates that a slaveholding *habitus* inhibited enslaved persons from fully engaging in the transformative worldview of these communities, she likewise indicates the privileged possibility for divine favour by those who were not enslaved. Glancy's work demonstrates that for those of highborn status, accessing moral privilege and authority in these new communities was made easier by their social class.

Thecla's narrative mirrors Glancy's observations about the fixation on women's chastity in these communities and the connections between class, sexual violability, and exemplary morality within early Christ following communities. *ATh* has Thecla leverage this connection in her self-defense against Alexander's attempted assault. When she speaks her resistance to Alexander, she becomes a mouthpiece for the entanglement of her classed protection with her new identity as a follower of Christ. When Alexander publicly embraces Thecla, she responds with a complete rejection of his privileged grasp. As the text continues, after Alexander fails to acquire Thecla

[263] Jennifer Glancy, *Corporeal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010, 62.

through Paul (Paul infamously denies knowing Thecla and promptly leaves Thecla and Antioch),[264] Alexander openly embraces (περιεπλάκη) Thecla in the street (ἄμφοδον), and Thecla fervently rejects his sexual advances. Her rejection of Alexander is as follows:

> But she did not put up with it, but sought out Paul. And she cried out bitterly, 'Do not force the stranger (ξένος)! Do not force the slave (δούλος) of God. I am a leading woman of the Iconians, and on account of my not wishing to marry Thamyris, I was cast out of the city.' And having been taken by Alexander, she took hold of him by the mantle and she took his wreath, and she stood by him triumphant (4.1). [265]

Thecla publicly lambasts Alexander for his attempted assault, and physically pushes back against his forced embrace. Through her voiced resistance, Thecla protests Alexander's assumption about her sexual availability by emphasizing her identity as an early Christ follower and her social station. The first two statements Thecla turns to Alexander in her defense are "Do not force (βῖαζω) the stranger (ξένος)! Do not force (βῖαζω) the slave of God (δούλος)" (4.1).[266] Both *xenos* (ξένος) and *doulos (*δούλος) are chosen language of early Christ followers to demarcate and differentiate themselves from others. *Xenos*[267] means foreigner, stranger, or guest.[268] This term stands in direct contrast to Alexander's characterization as an elite member of Antiochian society. More so, early Christ followers used this language of foreigner and alien to fashion an identity for themselves as other through a rhetoric of marginality and difference.[269]

Before Thecla arrives in Antioch, the text uses the term *xenos* to describe Paul while he is teaching in Iconium. For example, in a lament about Paul's teachings Thamryis, Thecla's

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[264] Daniel-Hughes argues that this unflattering image of Paul in *ATh* reflects the influence of his Corinthian correspondence on the narrative. In particular, she argues that the text is attuned to tensions in Paul's rhetoric in these letters and she challenges the assumption that by citing and integrating his work into the text, he too as a figure must be positively received. See Daniel-Hughes, "The Apostle of Failure?" I see a similar pattern echoed in Paul's characterization in *Acts* 16 when he forcibly exorcizes the prophetic enslaved girl. Here again, Paul exhibits uncomplimentary behaviours that have been repeatedly noted by scholars. I take up this comparison further in chapter four.

[265] *ATh* 4.1, ἡ δὲ οὐκ ἠνέγκην, ἀλλὰ Παῦλον ἐξήτει. καὶ ἀνέκραγεν πικρῶς λέγουσα Μὴ βιάσῃ τὴν ξένην, μὴ βιάσῃ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ δούλην. Ἰκονιέων εἰμὶ πρώτη, καὶ διὰ τὸ μὴ θέλειν με γαμηθῆναι Θαμύριδι, ἐκβέβλημαι τῆς πόλεως. καὶ λαβομένη τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου περιέσχισεν αὐτοῦ τὴν χλαμύδα καὶ περιεῖλεν αὐτοῦ τὸν στέφανον, καὶ ἔστησεν αὐτὸν θρίαμβον.

[266] *ATh* 4.1, μὴ βῖαζῃ τὴν ξένην, μὴ βῖαζῃ τοῦ θεοῦ δούλνη.

[267] *Rm* 16:23.

[268] Bromley, "xénos [foreigner, stranger, guest]", in *TDNT,* 661.

[269] For more on this subject see: Benjamin Dunning, *Aliens and Sojourners: Self as Other in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

betrothed, states, "For I am agonizing greatly concerning Thecla, because she loves the stranger (ξένος) thus and I am being robbed of marriage" (3.13).[270] Similarly, Thecla uses the term to refer to Paul according to a gatekeeper who is being questioned by Thamyris during his search for a missing Thecla. The text reads, "And going out they questioned the gatekeeper, and he told them that she said, 'I am going to the stranger in the prison'" (3.19).[271] The text is employing the term that likewise used in other second century sources, such as *1 Peter* and *Hebrews*, to demarcate difference and establish identity markers for early Christ followers. Therefore, not only does the term *xenos* draw on notions of Thecla as a literal foreigner in Antioch, but it also likewise positions *ATh* within an identity project found in some texts of early Christ followers.[272] *Doulos*, meaning slave, the second term Thecla uses to self-identify in her defense, is another phrase used by early Christ followers to characterize their relationship with God. For example, Paul uses the term to self-identify in *Romans* (*Rm* 1:1), and Luke has Mary use the phrase to describe her relationship to God upon learning about her miraculous pregnancy (*Lk* 1:38).

This master/slave metaphor describes the ideal relationship between God's followers. The metaphor indicated the total obedience, and subservience, of a Christ follower to their deity. Like an ideal enslaved person, the ideal follower of Christ placed the will of their God over their own wants and needs.[273] Both terms, *xenos* and *doulos* (δούλος), are markers of Thecla's identity as a Christ follower. They are also the first things she utters in her defense against Alexander's assault anchoring her self-defense in her identity as a Christ follower. She follows these identity markers by summarizing what transpired in Iconium. She explains that she is a leading woman[274] of the city who refused to marry and was therefore expelled from the city. In this line again, Thecla

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[270] *ATh* 3.13, οὐ γὰρ μικρῶς ἀγωνιῶ περὶ τῆς Θέκλης, ὅτι οὕτως φιλεῖ τὸν ξένον καὶ ἀποστεροῦμαι γάμου.
[271] *ATh* 3.19, καὶ ἐξελθόντες ἀνήτασαν τὸν πυλωρόν, καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὅτι εἶπεν· πόρεύομαι πρὸς τὸν ξένον εἰς τὸ δεσμοτήριον·
[272] For more on identity projects among early Christ followers, see Elizabeth Castelli*, Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making*, New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2004.
[273] For more on the master/slave metaphor please see my discussion on scholarship on enslaved persons in early Christ following communities in my introduction.
[274] *ATh* 4.1, Ἰκονιέων εἰμὶ πρώτη

corrects Alexander's presumption by identifying her highborn status alongside of her identity as a Christ follower, which informs her desire for a life of virginity. Both markers of her identity, her social status and her worldview, justify her resistance to Alexander's attempted rape and indicate how the text understands Alexander's presumption about Thecla's sexual violability. On account of this resistance Thecla is put on trial again by civic powers (4.2-4.11). Through these public trials she emerges, conferred, as a divinely chosen person with ritual authority, baptizing herself. Her virginity remains unscathed, and she lives out her life as a missionary teacher, spreading the message of early Christ followers (4.15-4.18). Thecla's life as a divinely chosen figure is indebted to the persistence in her virginity, a category only made available to her through her highborn status.

Enslaved Persons in the Text

While Thecla's rejection of Alexander's attempted assault demonstrates that early Christ followers imagined a space where sexual violence could be resisted, this text is not articulating an overhaul of systems of sexual violence that existed in the ancient world. In fact, while the text creates a reality where Thecla can resist attempted rape, it assumes classed systems that naturalized sexual violence against others, namely enslaved persons. As I turn to in the following section, I show that evidence of the system of slavery is ubiquitous in the text with enslaved characters surfacing throughout the narrative. They exist in homes in Iconium and Antioch, and likewise travel with Thecla on the road to Myra at the end of the narrative. The text does not challenge slave-holding ideology. It simply was not imaginable for the author of the text. Similarly, then, to how *HypArch* imagines a resistance to the archons' attempted rape for Norea yet maintains Eve's subjection to their sexual violation, *ATh* likewise imagines a resistance for some but not all in its narrative. In the worldview of the text, Thecla's resistance to sexual violence was not a resistance available to all.

After the resolution of her trials in Antioch, Thecla returns to Tryphaena's home. Tryphaena, an elite woman from Antioch,[275] having been her steadfast advocate, is now her primary benefactor, transferring Thecla all her property (4.14).[276] However, before Thecla leaves Antioch she spends eight days in Tryphaena's home. During this time the text tells us that she teaches those in the household so that many in the home believed in God. The text explains that this included many enslaved persons within the household. It reads, "Therefore Thecla entered with her and refreshed herself in her house for eight days, teaching her the word, so that she believed in God and also many of the slaves."[277] These enslaved figures mirror the enslaved handmaids who appear earlier in the text, mourning for Thecla as she sits at the window listening to Paul in Iconium. In *ATh* 3.10, the reader is told that alongside of Theocleia and Thamyris, Thecla's enslaved female attendants (παιδίσκαι) grieve for her. Both household scenes include characters of the enslaved figures that would have populated the homes of upper-class families,[278] and in both scenes, the enslaved persons reflect the sentiments of the owners of the household, as if they were direct extensions of their owners' feelings being members of their household. In Iconium, the enslaved handmaids reflect the concern of Thecla's mother and fiancé, where in Antioch, the enslaved handmaids reflect the sentiments of their owner, Tryphaena. However, these are not the only enslaved figures in the text. Enslaved characters are present throughout the narrative, not only within household scenes. In *ATh* 3.19 for example, the gatekeeper's companion, likewise an enslaved man (σύνδουλος), offers up information to Thamyris and his search party about Thecla, who had run away to be with Paul. In *ATh* 3.23, Paul sends an enslaved

[275] The text also tells us that she is a relative of the emperor, *ATh* 4.11.
[276] For more on female benefactors and early Christ followers see: Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch, *A Woman's Place*, especially chapter nine, "Women Patrons", 194-219.
[277] *ATh* 4.14: ἡ δὲ εἰσῆλθεν μετ'αὐτῆς καὶ ἀνεπαύσατο εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς ἡμέπας ὀκτώ, κατηχήσασα αὐτὴν τὸν λόγον, ὥστε πιστεῦσαι τῷ θεῷ καὶ τῶν παιδισκῶν
[278] For more on enslaved persons within the Roman household see: Sandra R. Joshel, and Lauren Hackworth Peterson, "Slaves in the House," in *The Material Lives of Roman Slaves* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 24-86; Catherine Hezser, "Slaves in the Household," in *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 123-148; and, David Balch, and Caroline Osiek eds., "Slaves," in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 207-276.

person (παῖς) to the market to buy food with his cloak,[279] and in *ATh* 4.11, Tryphaena's enslaved female attendants (θεράπαινα) are the ones who cry out and draw attention to Tryphaena's distress, bringing Thecla's public trials to an end. In the world of the text, the Roman system of slavery is omnipresent, and the narrative does not challenge it.

As the next chapter will elaborate, ancient slave culture was rape culture, and in not challenging the system of slavery, *ATh* does not unsettle slaveholding ideology that upheld the sexual violability of enslaved persons. From the freeperson's perspective,[280] enslaved persons were bodies,[281] economically viable tools that performed a role that sustained the status quo. Their bodies were the property of their owners and as such, were subjected to the will and desire of those owners. This dynamic was a naturalized subjugation of persons that included the normalization, and even expectation, of the sexual violation of enslaved persons. Even freeborn persons who were not an enslaved person's owner were able to publicly lambaste or physically reprimand an enslaved person in public space.[282] However, if a freeborn person misused another's enslaved person that damaged them in a way that compromised their usefulness to their owner, this transgression could result in legal retribution by the owner. This dynamic is evidenced in *Acts* 16:16-21, a scene I return to in the fourth chapter. This legal action was wholly tied to the

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[279] I read παῖς here as an enslaved person for three reasons. First, we are told the Onesiphorous and his household are following Paul in this scene. While children are present and speak, they are referred to as τέκνον**.** It is only once Paul sends a child to the market to trade his coat for food does the figure become a παῖς. τέκνον is used in the singular by Tryphaena when she refers to Thecla as her child (τέκνα)in *ATh* 4.5. Where the female diminutive of παῖς is used, as described above, to demarcate enslaved female attendants in Theocleia's and Tryphaena's households. Therefore, in this scene I read the use of παῖς as a designation of enslavement. See, Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christiantiy*, 25; and, Oseik, MacDonald, and Tulloch, *A Woman's Place*, 72.

[280] Glancy makes an important note in her work that little historical material preserves the perspective of enslaved persons' self-understanding. She does note, however, that there is evidence available to historians that documents enslaved peoples' discontent with at least some of the treatment levied against them. She states, "we do not possess a body of literature from the ancient world that we can reasonably attribute to slave authorship, we have a few clues to help us understand how slaves perceived their own personhood, in particular, how they perceived themselves as women and men. We do not know how they absorbed or resisted discourses that excluded them from the game of honor." Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity,* 28.

[281] See Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity,* 10-11.

[282] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity,* 12.

transgression of an owner's property rights and not an enslaved person's personhood. [283] Enslaved people were a private asset.

As objects owned by other persons, enslaved people were excluded from the morality culture that demarcated and maintained the social value of a freeborn individual. This morality culture hinged on concepts of chastity and honour, and as such was preoccupied with placing social value in expressions, or non-expressions, of the sexual body. From the perspective of slaveholding culture, enslaved persons existed outside the bounds of this moralizing system. In their exclusion, their bodies became a space where the freeborn public could enact morally objectional actions without consequence. Among other things, this meant that enslaved people were perpetually sexually suspect and, therefore, perpetually sexually available. Enslaved persons, then, were a sexual opportunity for their owners. This naturalized the normalization of sexual violence by owners, their families, guests, and chosen relations. It was not exclusively a gendered violence; it was also a ubiquitous class violence. Even enslaved persons who were not sexually violated existed in a world where they were read as sexually accessible.

Therefore, while *ATh* challenges notions of sexual subjugation through Thecla's resistance to Alexander's attack, the text does not understand the ancient system of slavery as something that was to be critiqued. *Ath,* instead, reflects an understanding of slavery that naturalized the existence of the system, and it was a system built on the normalized sexual violation of enslaved persons. Thecla both participates in classed social behaviours, such as the practice of slavery, while disrupting others that would justify her sexual violation by Alexander. For example, Thecla is not only attended by enslaved handmaids in Tryphaena's home, but she also takes enslaved persons with her on her devotional mission after her trials in Antioch.[284] After she leaves Tryphaena's home at the end of the text in search of a reunion with Paul, the text explains that

[283] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity,* 12.
[284] Having inherited Tryphaena's estate, Thecla would have also inherited the enslaved persons that the text details were attending to Tryphaena and Thecla. Enslaved people were transferable property. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity,* 10-11.

Thecla takes with her παιδίσκη.[285] This scene of people following Thecla demonstrates that she is an influential teacher in her own right, travelling with her own group of disciples, while the terminology suggests that at least some, if not all, in this crowd were enslaved persons.[286] As stated in the text, Tryphaena is Thecla's benefactor, and as such, Thecla would have inherited the enslaved handmaids mentioned by the text in *ATh* 4.11 and *ATh* 4.14. The text is explicit about Thecla's use of Tryphaena's financial support. Her resources are used to fund Thecla's, and by extension Paul's, teaching (4.16). As a spiritual leader and high-born citizen, Thecla benefits from the ancient system of slavery throughout her missionary travels.[287] So, while Thecla resists the

[285] *ATh* 4.15, "and it was made known to her that he [Paul] was in Myra and taking young men and women…she went to Myra." καὶ ἐμηνύθη αὐτῇ ἐν Μύποις εἶναι αὐτόν. Καὶ λαβοῦσα νεανίσκους καὶ παιδίσκας…ἀπῆλθεν ἐν Μύποις. The only other time the term is used in the text is to distinguish the enslaved handmaids in *ATh* 3.10 and *ATh* 4.14. These are the same enslaved handmaids previously discussed that reflect the sentiments of the home they served. While the term can mean young woman or girl (LJS: The Little Liddell, 512), all other cases of παιδίσκη in *ATh* demarcate enslaved women. Barrier translates the term as young women, Bart Ehrman translates it as maidens, and Wilhelm Schneemelcher as maidservants. Barrier, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, 178; Bart D. Ehrman, *The Acts of Thecla*, in *After the New Testament: A Reader in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 283; Edgar Hennecke, Wilhelm Schneemelcher, and R M. L. Wilson, "Acts of Paul and Thecla," in *New Testament Apocrypha* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 2:363. I, instead, include the marker of their enslaved status that is included in the term, as well as how the text is employing it.

[286] Thecla is attended by enslave women, but she also brings young men (νεᾶνιας) with her to Myra. The text reads, λαβοῦσα νεανίσκους καὶ παιδίσκας. There is a noted gender difference between the groups she brings with her, and as I have demonstrated above, at least one of those two groups is classed. Bernadette Brooten believes that all the persons following Thecla in this scene (νεανίσκους καὶ παιδίσκας) were enslaved persons. Both terms carry notions of youth, a concept acknowledged in the inclusion of young in the translation for both terms. Further, she suggests that this group were more than disciples, but likely a form of protection as women travelling with enslaved persons often had this role in antiquity. Stephen Davis explains that Thecla's adoption of a masculine appearance at the end of the text also speaks to this need of female travellers for a type of protection. According to Davis, Thecla's male appearance would have provided some of that protection. See: Davis, *The Cult of Thecla*, 32-33.

[287] This need for Thecla to seek out Paul after her transformation seemingly mirrors the attachment Thecla exhibits toward Paul throughout the text despite his repeated neglect. However, as Daniel-Hughes demonstrates, this visit is a courtesy rather than an enamoured return. She explains, "Thecla has already interpreted her baptism as this very commission. Moreover, she is not really supported by Paul at all at this stage (having secured the financing of the local widow, Tryphaena). Her visit to Paul functions as a courtesy, a final step on her way to a mission that does not require him. Although Paul, and his epistles, hover in and around the edges of these final scenes, the *Acts of Thecla* does not try and rehabilitate Paul as a character. Paul's uncertain treatment of Thecla—amplified, as I have argued, by the way the Corinthian letters figure into their adventures—is part of the ordeal that she endures. Under Paul's counsel, though not precisely in the way he intends, Thecla discovers how to live otherwise on the borders of familial and civic belonging. To do so she loses a whole lot along the way, even Paul himself" (32). In the end, Thecla steps into the role she herself admired in Paul. She becomes the teacher, travelling and educating others, including her once mentor, Paul. See Daniel-Hughes, "An Apostle of Failure."

sexual violence that threatened her, the text continues to normalize sexual violation for others. Resistance to sexual violence is irrevocably linked to class in this narrative.

CONCLUSION

ATh, like *HypArch*, preserves a history of resistance to sexual violence, where Thecla, like Norea, rejects the entitled sexual advances of another. These sexual advances are both built on the presumed subjugation of the heroine by those looking to sexually violate the character. In *HypArch*, the archons presume that Norea is subservient to them because of her humanity next to their quasi-divinity; in *ATh*, Alexander assumes Thecla is a low-standing woman and is therefore sexually violable. Like the archons' sexual attack in *HypArch*, Alexander's sexual entitlement is positioned as a threat to Thecla's budding authority as one of God's chosen. And like Norea, Thecla's resistance to this sexual violation emphasizes her identity as a divinely chosen person.

For both figures, resistance to these attempted rapes is integral for their growth into divinely chosen figures with charismatic gifts. When pressed by the archons, Norea uses her voice to demand divine intervention that ultimately results in her reception of a soteriological prophecy for humanity. Thecla emphasizes her identity as a follower of Christ as taught by Paul in her defense against Alexander. This rejection leads to a series of attempted executions of Thecla by the state, and she emerges from these trials as a divinely sanctioned teacher who can perform baptisms. For both figures, their rejection of sexual violence ushers in a series of events that identify these women as divinely chosen. In successfully escaping attempted rape, both Norea and Thecla are rewarded with charismatic gifts and a prerogative to teach others.

Regardless of these moments of forceful rejection of rape, neither source aims to overturn the entire logic of sexual violence as there are figures in each text who are subjected to rape and sexual violation. As demonstrated in chapter one, Eve is subjected to the archons' assault and loses her prophetic potential. In *ATh*, Thecla is routinely attended to by enslaved figures whose

sexual violability was normalized in ancient slaveholding culture. Yet, in holding these texts together they preserve a history of rape resistance that might otherwise go unnoticed. They demonstrate a history of survivorship. Moreso, they preserve images of deities that sanction and support this type of survivorship as they confer these survivors with charismatic gifts. Both Norea and Thecla are supported by divine forces in their efforts to escape sexual predators.

CHAPTER 3 - SLAVE CULTURE IS RAPE CULTURE: SEXUAL STATUS AND CLASS IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The previous two chapters trace how early Christian texts undermine charismatic speech through the sexualization and sexual violence experienced by characters. In the first chapter Eve's prophetic abilities are muted by the archons' rape of the seal of her voice. The second chapter focuses on how Norea and Thecla's resistance to violence shores up their status as divinely chosen figures who go on to receive prophecy, teach, and baptize. Where these chapters focused on narratives with explicit scenes of sexual violation, the following two chapters consider the systemic sexual violence ubiquitous in the ancient system of slavery. Here, I demonstrate how Luke's presentation of these figures and their speech depends on a history of sexual violence and sexualization that was tied to their status as enslaved persons.

The *Act of the Apostles* (*Acts*) is a second century text that recounts the journeys of the apostles to spread the message of Jesus after his death and resurrection. One of Luke's central objectives in *Acts* is to present the Jesus movement in a way that appeals to elite Roman mores by distancing it from foreign cults and lower-class persons. I center three marginalized characters who speak to an apostle in the text: the Ethiopian eunuch (*Acts* 8), the prophetic enslaved girl (*Acts 16*), and Rhoda (*Acts* 12). I argue that these scenes reflect tension in Luke's narrative concerning who can, and can cannot speak with divine authority. In these pericopes, Luke highlights the epistemological authority of the apostles, but as I will demonstrate through a close consideration of Luke's rhetoric, it is an authority made possible through the systemic sexualized violence toward enslaved persons.

I begin by providing some context to *Acts*, focusing on its representation of apostolic authority. I then consider slave culture as a rape culture in the ancient world, a modern term that I use to demonstrate the interconnectedness of everyday actions and systemic acts of sexual violation. This also provides critical context for my reading of *Acts* 16 and 12 that I take up in the

fourth chapter. The bulk of this chapter focuses on a narrative analysis of the Ethiopian eunuch.[288] I consider how the reality of slave culture as rape culture surfaces in *Acts* and argue that enslaved persons lived with the somatic experience of slavery as rape culture. I demonstrate how enslaved characters, simply by being identified as enslaved in the text, are coded with cultural meanings that presume their sexual violability. The second half of the chapter reads the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch of *Acts* 8 to show how Luke relies on his castrated body to present him as an ideal convert. I ask the question: why does Luke use a character marked as a eunuch in this scene? In the ancient imagination, a eunuch's body was proximate to that of a child, and Luke draws on this notion that eunuchs are childlike. This is reflected in the text through the Ethiopian eunuch's use of questioning, which perpetually defaults to Philip as a knowing teacher. Here, the Ethiopian eunuch is the curious student, who only speaks through inquiry.

