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Chreia Elaboration and the Un-healing of Peter's Daughter: Rhetorical Analysis as a Clue to Understanding the Development of a Petrine Tradition

MEGHAN HENNING

In a Coptic fragment associated with the *Acts of Peter*, Peter “heals” and then “disables” his own daughter as a demonstration of God’s power at work in him. The following article will compare Peter’s speech with the ancient rhetorical form of the *chreia*. When placed alongside other traditions that describe the life of Peter, a consistent pattern of anti-healings emerges, in which a display of apostolic power harms another character in order to provide a lesson for those watching. Taken together, the rhetoric and themes of the pericope suggest that it was composed as a way of explaining a difficult saying that was attributed to Peter.

INTRODUCTION

In several of the early Christian *Acta*, the apostles perform “rule miracles” wounding other characters for the expressed purposes of winning converts, protecting men from the “threat” of beautiful virgins, and publicly demonstrating the importance of repentance as well as the apostolic superiority

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of Peter.¹ In short, the apostles in these stories inflict harm on those with less power simply for the “edification” of others.² This investigation will examine the rhetoric that surrounds another surprising miracle associated with the *Acts of Peter*, focusing specifically on the story of Peter’s daughter in the Berlin Coptic papyrus (BG 8502.4).³

This story, in which Peter heals and then “unheals” his own daughter, is difficult to understand, even for the eyewitnesses in the text. As an

1. Gerd Theissen, *Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition*, trans. Francis McDonagh, ed. John Riches (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1983), 106–12, has identified these miracles form critically as “rule miracles” or “punitive rule miracles.” See, Meghan Henning, “Niedergestreckt und zerstört: Strafwunder und ihre pädagogische Funktion,” in *Kompendium der Wundergeschichten II: Wunder der Apostel*, ed. R. Zimmermann et al. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlag, forthcoming), for a discussion of the pedagogical function of “rule miracles.” For examples of other “rule miracles” see the punishment of Lot’s wife (Gen 19.26), the consumption by fire of Aaron’s sons (Lev 10.1–11), the demise of the sons of Korah (Num 16), the dramatic deaths of Judas, Ananias and Sapphira, and Herod (Acts 1.16–19; 5.1–11; 12.23, respectively), and *Acts of Peter* 2, 9, 15, and 32.

2. On the relationship between “spiritual edification” and disability in other early Christian literature, see the recent developments in the burgeoning field of Disability and the Bible. For instance, see Candida R. Moss, “Blurred Vision and Ethical Confusion: The Rhetorical Function of Matthew 6:22–23,” *CBQ* 73 (2011): 757–76. On the “invizibilizing” effect of modern interpretations of disability in ancient literature, see Warren Carter, “‘The blind, lame and paralyzed’ (John 5:3): John’s Gospel, Disability Studies, and Postcolonial Perspectives,” in *Disability Studies and Biblical Literature*, ed. Candida R. Moss and Jeremy Schipper (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 130–31. See also Alois Stimpfle, “‘Von Geburt an blind’ (Joh 9,1): Disability and Wirklichkeitskonstruktion,” in *Gestörte Lektüre: Disability als hermeneutische Leitkategorie biblischer Exegese*, ed. Wolfgang Grünstäudl and Markus Schiefer (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2012), 98–126.

3. The episode of the healing of Peter’s daughter is found in the Berlin Coptic papyrus BG 8502.4, available in James Brashler and D. M. Parott, “The Acts of Peter,” in *Nag Hammadi Codices V, 2–5 and VI: With Papyrus Berolinensis 8502, 1 and 4* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 473–93. The apocryphal *Epistle of Titus* contains the story of the gardener’s daughter, available in Pseudo-Titus, *De dispositione sanctimonii*, ed. Dom de Bruyne, *RBen* 37 (1925): 57. The Latin text of the *Actus Vercellenses* is available in R. A. Lipsius and M. Bonnet, *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha* (Leipzig: Avenarius et Mendelssohn, 1891), 1:45–103. The relationship between the Coptic papyrus BG 8502.4, Pseudo-Titus, and the longer Latin text of the Acts of Peter in the *Actus Vercellenses* has been contested, with some scholars arguing that all three texts are a cohesive unit, such as Carl Schmidt, *Die alten Petrusakten im Zusammenhang der apokryphen Apostelliteratur nebst einem neuentdeckten Fragment*, TU 24.1 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1903). Others have called into question the thematic similarities between the three texts, such as Andrea Lorenzo Molinari, “Augustine, *Contra Adimantum*, Pseudo-Titus, BG 8502.4 and the *Acts of Peter*: Attacking Carl Schmidt’s Theory of an Original Unity between the *Act of Peter* and the *Acts of Peter*,” in *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 38 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 426–47.

expectant crowd gathers around Peter to see their sick healed, a member of the crowd addresses Peter, praising him for his many miraculous healings. After praising Peter, the crowd member quickly contrasts Peter's healing works with the paralysis of the apostle's own daughter, asking Peter why he has not healed her:

Why have you not helped your virgin daughter, who has grown up beautiful and has believed on the name of God? For she is quite paralyzed on one side, and she lies there stretched out in the corner helpless. We see the people you have healed but your own daughter you have neglected.⁴

The contrast that the crowd member draws through this question reaffirms Peter's power, assuming that Peter is able to heal his daughter, but has simply not done so for some reason. In the ensuing narrative Peter demonstrates that he is able to heal his daughter, healing her and then commanding her to return to her paralyzed state, an action that causes the crowd to weep and beg for him to heal her once more. Peter explains that his daughter's paralysis is for the purpose of the crowd's edification, but the crowd's reaction calls attention to the inadequacy of this defense, eliciting a fuller response from Peter. In short, Peter's response to the initial question is that his daughter remains paralyzed because it is "expedient for her and for me," a response that he repeats, expands, and explains in several ways.⁵ Peter defends the logic behind his enigmatic statement and actions by offering the crowd three stories: the story of his daughter's birth, Ptolemaeus's unsuccessful attempt to abduct and marry her by force, and the subsequent conversion of Ptolemaeus. Each of these stories helps to cast Peter's daughter's paralysis as a pedagogical tool that is maximally beneficial for her and for the spiritual edification of others. After telling these three stories, Peter concludes by summarizing the moral of the story for his audience, calmly assuring the disturbed and upset crowd that the entire seemingly contradictory affair is actually a logical extension of divine providence.⁶

This article will explore the rhetorical function of this puzzling story and its relationship to other traditions about Peter. First, we will treat the rhetorical function of this story of violence, demonstrating that the story of the disabling of Peter's daughter fits the ancient rhetorical paradigm of

4. BG 8502.4:128–29 (trans. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, "The Acts of Peter," in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, trans. Robert M. Wilson [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1991], 2:285).

