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**Violence in the Greek Novels and Hagiographic Literature**

This paper examines the theoretical dimensions of violence against women from the perspective of a separate study of mine on the influence of the Greek novel heroine on the literary persona of the early Christian female saint. I explore why much of the violence, suffering and passion in Greek novels is directed at the heroine and how these motifs are transposed into saints' accounts. Interest in women in late antiquity is on the rise (Clark 1993 et al.), and while some very good work has been done in the area of religion (Perkins 1995), the complex relationship between late classical and early Christian literature deserves more attention -- for instance, Bowersock's (1994) position needs to be reexamined.

Violence goes hand in hand with suffering. In the Greek novels the suffering of the couple is conventionally driven by violence and frequently plays on sexual metaphor. In the saints' lives most violence involves sexual metaphor, for instance torture is often directed toward women's sexual organs and feminine characteristics. And the self-inflicted violence of asceticism attacks the source of lust, desire and "filthy thoughts" in the mind. Perkins has demonstrated the presence of a discourse during the first few centuries CE centered on the body as a suffering vessel.

Literary violence towards women can be thought of as displaced sexual passion. Passion drives the [male] villains, whose violence suggests their future intentions or designs for the woman. The author uses passion to provoke the reader's excitement through metaphor. The scholarship on misogyny as fear and hatred of an "other" who challenges the dominant social order is plentiful and rich (e.g. Bynum 1987). Transference of this misogyny from the woman to her body is an easy step, and when women internalize this value system they become ascetics. Coon (1997) finds at the heart of Christian asceticism the belief that women through their form are inherently alienated from God and must constantly battle their nature in order to merit communion with God. Asceticism finds no place in the novels, where sexual satisfaction is ultimately granted. The abstraction of violence from the physical to the metaphysical typifies Christian writers' adaptation of other concepts (such as chastity and passion) into Christian practice.

While current scholarship argues for a wealthy male novel reader (Stephens 1994, Bowie 1994), saints' lives certainly reached a broader audience. As the Greek novel genre fades from literature, the hagiographic "novella" is responsible for passing on the motifs of violence, suffering and passion through which women continued to be seen and continued to see themselves.