Further, I ask why this eunuch is likewise a foreigner, from Ethiopia. I argue that the Ethiopian eunuch's ethnic title points to his ambivalent status in the narrative. While his conversion story serves Luke's purpose in propping up apostolic authority, as a radical other, that is foreign and exoticized, the Ethiopian eunuch potentially troubles Luke's vision of the Way as palatable for a Roman audience. His foreign identity, though, renders his castrated body as other within an empire that outlawed the practice. His foreignness likewise demonstrates the broad appeal of the message of early Christ followers to the metaphorical "ends of the earth," fulfilling a prophecy made by Jesus earlier in the narrative (*Acts* 1:8). Luke, however, is trying to domesticate the image of the Way in his retelling of this early history by making it appear synchronous with Roman morality. Situating an important and early conversion in a doubly foreign figure works

[288] I understand the figure of the Ethiopian eunuch as an enslaved person in *Acts*. Luke does not use terminology that explicitly designates the Ethiopian eunuch as an enslaved person as he does with other characters in the text. My conclusion about the Ethiopian eunuch's enslaved status, however, is based on Luke's description of the character, specifically that the Ethiopian eunuch is the treasurer of the Candace's (the Ethiopian Queen) court (8:27). Historically, court eunuchs were enslaved persons and thus, I base my reading of the character on this known history and position the Ethiopian eunuch alongside other enslaved characters in *Acts*.

against this logic. For this reason, the Ethiopian eunuch appears only briefly in the narrative, and not as a fully incorporated member of the apostle's community.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts is a New Testament text that chronicles the work of the apostles after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. It is a second-century source, composed between 110-120 CE, perhaps in Ephesus.[289] The text is likely a literary companion to the *Gospel of Luke*, an association first suggested by Irenaeus in his *Adversus Haereses* circa 180CE, and bolstered by the fact that both works are dedicated to a "Theophilus." The "Luke" of the text was once considered to be Luke, the historical companion of Paul mentioned in *Philemon*, *Colossians*, and *2 Timothy*, and this assumed firsthand perspective brought historical credibility to this text in early Christian circles. *Acts* was the historical record for the early centuries of the Christian movement for.[290] Now Luke's claim to authorship is now universally questioned by scholars, and he is no longer accepted as Luke behind the Gospel or *Acts*. The name Luke, however, is still an accepted moniker for the unknown author, and following scholarly practice I will use "Luke" to refer to the author of *Luke-Acts* variously throughout the chapters.[291] *Acts* is no longer read as an historical record but is instead understood as a text that is presenting an idealized vision of the early Christ following community. Luke refers to this community as "the Way." *Acts* presents a particular narrative agenda of an idealized, harmonious community of apostles and other Christ followers. [292]

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[289] The re-dating of *Acts* was spearheaded by Richard Pervo's* research in: Pervo*, *Dating Acts*. However, with the publication of the *Acts Seminar* (of which Pervo* was a contributor) the new second century dating has been widely, albeit, not universally, accepted. See: Dennis E. Smith, and Joseph B. Tyson, eds., *Acts and Christian Beginnings: The Acts Seminar Report* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 2013), 5-8. See the section *Spectres of Pervo* in my introduction for more.

[290] Luke is mentioned by name in *Philemon* 1:24, *Colossians* 4:14, and *2 Timothy* 2:11

[291] Reasons for questioning Luke's authorship include the discrepancies between Paul's self-description in his letters and the description of Paul as detailed in *Acts*. For more see Smith and Tyson, *Acts and Christian Beginnings*, 9-10.

[292] This chapter utilizes both *the Way* (ὁ ὁδος), mentioned in *Acts* 9:2, as well as *Christian,* appearing in *Acts* 11:26, to refer to Luke's community given that both titles are used by Luke to self-identify.

Acts illustrates the growth of a small, local collective in Jerusalem into a movement with global influence. This narrative arc fulfills the prophecy by Jesus in *Acts* 1:8, which states that the apostles will travel with their message to the ends of the earth;[293] it also describes a tradition that has global, cosmopolitan appeal. The story begins after the resurrection of Jesus, narrating his ascension, then detailing the process of Matthias' election to replace Judas among the twelve disciples. It is here that the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost endows the apostles and others gathered with them with knowledge of foreign languages. These early chapters establish the authority of the apostles who are represented as continuing Jesus' evangelizing mission. Throughout *Acts*, the apostles frequently mirror Jesus' miraculous actions from the Gospels[294] and are inspired by the Holy Spirit in their missionary travels.[295] They are depicted as the direct link between Jesus and the world, and their authority is reinforced throughout the narrative. This chosen group includes Paul, a former persecutor of Christ followers,[296] who transforms into one of the most ardent champions of the movement after a miraculous vision on the road to Damascus.[297] While not initially a disciple of Jesus, *Acts* is certainly about Paul's apostleship, focusing on his missionary travels more than any other apostle. The text closes with the apostle Paul under house arrest in Rome. Ultimately *Acts* tells the story of a growing movement through the apostles' travels across the Roman empire and their ability to draw people to the movement.

Speech is integral to *Acts*. Fifty-one percent of its lines contain some version of direct speech,[298] and its inclusion of extended, robust speeches, particularly on the part of the apostles, and especially Paul, has drawn much scholarly attention. It stands out in this characterization not

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[293] *Acts* 1:8
[294] Two examples are: Stephen echoes Jesus' cries on the cross during his martyrdom (*Acts* 7:60), and Paul's clothes are able to heal people like the touch of Jesus (*Acts* 19:12).
[295] Acts 8:26-40, Philip is swept away by the Holy Spirit twice in this chapter, once to rendezvous with the Ethiopian eunuch and again after that successful baptism. He is moved by the Holy Spirit on his missionary journeys mirroring Peter's conversion of the masses in *Acts* 2.
[296] *Acts* 7:58; 8
[297] *Acts* 9: 1-9.
[298] Pervo*, *Acts*, 39.

just among New Testament texts, but among categories of ancient literature as well.[299] Speeches, and lines of direct speech, are important for Luke and help to sustain his rhetorical goals. Discussing speeches in *Acts*, Shelly Matthews contends that "speeches included in ancient narrative were composed according to the criteria of suitability (what a character should say from the historian's perspective) and verisimilitude (what such a character plausibly would say from the historian's perspective), rather than any modern standard of historical accuracy."[300] Therefore, what characters said and to whom reflects the author's version of historical storytelling. For *Acts*, this meant that its ample speeches reflected Luke's purview on the history of the Way. What characters say in *Acts*, and when they say it, figures into the image of the Way that Luke is constructing. For Luke, these speeches are associated with apostolic authority and a maleness that matches the authority structure of elite Roman masculinity.[301] As will be examined in the following chapter, for example, Luke uses speeches to domesticate his version of prophecy as something closer to public oratory, making prophetic speech more palpable to a Roman audience. More importantly for my analysis in this chapter, however, is how Luke uses these moments of direct speech to bolster apostolic authority and amplify the apostles maleness. Speech in *Acts* is part of the Luke's construction of authority within the community and this vision mirrors public performances of elite Roman masculinity.[302]

Much as Luke uses speech to make his version of the Way more appealing to Roman audiences, he likewise domesticates the Way's practices and beliefs to reflect Roman ideals by establishing them as venerable and rooted in antiquity. One way Luke does this is to present the followers of the Way as the true heirs of the Hebrew prophets. Throughout *Acts*, Hebrew scriptures are used to legitimate the Jesus narrative as the fulfillment of their prophecy. The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch exemplifies this when it uses the song of the Suffering Servant

[299] Pervo*, *Acts*, 39.
[300] Matthews, *The Acts of the Apostles: Taming the Tongues of Fire* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 12.
[301] For more see Gleason, *Making Men*.
[302] For more see Gleason, *Making Men*.

to describe Jesus.[303] This rhetorical turn places the believers of the Way within a long and storied lineage distancing them from the reputation of being a new and innovative cult. In the Roman world, older heritages garnered more prestige, while newer ones were held in suspicion. By framing the followers of the Way as the true heirs to the Hebrew prophets, Luke increased their public respectability and possibly looked to garner special privileges granted to Jewish people within the empire.[304] Throughout the narrative, the followers of the Way are characterized as respectable persons whose morals and values match elite Roman norms. *Acts* foregrounds male leadership,[305] frames prophetic gifts as oratory rather than as a mode of ecstatic worship,[306] and demonstrates how respectable Roman subjects of high status joined the movement.[307] According to *Acts*, then, the Way is not a new cult drawing on foreign practices such as prophecy, it is the fulfillment of an old tradition that can peacefully coexist in the empire.

My interest resides in how *Acts* represents enslaved characters within this movement. To that end, the following two chapters take up three different pericopes within the *Acts* narrative: the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (8:26-40); the exorcism of the prophetic slave girl (16:16-18); and the confusion of Rhoda at Mary's door (12: 12-17). I highlight Luke's rhetorical intentions to identify places of narrative tension where rhetorical goals are strained so as to expose his intentions and analyze his use of enslaved characters to further his agenda. My goal is to identify marginalized characters within the narrative, voices that Luke struggles to fit into his agenda of

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[303] *Acts* 8: 32-35, This pericope is taken up in further detail later in the chapter.
[304] Dennis E. Duling, *The New Testament: History, Literature, and Social Context* (Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2003), 19-20.
[305] Matthews, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 47-51.
[306] Matthews, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 78. This move, to tame prophecy, is thematically related to the use of direct language in the text. It is more evidence that Luke was appealing to elite Roman sentiments. *Acts* is a text rich in speech and speeches. In fact, it is a particular characteristic of the source, and it was an esteemed Roman characteristic. Depending how the term speech is defined the statistics can vary as to how much is exactly depicted inside the narrative, but these statistics nevertheless reflect the impressive quantity of speech included in the text. For some, speeches and discourse in *Acts* account for approximately one third of its total verses; when counting passages that include direct speech, fifty-one percent of the verses in the text include some form of direct speech. See: Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (*New York: The Anchor Bible/Double Day, 1998), 103-108; and Richard I. Pervo*, *Acts: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2008), 38-39.
[307] One such example is the conversion of a centurion named Cornelius in *Acts* 10.

presenting the Way as a peaceable movement of upstanding people. Indeed, I will argue that enslaved girls and eunuchs fit somewhat awkwardly in this narrative scheme. This chapter does not look to construct a new reading of the passage's meaning, but my reading does look to uncover a tension preserved in the narrative. The three narratives examined are all apostolic encounters with enslaved figures and while the three narratives contribute to the overall image Luke is constructing of a successful, respectable movement via male leadership, this harmonious image is produced through the assumption of naturalized sexual violence against enslaved persons. This analysis demonstrates how the characterization of the enslaved figures in *Acts* is indebted to the naturalized sexual violence embodied in ethnicity, race, class, and gender in the ancient world. My reading holds together concepts of ancient slavery and authority while tracing a history of sexual violence preserved in the narrative of *Acts*. The subsequent section establishes a reading of slave culture as rape culture that will be pivotal to the analysis of the text.

SLAVE CULTURE IS RAPE CULTURE

This section demonstrates how the logic of slaveholding naturalized sexual violence. Put differently, this section argues that slave culture can be understood as rape culture.[308] I use the modern term rape culture here purposefully.[309] I find that its meaning is the closest to articulating the systemic power dynamics of slavery and naturalized sexual violence. Rape culture speaks to a socialized gradation of meaning for social and cultural actions that lead to the normalization (and

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[308] Speaking about our modern societal need for the phrase, rape culture, Roxane Gay describes its as follows: "[t]his phrase denotes a culture where we are inundated, indifferent ways, by the idea that male aggression and violence toward women is acceptable and often inevitable." Roxane Gay, *Bad Feminist: Essays* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2014), 129. While Gay is using the term in a conversation about contemporary systems of sexual violence that exude violence against women, she points to the existence of cultural supports that normalize these actions of sexual violence. The term rape culture denotes not the action of rape itself, but the cultural actions and information that justify the rape of a particular social demographic. In Gay's discussion this group is women. I am reading the ideology of ancient slavery through this lens, where the actions within that classed system support the naturalization of the sexual violability of enslaved persons and therefore legitimizing sexual violation against an enslaved person. For a further discussion of rape culture please see the introduction to this dissertation.

[309] For more on the use of the term rape in ancient scholarship see Zola Marie Packman, "Call it Rape: A Motif in Roman Comedy and Its Suppression in English-Speaking Publications," *Helios*, 20.1 (1993): 42-55.

justification) of sexual violation against certain persons. For example, the characterization of certain types of clothes as 'slutty' and slutshaming, sexually suggestive advertisements, and jokes that use rape and sexual violation as the source of humour, are examples of the daily actions that inform naturalized sexual violence in our culture. In our contemporary setting the term is heavily gendered, however, it is not exclusive to gender. Race, class, ethnicity, and ability all contribute to the allowability of sexual violation of a person based on the normalized actions of rape culture.[310] So while not every woman, or gender non-conforming person, is subject to rape in their lives, they are all subject to rape culture. In much the same way, not all enslaved persons in antiquity were sexually violated but all of them were subject to the slave culture that normalized and allowed that violation.

In chapters three and four I use the concept of embodied knowledge to read three enslaved characters in *Acts* and ask how the history of sexual violence might surface within their characterization, ultimately shaping how Luke presents them. By using the logic of practice, I recognize how slavery conditioned bodies in antiquity and suggest that Luke's view of enslavement is likewise conditioned by a slaveholders' mentality which shapes his rhetorical choices. Ancient slavery was embodied, and Luke's representation of enslaved persons in the text presumes a history of sexual violence. I conclude that in presuming the enslaved logic of practice, Luke upholds the ideology of slavery as a rape culture while articulating his history of salvation.

The experience of slavery formed an embodied knowledge that enslaved people carried with them. Regardless of actual violent actions enslaved bodies suffered, enslaved people were presumed to be violable because those with power over them understood them as sexualized objects. This knowledge shaped the way an enslaved person moved through the world and participated in society. In her studies of ancient slave culture, Jennifer Glancy draws on the work

[310] Rebecca Solnit, "Worlds Collide in a Luxury Suite: Some Thoughts on the IMF, Global Injustice, and a Stranger on a Train," in *Men Expalin Things to Me*, 39-53.

of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and his theory of the logic of practice, or *habitus*, to think about how enslaved bodies were socialized to be simply body. The logic of practice, the "ordinary and invisible operations by which a society perpetuates itself,"[311] she writes, is helpful to consider when asking how Luke presents enslaved characters in his narrative. "Slavery," Glancy explains, "conditioned bodies and perception of bodies. Individuals were trained at a basic level to stand, walk, and negotiate the world either as slaves or free persons."[312] The way people move through the world has cultural meaning and reflects ideals about how to embody social roles, such as father, daughter, or enslaved. For enslaved people, this somatic knowing included a history of sexual violation. Sexual violence informed how enslaved bodies moved throughout the world and how they were perceived by others. Consider the logic of the freedwoman who is not able to gain access to the same level of *pudor* (an embodied modesty, chastity, and honour with immense social capital for women explored below) as freeborn women on account of her enslaved history. Despite being granted her freedom, she carried the memory of her proximity to sexual violence as an enslaved woman throughout her freed life. In the Elder Seneca's fictional *Trojan Women*, a freeborn woman's application for ritual office is questioned by detractors on account that, in her past, she was kidnapped and kept in a brothel. Although she was never sexually violated, her proximity to the possibility of sexual violation qualified her claim to *pudor* in the opinion of some.[313] This analysis uses this understanding of the logic of practice to read for authorial assumptions informing the rhetoric shaping enslaved characters in *Acts*.

The following paragraphs consider the pervasive nature of sexual violence within ancient slavery, which is relevant to my analysis of the three pericopes featuring enslaved characters. Ancient society was governed by notions of honour and shame. These principles shaped the value of a person, and their social roles were implicated in other identity categories, including class,

[311] Glancy, "Early Christianity, Slavery, and Women's Bodies," 146.
[312] Glancy, "Early Christianity, Slavery, and Women's Bodies," 146.
[313] Seneca, *Trojan Women*, lines 87-91, quoted in Glancy, "Early Christianity, Slavery, and Women's Bodies," 157)

gender, ethnicity, and race. Honour culture in the Roman empire was gender specific and tied to constituting and regulating gendered and sexed bodies. "Women" were defined by an honour rooted in their preservation of chastity, or more specifically their claim to what the Romans called *pudor*. As Jennifer Glancy explains in her essay "Early Christianity, Slavery, and Women's Bodies": "*pudor* connotes not only modesty but also a sense of shame, chastity, an awareness of what is proper, and attention to propriety—especially sexual propriety in conduct, dress, and speech. *Pudor* evokes not only chastity but also a reputation for chastity."[314] *Pudor* extended into all aspects of a woman's life, including her sexuality. It conceptually linked a woman's sexuality to her clothes, her mannerisms, and her speech. Her gendered body was coded with sexualizing data that translated into cultural meaning; however, the social capital of chastity was reserved for the lives of freeborn women. *Pudor* was not available to enslaved women who had no control over access to their bodies, or even freedwomen, who could never claim the same level of *pudor* as freeborn women on account of their past as enslaved persons. The social vulnerability of slavery continued to inform their social standing after their liberty from enslavement and muted their access to social privileges that freeborn women readily claimed.[315] Slavery was something an enslaved woman carried with her throughout her life, regardless of whether or not she had been freed. As Carolyn Osiek, Margaret MacDonald, and Janet Tulloch explain in their monograph *A Woman's Place*, enslaved women were written out of this system of honour and shame while they were enslaved.[316] They could lay no claim to these demonstrations of social worth and were perceived as suspicious characters with unwieldy morality—in particular, they were marked as sexually suspect. The legacy of slavery forever marred the potential of an enslaved person's body.

On the other hand, enslaved men were severed from their claim to a phallic economy on which assertions to Roman masculinity were waged. They were likened to children, dependent on

[314] Glancy, "Early Christianity, Slavery, and Women's Bodies," 148.
[315] Glancy, "Early Christianity, Slavery, and Women's Bodies," 149.
[316] Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch, *A Woman's Place*, 97.

their owners, and this dependence removed them from the cultural category of male. In *Slavery in Early Christianity*, Glancy explains: "A slave, however well cared for by his owner, remained in a dependent and secondary position. Although he might display the somatic characteristics of the adult male, he nonetheless had the social standing of a *pais* – a slave, a child. The exclusion of slaves from the category of manhood was thus implicit in ancient Mediterranean conceptions of masculinity."[317] As childlike social dependants, enslaved men could biologically father children, but they could not legally, or culturally, claim them as their progeny. Fathers needed to publicly claim their children, openly name them as members of their family. Enslaved men, who lacked the legal privileges accorded to freeborn and freedmen were unable to claim their offspring. They had no public voice to participate in this acknowledgment; they were property. Enslaved people lived outside the system of honour and shame, and this marginal status served to emphasize the sexualized nature of their bodies, as objects for others' use and pleasure. Their sexed bodies were read through their position as enslaved and were ultimately lacking in cultural value. In this way, it can be seen how Roman notions of sexuality intersected with class and even ethnicity. Bodily inviolability, always the privilege of the freeborn and imperial and civic elites (who had claims to legal status, particularly citizenship), was a critical and defining feature of idealized masculinity.[318]

Enslaved persons were conceived of, first and foremost, as bodies in the ancient world. The Greek word for body, *sōma* or plural *sōmata*, was used synonymously for slave,[319] and enslaved people were answerable with their bodies in daily situations. This left enslaved persons open to the sexual appetites of their owners. With their omission from the honour and shame system that governed ancient culture, enslaved people were viewed as sexually available for any

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[317] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 25.
[318] For more on masculine inviolability in antiquity see: Craig Williams, *Roman Homosexuality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Benjamin Dunning, "Same Sex Relations," in *The Oxford Handbook of New Testament, Gender, and Sexuality*, ed. Benjamin Dunning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 573-591.
[319] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 10.

form of pleasure demanded by their freeborn owners.[320] Philosophers such as Plutarch encouraged freeborn men to fulfill their sexual cravings with their enslaved when their wives placed limits on marital copulation.[321] The sexual use of enslaved persons, as desired by their owners, was normalized. This idea that enslaved persons are sexually available to the whims of their masters is manifest in cultural roles habituated by enslaved figures such as the flute girl. The flute girl was a cultural fixture at dinner parties as entertainment during the *convivia*, or the drinking party that accompanied meals. She was an enslaved woman whose entertainment value implied her sexual availability as an object of the guests' titillation and viewing pleasure.[322] The *delicia* are another example of the sexual availability of enslaved persons. The *delicia* were young, enslaved boys, taken on as pets by their owners frequently for sexual gratification. Such children often appeared with emperors.[323] These relationships were varied, some reflecting deep romantic relationships, while others embodying frivolous luxury, but the sexual dynamic of the relationship was widely established.[324] Within the cultural imagination of the freeborn public, enslaved people were sexual tools for erotic urges.

Enslaved people were bodies designated to fulfill freeborn society's sexual fantasies, which could even be on display in the public forum through civic spectacles. Enslaved people were forced to compete in sadistic games as gladiators and performers, having no control over their participation. In these spaces, sexual violence included any sort of violation the human imagination could produce, such as: rape, disembowelment, and bestiality. Such public display of

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[320] Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch, *A Woman's Place*, 103-105; and Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity,* 21-24.
[321] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity,* 21.
[322] Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2003), 35.
[323] The Younger Seneca description of the young boys taken for sex after a banquet follows:
"I shall not mention the troops of luckless boys who must put up with other shameful treatment after the banquet is over. I shall not mention the troops of catamites, rated according to nation and colour, who must all have the same smooth skin, and the same amount of youthful down on their cheeks, and the same way of dressing their hair, so that no boy with straight locks may get among the curly-heads." *Epistle* 95.24. Younger Seneca.
[324] Christian Laes, "Desperately Different? Delicia Children in the Roman Household," in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, ed. David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2003), 298-326.

sexual and pornographic fantasies propped up the social position of the upper classes. The brutalization of the enslaved person in the arena secured in their view the class structure of the empire. Historian Sheila Briggs explains:

> Entertainment in Greco-Roman society was the public display of the social hierarchy: there were those who paid for the entertainment, those who watched the entertainment, and those who were the entertainment. The elite held civic offices that included the honor and financial obligation of putting on public shows. The public display of the elite's wealth and nobility needed a foil. The social, and often sexual, degradation of the entertainer supplied it. The sexual availability of the female entertainer served to contrast her dishonor with the chastity of honorable citizens' wives and daughters.[325]

The public display of the enslaved body as sexually violated, mutilated, and murdered was social fodder for the freeborn public alongside others sentenced to death in the arena. The communal debasement of enslaved persons provided not only entertainment for these upper classes, but it secured the class structure from which freeborn people benefited. The routine sexualization of enslaved and other marginalized persons, in the form of public games, secured the social hierarchy and supported public institutions. Ancient authors were cognizant of this classed understanding of public trials, and the sexual viability of those condemned to the games is reflected in their texts.

Take the *Acts of Thecla*, for example. Thecla's body is repeatedly denuded throughout her trials. As I have argued in the previous chapter, Thecla is confused for a foreign, enslaved woman in Antioch and is treated as such in her public trials through repeated sexual exposure. When she is put into the amphitheatre she is stripped of her clothing.[326] While in the arena, we are told that a protective cloud descends to cover her naked body from onlookers in her baptism scene, indicating that her nudity was on display.[327] And finally, after she thwarts the final execution attempt, the governor of Antioch provides her with clothing as a gesture of reverence for her

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[325] Sheila Briggs, "Gender, Slavery, and Technology," in *Beyond Slavery: Overcoming its Religious and Sexual Legacy*, ed. Bernadette J. Brooten (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 162.
[326] *ATh* 4.8
[327] *ATh* 4.9

miraculous survival.[328] Thecla's bodily exposure, her forced public nudity, is a foundational part of her trials that exists from the moment she enters the arena until she is finally released from her civic charges. It is a public exposure typical of enslaved women who did not have the privileges afforded to upper-class women through chastity. Thecla is a high-born woman, however, and she is not enslaved. The text is aware of the tension in Thecla's class and her public treatment. Her nudity is repeatedly interrupted, mitigating her exposure to the public onlookers, and simultaneously, this nakedness is framed as powerful and a marker of her divine favour. She emerges from her sexually violent trials fortified, having made an impressive impact on the Antiochian social elites, gaining favour from Queen Tryphanea and the governor. Unlike an enslaved person condemned to the games, Thecla is not subject to the social disgrace and dishonour of public trials.

The utilization of an enslaved person's sexualized body likewise extended to reproduction. Where enslaved men could not claim their offspring, enslaved women were more valuable during their reproductive years, as any children they would produce were the property of their owners. Enslaved reproductive women could facilitate the growth of their owner's capital through the production of more enslaved people.[329] These enslaved women might also have to perform the duties of a wetnurse if desired by their owners.[330] The enslaved woman, as a female body, offered a valuable resource through the unique abilities of her reproductive anatomy. There was debate about whether the person who purchased an enslaved woman in her reproductive years, who never came to reproduce, was due financial compensation from her original owner.[331] This debate evidences the monetary value of enslaved women and their status as property which is also echoed in the use of female enslaved persons as prostitutes in antiquity.[332]

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[328] *ATh* 4.13
[329] Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch, *A Woman's Place*, 99.
[330] Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch, *A Woman's Place*, 100.
[331] Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch, *A Woman's Place*, 99.
[332] See Daniel-Hughes, "Prostitution."

Sexual violence permeated the logic of ancient slavery, where enslaved persons were subject to all forms of sexual violation. Consider the fourth century slave collar that describes its wearer as "an adulterous whore" in case she runs away. The brutality of the iron collar as something worn around a person's neck, alongside its prescription of its wearer's sexual promiscuity, demonstrates the embodied cruelty of slavery. It points to the normalized sexual violence of slaveholding that was exhibited in daily life.[333] The presumed sexual violability of enslaved persons reinforced the boundaries of social classes, and carried immense cultural significance in areas of reproduction, commerce, and civic status. The follow sections demonstrate how the enslaved status of the Ethiopian eunuch informed Luke's representation of the character and supported his conception of apostolic authority through the presumed sexual violability of the Ethiopian eunuch's enslaved body.

THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH, AN IDEALIZED CONVERT

The narrative of the Ethiopian eunuch in *Acts* 8:26-40 is a conversion story that relies on assumptions about class, ethnicity, and sexual violence to present the Ethiopian eunuch as an ideal convert fitting Luke's narrative agenda. In particular, the sexual violence inherent, as I have just shown, in enslaved status turns out to govern, in part, how *Acts* portrays this figure and his relationship to "the Way." While the Ethiopian eunuch is identified as an ideal convert brought into the community through his baptism, he appears only in this vignette, and his journey as a new Christian is untold. I suggest that the Ethiopian eunuch must remain a marginal character, a cameo of sorts, because his ethnic status makes his inclusion in the Christ community problematic given *Acts'* concern with Roman respectability. Ethiopia crafted a cultural allure for Romans while also representing the despised exotic. It was at once fascinating and suspect for its foreignness. The inclusion of an Ethiopian within the Way would challenge Luke's attempt to make this movement palatable and appealing to high-standing Romans because of this complicated

[333] "Bulla Regia Collar", ILS 9455. See Daniel-Hughes, "Prostitution," 645.

understanding of Ethiopia in the Roman imagination. Therefore, while the text presents the Ethiopian eunuch as an ideal convert, he can only play a minor role in the narrative. The Ethiopian eunuch, thus, is both idealized in the narrative, and a destabilizing character.

An Idealized Conversion of a Eunuch by an Apostle, Acts 8:26-40

In *Acts* 8:26-40, we find Philip on the road to Gaza from Jerusalem under the direction of an angel.[334] On this road, he encounters a court eunuch to the Ethiopian queen, who is returning home after his travels to Jerusalem for reasons of worship.[335] The encounter between Philip and this unnamed Ethiopian eunuch is divinely orchestrated through the power of the Holy Spirit, so it is no coincidence that when Philip is guided toward the Ethiopian eunuch's chariot, that he finds the foreign court official reading from key passages in the Hebrew scriptures, specifically *Isaiah*.[336] In this encounter, Philip enters the Ethiopian eunuch's chariot, and the two are seated next to each other as Philip offers guidance on the passages the Ethiopian eunuch was reading aloud.

The Ethiopian eunuch speaks three times with Philip, and each statement is in the form of a question. Despite Philip's leading role, it is the Ethiopian eunuch's questions that carry the narrative forward, guiding Philip toward key theological topics like the death and resurrection of Jesus, and baptism.[337] The first question the Ethiopian eunuch asks is in response to Philip's query whether the Ethiopian eunuch comprehends what he was reading. The Ethiopian eunuch replies: "How can I unless someone guides me?"[338] This question creates a space for Philip to emerge as a guide and the Ethiopian eunuch to become his pupil. It situates the relationship between the two within the framework of apostolic authority, a central concern of the larger narrative. In *Acts*, as I have mentioned, the apostles are characterized as continuing Jesus' ministry and emulating his

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[334] *Acts* 8:26
[335] *Acts* 8:27
[336] This passage is about the Suffering Servant from Isaiah 53:7-8. For more on this and the eunuch's character see: Brittany E. Wilson, *Unmanly Men: Remigrations of Masculinity in Luke-Acts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 140-142.
[337] Pervo*, *Acts*, 223.
[338] *Acts* 8:31, Πῶς γὰρ ἂν δυναίμην ἐὰν μή τις ὁδηγήσει με;

exceptional character. The apostles exhibit superhuman qualities[339] and mirror Jesus' actions in the *Gospel of Luke*.[340] Jesus chooses the apostles in the *Gospel of Luke* which marks them as exceptional (*Luke* 6-12:16) among his followers, and his choice is reaffirmed in *Acts* 1:12-26, extending the apostles' role as divinely chosen figures through the two narratives. The dynamic of this conversion scene echoes Jesus' designation of Philip as one of these chosen men, through the Ethiopian eunuch's passive inquiring following Philip's lead.

The Ethiopian eunuch's second question is about the content of the scriptural passage. In particular, he asks about whom the passage refers.[341] The Ethiopian eunuch is reading from *Isaiah*, and here Philip responds with a lesson educating him about Jesus' life and death as understood through the narrative of the Suffering Servant. The narrative cited is part of the fourth servant song (*Isa* 52:13- 53:12). This text is one of the prophecies within the Hebrew scriptures that, according to Christ followers, contains a messianic prophecy about Jesus. According to the Hebrew scripture, the Suffering Servant is depicted as a lowly, disfigured person despised by the world, who through his suffering and death is an offering for the sins of those who repudiated him.[342] Having the Ethiopian eunuch read this passage draws parallels between the Ethiopian eunuch, a castrated enslaved person, and the suffering of Jesus.[343] Philip's teachable moment bridges the figure of Jesus with the Ethiopian eunuch, and amplifies a message about Jesus, suffering and the salvation of lowly persons with which the Ethiopian eunuch could relate.

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[339] One such example is in *Acts* 19: 11-15 when Paul's clothing is said to heal the sick, and his name exorcises demons.

[340] The martyrdom of Stephen is an example of this duality (*Acts* 7:54-60). Stephen's death by stoning mirrors the death of Jesus on the cross, especially their petitions to God to forgive those killing them *Luke*: 23:24 and *Acts* 7:60.

[341] *Acts* 8:34, Δέομαί σου, περὶ τίνος ὁ προφήτης λέγει τοῦτο;

[342] This passage points to a discussion about sin having transpired in this scene, and, as we will see, the Ethiopian eunuch follows this teaching with a request for baptism. This request reflects back on Peter's speech in *Acts* 2 where he outlines the template for conversion, and states: "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven" (*Acts* 2:38).

[343] For more on this comparison between the Ethiopian eunuch and Jesus see: Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, 140-148.

After Philip conveys these lessons about Jesus, the chariot passes a body of water, at which the Ethiopian eunuch, inspired by Philip's words, asks what is stopping him from being baptized in that water at that moment.[344] This is the third question and final words spoken by the Ethiopian eunuch. The chariot is stopped, and the Ethiopian eunuch is baptized.[345] At this moment, the Ethiopian eunuch is a new member of Philip's community that believes in Jesus as the messiah. He has been brought into the Way, the title used by Luke to name this group of followers.[346] Immediately after this baptism, Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch part ways and the narrative continues. Swept away by the Holy Spirit again, Philip proceeds to teach on his way to Caesarea,[347] and the text turns to the miraculous narrative of Saul on the road to Damascus in chapter nine. This movement by the Holy Spirit bookends the scene and as such affirms Philip's encounter here as prompted by the spirit. This narrative in *Acts* 8:26-40 contains the most detailed record of Philip's missionary work.

I argue that the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch is an idealized conversion in *Acts* because it echoes the mass conversion and baptism in *Acts* 2, which sets the stage for the apostles' mission. In the Pentecost narrative (2:1-42), which will be taken up in greater detail in the following chapter, Peter facilitates a mass conversion that marks the beginning of the apostles' missionary work. These soon-to-be converts have just witnessed the descent of the Holy Spirit onto a large group of Christ followers who have gathered in Jerusalem. They are mostly wowed (there are some outliers) by the gift of tongues displayed by the newly Spirit-endowed Christ followers, and Peter takes the opportunity to preach to the masses. His teaching centers apostolic authority and the Holy Spirit while incorporating a prophecy from the Hebrew scriptures. The

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[344] Acts 8:36, Ἰδοὺ ὕδωρ, τί κωλύει με βαπτισθῆναι;
[345] Sean Burke points out the ambiguity of the Greek in this scene. While it has been widely read as the baptism of the eunuch, something Burke does not contest, but he does explain how the Greek could suggest that Philip is likewise baptized by the eunuch. See Sean D. Burke, "Queering Early Christian Discourse: The Ethiopian Eunuch," in *Bible Trouble: Queer Reading at the Boundaries of Biblical Scholarship*, ed. Teresa J. Hornsby and Ken Stone (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 184. This ambiguity supports Burke's reading of the Ethiopian Eunuch as a queer figure in early Christian discourse.
[346] Matthews, *The Acts of the Apostles*, xiv.
[347] *Acts* 8:40

scene ends with those onlookers being converted by Peter's message and brought into the Way. Like those first converts, this scene emphasizes the authority of the apostles and their knowledge, centers a prophecy from the Hebrew scriptures that identifies Jesus as the fulfillment of the Israelite tradition, and is facilitated through actions of the Holy Spirit. This scene mirrors the pattern established in *Acts* 2 that provides the template for subsequent conversions. In mirroring that earlier scene in *Acts* 2, *Acts* 8 affirms that the work catalyzed in *Acts* 2 is taking place through the apostles.

The convert in this scene is an elite figure, from a land imagined as a distant utopia.[348] How this figure informs the idealized nature of Philip's encounter, however, is debated. Shelly Matthews, for example, understands the narrative as one that advocates for a Christian message that appeals to high-standing and ranking persons.[349] Linking *Acts* 8 to the conversion of a centurion later in *Acts* 10, Matthews sees the narrative playing to an ideal of socially significant persons being drawn to the Way. She states that this passage "signifies that the Christian message is persuasive to people of high standing from both near and far."[350] This is an observation that sits comfortably in the history of scholarship on the text and the Lukan goals to situate the message of the Way in line with Roman values. Commentaries on *Acts* likewise nod to the exceptionality of this character converted by Philip. Joseph Fitzmyer refers to the eunuch as an "important person" serving a royal court.[351] Richard Pervo* calls the eunuch "a great catch, socially and symbolically… a male member of the ruling class."[352] These readings prioritize the text's description of the Ethiopian eunuch as a ranking official in a foreign court.[353] Britney Wilson, on the other hand, argues that the Ethiopian eunuch's willingness to be baptized makes him an ideal pupil, not his social status.[354] I agree that the Ethiopian eunuch is presented favourably here as a

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[348] Matthews, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 29.
[349] Matthews, *The Acts of the Apostles,* 29-30.
[350] Matthews, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 29.
[351] Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles,* 410.
[352] Pervo*, *Acts*, 222.
[353] *Acts* 8:27
[354] Wilson, *Unmanly Men,* 137-140.

divinely chosen convert who acknowledges Philip's apostolic authority, but I contend that his narrative value for Luke depends on his social categorization as a eunuch, and by extension, as a foreigner. Eunuchs were outlawed in the Roman empire, so the presence of a eunuch immediately evoked foreign lands with exotic laws.[355] An Ethiopian eunuch was emphatically othered. By centering the Ethiopian eunuch in my reading of the scene, I explain how this idealized conversion narrative requires this figure to be enslaved for it to unfold as planned by the narrator. It does not work without his enslaved, cultural background. As such, I demonstrate how Luke relies on the sexually violent ideology of slavery to build the success of this conversion narrative.

Slavery, Sexual Violence, and Castration

In what follows, I outline cultural understandings of eunuchs to suggest why Luke represented this figure as he does in the story, childlike and innocent, and as one easily defaulting to Philip's authority. I demonstrate how the Ethiopian eunuch, with a castrated body, could serve Luke's rhetorical agenda to prop up apostolic authority and missionary success. In antiquity, the term eunuch refers to a man who has been castrated. The history of human castration suggests that it developed through the practice of animal sterilization. The same method applied to male animals was later applied to human males. The process included tying a string around the testicles, causing them to blacken and fall off. This method of castration was the safest; however, alternative methods of human castration emerged. With these different methods of castration came a vocabulary used to name a eunuch based on how they were castrated. Sean Burke explains, "Other methods of castration were also developed that involved crushing the testicles or removing them surgically, and these different methods gave rise to different terms for the eunuchs produced by them: in Greek, for example, these terms included θλιβίας (pressed); θλασίας (crushed);

[355] In the first century, Domitian made it illegal for any Roman citizen to be castrated, and likewise made it illegal for Roman slaves to be castrated for commercial reasons. These laws were reiterated by Constantine in the fourth century, Leo I in the fifth, and Justinian in the sixth. See Gary Taylor, *Castration: An Abbreviated History of Manhood* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 141. This topic will be taken up later in the chapter.

σπάδων (torn); τομίας (cut); ἐκτομίας (cut out); and πόκοτος (cut off)."[356] While this language points to a diversity in castration methods in the ancient world, it likewise points to the human imagination driving these developments. There was experimentation in human sterilization to gauge preferred castration methods. Preference played a role in the design of human castration. Likewise, whom to castrate and when reflected those values and demands. Castration was a human intervention on the body for human ends.

While ancient castration was not exclusive to enslaved men,[357] it was a sign of slavery and the absolute lack of control enslaved people possessed over their bodies. Castration made physical the social limitations already impressed on enslaved males.[358] Testicles were a source of rich symbolism vital for understanding ancient masculinity. For example, testicles were symbols of honour,[359] and tools of reproduction and by extension the establishment of a *paterfamilias*,[360] not to mention their anatomical impact on the male body that was credited with maintaining the morphological features of a male body and the privileges of masculinity attached to it. Removing an enslaved man's testicles reminded them, and those around them, of their exclusion from these gender privileges. Castration made manifest that which was already known. Enslaved men could not claim children; there was no name to pass on to offspring, and they had no control over their bodies. They existed outside of the cultural systems that created and sustained ancient masculinity, as we have seen. So, while enslaved men may be somatically "male," they could not obtain the social status of males (which implied bodily inviolability and penetrative power).[361]

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[356] Sean D. Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch: Strategies of Ambiguity in Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2013), 97.
[357] The *galli*, for example, were self-castrated devotees of the cult of Cybele. While their castration was framed as making a "slave" for Cybele, they were not enslaved persons. See Burke, "Queering Early Christian Discourse," 180. Similarly, the *Gospel of Matthew* acknowledges that some eunuchs were born, and therefore not necessarily enslaved like Favorinus, and others were made. See *Matt* 19:10-12.
[358] Enslaved persons had no control over their body, and for enslaved males this included their genitals. Legally an enslaved male could not claim paternity, nor could they claim other markers of social capital like honour in the phallic economy of the ancient world. For more on the male slave body see: Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 24-29.
[359] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 27.
[360] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 27.
[361] See Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*; and Dunning, "Same Sex Relations."

Castration sterilized the individual, and it likewise affirmed a social sterilization that already existed.

As enslaved people's bodies were under the total control of their owners, castration loomed as an ever-present threat for enslaved men. It was part of the matrix of violence that was normalized as the enslaved experience. This violence was expected and understood as a naturalized occurrence of class and station by freeborn persons.[362] This conception of naturalized violence likewise extended to the sexual availability of enslaved people that I consider above.

Castration was a sexualized act. In the same way that freeborn persons employed enslaved people and their bodies as they wanted, castration was also at the owner's discretion. As the freeborn public viewed enslaved people as personal sexual objects, castration was another way that owners enacted their total control over the sexual life of their enslaved. Sterilization reshaped the male sexual body, and as an enslaved person, the castrated had no claim to contest the procedure. In other words, the castration of enslaved men was part of an ideology of slavery that subjected enslaved people to all kinds of violence, sexual and otherwise.

This history of castration, while not explicitly taken up in the conversion story, is implied through the Ethiopian eunuch's (εὐνοῦχος) identification as a eunuch. The enslaved man goes unnamed, but is instead marked by his subjection to this sexually violent procedure, and by his ethnic identity. Indeed, castration also serves to conform his "foreign" pedigree as Ethiopian, as I have mentioned above, castration was outlawed within the Roman empire. So, while the category of eunuch indicated these somatic changes, it also signified the eunuch's foreignness. Luke's characterization of this figure is purposeful, and it makes visible this history of sexual violence.

As we continue to think about the implication of castration on the Ethiopian eunuch's body and cultural role, it is important to sit with the standard age of those castrated in slavery and consider the naturalization of sexual violence against young bodies. The typical timeframe for

[362] As Jennifer Glancy notes the records from which this history is reconstructed record only one side of the power dynamic, and how enslaved persons understood, felt, or expected violence is lost to us. See Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity,* 86.

castration was not long after testicles descended with the onset of puberty.[363] This means that boys were castrated as they were just beginning to demonstrate a transition to adulthood that would take several years to complete. They were still children, not fully in the throes of pubescent changes. Boys were the enslaved chosen to be eunuchs. And while the socialized understanding of enslaved persons and children was proximate and slippery in the ancient world,[364] the corporeal reality of this violence enacted on young bodies does not diminish on account of social comparisons between enslaved people and children.

Luke is drawing this history into the literary imagination of the character when he identifies the character as a eunuch. It is the slaveholder's imagination imbuing this character with what they expected being a eunuch entailed. The Ethiopian eunuch's body retained the marking endured during his childhood. His adolescence was held suspended in his body, which never developed into an adult male body, even if enslaved men were never fully men in the cultural framework. His designation as a castrated male placed the Ethiopian eunuch in constant proximity to his biological childhood. This association with childhood will surface again within the context of Philip's relationship with the Ethiopian eunuch, and his ability to default to Philip's apostolic authority.

The Childlike Questions of a Eunuch

Luke's writing of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch constructs and maintains Philip's apostolic authority. The interaction is sanctioned by the Holy Spirit, whisking Philip in and out of the scene, and the figure converted is from Ethiopia, confirming Jesus' final words before his ascension in *Acts* 1:8, that his chosen will receive the Holy Spirit and spread his message to the

[363] Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch*, 97.
[364] One such example of the approximation of children and enslaved persons is in their representation in art. Both children and enslaved persons were comparable in their physical stature, often only decipherable through the actions they were preforming in the paintings. See Katherine M. D. Dunbabin, "The Waiting Servant in Later Roman Art," *American Journal of Philology*, 124.3 (2003): 443-467, https://doi.org/10.1353/ajp.2003.0044. As will be discussed later in the chapter, the language used for children and enslaved persons overlapped. See Mark Golden, "Pais, 'child' and 'slave,' in *L'antiquité classique*, 54 (1985): 91-104, https://doi.org/10.3406/antiq.1985.2143.

ends of the earth. Ethiopia was on the edge of the world in the ancient imagination, a point I return to later in this chapter. The figure of the Ethiopian eunuch, likewise, actively contributes to this affirmation of Philip's authority in the passage by repeatedly defaulting to Philip's knowledge in answer to his questions. The Ethiopian eunuch speaks three times in this narrative and each time he speaks a question. He asks Philip specifically about scripture, Jesus, and baptism. While his questions move the narrative forward by prompting explanations about key theological points,[365] they are also designed to default to the apostle. The Ethiopian eunuch is the student, and Philip is the teacher. The Ethiopian eunuch's questions are model questions leading him directly to Jesus through the Hebrew scriptures, confirmed by his baptism. It is a textbook play for Philip, allowing him to step into his role as a divinely chosen apostle without a hurdle, and his encounters with the eunuch mirror the first apostolic conversion in *Acts* 2. The Ethiopian eunuch has questions and Philip has the answers. His status as a eunuch likewise plays into this pupil/ teacher dynamic. The fact that the Ethiopian eunuch speaks only in questions provides a favourable comment on Philip's missionary skills, but his questioning also reflects his classed status as an enslaved person. How the Ethiopian eunuch speaks and engages with Philip signifies his embodied sexuality that is a product of his class. His enslaved status establishes him as a non-man and as a childlike figure, and his castration physically unmans him again, removing his testes, in a way that preserves traces of his adolescent body. He is twice unmanned and twice made proximate to childhood. These characteristics, which are inherent in the sexually violent ideology of slavery, inform how the Ethiopian eunuch interacts with Philip, defaulting to his authority and bolstering Philip's position as an apostolic leader.

The bodily mutilation of castration altered the Ethiopian eunuch's body so that it placed him closer to childhood than adulthood, and in this scene positions him as student next to a teacher, a child next to an adult, thereby buttressing Philip's authoritative role. Returning again

[365] Pervo*, *Acts*, 223.

to the physical effects of castration on the body, I demonstrate how a eunuch's body preserved many characteristics of male youth. According to ancient medical literature, male castration completely transformed the function of the body. Galen, a second-century physician in the Roman Empire, explains that the testicles were the source of vital heat that sustained masculine form and strength.[366] He compares them to a loom weight keeping a man's body in perfect balance and tension. Removing said weight created a slack throughout the body causing a springing back of muscles and tissues. Because of this, the veins of eunuchs were understood to be small and loose, comparable to those of women. Galen then links testes, not just to the male role in human reproduction and the socio-cultural implications of that relationship, but also to the construction of the entire adult male form. Bodily tissues in the broadest sense depended on the testicles to supply a tension to keep the adult male body together and taut. Without them, the physical appearance of Roman norms of "maleness" disappeared. A eunuch's physicality was forever altered by the loss of their testicles and their loss redefined the castrated male's biology. Castration permanently changed the physical make-up of a male body and placed this figure in a transgressive biological category.

While not all eunuchs were castrated before puberty (the *Galli*, for example, eunuch priests to the goddess Cybele, self-castrated in adulthood),[367] many eunuchs, like court eunuchs, were castrated before they reached puberty.[368] In these cases, castration had strong and notable impacts on the development of the male form. While the process left them sterile, unable to reproduce which in and of itself had social implications, other notable bodily changes distinguished a eunuch from other adult males. Facial hair, for example, did not grow so that a smooth hairless face became a staple characteristic of a eunuch. Their skin remained soft and smooth as they aged, and they retained their head of hair. Similarly, eunuchs developed less

[366] Kathryn Ringrose, *The Perfect Servant: Eunuchs and the Social Construction of Gender in Byzantium* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003), 57.
[367] Burke, "Queering Early Christian Discourse," 179.
[368] Burke, "Queering Early Christian Discourse," 180.

muscle mass than uncastrated males, leaving their flesh with a fattier appearance that was associated with female bodies and childlike appearances. For these reasons, eunuchs' bodies were likened to those of women and children by physicians, and they were encouraged to eat a gendered diet that supported what was thought to be their cool and moist physiology, and which differentiated them from the typical warm and dry disposition of normative male bodies.[369]

Remembering how central masculine speech is for Luke's vision of authority in *Acts*, it is important that a eunuch's voice was likewise altered by castration. This tertiary sex characteristic likewise signified a eunuch's childlike form. Like their hair and flesh, a eunuch's voice was distinct. Their voices were noticeably soft and of a higher pitch than non-castrated men. As we do today, ancient persons expected voices to change with the transition from childhood to adulthood; however, for a eunuch who was castrated before adulthood, their voices never deepened like other males; castration left their voices in a prepubescent state. In the Middle Ages, the *castrati* were men castrated before puberty with the sole objective of preserving their extraordinary singing voice feared to change with adulthood. This cultural phenomenon evidences the permanent vocal change that was achieved through male castration before adulthood.

The timbre of a eunuch's voice was suspended in a childlike state. Contrasting this next to the social capital constructed through male voices in the ancient world, the infantile speech of a eunuch reaffirmed his lowly social status. It embodied the opposite of how Luke employed male speech to bridge his community with Roman culture. Voice and speaking were irrevocably linked to manhood. Changing the construction of a male voice directly impacted a person's masculine status. In her study on rhetoric and manhood, for instance, Maud Gleason demonstrates how successful male speech was vital to claim elite masculinity. Public speaking was tied to male professions and interests such as law, history, and politics. It was even rooted in the male domestic role as *paterfamilias*, where at weddings, family gatherings, and other civic ceremonies the head

[369] Ringrose, *The Perfect Servant*, 56.

of the family would be called on to speak publicly. Male physiology was a vital player in the practice of maintaining this relationship between ancient speech and masculinity. As with the rest of their body, men's voices were also subject to a rigorous asceticism. When training for vocal performances, the entire body was believed to be affected by speech exercises. It is a logic that mirrored ancient physicians' and philosophers' thoughts on the functions of the body. For example, vocal exercises were understood to draw *pneuma* into the body. *Pneuma*[370] was an air-like substance and the "vital principle associated with the soul, with semen, and with the higher forms of intelligence."[371] In the logic of ancient physicians, drawing this substance into the body had positive effects on one's entire physique. The efficiency by which one could draw this material into themselves, however, was thought to be rooted heavily in their sexed and gendered bodies. Women, children, and eunuchs, on this logic, were not able to manipulate their bodies through vocal exercises in the same way men could enable a high reception of *pneuma*. This not only affirmed the superior male command over higher forms of intelligence but distanced other gender categories from such intellect. As such vocal exercises were uniquely tied to male health and masculine bodies. Men who could control the amount of *pneuma* coming into their bodies exhibited a superior form and a higher quality of speech to those who could not foster this ideal amount of *pneuma* in themselves. Voice, then, emerged as a marker of the quality of the internal person in the sense that a superior individual exhibited an ideal voice. For example, a strong, confident tone reflected a strong, healthy man. A man exhibiting the alternative, a weak or underperforming sound, was characterized as a feeble and frail manifestation of manhood. This type of weak presentation suggested that the speaker possessed a more womanly or childlike disposition and ultimately brought into question their masculine physiology.