5. BG 8502.4:131.

6. BG 8502.4:140–41.

the *chreia* elaboration. Next, we will discuss the rhetorical function of this *chreia* elaboration in comparison with other miracles performed by Peter in the Acts of the Apostles, the narrative fragment from Pseudo-Titus, and the text of the *Actus Vercellenses*. The rhetorical analysis of this episode will offer a fresh illumination of the passage's overall message, arguing that the story of Peter's daughter is not simply a story about the encratite ideal, nor merely a demonstration of God's power. Although those themes are certainly important to the narrative, they are in service of the story's overall rhetorical aim to educate audiences by demonstrating the apostle's power, leading them to conversion or deeper faith. As we shall see, this interpretation of the story of Peter's daughter also offers a novel explanation for the relationship between the Coptic papyrus and the narrative fragment from Pseudo-Titus, suggesting that the story of Peter's daughter is the earlier version of the fabula.

AUGUSTINE AND THE TEXT OF THE ACTS OF PETER AGAIN

The literary relationship between the texts attested in the Coptic papyrus BG 8502.4, the narrative of the Gardener's daughter from the epistle Pseudo-Titus, and the Latin text of the *Actus Vercellenses* has been thoroughly debated.⁷ Augustine's argument (*Adim.* 17.5) against the Manicheans' rejection of the canonical Acts seems to indicate that Augustine knew

7. Carl Schmidt, *Die alten Petrusakten*, argued that Augustine's statement was indicative of a unified "Acts of Peter" that included the stories found in BG 8502.4 and Pseudo-Titus, arguing that there were nine points of consensus between these two texts and the *Actus Vercellenses*. Nearly one hundred years later, Andrea Molinari, "Augustine, *Contra Adimantum*, Pseudo-Titus, BG 8502.4 and the *Acts of Peter*," 426–47, argued that Schmidt misread the evidence, ignoring the differing views toward sexuality and women in the three texts. Through her literary approach, Christine Thomas, *The Acts of Peter, Gospel Literature, and the Ancient Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 18–20, counters Molinari, arguing that Molinari has ignored the crucial connection between the paralysis of Peter's daughter and the paralysis of Rufina in *Act. Verc.* 2, and returns the debate to Schmidt's view that all three texts should be considered as part of the ancient Acts of Peter. See also, Matthew C. Baldwin, *Whose Acts of Peter?* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 60–66, who argues that the *Actus Vercellenses* is best studied as a work "in its own right," implying that BG 8502.4 and Pseudo-Titus should be treated as separate texts (and providing a minimalist reading of the external attestation of the text). The following analysis is not dependent upon the assumption of a single unified text that now exists in fragments (as Thomas and others have asserted). Instead, my analysis of the rhetorical function of the Coptic fragment is better served by treating each extant textual unit as distinct components of the fluid textual tradition, as Baldwin recommends. Nevertheless, for facility, in places where we are referring to the set of texts

a version of the Acts of Peter that included the story of Peter's daughter and the story of the Gardener's daughter. As noted above, this statement is frequently adduced as partial evidence for a longer original Acts of Peter that included all three of these texts (though not in their extant forms). Augustine's argument against the Manicheans has not only influenced the reading of the textual tradition, but modern scholars have also consistently adopted his reading practices, noting again and again that our pericope has thematic parallels to the Petrine rule miracle in Acts 5.1–11 (as Augustine does).⁸ All of these interpretive efforts from Augustine to the present hinge upon the idea that the intertextual relationship between Acts 5, the Coptic fragment, and Pseudo-Titus is based upon the thematic assonance between these narratives. However, even as scholars have used Augustine to make their cases regarding the development of the manuscript tradition, the inference that Augustine makes about the shared themes of the three passages has been noted, but unexplored.

The following rhetorical and literary analysis of the Coptic fragment will work to explore those shared themes, by taking the work of Christine Thomas as its methodological starting point. Thomas demonstrates that the various texts that are associated with the Acts of Peter were part of a "fluid" narrative tradition that is both malleable and homeostatic, so that oral and written traditions about Peter could be told and retold in ways that made sense in different historical contexts.⁹ According to Thomas's reading of the Acts of Peter, the story of Peter's daughter is an "elastic" story that is originally told in Pseudo-Titus, retold in the Coptic fragment, and represents an earlier and longer version of the Acts of Peter that is not represented in the extant *Actus Vercellenses*.¹⁰ In addition to proposing

that are associated with one another and the person of Peter in late antiquity, we will refer to the Acts of Peter.

8. Robert F. Stoops, "The *Acts of Peter* in Intertextual Context," *Semeia* 80 (1997): 57–86, esp. 69–70; Thomas, *Acts of Peter*, 33–35.

9. Thomas, *Acts of Peter*, 87–103, argues that Acts of Peter is a historical novel, which takes the most significant or well-known events of a person's life and then elaborates them according to rhetorical convention (Thomas here cites *ekphrasis* as an example). The tradition is "fluid" because each version of the Acts of Peter is aware of the last and consciously re-working the oral and written traditions about Peter that are available. Likewise, the tradition carries on a homeostatic understanding of history in order to cast Peter in a way that bears resemblance to the present context.

10. Thomas, *Acts of Peter*, 17–20, argues that the Coptic fragment episode belongs to the lost part of the Acts of Peter that took place in Judea, citing the following pieces of evidence: the location at Peter's house in the Coptic fragment, the connection between certain key phrases and the redactional tendencies of the *Actus Vercellenses*, and the internal references to a Judean section within the *Actus Vercellenses*. For the purposes of the following analysis we accept Thomas's basic proposal regarding the

an elastic “multi-form” tradition that is extending forward through multiple revisions, Thomas also proposes that the Coptic fragment is reaching back to the Acts of the Apostles, “alluding” to Acts 5.¹¹ The strength of Thomas’s approach for the purpose of our analysis is that it allows us to analyze the rhetoric of the Coptic fragment synchronically, based upon the text that we have, while also considering the diachronic implications of our analysis, placing this fragment in the broader context of the Acts of Peter, as it came to be understood in late antiquity by someone like Augustine.