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[370] It should be noted that *pneuma* is the same word for the Holy Spirit, which has a definitive presence and curated power in the text. However, the discussion of *pneuma* above is rooted in the physiological understanding of the body, and not with the occurrence of the Holy Spirit in the scene.
[371] Gleason, *Making Men*, 85.

Vocal measurements were highly gendered, and even a third gendered person such as a eunuch was situated within that ancient gender matrix. Voices were a social measure on a masculine balanced scale; how other sexed categories were situated in relation to that male center illuminates the social implications of their voices. A womanly, childlike voice carried cultural meaning that affirmed the social hierarchy by the sheer fact of their being written out those masculine affirming performances.[372] These othered gender categories worked to prop up the masculine ideal in their lack of social capital. It should be noted that the Ethiopian eunuch's voice is not cast in disparaging effeminate terms in *Acts* 8. Audiences familiar with these associations, however, may have imagined a figure whose voice was childlike and high in timber. More to my point is that by naming him as a "eunuch" Luke emphasizes his enslaved and sexed status as a primary identity marker, and in so doing, invokes the embodied history of enslavement and castration that I have traced here. While he may not be "unmanned" in this passage, his willingness to be taught and guided by Philip pivots on his association with youth and childlikeness. Moreover, I am suggesting that a eunuch, even as a literary character, would evoke for Luke an embodied history of social negotiations and compensations that included the social implications of their prepubescent voice.

[372] Favorinus is a notable ancient exception to this understanding of eunuch's voices and the social hierarchy. Favorinus was an orator born without testicles in the Rhône Valley, famous for rhetorical performances in the second century. As Maud Gleason explains, his physical differences were routinely levied against him by other orators, capitalizing on his genital differences to call his legitimacy as an orator into question. "The invective that Polemo and Demonax aimed at Favorinus," she states, "focused on his physical status as a defective male. When we examine what seemed wrong to them about a eunuch's practicing rhetoric or philosophy, the burden of their objection seems to be that if these arts represent the highest achievement of civilized man, then they must not be contaminated by practitioners who are imperfect examples of that species." For orators like Polemo and Demonax who publicly competed against Favorinus, their invective against him rested on the status of his genitals and drove their critique of his oratory practices. Polemo routinely chastised Favorinus' sexual appetite and the feminine style of his voice, calling it "womanish" and contrasting it with his soft body, a femininized body Favorinus' voice was entwined with his gendered and sexed body, and its relationship with expectations of ancient masculinity. Together these characteristics were considered to have a direct impact on his ability to speak persuasively. While Favorinus was the exception for eunuchs in the ancient world, assuming a prominent public position, the polemic levied against him demonstrates the social realities layered onto the speech of eunuchs. See Gleason, *Making Men*, 3-5, 46, 129-130, 161.

Luke chooses to rely on speech in his depiction of the Way, and in doing so, builds the masculinity of the apostles as authority figures. The Ethiopian eunuch's questions are part of this authorial strategy. What characters said and to whom reflects Luke's historical storytelling, and, therefore, the conversation between the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip supports that overall rhetorical vision. What the Ethiopian eunuch says, and who he is, are critical details. Given his role in the Ethiopian royal court, this figure would have been castrated before adulthood[373] conjuring specific physiological traits, considered above, in the views of ancient audiences: a hairless face, a higher voice, and a softer body. Luke builds from these gendered associations to shore up the text's claims about apostolic authority. Where the Ethiopian eunuch is childlike, Philip is a man, and this is evident through their exchange. The Ethiopian eunuch asks, Philip answers. The Ethiopian eunuch does not know, Philip does. The Ethiopian eunuch desires salvation through Christ, Philip possesses the tools to give it to him. The Ethiopian eunuch is the student, and Philip is the teacher. [374]

As previously stated, the Ethiopian eunuch speaks three times during his encounter with Philip in *Acts* 8. Each of these vocal exchanges comes in the form of a question from the Ethiopian eunuch followed by an answer from Philip. "How can I [understand] unless someone guides me?" the Ethiopian eunuch asks prompting Philip to sit beside him and explain the scriptural passage at hand. "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this about?" the Ethiopian eunuch continues, to which Philip answers educating his new pupil about Jesus. Finally, the Ethiopian eunuch asks for baptism in a passing body of water to which Philip obliges and baptizes the Ethiopian eunuch. Indeed, as we have seen, this narrative follows the pattern set out by Peter in

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373 Burke, "Queering Early Christian Discourse," 180-181.

374 Scholarship exists that contests this interpretation of the term εὐνοῦχος, suggesting that the term does not exclusively refer to castrated males, but instead can refer to men in positions of high standing. Sean Burke demonstrates that while this may be a possible use for the term, in his analysis of ancient texts he could not find a single example of where the term was used to describe a male who was clearly not castrated, leading him to conclude that εὐνοῦχος in praxis was used to refer to castrated males. For more see Burke, "The Meaning of Eunuch," in *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch*, 19-38; and Burke, "Queering Early Christian Discourse," 178.

Acts 2. The convert defaults to the apostle's knowledge in their search for spiritual education, and like an admirable student, the Ethiopian eunuch asks, Philip explains, and this shared knowledge is never disputed. Questions in their most basic sense are absent of statement. They are modes of interrogation and query. They can open a discussion yet share nothing on their own. They prompt explanation and demonstrate a desire for knowledge, or to know. Questions, in short, are utterances that are epistemologically distant from the oratory gifted to the apostolic figures in *Acts*. On his own, the Ethiopian eunuch cannot access truth and knowledge about Jesus. Moreover, oratory as I have highlighted is a marker of masculinity in the Roman world, so perhaps it comes as no surprise that the eunuch does not participate in it.

Next to the Ethiopian eunuch's quasi-masculinity, Philip's masculinity is amplified through his opportunities to explain convincingly. If speech makes the man in the ancient world, Philip's masculinity is bolstered next to the Ethiopian eunuch's questioning. As an apostle in *Acts*, Philip is a mouthpiece for the Way, and positioning Philip with an unknowing, childlike convert only confirms his authority. The Ethiopian eunuch's questions default to Philip as an authority, as someone who can explain. But while the Ethiopian eunuch is positioned to default to Philip's role as leader, this student/teacher dynamic is culturally insulated by the gendered expectations of the Ethiopian eunuch's childlike body.

Ethiopia and the Ends of the World

As I have demonstrated in the previous section, Luke builds on the social framework of the Ethiopian eunuch's castrated body to create a conversion narrative that bolsters Philip's apostolic authority. However, the Ethiopian eunuch is also designated in the text by his ethnic status. In lieu of a name, Luke identifies this character by this sexed and ethnic status. He is an Ethiopian eunuch, Αἰθίοψ εὐνοῦχος. The intersection of his classed and ethnic status points to a tension in the character about conversion and inclusion into the narrative's community. While Luke uses the character of the Ethiopian eunuch, and his castrated body specifically, to build an idealized conversion narrative, the character must remain marginal, on the fringes of the Way,

appearing, but not central to this new movement. In the Greek and Roman ethnographic imagination, Ethiopia was at once abhorred as radically other, and exoticized. Indeed, evoking a figure hailing from a distant locality provides a legendary aspect to the narrative of this movement's expansion. Yet because Ethiopia was at once despised and viewed as exotic, it connoted a foreignness that could threaten the peaceable image of the Way that Luke is constructing here.

The Ethiopian eunuch's foreign title fits the expectations of eunuchs in the second century given that castration of Roman citizens was outlawed. Any eunuch in the empire would have been associated with foreign powers.[375] This is not to say there were no eunuchs in Rome, but rather their castrated body signaled that they were from a distant place. For a Roman to become a eunuch was a crime, setting a man outside the bounds of "Romanness." Thus, for Luke's audience, a eunuch was a representative of far-off places with "exotic" laws. The Ethiopian eunuch's castrated status functioned to locate the figure outside the boundaries of the empire; by highlighting these points of his identity, Luke emphasizes his otherness.

This same status that distanced the Ethiopian eunuch from Roman citizenship made him a perfect slave.[376] Eunuchs were elite slaves created by and for elite persons, bound to elite social stations. Their unique status reflected on the masters who owned them, accentuating their power and privilege to manipulate others' bodies as they wished. So, while *Acts* 8 creates an image of an ideal Christian convert, the Ethiopian eunuch was already an idealized slave. According to Kathryn Ringrose, eunuchs were trusted as intermediaries, going from male spaces to female spaces with messages. They could exist and transgress these seemingly naturally divided spaces where others could not. Court eunuchs, such as the Ethiopian eunuch, likely emerged out of one

[375] As previous cited in an earlier section, in the first century Domitian made it illegal for any Roman citizen to be castrated, and likewise made it illegal for Roman slaves to be castrated for commercial reasons. These laws were reiterated by Constantine in the fourth century, Leo I in the fifth, and Justinian in the sixth. See Taylor, *Castration*, 141.
[376] Ringrose, *The Perfect Servant*.

of these transgressive roles where they were trusted to guard the royal harem. Their physical "in-betweenness" made them an ideal fit to serve in elite positions for powerful offices. As such, these figures left traces of themselves in court and legal documents.[377] Ringrose supplies examples where fictional eunuchs were even inserted retroactively into the history of great emperors to bolster that emperor's legacy.[378] Thus, the eunuch did not just connote a foreign status, it also evoked Roman imaginations of opulent royal courts in foreign lands (an imaginary that would have a long tenure in the European medieval and colonial landscapes as well). Important for my argument here then is that the Ethiopian eunuch signals a tension between lowliness and exalted royal status.

This tension is likewise seen in ancient understandings of Ethiopia. Scholars have long noted the utopian image that Ethiopia implies. Richard Pervo* explains that Ethiopia was "the legendary land of romance, an exotic region whose inhabitants enjoyed that utopian existence."[379] This understanding lends to the reading of the Ethiopian eunuch as a literary figure rather than a historical character. Pervo* continues, "These characteristics were derived not from archaeological research or authentic ethnographical study but from the location of Ethiopia: the ends of the earth." The understanding of Ethiopia as the ends of the earth is likewise seen as a fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in *Acts* 1:8 where he explains that the apostles will spread his message this far. This figure then testifies to the words of Jesus. Despite the eunuch's commitment and the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy, Luke, Matthews notes, does not follow the Ethiopian eunuch into Africa where he might continue sharing what Philip taught him.[380] This point is all the more important when we take into account that Roman Africa, including Ethiopia, would boast many ancient Christian communities (indeed, Christianity has a robust history on the

[377] Ringrose, *The Perfect Servant*, 202-211.
[378] Ringrose, *The Perfect Servant, 102-107; 202-203.*
[379] Pervo*, *Acts*, 221.
[380] Matthews, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 30.

continent dating to the Roman period),[381] yet Luke refuses to take his narrative there. This lacuna reflects at once an emphasis on the movement in urban localities in the Greek east of the Roman Mediterranean and concern that this new convert, by virtue of his ethnicity could fit easily into the narrative Luke is building.[382]

While Ethiopia presented a visionary utopia of a far-off land, perched at the end of the earth, it could also be viewed as abhorrent. The "racialized" logic that leads Greek and Roman repudiation of Ethiopians entailed focus on their geographical location and the physical differences said to belong to Ethiopian people. In his book, *The Invention of Racism*,[383] Benjamin Isaac identifies a theory of environmental determinism in Roman antiquity that located racialized differences as a product of geographical location. In the case of Ethiopians, their southern location, it was thought, left them scorched from the sun, with darker eyes and skin, and wooly, rough hair. Northern people, on the other hand, were lighter skinned. This environmental theory worked to shore up an idealization of the various *ethnoi* in a schema that rendered the Greek and Roman landscapes as the idealized, balanced geographical point.[384] Ethiopians' scorched bodies and thus darker characteristics were then coded with negative social and cultural meaning and were especially associated with a perception of cowardice.[385] Physiognomists, like the Greek Polemo, read Ethiopians, native to a utopian land, as naturally craven figures. In the Roman empire where strength and conquest were valued, to be read as cowardly was a very low portrayal. Yet, the imagery of Ethiopians was not one-sided. These peoples were also considered to be the first humans generated by the earth.[386] This belief fueled the idealized fantasy of Ethiopia as a paradise and fostered appreciation for its genealogy. Ethiopians, however, were still thought to

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[381] David Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).
[382] Laura Nasrallah, "The Acts of the Apostles, Greek Cities, and Hadrian's Panhellenion," *JBL* 3 (2008): 533-566.
[383] Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).
[384] Isaac, *The Invention of Racism*, 94.
[385] Isaac, *The Invention of Racism*, 151; 355 n.25
[386] Isaac, *The Invention of Racism*, 135.

exist at the bottom of the ethnic hierarchy by virtue of a kind of "primitivism." Ethiopians presented a unique social tension in the ancient world; they were at once revered and racially detested. They were exotic and despised. For this reason, an Ethiopian convert fits uneasily in Luke's vision of the Way.

Acts tries to appeal to the Roman imagination. It presents the Way as palatable to the values of Roman elites, and as holding the social morals expected from members of the Roman establishment. As I have mentioned, Luke distances his community from accusations that it follows the behaviour of exotic foreign cults. Centering the Ethiopian eunuch in the remainder of the narrative would undercut this rhetorical concern. While the Ethiopian eunuch evokes utopian ideals of a royal court at the ends of the earth, he also stands in direct contrast to the image of urbanized Roman subjects that Luke presents. Therefore, while the Ethiopian eunuch's castrated body provides Luke a useful narrative tool, he exits the narrative abruptly in order to shield the Way from an enduring association with that which is exotic and strange from a Roman-centered perspective. There is no room for the Ethiopian eunuch to stay within Luke's narrative vision.

CONCLUSION

The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch in *Acts* 8 is an idealized conversion in how it follows the pattern for conversion set out by Peter in *Acts* 2. In following Peter's prescient words in his speech at the Pentecost, the Ethiopian eunuch's conversion demonstrates the spiritual work that is transpiring through the apostles' individual missions. This conversion narrative relies on the castrated body of the Ethiopian eunuch, whose adolescent persona was built on an unwilling castration of an enslaved person. My examination of this figure is grounded in the notion that ancient slave culture was a rape culture, and that to be enslaved was to carry the embodied knowledge of sexual violence. The eunuch's castration left him in a physical state proximate to childhood, and this childlike understanding of eunuchs naturalized his naïveté, which Luke demonstrates in his literary representation. The Ethiopian eunuch speaks to Philip only in the form of questions, and this unknowing state allows Philip to step into the role as spiritual knower,

affirming his apostolic authority. Luke constructs this character's representation, playing on the association of eunuchs as sexually violated enslaved persons. The tension for Luke arises in the necessary intersection of the Ethiopian eunuch's ethnicity and his castrated body. Eunuchs were embodied crimes in Rome; castration was outlawed. Therefore, for Luke to bring a eunuch into the narrative he needed to come from outside of the empire. Ethiopia, while providing a domestic home for a castrated body in the ancient world, was the despised exotic locale. It epitomized the dangers of foreignness from which Luke distances his community to appeal to Roman acceptability. While Luke seems to appeal for the inclusion of enslaved persons within the movement (2), in the end, this figure hovers very much at its edges. He must disappear from the narrative. In short, I have argued that the conversion narrative of the Ethiopian eunuch is a narrative indebted to the sexually violent ideology of slavery in the ancient world. Luke relies on the eunuch's childlike curiosity and his association with exoticism to bolster the caliber of his movement. The embodied history of the Ethiopian eunuch's enslaved body is both useful and troublesome for Luke. While Luke builds from the sexually violent ideology of slavery, the Ethiopian eunuch holds the potential to disrupt Luke's self-proclaimed "orderly account" (*Luke* 1:1), and thus, ultimately, he must appear only briefly in Luke's narrative frame.

The following chapter continues this examination of enslaved figures within *Acts* and takes up the stories of two speaking enslaved girls in *Acts* 12 and 16. As I will demonstrate, the prophetic speech of these two enslaved girls is informed, like that of the Ethiopian eunuch, by the sexualization of enslaved people, which allows Luke to undermine the veracity of their speech. Both enslaved girls are subject to a discourse of madness shrouding their speech, a madness linked to rape and sexual violence. Here again we see that despite the inclusion of enslaved persons in the prophetic proclamation of *Acts* 2, in the end Luke's story of the Way assumes the logic of slavery that would objectify and marginalize enslaved persons.

CHAPTER 4 - PROPHECY AND *PAIDISKĒ*: CHARISMATIC SPEECH AND ENSLAVED WOMEN IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

This chapter continues the reading of enslaved characters in *Acts*. It continues to read enslaved characters alongside their social history as sexually violable bodies and asks how that embodied history might surface in their characterization. Where the previous chapter centered on the story of the Ethiopian eunuch, this analysis focuses on two speaking enslaved girls: Rhoda, and the prophetic enslaved girl of *Acts* 16. Both enslaved girls are silenced despite speaking truthful statements. Unlike the Ethiopian eunuch who is a passive speaker, uttering only questions that default to Philip's apostolic authority, the speaking enslaved girls make prophetic claims that center Peter and Paul. Like that of the Ethiopian eunuch, the characterization of their speech acts is shaped by the cultural expectation of the sexual violability of enslaved persons. I argue that the embodied history of slavery not only informs how Luke characterizes their speech in the narrative but justifies his silencing of their prophetic announcements.

As I will explain in this chapter, prophecy is an integral part of *Acts*, and Luke's theological project in this narrative involves controlling the parameters of how prophecy functions within the Way. He regulates the authority transferred in prophecy by limiting whose prophetic speech is received in the text. In silencing undesired prophecy, Luke undermines a prophet's claim to truth, knowledge, and by extension, authority. When I turn to *Acts* 16, I consider how the prophetic enslaved girl's enslaved status informs Luke's portrayal of her prophetic silencing. Paul exorcises the prophetic enslaved girl who repeatedly announces him in public as a slave of the Most High God. I will show how these actions silence her inspiring spirit and affirm Paul's status as one of God's chosen. This regulatory moment is possible because of the prophetic enslaved girl's subjugation as an enslaved person. As established in the previous chapter, to be enslaved was to be sexually violable, and therefore Paul's exorcism is accepted on account of her sexual violability prescribed by slaveholding culture.

Rhoda, like the prophetic enslaved girl, is silenced despite speaking truths in *Acts* 12. She announces the coming of Peter by his voice alone and is disbelieved by community members she serves as an enslaved figure. She is characterized as out of her mind and her pronouncement is dismissed. This characterization points to a rhetoric of madness that can also be identified in the narrative of the prophetic enslaved girl. Like Rhoda, the characterization of her prophecy alludes to frenzied, mantic behaviour. Thinking about the representation of Rhoda through the figure of Cassandra in Greek history, I demonstrate how this rhetoric of madness facilitates a culture of disbelief with which Luke is conversant as it pertains to the prophetic pronouncements of sexually violable figures. I demonstrate here once again that Luke's silencing of these enslaved girls relies on the regulatory mechanism of presumed sexual violability as it relates to prophetic speech. In centering the narratives of these two enslaved girls, I read Luke's rhetoric to demonstrate how a logic of sexual violence underwrites these scenes, and ultimately helps regulate whose prophecy was allowed and by extension who had access to the authority it garnered in the narrative. In laying out his vision of prophecy in *Acts*, Luke relies on the presumption of sexual violence against enslaved person to regulate his vision of the Way.

THE SPIRIT, SPEECH, AND UNDERSTANDING PROPHECY IN ACTS

Prophecy is an act of charismatic speech that inherently makes epistemological claims through its pronouncements. By this I mean that prophecy claims a privileged access to divine knowledge and truth. It is a vehicle through which divine knowledge ends up in the world and it signals rare access to otherworldly wisdom. Like other methods of charismatic speaking, prophecy carries notions of authority as those who prophesy present themselves as divinely chosen figures being able to speak on behalf of the divine. This phenomenon is also an integral part of *Acts*. Who can prophesy, from where and how, characterizes Luke's vision of the world and the role his community has in it. I understand this relationship, that between prophecy and authority, as a characteristic of epistemology that Luke envisions within the Way. Correct prophecy garners the prophetic speaker a chosen place within Luke's community, and as we will see, Luke has strong

opinions and clear boundaries for whose prophecy is correct and can be heard within the Way. In affirming a certain prophetic speaker, Luke confirms their epistemological access to the divine truth and knowledge he envisions. He also acknowledges their authority as chosen communicators with God. In silencing certain prophetic speakers (as I argue he does), Luke identifies who cannot speak on behalf of God in this community; he restricts who can access divine truth and knowledge. In this way Luke denies, and grants, characters epistemological access to divine knowledge as he envisions it based on his criteria for legitimate and acceptable prophecy. For Luke, this especially centers around the apostles and the charismatic gifts bestowed on them by the Holy Spirit (although other male prophets do appear when need be). From the onset of the text, the work of the Holy Spirit governs the missionary tales of the apostles, guiding them to and from locations. We have seen this in chapter three, when the spirit whisks Philip in and out of the scene with the Ethiopian eunuch. A more robust consideration of the role of prophecy in *Acts* is vital to situate my analysis of the two prophesying *paidiskē (*παιδίσκη) in this text because of the central role the Holy Spirit has in the narrative.

At the beginning of *Acts*, Jesus commands the apostles to stay in Jerusalem and wait for "the promise of the Father (1:4-5)."[387] He explains that in several days they will be baptized in the Holy Spirit, a fulfillment of this divine promise. This directive designates the apostles as a chosen group who possess privileged knowledge and a privileged position in the Jesus movement. The coming of the Holy Spirit affirms this chosen status in *Acts* 2. As explained in the previous chapter, a primary goal of *Acts* 2 is to establish the apostles as a chosen group who will evangelize the world, and, therefore, Luke is particularly keen to shore up the authority of these disciples in this text. The apostles are prioritized in this narrative as those who continue Jesus' teachings. That Luke is interested in singling out the "Twelve," is evident right at the start of the story (Paul will also be folded into that group, and, by the end of *Acts*, be the most consequential figure). While

[387] ἀλλὰ περιμένειν τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πατρός.

the apostles wait in Jerusalem as Jesus instructed, they replace Judas, by lots with Matthias (1:21-26). Luke notes that a crowd of followers was gathered in the upper room with the eleven disciples (who are named, 1:13). He explains that "certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus as well as his brothers" (1:14) were with the apostles.[388] The inclusion of Jesus' mother and brothers in this scene amongst the apostles, along with a gathering of Jesus' followers, locates Jesus' authority with this chosen group of men. We gather then that to be an apostle is a distinguished role, one that entails continuity with Jesus' mission.

Acts 2 not only establishes the privileged role of the apostles through their reception of the Holy Spirit, but also evidences a particular understanding of prophecy that likewise continues through the narrative. On the day of Pentecost, in the narrative, the Holy Spirit descended onto the group of those gathered. When tongues of fire appeared over those gathered, they began to speak, in what the Judeans "from every nation,"[389] who are likewise present for this event, interpret as their own native languages (2:5-13). At this moment, Peter steps forward and addresses the bewildered crowd, affirming that those speaking in foreign languages are not drunk (an accusation levied by a few onlookers, 2:13), but have obtained a heavenly gift, which he confirms by quoting the Hebrew prophet Joel (2:28-32). Peter's prophetic quotation describes the descent of God's Spirit in the last days upon all people so that men, women, old, young, enslaved, and freeborn would prophesy. This speech to the Jerusalem crowd suggests that the gift of the Holy Spirit has now been democratized; everyone will obtain prophetic gifts. What the crowed is witnessing, in the sudden exclamation of foreign languages, was this prophesied event. The crowd receives more teachings from Peter about the life and death of Jesus as foregrounded in the Hebrew scriptures and are eventually all baptized and brought into the community. At the end of this chapter, the newly baptized commit themselves to the disciples' teaching (διδαχὴ) and become members of their community (κοινωνία) (2:42). While prophetic gifts might be available

[388] Σὺν γυναιξὶν καὶ Μαριὰμ τῇ μητρὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς αὐτοῦ.
[389] ἀπο παντὸς ἔθωοθς

to all—according to Peter's proclamation—beyond this scene, it is the special demarcation of the apostles' capacity to missionize to "the ends of the earth" (1:8).[390]

The scene likewise exhibits Luke's rhetorical agenda to domesticate prophecy. Prophecy and spirit possession, as conceived of in the ancient world, could take hold of any sort of person: man or woman, old or young, freeborn or enslaved, of low or noble birth. It was a phenomenon that transgressed social boundaries, working outside of the social order, and it enabled activities such as speaking in tongues, visionary experiences, miracle-working, and communicating with otherworldly entities.[391] Spirits were an indiscriminate force that affected any sort of person, and this type of unpredictable transgression of social boundaries signaled suspicious and wayward behaviour. The *ad hoc* habits of possessing and inspiring spirits were unruly, especially to those with elite social station. For a member of the elite class, being unpredictably swept away in the spirit was disconcerting, and the Holy Spirit, a spirit that sweeps apostles to and from throughout the text,[392] is integral to the narrative of *Acts*.[393] As such, Luke wants to distance his community from this type of suspicion and disorder to appeal to cultural elites within the empire. As I have noted Luke does so by representing the Way as a respectable and well-mannered community that is in line with Roman values. Thus, prophetic gifts point to the activity of the spirit in the commissioning and activities of the apostles, but in the end, are not freely possessed by every character in the narrative. Luke aims to retain the potency of prophecy as a sign of the spirit and its authority, while also making it safe, domestic, and nonthreatening for his idealized, upper-class reader.

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[390] ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς.
[391] See my previous discussion on prophecy in the introduction and first chapter of this work.
[392] We have seen an example of this in Acts 8:39 after Philip baptizes the Ethiopian Eunuch he is "snatched away (ἁρπαζω/*harpazō*)" by the Holy Spirit. The verb *harpazō* means to seize, grasp, snatch up, carry away. It can also mean to plunder, seize, and rape. The verb connotes an involuntary subject being acted upon without permission. This lack of permission or agency lends itself to the apprehension conveyed around spirit possession and its unpredictable behaviour.
[393] Matthews, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 76.

Acts 2 lays the groundwork for how Luke achieves this goal.[394] First, he sets the Pentecost account in a public male space and marks it with Peter's speech to the crowd.[395] In this way, the descent of the Holy Spirit is characterized as something closer to public oratory than spirit possession. This is supported by the occurrence of speeches in *Acts*, which are a vital part of the history of scholarship on this text.[396] While what constitutes a speech is debated amongst scholars, speech in some fashion forms a substantial portion of the work.[397] The speeches are associated with maleness and apostolic authority, matching the authority structure of Luke's community with performances of elite Roman masculinity.[398] Situating prophecy in *Acts* 2 within the public domain, much like the speeches of *Acts*, lends an air of respectability, inviting comparisons to Roman public discourse. Additionally, there is no dissension among the crowd in the scene, no

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[394] For a more detailed account of Luke's representation of prophecy as controlled in this scene see Matthews, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 75-78.

[395] Matthews, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 77. For more on masculinity in Luke-Acts see: Mary-Rose D' Angelo, "The ANHP Question in Luke-Acts: Imperial Masculinity and the Deployment of Women in the Early Second Century," in *A Feminist Companion to Luke, ed*. Amy-Jill Levine and Marianne Blickenstaff (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 44-69; and Wilson, *Unmanly Men*. D'Angelo explains how the depiction of male authority in Luke-Acts is part of Luke's agenda, to present a community that echoes Roman values, where Wilson presents examples of manliness within Luke-Acts that disrupt the assumption of elite masculine norms in the work. For more on masculinity and oratory see: Gleason, *Making Men*, and the further discussion of this work in chapter three of this dissertation.

[396] Major works on the topic of speech and speeches in Acts include H.J Cadbury, "The Speeches in Acts," in *The Beginnings of Christianity: The Acts of the Apostles*, ed. F.J. Foakes Jackson and K. Lake (London: Macmillan, 1920-33), 402-27; and Martin Dibelius, *The Speeches in Acts and Ancient Historiography, in Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. H. Greeven (New York, 1956), 138-185. For more on speeches in *Acts* see: Marion Soards, "The Speeches in Acts in Relation to other Pertinent Ancient Literature," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 70, no. 1 (1994): 65–90.
For a consideration of silence in *Acts* see: Michal Beth Dinkler, "The Narrative Rhetoric of Speech and Silence in the Acts of the Apostles," *NTS* 67 (2021): 1-21.

[397] Depending on how you qualify the term speech/es, the statistics vary as to the quantity of speech/es depicted inside the narrative. These statistics nevertheless reflect the impressive amount of direct speech included in the text. Joseph Fitzmyer states that speeches and discourse in Acts account for approximately one third of its total verses, while Richard Pervo* states that 51% of the verses in the text include some form of direct speech. See Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 103-108; and Richard Pervo*, *Acts*, 39. As Michal Beth Dinkler explains in her work on silence in Acts, "Beyond the clear examples of Peter's sermon in 2.14-36, Stephen's speech in 7.2-53 and Paul's speech in 17.22-31, scholars disagree about the exact number of public speeches in Acts, although kerygmatic declarations clearly constitute a major percentage of the story. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the speeches have garnered so much attention in New Testament studies; since Martin Dibelius's ground-breaking work on the topic, this has been especially true of German scholars. The ocean of secondary literature on the public speeches attends to a sustained scholarly preoccupation in this regard" (9). Dinkler, "The Narrative Rhetoric of Speech and Silence in the Acts of the Apostles.

[398] For more see Gleason, *Making Men*.

chaotic resistance or disturbance. It is relatively calm and ordered for a wonderous event transpiring among such a large crowd (we recall that Judeans "from every nation" are reported to be present, 2:5-6). It is miraculous, but not disruptive. Similarly, the actions inspired by the Holy Spirit are perfectly understandable for those witnessing the event. Shelly Matthews reads this scene, specifically the clarity Holy Spirits gift, as a recasting of *glossolalia* in direct response to Paul's concern about the prophetic gift in his letter to the Corinthians (*1 Cor* 14:5-32).[399] She explains that *glossolalia* consisted of incomprehensible utterances that demanded translation or explanation for those witnessing the inspiration, and, according to Paul's letter, this prophetic activity was a source of tension in the Corinthian community.[400] Unlike *glossolalia* as Paul presents it, this prophecy in *Acts* 2 is coherent and understandable by the linguistically diverse crowd of people gathered in Jerusalem. The scene reverses Paul's presentation of the gift of tongues as unrecognizable noise into coherent speaking (*1 Cor* 14:6-12), demystifying the otherworldly communication and removing suspicion from the act.

Finally, the most effective way Luke distances the Way from associations with wayward Spirit movements, writes Mathews, is "to evoke the phenomenon in *Acts* 2 but then remain aloof from the phenomenon for the remaining twenty-six chapters of the book."[401] *Acts* 2 opens with a scene in which the spirit descends and the disciples gathered there are endowed with linguistic gifts. This prophetic activity incites a mass baptism of those present for this miraculous scene. Spirit reception appears to be linked to baptism, as laid out in *Acts* 2, yet the descent of the spirit is only hinted at twice more concerning group baptism in the duration of the text.[402] Peter's

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[399] As Shelly Matthews explains, the text uses the term ἑτέραις γλώσσαις to describe the prophetic gift, which hints at the practice of *glossolalia*. However, the description of the event contradicts the expectations of *glossolalia*. She reads this language as a purposeful nod to the phenomenon that enables Luke to create a distance between the expectation of speaking in tongues and what transpires in Acts 2. See Matthews, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 78.

[400] For a foundational reading of Paul's Corinthian correspondence see: Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, 90. For her discussion on the gift of tongues see 140-146.

[401] Matthews, *The Acts of the Apostles,* 81.

[402] The two scenes are as follows: *Acts* 10:46, this narrative depicts a communal baptism by Peter where Gentiles receive the gift of tongues; and *Acts* 19:6 is a group baptism performed by Paul in Ephesus where those baptized likewise speak in tongues.

invocation of scripture is likewise misleading. While the passage from Joel states that women and enslaved persons will also receive prophecy with the coming of God's Spirit, the only prophecy from a woman or an enslaved person in the whole of *Acts* comes from a figure outside of the community, the enslaved girl of *Acts* 16 discussed below. Further, her prophetic inspiration appears to derive from the God Apollo, not the Holy Spirit. As I will take up in greater detail later in this chapter, she is characterized unfavourably, exorcised of her inspiring spirit, and dismissed from the narrative. Enslaved persons were part of these earliest Christ following communities and are present in the community in *Acts*,[403] yet none are described positively as possessing prophetic characteristics.

Luke does hint at prophesying women within the community, but this inclusion is deceptive. *Acts* 21 states that Philip has four virgin prophetic daughters. Yet, Philip's prophetic daughters never speak (21:9). There is no direct or implied pronouncement from these women, and Luke seems keen to ensure that their prophetic powers are mentioned, but that the audience does not witness them using those powers. While Paul is staying in their home, God needs to warn him about his impending execution in Rome. Rather than speak through one of the four named prophets on site, God sends the wandering prophet Agabus to relay the message to Paul (21:10-11). A fifth, male prophet, is brought into the scene to deliver the divine message rather than have one of the four female prophets on-site relay the news. While Turid Karlsen Seim suggests that Luke wants his reader to make a connection between Philip's daughters and Peter's quotation of *Joel* in *Acts* 2 stating that daughters shall prophesy in the last days,[404] Mitzi Smith reads the silence of Philip's prophetic daughters as tools that foreground male exceptionalism, a gendered

[403] See Rhoda in *Acts* 12, who is the doorkeeper for Mary's home where many believers are gathered praying for Peter. Her story will be taken up in greater detail at the end of this chapter. I will also argue that Rhoda is a prophet, albeit, not named as such by Luke.
[404] Turid Seim, *The Double Message: Patterns of Gender in Luke and Acts* (New York: T&T Clark, 1990), 147.

dynamic that supports my own reading of the silenced enslaved girls.[405] Smith observes that the prophetic women are first introduced in relationship to their father, boosting his image, and then their inaction next to the hyper action of the prophet Agabus emphasizes the vital nature of his pronouncements; in spite of their named charismatic gifts, Philip's prophetic daughters do not participate in the resolution of the conflict in the scene. Rather, they heighten the effectiveness of the male actioned resolution. Smith concludes that "[t]he theological implication is that the Holy Spirit has chosen the male prophet over the female prophets. The invited interpretation or meaning making is that men's prophetic words are more important. Women's prophetic words are not necessary when capable men are available, even if the men have to travel from Judea to Caesarea."[406] Despite the citation from the Hebrew scriptures that everyone will prophesy in *Acts* 2, this gift is relegated to the voices of men. According to Luke's representation of prophecy, the Way is not an unruly spirit movement that disrupts social boundaries that would prompt suspicion from the upper classes. Prophecy, as practiced within the community, is in line with Roman values, and it does not disrupt social order. More so, as prophecy is tied to apostolic authority, Luke is making explicit claims as to who can, and cannot, do God's work. In his effort to delineate a prophecy that is more palpable to the upper classes of Roman society, he is likewise making epistemological claims about the transmission of divine knowledge within the Way; it is a regulatory effort on the part of the evangelist that situates divine knowledge with the characters of the apostles.

THE PROPHETIC ENSLAVED GIRL OF *ACTS* 16

The prophetic enslaved girl of *Acts* 16 is a secondary character who appears in a handful of lines in the middle of a larger narrative within *Acts*. When the reader meets the prophetic enslaved girl, she is selling fortunes for her owners benefit and upon seeing Paul and Silas, she

[405] Mitzi Smith, *The Literary Construction of the Other in the Acts of the Apostles: Charismatics, the Jews, and Women* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 146-153.
[406] Smith, *The Literary Construction of the Other*, 153.

announces them as slaves of the Most-High God. Despite the truthfulness of her statements, however, Paul, irritated by her persistent announcements, exorcises the enslaved girl, removing her divining spirit. It is a puzzling reaction by the apostle to what seems to be candid publicity. Nevertheless, Paul silences her truthful utterances, and the prophetic enslaved girl exits the narrative. I argue that the encounter between Paul and the prophetic enslaved girl relies on an ideology of slavery that entailed the sexual violability of enslaved persons. As we saw in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, to be identified as enslaved in the second century was to live with the threat, and often experience, of sexual violence. The exorcism of the prophetic enslaved girl in *Acts* 16:16-18 is a narrative concerned with shoring up Paul's apostolic authority, and it likewise points to a tension around prophecy, an integral yet precarious aspect of Luke's theology. Luke wants to distance his community from the type of prophetic experiences represented by this enslaved girl. She, in other words, resolves a tension that prophecy might portend in Luke's purview. In centering the sexually violent history of ancient slavery, I demonstrate how the enslaved status of a young female prophet worked to resolve Luke's concern about prophetic acts while bolstering the apostolic authority of Paul. In other words, I argue that an ideology of sexual violence informs the execution of this narrative exorcism and shores up Luke's representation of prophecy within the Way.

Chapter 16 is a significant moment in the storytelling of *Acts*. Paul has received a visionary dream that leads he and Silas, a new travelling partner, to Macedonia, a new geographical local for the Way (16:8-9). This narrative is likewise the first of the four "We" narratives. "We" narratives are passages in *Acts* where the third-person narration shifts to a first-person plural retelling.[407] The first major account that the text records in Macedonia transpires in Philippi, a city characterized as both a vital urban center as well as a Roman colony (16:12). The prophetic enslaved girl surfaces in the middle of this narrative arch which begins and ends with notable

[407] "We" passages are found in *Acts* 16:9-18; 20:4-16; 21:1-18; and 27:1-28.

conversion stories. The first conversion story is that of Lydia, a householder that Paul and Silas meet outside of the city while they are looking for a place of prayer. Lydia is part of a group of women gathered by the water to whom Paul and Silas preach.[408] After hearing the men's teachings, Lydia accepts their message and along with her household, is baptized. The text reads,

> On the Sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. A certain woman named Lydia, a worshipper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.' And she prevailed upon us (16:13-15).[409]

This character has been frequently read as a narrative partner, or narrative juxtaposition, to the prophetic enslaved girl whose story immediately follows Lydia's. For example, Shelly Matthews connects the two women because of the use of term for the place of prayer (*proseuchē*) in both scenes.[410] Mitzi Smith sees the two female characters as representatives of internal and external others in the text who are proximate to the apostle while representing different spectrums of the Roman household.[411] Jeffrey Stanley reads both women together as "boarder women" in his post-colonial reading of the scenes, centering the border crossing of Paul and Silas from Asia Minor into Macedonia.[412] Lydia's conversion is a significant part of *Acts'* narrative as it recounts the first European conversion, ultimately tracking the growth of the Way into new geographical locations, and it details the conversion of a female head of house, narrating a guide for women's place in the

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[408] It is noteworthy that this congregation is entirely female, and that this is the only time that this description appears in *Acts*. For more on women's prominence in early Christ follow communities in Philippi see Shelly Matthews, *First Converts*: *Rich Pagan Women and the Rhetoric of Mission in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 93.

[409] Τῇ τε ἡμέρα τῶν σαββάτω ἐξήλθομεν ἔξω τῆς πύλης παρὰ ποταμὸν οὗ ἐνομίζομεν προσευχὴν εἶναι, καὶ καθίσαντες ἐλαλοῦμεν ταῖς συνελθούσαις γυναιξίν. Και τις γυνὴ ὀνόματι Λυδία πορφυρόπλις πόλεως Θθατείρων σεβομένη τὸν θεόν, ἤκουεν, ἧς ὁ κύριος διήνοιξεω τὴν καρδίαν προσέχειν τοῖς λαλουμένοις ὑπὸ τοῦ Παύλου. ὡς δὲ ἐβαπτίσθη καὶ ὁ οἶκος αὐτῆς, παρεκάλεσεν λέγουσα, Εἰ κεκρίκατέ με πιστὴν τῷ κυρίῳ εἶναι, εἰσελθόντες εἰς τὸν οἶκόν μου μένετε· καὶ παρεβιάσατο ἡμᾶς.

[410] Matthews, *First Converts*, 89.

[411] Smith, *The Literary Construction of the Other*, 39-46; 134-142.

[412] Jeffery Staley, "Changing Woman: Toward a Postcolonial Postfeminist Interpretation of Acts 16:6-40," in *A Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine and Marianne Blinkenstaff. London: T & T Clark, 2001, 177-192.

movement. What is of note for my analysis of the prophetic enslaved girl, is how Luke gestures to slave holding culture in the scene. For example, the baptism of Lydia's household is one of four household baptisms in *Acts* where the apostles come to baptize a household after first converting the householder (10; 16:13-15; 16:27-34; 18:8). These group baptisms would have included enslaved persons as they were part of the fabric of ancient households.[413] According to Jennifer Glancy, the group baptism in *Acts* demonstrates Luke's assumption "that his readers would find nothing amiss when a slaveholder determined the religious practices of the household."[414] The second baptism that concludes the chapter (16:27-34) is likewise one of these four household baptisms where Luke narrates a group baptism for a household after the conversion of the householder. After Paul and Silas are thrown into prison for Paul's exorcism of the prophetic enslaved girl, an earthquake shakes the doors of the prison open overnight. When the jailer tasked with guarding the prisoners, which include Paul and Silas, sees the open doors, he is about to kill himself because of his failure to guard the prisoners. However, none of the prisoners left the prison with the opening of the door. This miraculous turn of events inspires the jailer to ask Paul and Silas to be saved, leading to the baptism of his household. This conversion reads, "Then he brought them outside and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' They answered, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.' They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. At the same hour of the night, he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay (16:30-33)."[415] Like the conversion of Lydia at the beginning of the chapter, *Acts* 16 concludes with the baptism of another household in Philippi. Nestled between these two conversion stories is the exorcism of the

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[413] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 46-49. For more on the role of enslaved persons within early Christ following communities please see Balch and Osiek, "Slaves," in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 207-274.

[414] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity,* 47.

[415] Καὶ προαγαγὼν αὐτοὺς ἔξω ἔφη, κύριοι, τί με δεῖ ποιεῖν ἵνα σωθῶ; οἱ δὲ εἶπαν, Πίστευσαν ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν καὶ σωθήςῃ σὺ καὶ ὁ οἶκός σου. Καὶ ἐλάκησαν αὐτῶ τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐν τῇ οἰκιᾳ αὐτοῦ. Καὶ παραλαβὼν αὐτοὺε ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ τῆς νυκτὸς ἔλουσεν ἀπὸ τῶν πληγῶν, καὶ ἐβαπτίσθη αὐτὸς καὶ οἱ αὐτοῦ πάντες παραχρῆμα

prophetic enslaved girl, the only named enslaved person to prophesy in the text. This sandwiching of a prophet between the narratives of two mass baptisms gestures back to *Acts* 2 where Peter proclaims the democratization of prophecy and the masses witnessing the Pentecost event are baptized as first converts. This pattern in *Acts* 16 signifies that the work mapped out earlier in the text is unfolding as planned.

The prophetic enslaved girl is identified as a *paidiskē* [416] who has a spirit of divination. She encounters Paul and Silas as they are making their way back to the place of prayer (*proseuchē)*, presumably where they originally met Lydia. She begins to follow them proclaiming Paul and Silas as the "slaves of the Most High God" (16:17).[417] We are told that the girl's owners make a great deal of money from her fortune-telling in the market. As the text reads, "we met a female slave who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling (16:16)".[418] According to Clarice Martin, this prophetic enslaved girl is "quadruply" marginalized through her gender, her enslaved status, her possession by a spirit, and her economic exploitation by her owners.[419] For several days, this quadruply marginalized girl follows Paul and Silas, loudly proclaiming their identity to those around them. Paul becomes annoyed (διαπονέσθαι) with these

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[416] I translate *paidiskē* (παιδίσκη) as *enslaved girl* over *slave maid* or simply *female slave* not only to be more precise in my language, but to highlight conceptual associations held in relation within the term. While *paidiskē* is commonly translated as female slave, Liddell and Scott's Greek-English lexicon explains that the term is a diminutive of παῖς, or child, and that *paidiskē* means young girl, maiden. The lexical entry author continues with the inclusion of female slave, concubine, and prostitute as possible meanings for the term. Therefore, the multiple layers of meaning creating this term are an intersection of enslavement, female childhood, and sex work. In translating the term as enslaved girl I mean to highlight the naturalized associations buried in this vocabulary. In this single term, we can identify a history of meaning where sex work and young girls are conceptually related. Given the contemporary legacy of some biblical scholars, this naturalized connection in biblical language is important. Looking past the sexualization of young bodies would seem to be a part of the history of New Testament scholarship.

[417] Οὗτοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου εἰσίν. Ivoni Richter Reimer traces the phrase "God the Most High" which the prophetic slave girl uses to identify Paul and Silas in Acts 16.17 (θεὸς ὕψιστος). She concludes that the phrase was used uniquely to identify the God of Israel. Her analysis determines that what the prophetic enslaved girl announces is on brand with the narrative message and are truths about Paul and Silas that the reader already knows. See: Ivoni Richter Reimer,
"The Prophetic Slave in Philippi (16:16-18)," in *Women in the Acts of the Apostles: A Feminist Liberation Perspective,* translated by Linda M. Maloney (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1995), 160-165.

[418] ἐγένετο δὲ πορευμένων ἡμῶν εἰς τὴν προσευχὴν παιδίσκην τινὰ ἔχουσαν πνεῦμα πύθωνα ὑπαντῆσαι ἡμῖν, ἥτις ἐργασίαν πολλὴν παρεῖχεν τοῖς κυρίοις αὐτῆς μαντευομένη.

[419] Clarice Martin, "The Acts of the Apostles," in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary, Volume 2*, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Shelly Matthews, eds. USA: Crossroad, 1993, 784.

persistent proclamations, turns, and exorcises the spirit of divination in the name of Jesus Christ. "While she followed Paul and us," the text reads, "she would cry out 'These men are slaved of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.' She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, 'I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And it came out that very hour (16:17-18)."[420] This reaction on Paul's part lands he and Silas in prison after the enslaved girl's owners pursue legal action.[421] We do not hear from the enslaved girl again, and the narrative follows Paul and Silas through their next prison escape and subsequent conversion of the jailer and his household.

The exorcism of the prophetic enslaved girl in *Acts* 16 builds Paul's authority as an apostle through his miraculous ability to exorcise. It is a power that establishes parallels between Paul and Jesus, drawing strong comparisons with the exorcisms Jesus performs in the *Gospel of Luke*. This scene is often compared to Jesus' exorcism of the Gerasene demonic in *Luke* 8:26-39 (*Matthew* 8:24-34; *Mark* 5:1-20).[422] These comparisons demonstrate how Luke characterizes Paul's apostolic authority through correlations with Jesus. Narratives, like the exorcism of the prophetic enslaved girl, situate Paul's teaching and missionizing as an extension of Jesus' teachings, as it does with other apostles in *Acts*. It is strange, however, that Paul exorcises the prophetic enslaved girl when she names him as "a slave of the Most High God" (16:17).[423] This phrase, Most High God (θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου), was known to refer to the Hebrew God.[424] Christy Cobb argues that this phrase is *heteroglossic* here, because it is a phrase uttered by Stephen (7:48) and then placed in the words of enslaved girl. Cobb continues to argue,[425] that the enslaved girl's prophecy comes true, as Paul and Silas are treated as enslaved bodies when they are beaten and

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[420] Αὕτη κατακολουθοῦσα τῷ Παύλῳ καὶ ἡμῖν λέγουσα, Οὗτοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου εἰνίν, οἵτιωες καταγγέλλουσιν ὑμῖν ὁδὸν σωτηρίας. Τοῦτο δὲ ἐποίει ἐπὶ πολλὰς ἡμέρας. διαπονηθεὶς δὲ Παῦλος καὶ ἐπιστρέψας τῷ τνεύματι εἶπεν, Παραγγέλλω σοι ἐν ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐξελθεῖν ἀπ᾽αὐτῆς· καὶ ἐξῆλθεν αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ.
[421] Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles*, 176-178.
[422] Smith and Tyson, *Acts and Christian Beginnings*, 197
[423] Οὗτοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ ὑψίστοθ εἰσίν.
[424] Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles*.
[425] Cobb, *Slavery, Gender, Truth, and Power*, 191-192.

imprisoned in the ensuing scene (16:21-24).[426] Paul's exorcism of the enslaved girl stands in contrast to her truthful statements.