Thus, we will read the *BG* 8502.4, Pseudo-Titus, and the *Actus Ver-cellenses* as separate texts within a “fluid tradition.” After their original composition within this elastic tradition these texts later came to be understood as part of the same text by someone like Augustine by virtue of their association with the figure of Peter, and their overlapping depictions of Peter performing miracles in order to demonstrate apostolic power. As we maintain with Christine Thomas that the distinct texts of the Acts of Peter represent a fluid narrative tradition, we will also clarify several particulars regarding the way that the “memory” of Peter is being developed in this particular story, arguing for the priority of the Coptic fragment, and calling into question a simple “textual allusion” between the Acts of the Apostles and the Acts of Peter. In addition to adopting and refining Thomas’s understanding of the textual tradition, we will begin our analysis with the rhetorical arguments of Robert F. Stoops and Thomas, who both suggest that the compositional technique of the *chreia* elaboration is an appropriate way to understand the authorial activity behind the Acts of Peter.¹² Our work will test and develop this *chreia* elaboration thesis

chronological relationship of these “multi-forms,” although we will argue against her hypothesis regarding the priority of Pseudo-Titus.

11. Thomas, *Acts of Peter*, 33–35, argues that the earliest levels of the Acts of Peter are the words of Jesus and the episodes of the Gospels, and that later redactional levels “allude to” (but do not cite) the canonical epistles and Acts. Based upon this basic framework for understanding intertextuality, Thomas sees an “allusion” to Acts 5 in the Coptic fragment, akin to Augustine’s own reading of the text. While we share Thomas’s methodological interest in looking forward and backward within the Petrine tradition, we will argue that her understanding of intertextuality is too reliant upon the earliest redactors having access to a written version of the Acts of the Apostles at the time of writing.

12. Stoops, “*Acts of Peter*,” 60–63; Thomas, *Acts of Peter*, 85–89. Stoops argues that the work of the scholars at the Chreia project at the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity has demonstrated the broad influence of rhetorical education in antiquity, so that the authors of the Apocryphal Acts “almost certainly had some formal training, which probably employed handbooks and stock examples.” Thomas applies the insights of the scholarship on ancient rhetoric to her theory regarding the fluidity of

through direct application of the rhetorical method to the text in order to say something more specific about the pre-history and rhetorical function of the Coptic fragment. As we revisit Augustine's implicit assertion that these stories about Peter are all somehow thematically related, we hope to contribute to the ongoing scholarly conversation about the "lived memory" of Peter, demonstrating that even an "apocryphal" text like the Coptic fragment might reflect an important piece of tradition about Peter that circulated in the second and third centuries C.E.¹³

RHETORIC: ATTRIBUTING MEANING TO THE DISABLING OF A BODY

Within the Acts of Peter, the narratives that involve paralysis or "rule miracles" all share a common rhetorical function, namely to demonstrate the power of the apostle. While other scholars have focused on the collection of these stories in the Acts of Peter as "folk tales" or "fabulae" about the virtues of chastity,¹⁴ or "divine providence,"¹⁵ we will examine the rhetorical techniques used within the story of Peter's daughter in order to evaluate the intended impact of the narrative.

When searching for a rhetorical device in which a person attributes meaning or significance to something or someone else through story or propositional statements, there are a few candidates that come to mind. The

the textual tradition of the Acts of Peter, citing the *chreia* elaboration as an example that "even attitudes to finished texts were similarly fluid in antiquity" (86). In this regard the first part of our project consciously takes up the work that Stoops, "Acts of Peter," 63n2, outlined in a footnote, arguing that the story of Peter's daughter "lends itself nicely" to rhetorical analysis as a kind of "mixed *chreia*."

13. See Marcus Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory: The New Testament Apostle in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), for discussion of the "lived memory" of Peter. For other recent discussions regarding Petrine traditions see Martin Hengel, *Peter: The Underestimated Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010); Markus Bockmuehl, *The Remembered Peter in Ancient Reception and Modern Debate*, WUNT 262 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); Joseph Verheyden, "Rock and Stumbling Block: The Fate of Matthew's Peter," in *The Gospel of Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity*, ed. Donald Senior (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 263–312.

14. See for example, Virginia Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of the Apocryphal Acts* (Lewiston, NY: Mercer University Press, 1987), who has focused upon the "chastity narratives" across the Apocryphal Acts; and Thomas, *Acts of Peter*, 40–71, who looks at each fabula that is repeated or "doubled" within the fluid textual tradition of the Acts of Peter.

15. Elsewhere, Thomas, *Acts of Peter*, 19, also argues that the main purpose of this story is to iterate God's providence.

chreia, *fable*, or *koinos topos* are possible rhetorical corollaries to Peter's and Paul's speeches about paralysis.¹⁶ While the examples of the *fable* and *koinos topos* are similar to portions of our story, the *chreia* elaborations in the classroom exercises are more closely aligned with the entirety of the pericope. In the analysis that follows, we will focus on the *chreia*, comparing the examples of this rhetorical device in the rhetorical handbooks and classroom exercises to the rhetoric that we find in the Acts of Peter.

According to Theon's *Progymnasmata*,¹⁷ a *chreia* (χρηία) is "a brief saying or action making a point, attributed to some specified person or something corresponding to a person."¹⁸ Byzantine commentators classify the *chreia*, or ethical thought, as a type of deliberative rhetoric.¹⁹ A third-century school hand summarizes the *chreia* as a "concise reminiscence associated with some character," whose purpose is to "be recited."²⁰ The *chreia* often takes the form of a question, followed by an answer from a famous character, a format that is most commonly given as an example in the rhetorical handbooks.²¹ For instance, Libanius's *Progymnasmata* discusses the *chreia* attributed to Alexander the Great, who when asked where he kept his treasures pointed toward his friends, saying, "Look for no other wealth of Alexander. These are my treasures."²²

16. For discussion and examples of each of these rhetorical devices in ancient classroom exercises and the *Progymnasmata*, see Ronald F. Hock and Edward N. O'Neil, eds. *The Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric: Classroom Exercises* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002); George A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).