As the narrative continues, Paul grows frustrated with the girl's persistence in following him and turns and exorcises her. His anger is the source of his ensuing action, a miraculous action that puts him in alignment with Jesus. Some scholars frame this angered exorcism as a cosmic confrontation. It is a reading that resolves the peculiarity of Paul's frustration with the otherwise text-positive pronouncements. The prophetic enslaved girl is, as Cobb states, "a mouthpiece for Lukan theology."[427] Both Joseph Fitzmyer and Richard Pervo* read the exorcism as a show of dominance by Christian powers over rival religious traditions. They come to this conclusion by emphasizing that the enslaved girl is said to have a Pythian spirit (πνεῦμα πὐθωνα) referring to the Pythia, Apollo's chosen prophet at Delphi, a topic I will return to in the next section.[428] In Fitzmyer's and Pervo's* readings, Paul comes to exorcise the enslaved girl in a triumphant move to position Jesus' superiority over that of Apollo, the source of the enslaved girl's revelation.[429] These readings seek to resolve and justify the peculiar exorcism by positioning the heavily disenfranchised girl against the text's protagonist and self-proclaimed Roman citizen (16:37-38) through the otherworldly forces at play in the scene. Mitzi Smith explains that Paul's victory over this charismatic other who possesses comparable prophetic gifts (remember Paul and Silas are in Macedonia on account of Paul's visionary dream, 16:9-10), identifies Paul as a superior, more powerful charismatic and by extension positions the gospel mission as one that is triumphant.[430] Paul's exorcism of the prophetic enslaved girl is framed as a show of his power, as one of the

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[426] Cobb, *Slavery, Gender, Truth, and Power*, 193.
[427] Cobb, *Slavery, Gender, Truth, and Power*, 174.
[428] Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 583; Richard I. Pervo*, *Acts*, 404. This logic is echoed by the Acts Seminar which again concludes that the primary objective of the narrative is a demonstration of dominance by the Christian God over competing ones; that Paul's uncharacteristic anger directed toward the slave girl is couched within this cosmic struggle and not a personal affective reaction by the protagonist. See Smith and Tyson, *Acts and Christian Beginnings*, 196-199.
[429] For more on the prophetic enslaved girl's Pythian spirit see: Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles*, 154-156; Shelly Matthews, *First Converts*, 90.
[430] Smith, *The Literary Construction of the Other*, 13.

chosen members of the Way. It is a show of cosmic fortitude, which emphasizes Paul's authority at the prophetic enslaved girl's expense. She exits the narrative with the exorcism and what happens to the character after she is exorcised is unknown. She becomes an opportunity for Paul's public display of apostolic authority.

Oddly the only person to prophesy, despite Peter's proclamation that this gift signals the work of the spirit, is not brought into the Way but instead is treated with disdain.[431] Mary-Rose D'Angelo argues that the prophetic enslaved girl points to all the dangers that might be associated with prophecy for Luke.[432] The girl is enslaved, inspired by a foreign god (Apollo), associated with strange prophetic practices (about which I say more below), and sells her talents in a public space. Indeed, Luke states that she is issuing oracles (μαντεύομαι), not prophesying (προφητεία), framing her divinatory practices through polemical rhetoric.[433] According to D'Angelo, the girl takes on the negative qualities of prophecy and places them outside of the community. By embodying the negative traits of prophecy, the prophetic enslaved girl amplifies a positive representation of members of the community. Her prophecy, in other words, is a foil to the prophetic agency of those within the Way. The prophetic enslaved girl helps Luke align his community with Roman values that held prophecy with suspicion by taking on those precise characteristics as an outsider. In fact, Shelly Matthews suggests that the prophetic enslaved girl is a narrative deflection Luke creates to embody real-world accusations levied at early Christ followers by those outside the community. According to Matthews, Luke juxtaposes the prophetic enslaved girl with Lydia's character in the preceding passages. Lydia is representative of the idealized female member of the community because of her social value as a vendor of elite

[431] IRR believes she was brought into the community afterwards.
[432] Mary-Rose D'Angelo, "Women in Luke-Acts," 441-461.
[433] According to Richard Pervo*, the verb μαντεύομαι is "always used in a negative sense in the LXX and early Christian literature," Pervo*, *Acts*, 405 n. 46. The context of this scene would support that reading, given that Paul exorcises the enslaved girl. Similarly, David Aune explains that the spirit inspiring the prophetic enslaved girl was an unclean spirit or demon. Her style of oracular utterance is characterized as undesirable in the text. David Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 268-269.

goods,[434] while the figure of the enslaved girl plays host to the negative assumptions and social dangers assumed present in the new religious movement.[435] Both readings see the prophetic enslaved girl as a purposeful foil designed to support Luke's agenda by playing host to what he was rejecting. She is a narrative resolution for Luke's problem with prophecy and an opportunity to shore up apostolic authority.

Embodied Sexual Violence and the Ideology of Ancient Slavery

In this section, I build on Matthews and D'Angelo's arguments, specifically that the narrative bolsters Paul's apostolic authority through his exorcism of the prophetic enslaved girl, and that she signifies dangerous stereotypes about prophecy from which Luke is purposefully distancing his community. I argue that the prophetic enslaved girl's narrative identity as an enslaved person facilitates Luke's goals to regulate epistemological access by locating charismatic authority in the apostles. In particular, the sexual violability of this character makes Luke's agenda in this scene possible. The following section demonstrates how the apostolic authority crafted by Luke in this scene is built on the presumed sexual violability of the prophetic enslaved girl.

Like the Ethiopian eunuch, the prophetic enslaved girl is marked not by a name, but by her social status, a designation that inferred her sexual violability. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, ancient slave culture was rape culture, and to be identified as enslaved in the second century was to be marked as sexually violable. More so, sexual violability of the prophetic enslaved girl is re-emphasized in her gender. She is called a *paidiskē* (16:16), a gendered designation meaning enslaved girl. Not only is she marked as enslaved, but, coupled with her gender, this character was doubly sexualized as an enslaved woman. The ancient Mediterranean world functioned on a moral code rooted in the establishment of shame or honour. While men

[434] Matthews, *First Converts*, 72-95.
[435] Ivani Richter Reimer in contrast, offers a reading of the text from the point of view of liberation theology. She posits that historically the figure of the prophetic slave girl could have been brought into the community after the Paul's exorcism of her prophetic spirit. See: Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles*, 180-184.

established their honour through the exertion of authority over family,[436] for women, their moral worth was weighted in their ability to embody an idealized sexual nature: chastity.[437] Female honour, and by extension female shame, was bound to exhibitions of female sexuality and enslaved persons were written out of this moral performance.[438] Without a claim to chastity, honour, or shame, an enslaved woman figured as a sexually open body, remaining a member of a highly sexualized social group beyond the moral regulations of the elite social classes. As such, they were always sexually suspect and viewed as sexually available to the freeborn population.[439]

Luke's presentation of the prophetic enslaved girl relies on and recites this understanding of her gendered enslavement. In naming her as enslaved Luke reminds the reader of the parameters of her enslaved status, however, the actions that unfold in this scene likewise establish Luke's presumption of a slaveholding culture. We are told immediately after Paul exorcises the prophetic enslaved girl that her owners became upset because their ability to make money was disrupted by Paul's actions (16:19). The prophetic enslaved girl, newly exorcised, no longer possessed the spirit that enabled her to sell fortunes in the marketplace. Her owners, angered to action, seize Paul and Silas, and bring them before the authorities. Paul and Silas end up in prison (16:19-24), and the story moves forward focused on them. This single line, "But when her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities" (16:19),[440] serves as a reminder of the prophetic enslaved girl's status first and foremost as property. After Paul exorcises her, she disappears from the story. Instead, her owners emerge enraged, seeking revenge on Paul, and by extension Silas. This single

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[436] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 27
[437] Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch, *A Woman's Place*, 97.
[438] For more on this system of honour and shame see the discussion on pudor in Glancy, "Early Christian Slavery and Women's Bodies,", 148-149.
[439] It must be mentioned that the exclusion of female slaves from this sexual category did not only work to sexualize the excluded, but it also worked to reaffirm the role of honour (or *pudor*) among the ranks of freeborn women. Denigrating the female slave through the exploitation of her sexuality ultimately declared the sexual integrity of the freeborn woman in the ancient world.
[440] ἰδόντες δὲ οἱ κύριοι αὐτῆς ὅτι ἐξῆλθεν ἡ ἐλπὶς τῆς ἐργασίας αὐτῶν, ἐπιλαβόμενοι τὸν Παῦλον καὶ τὸν Σιλᾶν εἵλκυσαω εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄρχοντος.

line repositions the prophetic enslaved girl firmly within the social fabric of slavery. Despite the prophetic agency she demonstrated a few lines earlier when announcing Paul and Silas to those in the market, she becomes a damaged object for which her owners demanded recompense according to Luke. Her owners' reasoned objection to their loss of income illustrates the entire logic of ancient slavery as the naturalized subjugation of persons in this scene. This is evidenced not only in how the prophetic enslaved girl is identified, as a *paidiskē,* but through her owner's actions that frame her monetary value.

Here Luke objectifies the prophetic enslaved girl by highlighting her owners' demand for social compensation and legal intervention against Paul and Silas; therefore, I maintain that the cultural understanding of slavery is essential to how Luke employs her character. I read this scene specifically in the context of how enslaved people were sexualized. Slavery was a social framework collaboratively informed by the application of human bodies for the social benefit of others. Connecting the objectification of enslaved persons with the sexualization of enslaved persons is reading two sides of the same coin; both are informed and sustained by the same social system of meaning. In this sense, knowing the prophetic enslaved girl as an object is to know her as a sexualized character in the text.

The term for enslaved that Luke uses to designate this character likewise has a history of sexualization. Luke identifies the prophetic enslaved girl as a *paidiskē,* a young, enslaved female. The term stands in contrast to the other term used for an enslaved person by Luke in this scene, *doulos* (δοῦλος*)*. Luke uses *doulos* to describe Paul and Silas' relationship with God through the prophetic enslaved girl's proclamation (16:17), and it is also used by Luke in the Annunciation, when Mary responds to the angel's announcement of her pregnancy describing her servitude to God, ("Here am I, the servant (*doulos)* of the Lord," *Lk* 1:38).[441] It is a term echoing Paul's own letters when he refers to himself as the *doúlos* of Jesus Christ in his letter to the *Romans* (1:1).

[441] Ἰδοὺ ἡ δούλη κυρίου·.

Early Christ followers frequently employed the metaphor of slavery to characterize their relationship to God, a point previously demonstrated chapter two with Thecla's rejection of Alexander's sexual advances (*ATh* 4.1).[442] Unlike *doulos*, however, *paidiskē* is a term for enslaved that carries sexual overtones with it likewise meaning prostitute.[443] The term appears four times in Luke's writings. It appears to refer to female slaves in the parable of the overseer (*Lk*. 16: 1-13), and in Peter's denial (Lk. 22:54-62) it refers to an enslaved female servant in the high priest's house. The two narratives I take up in this chapter, that of Rhoda (12:12-18) and the prophetic enslaved girl, are the third and fourth usages of the term in Luke's work.[444] Luke gestures to the sexualizing link of the term with the proximity of the prophetic enslaved girl's public transactions to those of ancient sex workers, as one selling her talents in a public space.[445] While the prophetic enslaved girl never engages in sexual activity, her characterization as an enslaved girl engaging in public commerce through embodied talents implicate her as sexually available. This is the same logic seen in *ATh* when Alexander assumes that Thecla is sexually available for him because of her presence in a public space. The public display of the prophetic enslaved girl's talents aligns her with other *infames*, or persons whose profession attributed to their lack of reputation, and by extension lack of modesty or honour. She is a sexualized character in this scene through the systemic sexualization of enslaved persons within a slaveholding society.

While the scene does not contain acts of explicit sexual violation, I argue that Paul's actions in this scene reflect the same cultural mores that naturalized sexual violence against enslaved persons. Kathy Williams' argument about this pericope is helpful to discern the cultural workings of these power dynamics. She demonstrates how the scene's rationale reflects ancient understandings of rape and sexual violence. Williams compares this scene with the trope of

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[442] Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 17-34.
[443] Matthews, *First Converts*, 89.
[444] The term *paidiskē* is used in each gospel retelling of Peter's denial (*Mark* 14:66-72, *Matt* 26:69-75, *John* 18:15-27), and it is also used by Paul in *Galatians* referring to Hagar (4:21-31).
[445] Matthews, *First Converts*, 89.

comedic rape frequently used in New Comedy.[446] Reading the scene for possible connections to ancient forms of comedy, Williams does not look for sexual violence; rather, she sees this exchange between Paul and the prophetic enslaved girl as mirroring established dramatic devices in New Comedy.[447] Williams explains that in a comedic rape scene a virgin, who goes unnamed, is raped, setting the story in motion. The rapist, who "the audience is encouraged to think of … in a positive light,"[448] denies his culpability in the rape. Williams argues that this narrative pattern neatly maps onto the narrative of Paul and the prophetic enslaved girl in *Acts* 16. The scene follows,

> One day as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a female slave who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling. While she followed Paul and us, she would cry out 'These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.' She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, 'I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And it came out that very hour.[449]

Where the similarities stop for Williams is in the resolution. Those familiar with the comedic trope would expect the rapist to take the violated virgin as his wife, conveying a "happily ever after" motif and a natural solution to the conflict. In *Acts*, however, Paul does not take any responsibility for the exorcized enslaved girl; he ends up beaten and imprisoned on account of her owners and goes on to convert the jailer set to guard him (16:19-34). Paul remains unmarried, while the prophetic enslaved girl disappears from the story. Williams demonstrates that although there is not explicit rape in the story, a narrative in which rape might be anticipated forms part of Luke's

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[446] Kathy Williams, "At the Expense of Women: Humour (?) in Acts 16:14-40," Pages 79-89 in *Are we Amused? Humour about Women in the Biblical Worlds*, ed. Athalya Brenner (London: T&T Clark, 2003).
[447] Others have used comedic devices to analyze the texts of early Christ followers. J. Albert Harrill, for example, has read the texts of early Christ followers for a theme of Roman slave comedy. He reads Luke's parable of the dishonest manager (*Luke* 16:1-8) and the story of the enslaved girl Rhoda (*Acts* 12:12-18) as examples of Roman slave comedy within the New Testament and argues that both build from known comedic tropes. Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 59-84.
[448] Williams, "At the Expense of Women," 86.
[449] ἐγένετο δὲ πορευμένων ἡμῶν εἰς τὴν προσευχὴν παιδίσκην τινὰ ἔχουσαν πνεῦμα πύθωνα ὑπαντῆσαι ἡμῖν, ἥτις ἐργασίαν πολλὴν παρεῖχεν τοῖς κυρίοις αὐτῆς μαντευομένη. αὕτη κατακολουθοῦσα τῷ Παύλῳ καὶ ἡμῖν λέγουσα, Οὗτοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου εἰσίν, οἵτινες καταγγέλλουσιν ὑμῖν ὁδὸν σωτηρίας. Τοῦτο δὲ ἐποίει ἐπὶ πολλὰς ἡμέρας. διαπονηθεὶς δὲ Παῦλος καὶ ἐπιστρέψας τῷ πνεύματι εἶπεν, Παραγγέλλω σοι ἐν ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐξελθεῖν ἀπ᾽ αὐτῆς· καὶ ἐξῆλθεν αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ.

rhetorical devices here. Her observations support my conclusion that the power dynamic between Paul and the prophetic enslaved girl implies her sexual violability.

Alongside her identity marker as a *paidiskē* that doubly sexualizes the prophetic enslaved girl, the narrative plays out in a way that mirrors established tropes about sexual violence. This scene is shrouded in assumptions about the prophetic enslaved girl's sexual violability which amplify the allowability of her subjugation as an exorcizable subject by a stranger, Paul. While Luke does not state that Paul rapes the prophetic enslaved girl, rather he exorcises her, modern studies about rape and sexual violence have clearly demonstrated that rape is not an isolated act, but an allowable action couched in a system of power and privilege.[450] These same scholars have also attested that while systems of sexual violence are highly gendered, class, ethnicity, and race complicate this naturalized violence. While sexual violence can present anywhere, socialized categories like class and race compound the allowability of, and even justify, these sexually violent actions. The prophetic enslaved girl is located at these cultural cross sections: she is young, female, and enslaved, and she is reprimanded by a man above her station (Paul claims his Roman citizenship in this chapter which carries a wealth of privileges in the ancient world, 16:37-38). Taken together, the invasion of the enslaved girl's body is normalized on account of her vulnerability.[451] Paul's exorcism of the prophetic enslaved girl is informed by her sexual violability. His position over her as a superior charismatic power is presumed by Luke through a logic systemized sexual violence over enslaved persons. The power dynamics that unfold in this scene ultimately bolster Paul's apostolic authority, underscoring the naturalization of her sexual violability.

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[450] For a discussion of sexual violence and rape culture within the discipline of Religious Studies, see: Graybill, Minister, and Lawrence, *Rape Culture and Religious Studies*. The introduction to this reader is an invaluable resource that locates the work of sexual violence in the discipline of Religious Studies within the lived experience of campus life, and the reality of sexual violence in that space. It also contains a detailed history of the #MeTooMVMT, an indisputable turning point in the modern discussion of sexual violence and power.

[451] In *Luke* 8.2, Jesus exorcizes Mary Magdalene of seven demons, an action that frames Mary Magdalene negatively. This comparison likewise places Paul in comparision with Jesus again in this scene.

This is not the first time we have seen the figure of Paul distance himself from a young, outspoken female. As I have discussed in chapter two, Paul denies knowing Thecla in *ATh* and abandons her in the clutches of a wanton male. In *ATh* 4.1, after Alexander plies Paul with money and goods for Thecla, Paul responds: "I don't know the woman of whom you speak, nor is she mine."[452] Despite having travelled together from Iconium, Paul denies knowing Thecla when asked by Alexander in Antioch. This is the last time the reader sees Paul until after Thecla's trials when the two reconnect in Myra (*ATh* 4.15). It is an interaction that, according to Ross Kraemer, "does not reflect well on Paul."[453] Melissa Aubin points out that Paul denies his acquaintance with Thecla even though he has just prayed on her behalf in the preceding scene (*ATh* 3.23).[454] She continues stating that "Paul fails to answer Thecla's cries and vanishes from the scene."[455] Despite Jeremy Barrier's attestation that "this scene has been grossly misinterpreted… as the abandonment of Thecla by Paul,"[456] and instead continues the motif from the ancient novel where the lovers lie in order to protect themselves, Paul's reaction to Alexander's inquiry into his relationship with Thecla is peculiar. Paul chooses to abandon the confrontation, and in doing so leaves Thecla to fend for herself. There is no demonstration of mutual responsibility for his travelling companion.

In the author's depiction of Paul's quick escape in *ATh* 4.1, there is a familiarity of Luke's Paul in *Acts* 16 when he exorcises the prophetic enslaved girl. There are notions of abandonment and disassociation by Paul from these women who can identify him as one of God's chosen. In both *ATh* 4.1 and here in *Acts* 16:16-18, Paul is characterized by his discomfort with the public association with an outspoken young woman. The Paul of *Acts*, and the Paul of *ATh*, does not want to be linked with the prophetic enslaved girl, or with Thecla. In fact, Paul dismisses the association

[452] *ATh* 4.1, Οὐκ οἶδα τὴν γυναῖκα ἣν λέγεις, οὐδὲ ἔστιν ἐμή.
[453] Kraemer, *Unreliable Witnesses*, 141.
[454] Aubin, "Reversing Romance?", 267.
[455] Aubin, "Reversing Romance?", 267.
[456] Barrier, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, 140.

in both texts by disparaging his female counterpart. In *ATh* he denies knowing Thecla when he assuredly does know her, and in *Acts* 16:18 he exorcises the enslaved girl, crippling her usefulness to her owners, for announcing he and Silas through words he used to introduce himself in other sources.[457] The sentiments expressed by these two characterizations of Paul are the same.

Regardless of the shared impulse of both Pauls to distance themselves from these women, in *Acts* 16, Paul's exorcism of the prophetic enslaved girl reaffirms his apostolic authority through the demonstration of his superior charismatic powers. For Luke, Paul's exorcism of the prophetic enslaved girl places epistemic authority squarely back in the role of the apostle and this is achieved through the social implications of her identity as a *paidiskē*. Luke presents this character with prophetic abilities only to re-center that power in the apostle on scene. The enslaved girl's powers are tools for Luke to reaffirm the importance of apostolic authority. Understanding how ancient prophecy likewise carried sexual connotations in the following section reaffirms this reading of Paul's exorcism of the prophetic enslaved girl.

Sexualization of Prophecy

The prophetic enslaved girl is the only female or enslaved character to prophesy in *Acts* and she is silenced. In a text noted for its extraordinary inclusion of direct speech and whose author employs prophecy to establish epistemological access through a group of chosen apostles, her silencing is significant. Eliminating someone's prophetic abilities, in this text, eliminates their claim to truth and knowledge. As I previously argued, the cultural logic of a slaveholding culture allows Paul's exorcism of the prophetic enslaved girl for Luke. This section demonstrates how conceptions of prophecy as a sexualizing act likewise informed Luke's representation of the prophetic enslaved girl, and similarly informs her subsequent silencing. The stifling of her

[457] As discussed above in this chapter, early Christ followers adopted the term slave (δοῦλος) to describe their relationship with God. Paul himself uses the phrase at the opening of his letter to the Romans: "Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ."[457]
Rom 1:1, Παῦλος δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.

charismatic voice differentiates her prophecy from the kind of inspired speech given by the apostles, and at this point in the narrative, Paul.

Ancient prophecy had a potentially erotic connotation, as it was conceptualized as penetrative. This association of penetration and prophecy is vital for my analysis of Eve in *HypArch* explored earlier in this project. Ancient authors borrowed language from medical literature to speak about the prophetic experience as penetrative invasion in terms of how material forces on the prophetic body, such as fumes and divine breath, were understood. As medical writers and philosophers explained ailments through the framework of penetration and physical transgression, they likewise understood prophecy through this framework. The construction of female flesh held that it was naturally more permeable to these forces, leaving women more susceptible to supernatural imposition. The receptive quality of women's sexual anatomy meant that they were primed for divine intrusion,[458] a logic anchored in the naturalization of phallocentric constructions of sex conceived as actions between a penetrator and penetrated. This logic served to constitute "maleness" and "femaleness" as such, and likewise to gender prophetic acts. While both men and women are recorded as ancient prophets, the conception of the female body left it more vulnerable to divine intrusion. Therefore, prophecy was commonly defined by the social logic of sex occurring between a masculine penetrator and a feminized penetrated.

Luke's silencing of the prophetic enslaved girl demonstrates the care taken to police prophecy within this text as his goal of domesticating prophecy aims to avoid the social pitfalls of the phenomenon while continuing to include it within his community. [459] The exorcism of the prophetic enslaved girl insulates prophecy as practiced within the Way from the conception of it as an inherently sexualizing act. By situating the one prophetic act by a woman or enslaved person

[458] For more on how women's bodies were primed to host spirits and daemons see Padel, "Women: Model for Possession by Greek Daemons," 3-19. Padel demonstrates how the understanding that women's bodies were more open than men's led to an understanding that women were more likely to be possessed by spirits in Greek literature.
[459] D'Angelo, "Women in Luke-Acts,"457.

within a single voice, Luke controls the democratizing pronouncement about prophecy in *Acts* 2 by locating it in the voice of a silenced outsider. Other early Christian authors were likewise aware of the sexualizing implications of prophecy and worked to guard against them in their prescriptions, especially to women. For example, Paul's prescription for women's veiling while prophesying in *1 Cor* 11:2-16 was a regulatory method to ensure and authenticate Corinthian prophecy according to Dale Martin in his monograph, *The Corinthian Body*.[460] Mary-Rose D'Angelo identifies this logic in third century author Tertullian of Carthage's treatise "On the Veiling of Virgins".[461]

Guarding women against sexualizing behaviours was likewise a method employed in the ancient world beyond early Christian circles to shield a prophet from unwanted, malevolent forces. Limiting the sexual body of the seer limited the potential for an intrusion by a deceptive or unwanted spirit. Women who held other ancient prophetic offices beyond early Christ following communities were often celibate or widowed when recruited into their prophetic roles. The Pythia, who I will return to shortly, was an elderly widowed woman. The Vestal Virgins, while not strictly prophets, were divine stewards, tending the sacred flame and their chastity was integral to the success of their sacred duties.[462] These roles were filled with sexually chaste women based on the logic that their abstinence secured the integrity of their sacred work.[463] The absence of their sexual activity mitigated prophetic dangers and authenticated their otherworldly interaction.

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[460] Martin's analysis here is concerned with Paul's proscription about women's veiling in *1 Corinthians* 11:2-16. Martin's discussion about the sexualizing nature of prophecy in ancient physiological terms demonstrates that how women's susceptibility to invading forces was rooted in their physiology and was more than ancient analogy. He argues that this physiological understanding is undergirding Paul's alarm about women prophesying in Corinth. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*.

[461] Mary-Rose D'Angelo, "Veils, Virgins, and the Tongues of Men and Angels: Women's Heads in Early Christianity," in *Off with her Head! The Denial of Women's Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture*, ed. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz and Wendy Doniger (Berkley: University of California Press, 1995), 131-152.

[462] Vestal Virgins who were discovered to have broken their vow of chastity were executed by being buried in an underground chamber with a limited number of supplies. Their death was inevitable in this state.

[463] Much work has noted this association between female chastity and women's roles within devotional communities in the ancient world. Guilia Sissa's work *Greek Virginity*, for example, elaborates on this logic in the Greek world, in particular the case of the Pythia at Delphi. She explores questions about how women's virginal intactness was conceptualized in the ancient world, arguing that virginity was not a physical intactness, like that of a hymen, to be disrupted once and forever unmendable, but rather that Greek virginity worked through concepts of openness and closedness. This understanding of virginity

Where the archons' rape of Eve in *HypArch* demonstrates how this logic could be used to qualify and question the integrity of a woman's claim to prophecy, the association between a woman's divine stewardship as tied to her chastity is present in *HypArch's* narrative of Norea. Explored alongside Thecla in chapter two, the preservation of Norea's virginity, like Thecla's, is integral to her being heralded as a divinely chosen figure. The prophetic enslaved girl, however, does not have access to this concept of chastity as her enslaved status coded her as a sexually violable person. Therefore, she presented a problem for Luke as she embodied both prophetic abilities and sexual violability. Co-existing in her characterization are notions of sexual violation and charismatic talents. Exorcising her neutralized this co-existance for Luke, by ridding her of a spirit that facilitated her prophetic abilities in the first place.

According to the work of N. Clayton Croy and Alice E. Connor, Luke demonstrates that he is aware that prophecy has erotic connotations and takes care to distance the women in his narrative from prophetic actions that would leave them susceptible to unwanted invading forces.[464] In their analysis of the Annunciation scene in the *Gospel of Luke* (*Luke* 1:26-56), a text written by the same author who composed *Acts*, Croy and Connor argue that Luke refuses to name Mary explicitly as a prophet, but nevertheless depicts her as one. Luke aims, they argue, to avoid the erotic overtones implied in a prophet's relationship with the divine. In avoiding the association, Luke works to shore up the virgin birth by sidestepping any sexual implication that might suggest that the Holy Spirit penetrated Mary in their prophetic communication.[465] Had

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informed the sacred roles women adopted. Sissa, *Greek Virginity*. In her work, Sissa gestures to this relationship between the sacred and female chastity in later Christian works, as it was a preoccupation of late antique Church Fathers. The association between women's chastity and its role in the development of Christian thought has been richly developed by scholars of late antique Christianity. Such work includes: Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride*; Susanna Elm, *Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); and Burrus, "Word and Flesh."

[464] Croy and Connor, "Mantic Mary."

[465] Michael Pope argues that Luke uses language and imagery to suggest a seminal conception of Jesus in these same passages (*Luke* 1:27-56). According to Pope, "Luke casts Jesus's conception in a way that can address the 'Hows?' of the narrative by directly considering uteruses and obliquely introducing the reciprocally expected sperm but stopping short of claiming actual sexual congress" (14). He does this by tracing spermatic allusions through biblical intertextuality in the scene, such as Joseph's claim to the Davidic line, and the relationship between the πνεῦμα-δύναμις-σπέπμα (spirit- power, might- seed) in

Luke named Mary as a prophet there might have been sexual implications in her relationship with the Holy Spirit, a logic that might complicate her claim to virginity. Such a claim could destabilize Luke's attestation of the virgin birth of Jesus.

This same apprehension, to locate prophecy in a person who might emphasize the sexualized nature of the phenomenon, is likewise seen in the women that Luke names as prophets in both of his works: Anna (*Luke* 2:36-38) and Philip's daughters (*Acts* 21:8-9). In both cases, Luke distances these women from sexual activity by emphasizing their chastity. At the beginning of the gospel, Anna prophesies about Jesus as a child. She is characterized as an especially devout woman from the tribe of Asher who never leaves the temple and is in a perpetual state of prayer and fasting. We learn quite a bit about her marital status for how briefly she is present in the text. At 84-years-old, Anna has been living as a widow since her seventh year of marriage. The implication here is that she has been living a chaste life not only for many, many years as an 84-year-old, but for all but seven years of her life. This named female prophet speaks about the child Jesus while Luke eradicates any notion of an active sexuality in her character. In *Acts*, Philip's daughters are likewise identified as chaste prophets. They are named as virgins alongside their prophetic title (παρθένοι προφητεύουσαι), thus linking their chaste sexual status with their prophetic gifts.[466] However, Philip's daughters do not speak. So important is their silence to Luke, as we have seen, that when God needs to relay a message to Paul about his death in Rome (undoubtedly a vital part of the narrative!), he sends the wandering male prophet Agabus to meet Paul. In this way, Philip's prophetic virgin daughters remain distant from the erotic overtones that might be read into prophetic acts. According to Mitzi Smith, the extra biblical sources that attest to traditions about Philip's daughters beyond *Acts* focus on the women's virginity and downplay

ancient embryological theories, language used by Luke in the narrative. Pope, "Luke's Seminal Annunciation," 791-807.

[466] I am using the word *girl* here over young women or women, as the female figures are designated by their unmarried, chaste state which also has age and maturity implications. Similarly, they are designated as the daughters (θυγατὲρες) of Philip, another modifier that positions them at a younger, subordinate age. As such, the term girl reflects this diminution of person and status.

any charismatic gifts they might have possessed, recording not a single prophetic utterance from the four.[467] As their tradition develops, the virginity of Philip's four daughters becomes central to their identities over their prophetic abilities. These women are remembered as integral figures in the early Christ follow community not because they were prophets, but because they were virgins. Where Mary speaks but is never titled as a prophet, Philip's daughters are named prophets, but never utter a prophecy.[468] Luke avoids the inherent sexualization of prophecy in his narrative by selectively supplying the title, prophet, to those within his community. When the title is supplied, he takes care to police the character to manage the sexualized image that prophecy might imply. Mary, Anna, and Philip's daughters are purposefully distanced from the possible sexualization of prophecy by Luke.

Unlike Mary, Anna, and Philip's daughters, however, the prophetic enslaved girl is an outsider, and her prophetic abilities derive from another otherworldly source besides the spirit.[469] The text explains that the prophetic enslaved girl has a spirit of divination (πνεῦμα πύθωνα) which allows her to tell fortunes (μαντεύεσθαι). She is not identified as a prophet (προφήτης), but is evidently clairvoyant. While the term *pythōn* (πύθωνα) that demarcates her spirit of inspiration could refer to the snake at Delphi guarding the oracle,[470] as well as reference a snake generally, when paired with *pneuma (*πνεῦμα), as it is in this scene, the two together are translated as "spirit of divination".[471] When Acts was composed, the term indicated an oracle in contemporaneous

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[467] Smith, *The Literary Construction of the Other*, 149-150.
[468] Michal Beth Dinkler posits reading narrative silences in Luke's work, both the gospel and *Acts*, as mutually constitutive narrative elements. In doing so, she demonstrates how narrative silences have rhetorical effects which can help further understand Luke's goals. While she does not take up the silence of Philip's daughters in her article on *Acts* directly, their silence does exemplify her thesis. For more see: Dinkler, "The Narrative Rhetoric of Speech and Silence in the Acts of the Apostles."
[469] Turid Seim reads this spirit being counter to the Holy Spirit in *Acts* because of the monetary association of its possession, and that economic benefit is a sign of false prophecy. She explains, "The incompatibility between material gain and the work of the Holy Spirit is repeatedly a criterion in Luke-Acts for the discernment between what is false and what is true prophecy… The Spirit serves not one's own interests, but those of the community. This means that only a false spirit is a source of pecuniary profit." Seim, *Double Message*, 174.
[470] Ovid M*etamorphosis*, 1:438-447
[471] LSJ s.v. python

works and given the actions of the prophetic enslaved girl in the scene (she is selling fortunes) the term is used by Luke to characterize her charismatic talents.[472] As for the type of oracle, *pythōn* could specifically refer to the Pythia, Apollo's prophet at Delphi, or other diviners such as ventriloquists sometimes known as "belly-talkers". In both instances however, the oracular experiences of the Pythia and ventriloquists are subject to sexualizing descriptions of their inspiration, lobbing another layer of sexualization onto the prophetic enslaved girl's character in this scene.

Ventriloquists were referred to as "belly-talkers" based on the understanding that they were impregnated by the god at the root of their prophetic ability. This divine impregnation invokes the same logic of penetration discussed above that affiliated prophetic acts with sexual ones. In his *On the Obsolescence of Oracles*, Plutarch dismisses this claim outright, calling it a "foolish and childish" belief on the workings of divine inspiration.[473] His strong response suggests a distancing between oracular inspiration and the sexual implication of divine penetration, however, as Richard Pervo* points out, the belief that an oracle was impregnated by a god must have been commonly accepted to warrant such a rebuttal from Plutarch in the first place.[474] Despite Plutarch's rebuke, his statement provides evidence that the divine penetration of a prophet was a commonly held belief at the turn of the second century.

Affiliation of the prophetic enslaved girl with the Pythia, Apollo's Delphic oracle, in the scene is a popular, albeit not uncontested, reading of the charismatic character.[475] The Pythia was one of three female seers chosen from the widows in a nearby village to serve Apollo in his temple at Delphi.[476] The temple was a site of pilgrimage, with those travelling long distances to ask the Pythia a question, questions which were mediated and translated by a group of priests. While it had fallen out of favour by the second century CE, for centuries it had been the most popular form

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[472] Cobb, *Slavery, Gender, Truth, and Power,* 174.
[473] *Moralia* 414E
[474] Pervo*, *Acts* 405, footnote 41.
[475] See: Matthews, *First Converts*, 90; Cobb, *Slavery, Gender, Truth, and Power*, 174-180.
[476] Sissa, *Greek Virginity*, 35-36

of cult worship and sacred authority in the ancient world.[477] Ivani Richter Reimer argues that the language, in particular, πνεῦμα πύθωνα (Pythian spirit) and μαντεύεσθαι (fortune-telling), used to describe the enslaved girl in this passage aligns her with this tradition of Apollo's female prophets.[478] She argues that the prophetic enslaved girl was a roaming Pythia, prophesying outside of a fixed location.[479] Reading the exorcism of the prophetic enslaved girl as a *tête-à-tête* between Apollo and Jesus as we have seen above by Fitzmyer and Pervo, adopts this understanding of the prophetic enslaved girl as a prophet affiliated with the Greek and Roman deity. Cobb likewise reads this description of the prophetic enslaved girl as one situating her within the Pythian tradition of prophets. She offers evidence in material culture in the form of a coin with the image of a Delphic oracle and a tripod to support her claim that Luke's readers would have read the word *pythōn* in relation to the tradition of Delphic oracles. The common placement of coins in antiquity, and importance given to the images they carried, lends to the understanding that the office of the Pythia was also commonly recognized. "That the image of Sibyl, a Delphic oracle, was found on a coin," Cobb explains, "only furthers the popularity of her image and solidifies the idea that reader of Acts would have been knowledgeable about the stories of the Delphic oracle."[480]

Like the "belly-talkers," the Pythia's charismatic possession also draws comparisons to sexual acts with her inspiring god. Ancient Christian authors describe the relationship between the Pythia and Apollo through the same logic that treated prophecy as a physically invading force with erotic overtones. Origen of Alexandria, for example, describes how the god Apollo entered his Delphic oracle in this way: "It is said of the Pythian priestess whose oracle seems to have been the most celebrated, that when she sat down at the mouth of the Castilian cave, the prophetic Spirit of Apollo entered her private parts; and when she was filled with it, she gave utterance to

[477] Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 24-28.
[478] Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles*, 154-156.
[479] Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles*,156.
[480] Cobb, *Slavery, Gender, Truth and Power*, 181.

the responses which are regarded with awe as divine truths" (Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 7.3). What Origen depicts in his interpretation of this oracular relationship is an allusion to the vaginal invasion of the Pythia by Apollo via fumes as the causal function of prophetic inspiration. It is only when Apollo has significantly filled his prophet that she offers inspired utterance. The logic maps neatly onto penetrative intercourse, with her utterance, in Origen's depiction, alluding to a cry of pleasure. This representation of the Pythia is part of an early Christian polemic, aimed to discredit the gods by affiliating prophecy with erotic penetration. The associations made here by Origen were already well established in the second century before his writing, and the tradition of the Pythia was held to this sexualizing logic.

Though the prophetic enslaved girl has a spirit of divination (πνεῦμα πύθωνα) in her; she is not named as a prophet (προφήτης) like Anna or Philip's daughters, and, unlike the named female prophets, the prophetic enslaved girl's chastity is not emphasized through her widowhood or virginity. Instead, her enslaved status marks her character as one that is sexually violable. Similarly, the term *pythōn* used to identify her inspiring spirit has multiple associations that imply an erotic relationship between the divine and the seer – she is doubly sexualized. Like Luke's unwillingness to name Mary as a prophet and his silencing of Philip's prophetic daughters, the prophetic enslaved girl is another instance where his anxiety concerning the sexualization of prophecy surfaces. The prophetic enslaved girl is named for her otherworldly gifts; she speaks truths that point to Paul and Silas' divine commission, and Paul silences her, and, therefore, her prophecy. Paul exorcises her inspiring spirit, eradicating her insight to truth about he and Silas. The sexual violability of her character authorizes, even necessitates, Paul's silencing of her charismatic speech. In doing so, Paul emerges as divinely chosen apostles, exorcising spirits reminiscent of Jesus in Luke's gospel. His exceptionalism builds from her silencing, a silencing permissible because of her eroticized and sexually violable character.

In centering the narrative of the prophetic enslaved girl, I have shown why Luke disparages this character. I have purposefully done so to identify mechanisms of sexual violence

that sustain Luke's narrative logic. This includes his vision of prophecy as an integral part of the Way that signified authority as an epistemological instrument. Luke's presentation of Paul's authority in this scene is built on the prophetic enslaved girl's enslavement. He constructs the scene to emphasize Paul's journey as God's chosen, and the prophetic enslaved girl is a narrative object to help achieve that goal. In her characterization as possessed, Luke's uneasiness toward the subject of prophecy surfaces. Despite the democratization of prophecy for enslaved women (among others) in *Acts* 2, Luke refrains from using the language of prophecy for this prophetic figure. The presumed relationship between the enslaved girl and sexual violability excludes the prophetic enslaved girl from Luke's vision of prophecy. Instead, sexual violence becomes the foundation for Luke's dismissal of her charismatic speech while regulating his vision of authority. Sexual violence, and presumed sexual violability, validate Luke's policing of her prophetic voice and its access to truth about the apostles.

The following section takes up the narrative of Rhoda, another *paidiskē* in *Acts*. Like the prophetic enslaved girl, Rhoda's actions in the text are caught up in the naturalized sexual subjugation of her enslavement. This sexualization is likewise tied to prophetic utterances that are subsequently silenced. Considering Rhoda's announcement of Peter alongside the narrative of the prophetic enslaved girl, I identify a rhetoric of madness informing Luke's presentation of both *paidiskē* in *Acts*. This rhetoric of madness is a method of epistemological regulation that emerges from a relationality between prophecy and sexual violence. It too qualifies whose speech has truly accessed divine knowledge, and should therefore be heeded. Providing my reading of the prophetic enslaved girl first supplies a necessary foundation for my reading of Rhoda, and therefore, I have considered *Acts* 16 before I turn to this earlier passage in *Acts* 12.

RHODA: *ACTS* 12:12-17

Before we meet the prophetic enslaved girl in *Acts* 16, the reader encounters another *paidiskē* interacting with a different apostle, Peter, who is also silenced despite speaking truthful statements. My reading of the prophetic enslaved girl emphasizes Rhoda's pronouncement of

Peter and allows my reading of both *paidiskē* considering their relationship to prophecy and their cultural history of sexual subjugation as enslaved women. In putting the two scenes together, I identify how Luke relies on a rhetoric of madness at play in both narratives. It is a rhetoric concerned with policing access to truth, couched in an understanding of these *paidiskē* as sexualized figures. Their exuberance in each scene nods toward a frenzied state that leads to the dismissal of the two enslaved girls' truthful statements. Luke presents both as engaging in a kind of frenzied speech. Rhoda is said to be out of her mind (μαίνῃ), while the prophetic enslaved girl cries out, screams, and shouts (κράζω) her revelation while following Paul and Silas for many days (16:18).[481] The information both girls articulate is truthful, but Luke does not present them positively because the prophetic enslaved girl is marked by her status and her possessed state, and Rhoda appears foolish. I juxtapose Rhoda's pericope with the narrative of the Greek prophet Cassandra to show how Luke relies on a rhetoric of madness. As it surfaces in Luke's narrative, this rhetoric of madness delimits access to truth, and establishes epistemological boundaries through cultural notions of sexual violence.

Rhoda is an enslaved girl in the house of Mary who is the mother of John called Mark (12:12). In *Acts* 12, we are told that several community members have gathered in Mary's house to pray for Peter who they believe has been put to death. Unbeknownst to them, Peter has had a miraculous prison escape with the help of an angel (12:6-11) and is on Mary's doorstep. Rhoda, tending the door, recognizes Peter's voice and enthusiastically runs to the praying group (12:12-14). In her enthusiasm, Rhoda forgets to let Peter into the home. The praying group dismisses her claims suggesting instead that it was Peter's angel Rhoda had identified at the door (12:15). When the group goes to the door, however, they realize that Rhoda is correct, and Peter was there all along. This narrative appears near the end of a major transition into Paul's narrative. In *Acts* 12, Paul has already been converted (9:3-19), but has yet to take center stage as Luke's apostolic

[481] τοῦτο δὲ ἐποίει ἐπὶ πολλὰς ἡμέρας.

protagonist (13:1-28:31). The scene is set in a context of violence in Jerusalem, as Herod has executed James and imprisoned Peter. There is a lot at stake for Luke in these transitioning passages: there is the threat of imminent violence targeting the text's heroes; and for Luke as the narrator, he is articulating a vital theological juncture where a non-member of Jesus' inner circle emerges as an apostle. It is in this set of narrative circumstances that the reader meets Rhoda at Mary's door.

The passage reads:

> As soon as [Peter] realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many had gathered and were praying. When he knocked at the outer gate, a maid named Rhoda came to answer. On recognizing Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the gate, she ran in and announced that Peter was standing at the gate. They said to her, "You are out of your mind!" But she insisted that it was so. They said, "It is his angel." Meanwhile Peter continued knocking, and when they open the gate they saw him and were amazed (12:12-16).[482]

In a narrative with such heightened stakes there is this peculiar story of an absent-minded enslaved girl, steadfastly committed to her observations about Peter's presence despite the dismissal of her owners. Ultimately Peter never enters Mary's house. He leaves a message to be passed along to other missionaries and continues his journey (12:17). By the end of the chapter, Herod is dead (12:22) and the growth of the Way has been assured in Jerusalem (12:24).

The scene has an air of humour about it. Peter, having just escaped prison, is left standing in the street, exposed, waiting for refuge outside a friend's home. The friends and spiritual companions inside are too preoccupied with praying for him to rescue him from the street. After escaping his detainment by enemies, Peter's last threshold to safety is unwittingly blocked by allies. Rhoda's reaction to hearing Peter's voice is likewise ridiculous. Instead of opening the door to let Peter into the home, Rhoda runs to those praying and exclaims Peter's presence at the door.

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[482] Συνιδών τε ἦλθεω ἐπὶ τὴν οἰκίαν τῆς Μαρλιας τῆς μητρὸς Ιωάννου τοῦ ἐπικαλουμένου Μάρκου, οὗ ἦσαν ἱκανοὶ συνηθροισμένοι καὶ προσευχόμενοι. Κρούσαωτος δὲ αὐτοῦ τὴν θύραν τοῦ πυλῶνος προςῆλθεν παιδίσκη ὑπακοῦσαι ὀνόματι Ῥόδη, καὶ ἐπιγνοῦσα τὴν φωνὴν τοῦ Πέτρου ἀπὸ τῆς χαρᾶς οὐκ ἤνοιξεν τὸν πυλῶνα, εἰσδραμοῦσα δὲ ἀπήγγειλεν ἑστάναι τὸν Πέτρον πρὸ τοῦ πυλῶνος. Οἱ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὴν εἶπαν, Μαίνῃ. ἡ δὲ διϊσχυρίζετο οὕτως ἔχειν. Οἱ δὲ ἔλεγον , Ὁ ἄγγελός ἐστιν αὐτοῦ. ὁ δὲ Πέτροςἐπέμενεν κρούων· ἀνοίξαντες δὲ εἶδαν αὐτὸν καὶ ἐξέστησαν.

She is too excited by his voice to actually let him in and is dismissed by those praying as flighty and out of her mind (μαίνῃ). The scene showcases how tropes from New Comedy punctuate *Acts*. J. Albert Harrill, for example, argues that Rhoda is a *servus currens*, or the "running slave" stock character in this scene.[483] Reading Rhoda's announcement of Peter exclusively through New Comedy, however, limits the interpretation of the scene. For example, the power dynamics that fashion this comedic moment at the expense of Rhoda, such as ancient slavery, go unquestioned. Instead of reading Rhoda as a laughingstock and overshadowing the substance of her announcement with a dismissal via humour, I focus on Rhoda's announcement of Peter as a prophetic announcement as she exclaims the arrival of a divinely chosen figure. Rhoda is not simply stumbling over her feet, forgetting to let a guest in, embodying an archetype of the foolish enslaved character. She is heralding Peter's arrival without having seen the apostle. Rhoda, writes Ronald Charles "is able to perceive or recognize" Peter's voice "and announced to the crowd that

[483] As previous alluded to through the work of Kathy Williams above, scholars have established that Luke repeatedly draws from New Comedy throughout his work. In this scene, James Albert Harrill argues that Rhoda is a model example of a *servus currens*, or the stock character of a "running slave" that was routinely employed in New Comedy. A "running slave" figure, is a slave who has a vital message to relay to an important character, likely their master. In being the first to reveal the news, the enslaved persons hope for rewards such as more food, or favourable treatment. Their emotional response to these possible rewards overwhelms them with excitement, so while hurrying to relay their message they are presented as breathless and fumbling. The character is designed to provoke laughter and produce comedy at their expense. In doing so, the character "reifies traditional Greco-Roman moral values about slavery" (61). Harrill suggests that Rhoda serves this function in *Acts* 12, and that Luke inserts this moment of ridiculousness and comedy in the narrative to emphasize the realness of the ensuing narrative where Peter does appear to the followers, linking the narrative back to the gospel recount of the resurrection. See: J. Albert Harrill, "The Dramatic Function of the Running Slave Rhoda (Acts 12.13-16): A Piece of Greco-Roman Comedy," *NTS* 46 (2000): 150-57; and J. Albert Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 59-65. The association of New Comedy with this scene in *Acts* 12 is first mentioned by Richard Pervo* in his work *Profit with Delight*, and is more fully examined by Kathy Chambers in "'Knock, Knock—Who's There?' Acts 12.6-17 as Comedy of Errors," after Harrill's 2000 paper, "The Dramatic Function of the Running Slave Rhoda (12:13-16)," but before his above-mentioned monograph. See: Richard Pervo*, *Profit with Delight,* Fortress Press, 1987, 63; Kathy Chambers, "'Knock, Knock—Who's There?' Acts 12.6-17 as Comedy of Errors," in *A Feminist Companion to the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marianne Blickenstaff (London: T & T Clark, 2001), 89-97; and, J. Albert Harrill, "The Dramatic Function of the Running Slave Rhoda," 150-57. Other works expounding on New Comedy in Luke-Acts include Williams, "At the Expense of Women." Callie Callon argues that the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15 is built on the stock characters young men (adulescentes) and prostitutes (meretrices) in New Comedy. See: Callie Callon, "Adulescentes et Meretrices: The Correlation between Squandered Patrimony and Prostitutes in the Parable of the Prodigal Son," *CBQ* 75 (2013): 259-278.