17. Aelius Theon of Alexandria likely wrote during the middle of the first century C.E., cf. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 1–2.

18. Aelius Theon, *Progymnasmata* [5.96] 15. When citing the *Progymnasmata*, I will place references to Spengel's *Rhetores Graeci* in brackets, followed by the page numbers in Kennedy where the English translation can be found. For a discussion of the differences between a *chreia* and a maxim or a reminiscence, see Theon, *Progymnasmata* [5.96–97] 15–16. Namely a maxim does not identify a speaker, and a reminiscence is much longer than a *chreia*.

19. George Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 164.

20. See questions and answers in the partially restored text of the papyrus PSI I.85 in Hock and O'Neil, *Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric*, 96–97.

21. Hermogenes observes this in his *Progymnasmata*, stating that the *chreia* often takes the form of a question and answer. Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* [3.7] 76–77. For a clear overview of the different forms of a *chreia*, see Vernon K. Robbins, "Introduction: Using Rhetorical Discussions of the Chreia to Interpret Pronouncement Stories," *Semeia* 64 (1993): vii–xvii.

22. Libanius, *Progymnasmata* 3, Chreia Elaboration 1.4. For text and translation, see Hock and O'Neil, *Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric*, 141–55.

As part of the classroom exercises, this basic question and answer would be elaborated according to a specific pattern, requiring the rhetorician to augment the *chreia* with specific kinds of speech that would demonstrate the veracity of the original *chreia*.²³ The elaboration could be as short as a few lines of prose, and only loosely conforming to the guidelines for expansion, as in the example given by Theon.²⁴ Or the *chreia* could be elaborated with a long narrative that rigorously conformed to the standards for elaboration (eight κεφάλαια), including each component in the expected order.²⁵

In addition to bolstering the truth claims of the *chreia* itself, a secondary purpose of the elaboration was to honor the person with which it is associated, as demonstrated by the encomiastic section that began each elaboration.²⁶ The encomiastic section also establishes the speaker's validity in order to substantiate the content of the *chreia*, summarizing his accomplishments, praising his character, or citing that others held him in high regard. For example, in a shorter *chreia* elaboration the encomiastic section might simply state "Isocrates was wise,"²⁷ while a longer elaboration would detail some of his wise deeds or quote others who had pontificated upon his wisdom. After the encomiastic section (ἐγκωμιστικόν), the next heading (κεφάλαια), or section, of the *chreia* elaboration is the

23. While Theon, *Progymnasmata* [5.105–106] 22–23, merely stipulates that the elaboration must begin with *prooemion*, state the *chreia*, and then provide the supporting arguments, later versions of the *Progymnasmata*, such as that of Aphthonius [5.23–25] 98–99, follow this format: Encomiastic section, Paraphrastic section, Rationale/Cause, Contrary/From the Opposite, Comparison/Analogy, Example, Testimony/From the Judgment of Others, Epilogue. Aphthonius's model of elaboration with these eight *kephalaia* held sway within rhetorical education from the late fourth century through the fourteenth, but it was rooted in much earlier patterns of elaboration ("the complete argument" or the "embellishment of an idea") that are accessible in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (85 B.C.). See, Hock and O'Neil, *Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric*, 84–90. The patterns of elaboration in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* contain only five or seven sections, leaving out the "Testimony," the "Contrary," or the "Analogy" sections. See Appendix to compare different styles of elaboration.

24. Theon, *Progymnasmata* [5.103–104] 21–22. As Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 67–73, demonstrates, the documentary evidence from Egypt suggests that the *chreiai* were part of the core of primary education, and would be familiar to most students.

25. For examples of these longer and more formulaic *chreia* elaborations, see Hock and O'Neil, *Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric*, 141–55.

26. As Hock and O'Neil, *Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric*, 127, argue, Libanius's elaboration on Alexander the Great's comment on his "treasures" is first and foremost a discussion on friendship, and only partially about Alexander the Great himself.

27. See, for example, Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* [3.7–8] 77.

paraphrastic section (παραφραστικόν), in which we find the original *chreia*, often in the form of a question and answer.²⁸ In responsive *chreiai*, or those that contain a question and answer, the paraphrase can offer a “cause” for the answer to a question, as in the example given by Theon: “Socrates, having been asked if the king of the Persians seemed to him to be happy, said, ‘I cannot say, for I cannot know the state of his education.’”²⁹ Thus, the paraphrastic section offers the reader a scene to imagine, and is the rhetorician’s first opportunity to set the *chreia* in a context that helps to explain its content.

After the *chreia* is presented, the rhetor may include several supporting explanatory sections: a rationale (αἰτία), explaining the basic logic or premise behind the saying;³⁰ an argument “from the opposite” (ἐκ τοῦ ἐναντίου), considering the opposing point of view or what would happen if the saying was false;³¹ an analogy (παραβολή) that connects the saying to another widely understood concept or another statement that is commonly held as “true”;³² an example (παράδειγμα) often in the form of a story or literary reference;³³ and testimony from the ancients (μαρτυρία παλαιῶν), quoting another noteworthy figure who has offered a similar saying.³⁴ As we noted above, the author of the elaboration may not use

28. Theon, *Progymnasmata* [5.97–98] 15–16, also differentiates between four types of responsive *chreiai*: Of these four, the inquiry and response gives an explanation or a cause for the answer, fitting the story of Peter’s daughter most closely.

29. Theon, *Progymnasmata* [5.98] 15–16, cf. Plato, *Gorgias* 470e.

30. Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* [3.24] 98–99: “Those who long for education attach themselves to educational leaders, whom it is frightening to approach and stupid to abandon. . . . But the boy who has experienced these things, when he comes to manhood wears a crown of virtue.”

31. Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* [3.24] 98–99: “If, on the other hand, out of fear of these things someone were to flee from teachers, run away from parents, and shun pedagogues, he is completely deprived of training in speech and has lost ability in speech with his loss of fear.”

32. Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* [3.24] 98–99: “Just as those who work the earth cast the seeds in the ground with toil but reap the fruits with greater pleasure, in the same way those exchanging toil for education have by toil acquired future renown.”

33. Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* [3.24] 98–99: “Look, I ask you, at the life of Demosthenes, which was the most filled with labor of any orator, but became the most glorious of all. He showed such an abundance of zeal that he took the ornament from his head, because he thought the ornament that comes from virtue was the best; and he expended in toils what others lavished on pleasures.”

34. Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* [3.24] 98–99: “Thus, one should admire Hesiod’s saying (cf. *Works and Days* 289–92) that the road of virtue is rough, but the height is easy, the same philosophy as found in the maxim of Isocrates; for what Hesiod indicated by a ‘road’ is what Isocrates called a ‘root,’ both expressing one thought but with different words.”

all of these explanatory sections (or κεφάλαια), or may change the order in which he presents them, but the classroom exercises allowed rhetors to practice and become familiar with each component of a *chreia* elaboration. Finally, each *chreia* elaboration closes with a brief epilogue (ἐπίλογος βραχύς) that summarizes for the hearer a moral or lesson that can be learned from the *chreia*.³⁵

THE STORY OF PETER'S DAUGHTER AS A CHREIA ELABORATION

The recent studies by Rafaela Criboire and Teresa Morgan on ancient education and rhetoric have taught us that, although far fewer students completed a tertiary education than was initially thought, there is strong evidence for a geographically widespread and consistent curriculum among school hands, which copy the elementary exercises such as *chreia* recitation. Thus, it is not inconceivable that early Christians in Africa and Asia Minor in the second and third centuries C.E. would have been familiar with this rhetorical form, and would have even recited *chreiai* that were attributed to their own heroes and honored leaders. In this context, the Coptic text of BG 8502.4 can be read as an elaboration of one such *chreia*, originally attributed to Peter, and elaborated in order to make sense out of a theologically difficult tradition.³⁶ This *chreia* elaboration fits the pattern of elaboration set forth in the rhetorical handbooks, containing six of the eight possible formula sections, omitting only the “analogy” (παραβολή) and “testimony of the ancients” (μαρτυρία παλαιῶν) sections.³⁷ The absence

35. Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* [3.24] 98–99: “Looking at all this, one should admire Isocrates for his wise and beautiful speculation about education.”

36. Stoops, “*Acts of Peter*,” 63n2, states that this is a “mixed-*chreia*,” which “is elaborated into a narrative sequence of speeches, and counter-examples,” in his initial suggestion that this passage be further analyzed as a *chreia*. A “mixed-*chreia*” simply refers to a *chreia* that includes both a “saying” and an “action,” as in the Coptic fragment’s combination of Peter’s dialogue with the crowd and his healing and unhealing of his daughter. The following argument will demonstrate that Stoops was correct, using rhetorical analysis of the episode in the Coptic fragment. As Robbins, “Introduction,” xv, notes, the longer elaborations with more focused argumentation (which Robbins labels “second-level”) “may develop out of any these types” [sayings, *chreiai*, action-*chreiai*, or mixed-*chreiai*].

37. Absent the “analogy” and “testimony from the ancients” sections, this elaboration best fits the pattern set out in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Thus, the shorter form of this elaboration, could suggest that the Coptic fragment was originally composed sometime before the end of the fourth century C.E., when Aphthonius’s eight-section pattern of elaboration became the dominant model. See Appendix.

of these two sections should not be taken as evidence against seeing this passage as a *chreia* elaboration, since the rhetorical handbooks themselves differ as to how many supporting sections there should be and the order of those formula sections.³⁸ Amongst the elaborated *chreiai* in the classroom exercises there is also diversity with respect to the length of the *chreia* elaboration, with some elaborations taking up only ten or so lines, and others in which each individual section of the argument takes up the same amount of space.³⁹ In the following analysis, we will demonstrate that the Coptic fragment under discussion here is more akin to the form of these longer *chreia* elaborations than a mere fragmentary “Act” narrative because it “approximates a complete argument” through its use of these constitutive parts.⁴⁰

The question that is posed to Peter in the Berlin Coptic papyrus 8502 follows the basic pattern of the *chreia* elaboration. The original *chreia* would have been the question and Peter’s response, fitting the rhetorical pattern of questions and answers attributed to famous characters that we observed in the discussion of the *chreia*: “Peter . . . why have you not helped your virgin daughter, who has grown up beautiful and has believed on the name of God? . . . but Peter said unto them: ‘As the Lord liveth, this is expedient for her and for me.’”⁴¹ In the text of the Berlin Coptic Papyrus, this

38. Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* [4.24] 142. See also the absence of “Testimony from the Ancients” in the elaboration of Libanius, *Progymnasmata* 3, *Chreia* Elaboration 2, sections 21–22 in Hock and O’Neil, *Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric*, 166–67.

39. Compare the two elaborations in Hock and O’Neil, *Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric*, 98–112 and 140–55 as respective examples of a very short elaboration, and one that is comparable in length to the Coptic fragment under discussion here. In discussions of *chreiai* in scholarship on early Christianity the shorter examples tend to be cited for comparison with the gospel narratives, leaving the false impression that *chreia* elaborations were all this length.

40. Robbins, “Introduction,” xiv–xvi, makes an important distinction between the different “levels” of elaboration that are possible with respect to *chreiai*. In Robbins’s classification the elaborated *chreia* is distinguished from the amplified or expanded because it organizes the component parts to “approximate a complete argument” (xiv). Amongst elaborated *chreiai*, he makes the further distinction between “first-level” and “second-level” elaborations, the latter of which most closely matches the examples we have highlighted here for comparison with the Coptic fragment. Whether or not the author or redactors of our fragment understood these “levels,” the plethora of examples in the *Progymnasmata* indicate that his own education would have made him familiar with something like the examples that Robbins classifies as “second-level” elaborations.

41. BG 8502.4:129, 131 (Schneemelcher, 285, slightly adapted). The wording of the question and the response both appear to be an exchange between Peter and the whole audience, while the elaboration that is written around it reflects an exchange between a single man and Peter.

chreia is elaborated with an encomiastic section (ἐγκωμιαστικόν), which precedes the question (true to rhetorical convention), praising Peter's deeds: "Look Peter, before our eyes you have made many who were blind to see, and the deaf to hear and the lame to walk, and you have helped the weak and given them strength."⁴² As both Nicolaus and Doxapatres noted, the encomium is comparable in its function to the first part of a standard speech (προοίμιον), that functions to secure "good will."⁴³ Thus the encomium not only functions to introduce the topic of the *chreia*, but also establishes the authority of the speaker (in this case, Peter). Peter is established as a healer whose deeds are worthy of praise.

This section is followed by a paraphrastic (παραφραστικόν) section, which presents the original question and answer, or *chreia*, and augments it with the narrative about Peter healing his daughter for the sole benefit of "increasing the faith of those who are here."⁴⁴ In the paraphrastic section, Peter also "unheals" his daughter, commanding her with language that echoes that of the *chreia*: "Go to your place, lie down and return to your infirmity, for this is expedient for you and for me."

A "Rationale" (αἰτία) is elaborated through the story that follows Peter's answer, in Peter's narration of his vision on the day of his daughter's birth, in which the Lord explains that "this daughter will do harm to many souls if her body remains healthy."⁴⁵ The ensuing stories about Ptolemaeus contain the arguments "from the Opposite" (ἐκ τοῦ ἐναντίου) as well as the "Example" (παράδειγμα) of the *chreia*. In the rhetorical handbooks, a *chreia* elaboration's "from the Opposite" argument would explore what would happen if the *chreia* was taken to be false.⁴⁶ Similarly, the first story of Ptolemaeus allows Peter's listeners to hear that if the girl had not been disabled, she would have been in a "forced marriage" (rape by modern

42. Here the opening encomium is not presented in the voice of the narrator, but in the reported speech of the questioner. Although less common, the encomiastic section could take the form of quotations from other persons, and Theon, *Progymnasmata* [5.106] 23, notes that this section should take "whatever characterization is possible."

43. See Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* [7.42–8.58] 151–61, Doxapatres, 2.267. Although they share a similar rhetorical function, the encomion is more variable in form, and can take whatever form the context demands (Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* [8.50] 156).

44. BG 8502.4:129 (Schneemelcher, 285).

45. BG 8502.4:132 (Schneemelcher, 285).

46. See for example, the *chreia* of Alexander the Great's saying on friendship, in which Libanius's elaboration "From the Opposite" argues "anyone can see more accurately how important the relationship of friends is if he investigates those men who have been deprived of them" (Libanius, *Progymnasmata* 3, *Chreia Elaboration* 1.12). For text and translation, see Hock and O'Neil, *Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric*, 141–55.

definitions) with Ptolemaeus.⁴⁷ Peter delivers this story just as the rhetor would, providing a scene that allows the audience to imagine the opposite scenario to that of the *chreia*, and conclude that the *chreia* is logically sound, aided by Peter's conclusion that "this is the cause of the matter, why the girl continues in this state until this day."⁴⁸

Peter continues his speech with an argument by way of "example," using the second story about Ptolemaeus's fate in order to demonstrate that people have been brought to faith as a result of the daughter's paralysis. In this regard, Peter's speech about Ptolemaeus is part of the elaboration on the original *chreia*, using Ptolemaeus as the paradigmatic example of one who "did see with the eyes of his flesh and with the eyes of his soul," who also led others to "set their hopes on Christ."⁴⁹ Finally, the narrative ends with an "Epilogue" (ἐπίλογος), following the rhetorical structure of the *chreia* elaboration:

Know then, O servant of Jesus Christ, that God cares for his own and prepares good for every one of them, although we think that God has forgotten us. But now, brethren, let us be sorrowful and watch and pray, and God's goodness shall look upon us, and we wait for it.⁵⁰

In this final section of the *chreia* elaboration, the audience is reassured of the veracity of the initial saying, as well as encouraged to follow the course set by Peter. Here, the daughter's disability is not only expedient for her and Peter because it protects them both from the unwanted advances of suitors, but also because it prevents her from harming souls. This elaboration not only construes the disabled daughter as an object, or a means to a spiritualized end, but also as co-pedagogue with Peter, "expediently" winning souls *because of* her disability. Although the pericope ends with an epilogue on God's providence, the epilogue is not the "final word" on the rhetorical function of the story. Instead, the message about providence

47. BG 8502.4:132 (and presumably the missing text on 133–34). What is so striking about this argument "from the Opposite" is that the reader is left to infer that paralysis is somehow a deterrent to Ptolemaeus, protecting Peter's daughter from his unwanted advances. As Joel Baden and Candida Moss, *Reconceiving Infertility* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015) 192–99, esp. 196, argue, the rhetoric in this passage is dependent upon Peter's reversal of the ancient "economy of the body," in which "physical infertility and undesirability are prized more highly than youth, beauty, and fertility."

48. BG 8502.4:135 (Schneemelcher, 286).

49. BG 8502.4:138 (Schneemelcher, 286).

50. BG 8502.4:140 (Schneemelcher, 286).

is really a means of elevating Peter, demonstrating his apostolic power through the bodily weakness of others.

APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY AND THE TRANSFORMATIONAL CAPACITY OF BODILY UN-WHOLENESS: DEVELOPMENT OF A PETRINE TRADITION

As we have argued thus far, the text of the Coptic papyrus represents an elaboration of the *chreia* attributed to Peter, telling the story of Peter's daughter's paralysis in order to explain the saying about the "expediency" of disability as a means for winning converts. In its elaborated form, the story of Peter's daughter's paralysis provides spiritual edification for its audience, fitting with the pattern of other stories about Peter performing anti-healings. As Augustine implicitly observed, this *chreia* shares themes with the "rule miracles" of the Hebrew Bible and Acts 5. In these punitive miracles the recipients are injured or die, signaling divine punishment, and offering a pedagogical message for the onlookers in the narrative and the readers of the text.⁵¹ Likewise, Christine Thomas has argued that the Coptic fragment is a textual allusion to the punitive miracle story in Acts 5.1–11, in which Peter brings about the death of Ananias and Saphira with just a word.⁵²

While Augustine's and Thomas's readings are suggestive, the textual attestation of the Acts of the Apostles in the second century C.E. requires us to reevaluate our understanding of the intertextual relationships at play here.⁵³

51. For further examples of the rule miracle and its pedagogical function see n.1.

52. Thomas, *Acts of Peter*, 34n127, argues that the final redactor of the hypothetical ancient textual form of the Acts of Peter in its most developed state completed his work as early as the third quarter of the second century C.E., and that this "coheres" with the external attestation of the Acts of the Apostles in Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, and Tertullian. As we will argue below, if we maintain that the "final redaction" is as early as Thomas asserts (cf. Schmidt, *Die alten Petrusakten* and Bremmer, "Aspects of the *Acts of Peter*"), then the elaboration of the *chreia* in line with the tradition of Peter's punitive miracle in Acts 5 could have occurred at an earlier phase of editorial activity, and is likely an instance of a shared tradition about Peter.