Peter was there."[484] Dennis MacDonald likewise reads Rhoda as clairvoyant, noting that based on Peter's voice alone, Rhoda can recognize him behind the door.[485] Christy Cobb reads Rhoda alongside the prophetic enslaved girl in *Acts* 16, and argues that both *paidiskē* are "focalizers" of truth in the narrative.[486] While Christy Cobb does not name Rhoda as a prophet, she does attest to Rhoda's role as a truth-teller in her announcement of Peter at the gate. Even though Rhoda's claim is dismissed by the praying community members, Cobb explains that the truth of her words are validated in the continuation of the narrative.[487] Like named prophets before her, Rhoda recognizes without seeing and announces the undeniable truth of the coming of an apostles.[488]

There are numerous places where Rhoda and the prophetic enslaved girl intersect in their narrative roles. Rhoda and the prophetic enslaved girl are both *paidiskē* in service of their owners in the narrative; Rhoda is tending the door to her owner's household, and the prophetic enslaved girl is telling fortunes in public to earn money. Both enslaved girls correctly identify an apostle only to be silenced for this identification. Rhoda is dismissed as silly and misinformed when she announces Peter is at the door, while Paul exorcises the prophetic enslaved girl for repeatedly publicly crying out and naming him as the slave of the Most High God. In their silence, both enslaved girls are also subject to a rhetoric of madness that discredits their message of recognition and rationalizes their silencing. The prophetic enslaved girl, for example, has a strong emotional reaction to seeing Paul and Silas. She is described as crying out (ἔκραζεν) her announcement of Paul and Silas. Likewise, she follows the missionaries persistently for several days (πολλὰς ἡμέρας). She appears to be acting out of exuberance at seeing the two men, not unlike a modern fan encounter the prophetic enslaved girl is physically overcome with emotion. David Aune reads

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[484] Ronald Charles, *Silencing of Slaves in Early Jewish and Christian Texts* (London: Routledge, 2020), 142.
[485] Dennis MacDonald, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer? Four Cases from the Acts of the Apostles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 142.
[486] For more on Cobb's use of the term "focalizer" see: Christy Cobb, *Slavery, Gender, Truth and*, 59-63.
[487] Cobb, *Slavery, Gender, Truth, and Power*, 148.
[488] Rhoda's recognition of Peter fits the pattern of a *recognition oracle* which "provides supernatural identification for some individual of singular importance." Aune, *Prophecy in Early*, 68-69.

her divination as indicative of a possession trance, on account of "her bizarre behaviour and her crying out loudly while delivering the oracle."[489] Her apostolic identification is articulated through her high, unwieldly emotions. The prophetic enslaved girl's fortunetelling (μαντεύομαι) likewise lends itself to a reading of her behaviour as frenzied. Luke Johnson explains that μαντεύομαι was "the technical term for ecstatic prophecy in the Hellenistic world,"[490] while Joseph Fitzmyer points out that the term means "to act as a mantis."[491] This form of divination was likewise associated with foreignness and fraudulence.[492] The pejorative language is clear in this passage, she is fortunetelling (μαντεύομαι), not prophesying (προφητεία), as she follows the apostles for days, screaming (κράζω) her announcement of them.[493] Her behaviour is bizarre and out of sorts, and it is this behavior that annoys (διαπονέσθαι) Paul, spurring his exorcism of the enslaved girl. Rhoda, in comparison, is expressly call out of her mind (μαίνῃ) by those community members to whom she announces Peter's arrival. The passage reads, "When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, 'Peter is at the door!' 'You're out of your mind,' they told her."[494] As this passage continues and Rhoda persists in her identification of Peter, the community members suggest that she is seeing otherworldly beings instead. The scene continues, "When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, 'It must be his angel'."[495] There

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[489] Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity,* 268.
[490] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 294.
[491] Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 586.
[492] Fitzmyer continues from the above note that, "presumably, her [prophetic] ability attracted gullible people who paid for her services," (586) reading the prophetic enslaved girl's talents as deceptive and low brow. Similarly anchoring her prophetic utterances through a disreputable lens is the fact that she is affiliated with foreign divination in the narrative. She is associated with the Pythia, an oracle geographically situated in Greece, and according to Shelly Matthews' this characterization of the enslaved girl's divination was an established invective used against missionizing groups in the ancient world to frame them as swindlers. Matthews, *First Converts*, 90. This disreputable understanding of the prophetic enslaved girl's diving talents is again echoed in Richard Pervo's* reading of the scene. He suggests that Paul's impression of the prophetic enslaved girl's abilities represented a "vulgar religion, which resembled the superstitions hawked in public squares to unscrupulous quacks," Pervo*, *Acts*, 404.
[493] As previously discussed in this chapter, I read the actions of the prophetic slave girl in *Acts* 16 as acts of prophecy. This comparison looks to emphasize the connection between what these enslaved girls are doing and the moralizing language of madness.
[494] καὶ ἐπιγνοῦσα τὴν φωνὴν τοῦ Πέτρου ἀπὸ τῆς χαρᾶς οὐκ ἤνοιξεν τὸν πυλῶνα, εἰσδραμοῦσα δὲ ἀπήγγειλεν ἑστάναι τὸν Πέτρον πρὸ τοῦ πυλῶνος. Οἱ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὴν εἶπαν, Μαίνῃ.
[495] ἡ δὲ διϊσχυρίζετο οὕτως ἔχειν. Οἱ δὲ ἔλεγον , Ὁ ἄγγελός ἐστιν αὐτοῦ.

is no way in the minds of those gathered that Rhoda spoke truth, therefore, she must have been out of her mind. Paired with the silencing of both of these enslaved girls is a depiction of each as frenzied, and of unsound mind. These descriptions are reminiscent of prophetic ecstasy, lending to a reading of each enslaved girl as exuding a type of madness.

Returning to Laura Nasrallah's work previously discussed,[496] we can recall how claims to prophecy functioned on a polemical scale of madness and rationality, where madness and frenzy were used to discredit access to truth through prophecy, and soundness of mind, or rationality, was identified in the seer to authenticate their claims.[497] This discourse regulated power and authority in communities engaging in prophetic behaviour (such as the community depicted in *Acts*) as it worked to substantiate the truthfulness of prophetic declarations. It did this by making epistemological claims and erecting epistemological boundaries. The characterizations of Rhoda and the prophetic enslaved girl in their respective stories reinforces such boundaries for Luke. If they are out of their mind, emotional, or frenzied, their prophetic utterances are justifiably dismissed as nonsense and silly; their words can hold no divine weight if they are of unsound mind. Instead, Paul emerges as a charismatic talent, exorcising the prophetic enslaved girl, and Peter confirms his own arrival as Rhoda disappears from the story. While the enslaved girls are silenced, the apostles they recognized are re-centered as those possessing divine knowledge. This characterization of the enslaved girls allows Luke to re-focus his vision of divine authority in the apostles.

Thinking with Cassandra

In the analysis of Eve in my first chapter I argue that the archons' rape of the seal of her voice works to sever her prophetic ties with the world above, ultimately disrupting her prophetic abilities. I rely on Nasrallah's work to make that claim. There is a similar dynamic at play here, in

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[496] Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly*.
[497] See Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly*, 5-11, for a discussion on how she engages the concept of rationality in the ancient world.

the revelatory speech of the two enslaved girls of *Acts*, as there is in the silencing of Eve's prophetic voice. The epistemological claims the enslaved girls make through their identification of both apostles is silenced, and, like Eve, this silence is validated through a presumed sexual violability of the prophetic speakers. In the silencing of the two enslaved girls in *Acts*, like the silencing of Eve in *HypArch*, there is a causal relationship between sexual violence and the muted speech of a prophet. To clarify this relationship between the act of silencing and sexual violence in the case of Rhoda and the prophetic enslaved girl, I turn to the ancient Greek prophet Cassandra whose prophecies are likewise dismissed on account of the sexual violence enacted upon her.

Both Dennis MacDonald and Ronald Charles refer to Rhoda as a prophet, not in response to the term *paidiskē* and similarities with the prophetic enslaved girl, but rather in reference to Homer's Cassandra. MacDonald argues that Luke is using the *Iliad* as a narrative conversation partner for his work. He considers Rhoda's prophetic characteristics as an entry point to contrast the enslaved girl with Cassandra. Cassandra is an ignored prophet who is characterized as mad by her contemporaries,[498] and in the *Iliad,* she announces the arrival of her father Priam at the gates of Troy.[499] MacDonald notes that in Homer's representation of Cassandra she is not the unheeded prophet she later becomes; nevertheless, he does see a unique Homeric connection between the two women, namely in the allusions to roses. MacDonald points out that Cassandra is likened to Aphrodite in her beauty in the *Iliad* and that Aphrodite was symbolized in art by the rose. This connection is reaffirmed when Cassandra anoints Hector's body with rose oil. MacDonald suggests in naming the enslaved girl Rhoda (Rose), Luke was alluding "not to the Cassandra myth as a whole but to a single Homeric line,"[500] therefore putting *Acts* in conversation with the Greek epic. Ronald Charles builds from MacDonald's analysis and argues that Rhoda is the spiritual daughter to Peter, as Cassandra is the daughter of Priam announcing his arrival. As a result of this

[498] Stephen L. Harris and Gloria Platzner, eds., *Classical Mythology: Images and Insights* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001), 348-349.
[499] MacDonald, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer*?, 141-145.
[500] MacDonald, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer?*, 144.

link, Charles suggests that Rhoda was a Christ-believer and member of the Way. He reads her announcement of Peter at the door as her rejoicing and spreading the good news, and he compares Rhoda's exclamations with Mary's Magnificat. "Read this way," he says "Rhoda, the rose, is no longer simply a slave woman used by Luke as a literary character to assume comedic qualities; she takes the dimension of an important theological figure that comes to disturb one's reading and interpretation of the text."[501] Reading *Acts* 12 in relation to Priam's return to Troy in the *Iliad*, Rhoda, the enslaved girl running to and from the door, emerges as a joyous prophet.

The comparison of Rhoda and Cassandra is useful in articulating a connection between sexual violence and prophetic mistrust in the scene at Mary's door in *Acts* 12. Drawing on the comparison of Rhoda and Cassandra, I emphasize narrative intersections that point to a relationality between prophetic speech, sexual violence, and believability. As both authors explain,[502] the *Iliad* does not attest to the part of Cassandra's legacy where she is a prophet, but by the second century, when Luke is writing, Cassandra was known as much more than the daughter of Priam and sister of Hector. According to Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* written in 456 BCE,[503] for instance, Cassandra was a prophet whose abilities were gifted to her by the god Apollo. This gift was either to entice and seduce Cassandra, or an agreement made with her for consensual intercourse. For whatever reason, Cassandra did not want to have sex with Apollo after he gave her prophetic abilities. Expectedly, this enraged Apollo who was unable to take back his gifts. To soothe his anger at her rejection, Apollo extended his "gift" to Cassandra so that her prophecies, while always correct, would be forever ignored.[504] For the rest of her life, Cassandra's ability to

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[501] Charles, *Silencing of Slaves*, 140.
[502] MacDonald, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer?* 142; Charles, *Silencing of Slaves*, 140.
[503] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon,* in *Classical Mythology: Images and Insights Fourth Edition*, ed. Stephen I. Harris and Gloria Platzner, trans. by George Thomson (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001), 561-591.
[504] Apollo's vengeance recalls contemporary Incel culture and the violence it advocates against women who refuse sexual advances. For example, the recent mass shooting in Isla Vista, California in 2014 was justified by the young male shooter as retribution for women sexually rejecting him and forcing him into an involuntary celibate (Incel) lifestyle. This violent anger is part of a contemporary conversation on toxic masculinity, but as the Cassandra/Apollo interaction demonstrates there is a long-established logic that justifies violence against women who dismiss sexual advances by men.

speak the truth would be suspect and dismissed. According to the play, after the Greeks took Troy, the soldiers desecrated religious altars and Cassandra, being a virgin priestess to Apollo, was raped by Ajax the Lesser. Cassandra was rewarded as sexual property to Agamemnon as a spoil of war, and later murdered by his wife. [505] By the fifth century BCE, Cassandra's narrative entailed, then, both sexual violence and her prophetic ability, present but discounted by those around her as madness.[506]

If Cassandra is alluded to in the name, Rhoda, what does this imply for how Luke is characterizing her? In particular: What can the sexually violent aspects of Cassandra's history illuminate in Rhoda's? Rhoda does not appear to be marked by sexual violence when perceived as mad by her community, as she joyously announces Peter's arrival. But she is implicitly. Rhoda, like the prophetic enslaved girl of *Acts* 16, is a *paidiskē* (12:13). She is designated not only by her gender and age, but in her classed status as an enslaved person. This classed status relegated enslaved persons outside of the system of honour and shame, a system, as I have shown, that freewomen navigated by sustaining a sexual integrity as predetermined by society. For enslaved women living outside of this regulatory system, their bodies were always sexually suspect.[507] As such, Rhoda, marked as enslaved by Luke, was implicitly sexualized in the narrative. More so, what if the name Rhoda did not refer to roses as MacDonald and Charles paternally suggest. What if it refers to the island of Rhodes, a known slave-trading port? As Margaret Aymer so aptly points out, Rhoda was a common name for enslaved persons during this period. Having been trafficked from other parts of the empire, or newly taken territory, enslaved persons were frequently renamed upon purchase. In many cases, these names derive from their place of purchase, where the newly enslaved person was recast in society as something new, and revised, as a person

[505] She is noted to be Agamemnon's concubine, however, the translation does not convey the involuntary nature of her sexualized situation. Cassandra was rewarded to Agamemnon as a spoil of war for his triumph. She was a sexual prize, which meant she would have been subject again to justified sexual violence as she was during the sack of the city, and in Apollo's wrath.
[506] Harris and Platzner, *Classical Mythology,* 348-349.
[507] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 12-14.

subjugated.[508] In this reading, the name Rhoda gestures not only to a Greek epic, but to a history of human trafficking where sexual violence was pervasive. This reading weaves Cassandra and Rhoda's narratives more closely together. Cassandra too was trafficked and considered a spoil of war. Cassandra's exploitation is explicit as her sexual violation is twofold, being awarded as a sexual prize twice, ultimately leading to her murder.

Reading these narratives of Rhoda and the enslaved girl alongside Cassandra surfaces how Luke's presentation of enslaved girls as mad once more references their sexualization. Cassandra is raped and rewarded as sexual property; the enslaved girls were likewise sexualized property as marked by their enslaved status. Cassandra, the Greek seer, reminds us that sexual violence is often experienced alongside a silencing and dismissal of those sexually subjugated; it is a silencing and dismissal to which both enslaved girls are subjected by characters in the text. Lending to this characterization of the enslaved girls in *o*is the reality that enslaved persons were perceived to be unable to speak truth in the ancient world. As Page duBois explains, in ancient legal contexts torture was used with the sole purpose of extracting truth from enslaved persons.[509] In other words, the law held that enslaved persons would only reveal the truth if they were tortured.[510] As enslaved women in the ancient world, both Rhoda and the prophetic enslaved girl would have been seen both as incapable of producing truthful speech, and as sexually violable due to their enslaved status and link to prophecy. Enslaved women, then, were readily linked to madness and untruth. Violence was already a condition for their truth-telling, and how these persons were marked sexually rendered them suspect and unreliable. For Luke, these characters become ways to manage the connections between prophecy and sexuality by distinguishing their frenzied speech from the apostles' oratory. Their bodies were available to violence, and thus, they are seen

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[508] Margaret Aymer, "Outrageous, Audicious, Courageous, Willful," in *The Bible, gender, and sexuality: Critical readings*, ed. Rhiannon Graybill and Lynn R. Huber (London: International Clark, 2020), 274-275.
[509] Page duBois, *Torture and Truth*.
[510] Virginia Burrus, "Torture and Travail: Producing the Christian Martyr," in *A Feminist Companion to Patristic Literature*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Maria Mayo Robbins (New York: T&T Clark International, 2008), 56-71.

as justly ignored. In the end, Rhoda and the prophetic enslaved girl are narrative props for Luke, bolstering apostolic authority through the naturalized relationship between their class, truth, and sexual violence.

CONCLUSION: TRUTH, BELIEVABILITY, AND MADNESS

Prophecy is an integral part of *Acts*. Luke makes epistemological claims about life as a Christ follower by establishing a lineage of authority and verified prophecy through the apostles. Prophecy, however, was a contentious topic in the second century, frequently associated with fraudulence, foreignness, and lower classes. In the enslaved girl figures of *Acts* 12 and 16, Luke fashions characters where the social dangers present in prophecy could be diverted, while preserving other aspects of prophecy from these negative associations. In so doing, Luke reaffirms his epistemic view by limiting who can and cannot exhibit prophetic behavior. Similarly, he ensures prophecy as a vital part of the Way.

Luke justifies the silencing of these two enslaved girls by building from their presumed sexual violability as enslaved persons. Paul's exorcism of the prophetic enslaved girl in *Acts* 16 for example, is supported by the same subjugating system of power that naturalizes sexual violence against enslaved persons. Ancient prophecy had potential eroticizing connotations that Luke was aware of in his work. To avoid these sexualizing implications between a penetrated prophet and a penetrating deity, many female figures who held religious offices, such as prophet and priestess, were chaste figures. This regulating chastity thwarted accusations of sexual impropriety in the carrying out of their office. It is apparent that Luke is aware of these connotations in his work by the characterization of Anna's, Philip's daughters', and Mary's chastity alongside their charismatic speech. In the prophetic enslaved girl, Luke fashions a character who is by her social class sexually viable. Interrupting her charismatic speech follows this same logic of protecting prophecy from sexualizing implications. The prophetic enslaved girl's sexualized body is ruled unfit for prophecy as Luke understands it. More so, he bolsters apostolic authority through this culture of presumed sexual violation. In his exorcism of her divining spirit, Paul arrives as a charismatic powerhouse

in the text comparable to Jesus. His showcase of apostolic power relies on a system of naturalized sexual violence at the prophetic enslaved girl's expense.

Rhoda in *Acts* 12 illuminates another layer of this regulatory relationship between sexual violence and prophecy, namely a rhetoric of madness. In considering Rhoda's behavior in this scene, I identify a polemical message of madness and frenzy in both *paidiskē* narratives. This rhetoric dismisses the enslaved girls' prophetic announcements and characterizes them as false speakers. Thinking with Cassandra, the ancient Greek seer, highlights an association between this rhetoric of madness and how the association with sexual violence could undermine the veracity of prophecy. Like the two enslaved girls, Cassandra is an unbelieved prophet, characterized as mad, and subject to repeated scenarios of sexual violation. Here again, we see Luke rely on the presumed sexual violability of these enslaved girls to regulate his vision of prophecy and authority. Despite Peter's speech at Pentecost, which implies the democratization of prophecy, in the case of the text's two enslaved girls, it remains an unfulfilled promise.

This reading of these two enslaved girls is a bleak one. It demonstrates how Luke relies on an ideology of slaveholding in presenting these characters as restricted in their access to divine truth, even as the words they speak are true, and their prophetic capabilities apparent. It is important to note, however, that while Luke uses these characters for his own agenda, silencing their voices to center apostolic authority, the narrative preserves the enslaved girls' truth. Despite Luke's agenda to silence these enslaved girls, their voices persist, and they are recognized as prophets and truth-tellers centuries onward. Readers recognize the peculiarity of Paul's exorcism of the prophetic enslaved girl, and they see that Rhoda is disbelieved by those who should believe her. Though Luke uses these characters to shore up his rhetorical agenda, might we reread them as witnesses of truth? Might we read in a way that resists discounting their speech because their enslaved circumstances rendered them sexualized. In my epilogue, I briefly consider this possibility, in conversation with recent feminist readings of *Acts*. I suggest that like victim-

survivors of sexual violence today, Rhoda and the prophetic enslaved girl are subject to a culture of disbelief, but in a post-#meToo world, we might claim them as figures in a history of survivors.

This intervention into Luke's logic justifying the enslaved girls' silencing is important. It demonstrates how sexual violence permeates our ancient sources in discursive ways to limit voices and their access to power. Without excavating narratives like this one, these discourses are reproduced, and the normalization of sexual violability continues to regulate who can access truth, and knowledge.

EPILOGUE

From the onset of this work, I presumed that sexual violence was pervasive in ancient culture. This understanding of sexual violence developed from contemporary discussions on the ubiquitousness of sexual violence in our own culture. As such, this project looked to identify the pervasive presence of sexual violence in early Christian narratives. I started with the question: how does sexual violence surface within texts of early Christ followers and what might the broader implications be of its inclusion in these narratives? It was not a question of "if" sexual violence was preserved in these texts, but "how". I focused on sexual violence and made it the entry point for my analysis. Centering sexual violence in this way allowed me to find answers to the above questions and, ultimately, learn more about the cultural patterns that naturalized sexual violence in these communities.

Centering sexual violence was a methodological choice informed by feminist biblical interpretation. Feminist biblical interpretation purposefully centers the experiences of women in biblical sources, rejecting the notion that women were non-factors in the creation of biblical sources. Scholarship emerging from this discipline builds on the premise that women were active and invested participants in the cultivation of these worldviews. As feminist biblical interpretation chooses to recognize women where their contributions have been omitted in the history of scholarship, through this project I too choose to recognize sexual violence in these sources, rejecting the notion that sexual violence is ostensibly absent in these texts. Likewise, this work prioritizes readings of characters uniquely characterized by their gender, class, or ethnic diversity, recognizing that sexual violence affects social groups differently. Intersectionality, then, is integral to understanding sexual violence, and, therefore, it is a foundational tool in this analysis.

Each narrative examined contains narratives of sexual violence that are inherently different. Eve is explicitly raped in *HypArch*, where Norea and Thecla escape attempted rape in their respective texts. The Ethiopian eunuch in *Acts* is identified through his personal history of

sexual violation in the form of forced castration, while the enslaved girls in *Acts* are silenced because as figures presumed to be sexually violable, their announcements are held with suspicion. In each of these narratives, sexual violence frames the viability of a character's charismatic speech. While the narratives represent the relationship between charismatic speech and sexual violence differently, they all depict stories where sexual violence and speech regulate who could, or could not, access divine truth and knowledge. In this way, the identified discourse regulates epistemological access within the worldview of the text – or how humans in that community come to know ultimate truths. By extension, it likewise makes claims about who is most suited for positions of power and authority within the group.

The main contributions of this work vary, but I choose to highlight two of significance here. First, excluding Acts, the sources I examine are atypical for discussions and analysis of prophecy in the second century among early Christ followers. Bringing these sources into this area of scholarship is a novel move and contributes new perspectives into an established area of research. It demonstrates both the reach of these debates and the diverse rhetoric employed to position an argument. Secondly, through this work I demonstrate how a canonical source that has no explicit scenes of sexual violation can still participate, and reinforce, a rhetoric of sexual violence in its narrative. I exhibit how systemic sexual violence permeates Christian scripture. This of course has implications beyond the area of early Christian studies as it reaches into the communities that use these sources as authorizing texts.

The legacy of this discourse persists today in how we qualify the believability of survivors of sexual violence. Here again, speech is regulated alongside acts of sexual violation. Survivors of sexual violence have long been silenced in contemporary society. From accusations of madness and sensitivity (they are "crazy", too emotional, or hysterical) when they misinterpret an evident office "joke", to charges of lying about sexually violent events, the same tools are used to disqualify the speech acts of those considered sexually violable, or those sexually violated. Their speech, their

claims to truth, are disbelieved. This disbelief is reinforced through social mores and categories. As enslaved people in antiquity were presumed to be sexually violable simply because of their social class, there are groups of persons today, such as sex workers, those imprisoned, and transwomen, whose subjection to sexual violation is normalized and allowed. These groups experience high rates of sexual violence, which is culturally coded as part of their circumstances, therefore allowing their continued sexual subjugation. Similarly, rape culture perpetuates myths that work to discredit the voices of survivors. Girls are framed as "asking for it" through their behaviour and clothes, and perpetrators are frequently protected through sentiments such as "boys will be boys." These types of strategies work to undermine a survivor's memory of events, fostering self-doubt, and cultivating a sense of culpability in their own assault. These negative feelings and beliefs about their own participation in the assault ultimately dissuade survivors from seeking help. Finally, many survivors report being unable to speak about their assaults as a symptom of their trauma. The believability of one's speech, their claim to speak truth, is still regulated by acts of sexual violation.

To conclude this project, I would like to acknowledge that I struggled in this analysis to identify a positive reading of these figures in conjunction with the sexually violent narratives I was identifying. In a post-#meToo world, I wanted to read for a history of survivors, but realized that in my readings of these figures, they remained subject to gruesome bouts of sexual violence. However, as I was finishing this project in Summer 2023, I witnessed a transwoman claim the story of the Ethiopian eunuch in an expression of trans joy. Shakina Nayfack, an award-winning Broadway actor and trans activist, had the words of the Ethiopian eunuch's third question to Philip, "What can stand in the way of me being baptised?" (*Acts* 8:36) printed on the shirt she wore during her baptism.[511] Nayfack already identified as a baptised Christian before this event, but wanted to participate in the ritual again in a different congregation to pay witness to her life

[511] Shakina Nayfack (@shakeenz), Instagram story, 31 July 2023, https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/17958157862495677/?hl=en

as a Christian, transwoman. For her, wearing this question on her body as she was baptised was a direct challenge to the surge of anti-trans legislation in the United States supported by conservative Christian lobby groups. Through her reading of the Ethiopian eunuch's words, his questions transform from those that default to Philip's apostolic authority into words that challenge the exclusion of gender diverse persons from Christian circles. For Nayfack, the Ethiopian eunuch's words document a trans Christian history.

The transgender community has been subject to gruesome, normalized violence. Transwomen of colour account for one of the highest homicide rates per demographic, with the number of murders nearly doubling in the past five years. When Nayfack adopts the Ethiopian eunuch's words to claim her space in a Christian congregation where many would reject her, she refuses this gender-based violence as an identity marker and instead fashions a moment of resistance in trans joy. One of the final images Nayfack shares is of her singing and dancing post-baptism among the other congregants. The moment is transformative—Nayfack's joy supercedes the reality of trans violence and instead records her own history of survivorship though her Christian identity.

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