53. As Lee Martin MacDonald, *The Biblical Canon: Its Origin, Transmission, and Authority* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 386–87, notes, late second century authors (namely Irenaeus) are the first to make clear appeals to the authority of Acts, but even then the occasions on which one finds citations of Acts or clear word parallels are rare. Thus, as Candida R. Moss, "Nailing Down and Tying Up: Lessons in Intertextual Impossibility from the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*," *VC* 67 (2013): 117–36, has cautioned, scholarly efforts to identify "intertextuality" prior to the fourth century need to be more accommodating of the various ways in which texts and oral traditions

Although Thomas is careful to posit that the textual relationships between the various Peter narratives is “not a static series of interconnections at one point in time,” her conclusions are predicated upon the Acts of the Apostles having canonical status and wide circulation as a text by the end of the second century.⁵⁴ By the same token, Marcus Bockmuehl’s depiction of the “lived memory” of Peter reveals his tendency to think that the apocryphal texts are “false,” and that the delineation of the canon is sharp and occurs early in the second century.⁵⁵ The following analysis will seek to nuance the assertions of Thomas and Bockmuehl regarding the normativity of the Acts of the Apostles by the end of the second century C.E., as well as the subsequent conclusions that Thomas makes regarding intertextuality. If we compare the thematic relationships between the different anti-healing stories about Peter, we are able to see that the Coptic fragment should not be understood as an allusion to Acts 5, but as an elaboration of a parallel tradition about Peter as the apostle of great power. We will argue that such a tradition developed in the late first and early in the second century and is evident in the Acts of the Apostles and the other narratives about Peter that are preserved in the Acts of Peter.

Acts 5.1–11 is one of several dramatic and sudden deaths in Acts that highlights apostolic authority.⁵⁶ In this story, Ananias and Sapphira withhold part of the profits from a property sale and lie to Peter about it. Peter questions Ananias and Sapphira independently about this affair, and through his questions Peter reveals the severity of their offenses. Instead

were circulated and read during this period. In the case of the Petrine Acta at hand, we may just as likely have a set of common traditions that were associated with the person of Peter rather than early literary borrowing from the Acts of the Apostles.

54. Thomas seems to see the Acts of the Apostles as a fixed text, possibly with proto-canonical or canonical status by the end of the second century: “At the later end of the chronological spectrum, however, the redactor(s) of the Acts of Peter borrowed directly and explicitly from the works that had, by that time, become normative such as the synoptic gospels and the Pauline epistles. Moreover, by the later second century, one of the redactors of the Acts of Peter consciously modeled it on the Acts of the Apostles” (*Acts of Peter*, 32)

55. While Bockmuehl’s approach to the various Petrine traditions as part of a “lived memory” fits very nicely with our own adoption of Thomas’s concept of narrative fluidity, we take issue with the sharp distinction that he draws between canon/apocrypha and fact/fiction in the second century C.E. For specific evidence of this distinction within his approach see *Remembered Peter*, 23, 115, and esp. 199–201, in which he characterizes the Acts of Peter as containing “a pound of wild fancy,” relying upon an outmoded understanding of the apocrypha. See also Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory*, 90, 103, 133, 140, 145, and esp. 160–61, in which he characterizes the Acts of Peter as “largely legendary and apocryphal.”

56. See also Acts 1.16–19; 12.23.

of offering answers to his questions, each of them immediately drops dead, as if to say that sudden death is the answer to Peter's questions, the supernatural consequence of these offences.⁵⁷ The rhetorical purpose of the story is encapsulated in the audience's "great fear" (vv. 5, 11), indicating to the readers of the text that they too should have reverence for Peter's authority, the standards of the early Christian community, and the power of God.⁵⁸ This story shares several narrative features with the Coptic fragment, namely the injury of individuals at the words of Peter, the audience's subsequent horror, and the property sale and transfer of money to the Christian community.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, several of these features are iterated very differently in the Coptic fragment.⁶⁰ In Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira die; whereas Peter's daughter is paralyzed in the Coptic fragment.

57. Other commentators have focused upon the specific offenses listed by Peter (greed, lying, testing the Spirit of the Lord). See, for example, Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 88; Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar Über Das Neue Testament (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 199; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible Commentary 31 (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 323–24; Daniel Marguerat, *Les Acts des Apôtres* (Geneva: Labor and Fides, 2007), 172–78; Pervo, *Acts*, 132–33. However, Peter's questions all reiterate the same overarching theme: an offense against the community is an offense against God, drawing the reader's attention back to the characterizations of the Christian community and its God. As Albert J. Harrill, "Divine Judgment Against Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5.1–11): A Stock Scene of Perjury and Death," *JBL* 130 (2011): 351–69, has argued through comparison to the dramatic representations of perjury in the ancient Mediterranean, this scene would have secured the religious and ritual identity of the church as "blameless of impiety" and defended it against claims of atheism.

58. Despite the fact that Peter's daughter does not die, this rhetorical similarity is likely what has caused both modern scholars and late antique Christians like Augustine to compare Peter's actions in both texts to the *Strafwunder* tradition. Augustine connects Acts 5.1–11 to the punitive miracles of the Hebrew Bible on two occasions: in *Adim.* 17.5, as mentioned above, but also in, *Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount* 20.64, where he compares Peter's activity here with that of Elijah in his reflections on the Sermon on the Mount.

59. See, for instance, Stoops, "Acts of Peter," 69–70; Thomas, *Acts of Peter*, 18, 34.

60. Christine Thomas, "The 'Prehistory' of the *Acts of Peter*," in *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: Harvard Divinity School Studies*, ed. François Bovon, Ann Graham Brock, and Christopher R. Matthews (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 57, states, "The paralysis of Peter's daughter is not truly a *Strafwunder*, since it is the beneficent act of God that preserves her virginity." As we argue here, although Peter's daughter is not being punished for sins, and this is not "truly a *Strafwunder*" as Thomas notes, the rhetorical emphasis in this story is still similar to a typical *Strafwunder*, in which the audience is intended to learn a lesson from the harm that is done.

Although the sale of the property is the occasion for the story in Acts 5, in the Coptic fragment it is a minor detail that demonstrates Ptolemaeus's spiritual transformation. Taking into account these differences in the way in which the two stories are told, the major similarities that remain are the person of Peter and the rhetorical function of both stories. Therefore it is more plausible that these two stories represent an instance of a common tradition surrounding the person of Peter and not direct textual influence.

If we read the Coptic fragment as a *chreia* that was elaborated in line with a common tradition about Peter performing anti-healings, then the overarching story is not primarily about the encratite ideal or a generic understanding of divine providence.⁶¹ Rather, this story has been constructed in a way that explicitly connects it to other stories in which Peter's apostolic power harms a person in order to educate his audience. In this reading, the body of Peter's daughter is central, not as the embodiment of the encratite ideal, but as the pedagogical object lesson for onlookers.⁶² Peter's daughter's paralysis is discussed as bodily "un-wholeness," which has the capacity to affect "spiritual wholeness" in others.⁶³ Peter recalls the

61. For example, see Jan N. Bremmer, "Aspects of the *Acts of Peter*: Women, Magic, Place and Date," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Peter: Magic, Miracles, and Gnosticism*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 1–20, esp. 3; Ann Graham Brock, "Political Authority and Cultural Accommodation: Social Diversity in the Acts of Paul and the Acts of Peter," in *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: Harvard Divinity School Studies*, ed. François Bovon, Ann Graham Brock, and Christopher R. Matthews (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 145–70, esp. 156; and Cornelia B. Horn, "Suffering, Children, Parental Authority, and the Quest for Liberation?: A Tale of Three Girls in the Acts of Paul and Thecla, the Acts of Peter, the Acts of Nerseus and Achilleus and the Epistle of Pseudo-Titus," in *A Feminist Companion to the New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Maria Mayo Robbins (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 136, who collectively argue that the depiction of Peter here is primarily about the daughter's celibacy. In contrast, Stoops, "Acts of Peter," 63n2; and Thomas, *Acts of Peter*, 19, who both take the "epilogue" of the *chreia* elaboration as the final word on the matter, seeing the story as one about "God's providence."

62. As evidenced in other ancient narratives of healing, the attitude that paralysis is a preferential state is highly unusual, but the use of a healing narrative for pedagogical purposes is not. In the New Testament, see Matt 9.2–8 and Mark 2.3–13; Within the inscriptions found at the sanctuary dedicated to Asklepios at Epidaurus, see the stories in which people with paralysis or broken limbs are healed: Stelae A3, A17, B15 (35), B17 (37), B18 (38), C14 (57), C21 (64) in Lynn R. LiDonnici, *The Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).

63. As Anna Rebecca Solevåg, "Gender and Disability in the Acts of Peter: Apostolic Power to Paralyze," in *Marginalised Writings of Early Christianity: Apocryphal Texts and Writings of Female Authorship*, ed. Outi Lehtipuu and Silke Petersen, *The Bible and Women: An Encyclopedia of Exegesis and Culture*, Volume 3.2 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, forthcoming), notes, disability and healing are used in

Lord's speech on the day of his daughter's birth, in which the Lord warns "this daughter will do harm to many souls if her body remains healthy."⁶⁴ Peter's recollection of this vision informs his audience that his daughter's bodily "un-wellness" somehow protects "many souls," a claim which he goes on to defend by recounting that her disability was inflicted by the Lord as a means of protection from Ptolemaeus's unwanted sexual advances.

Peter's presentation of the story of Ptolemaeus demonstrates that not only is the act of disabling edifying, but the disabled body itself is a transformational spectacle for others. After Ptolemaeus attempts to "defile" the ten-year-old virgin, "one side of her body from her toes to her head was paralysed and wasted" and he is physically blinded by his grief over the whole affair.⁶⁵ Utilizing the ancient *topoi* that connect the eyes with sexual sin,⁶⁶ and blindness to knowledge,⁶⁷ Ptolemaeus's disability not only prevents him from lusting after beautiful women, but also from comprehending spiritual truths. The text tells us that Ptolemaeus's blindness is healed both physically and spiritually,⁶⁸ and after Ptolemaeus's death, Peter summarizes that "it was through her [Peter's daughter] that he [Ptolemaeus] had believed in

the Acts of Peter to demonstrate power, as "part of the power game" of the text. For a discussion of the discursive practices surrounding disability in antiquity that juxtapose whole/unwhole, sick/well, see Meghan Henning, "In Sickness and in Health: Ancient 'Rituals of Truth' in the Greco-Roman World and 1 Peter," in Moss and Schipper, *Disability Studies and Biblical Literature*, 185–203.

64. BG 8502.4:132 (Schneemelcher, 285). As Baden and Moss, *Reconceiving Infertility*, 195, point out, the language that is used to describe Peter's daughter's beauty and Ptolemaeus's desire should press readers to inquire more deeply about how paralysis is functioning in this story. Here, they argue, paralysis is a "precursor to salvation."

65. The language used to describe Rufina's paralysis at the hands of Paul in *Actus Vercellenses* 2 parallels the language used to describe the paralysis of Peter's daughter down "all one side" and "from her toes to her head" in the Berlin Coptic fragment. Thomas, *Acts of Peter*, 18, notes thematic similarities between this text and the Berlin Coptic Papyrus BG 8502.4. Because Rufina's paralysis occurs at the hands of Paul and occurs in the first three chapters of the *Actus Vercellenses*, it is likely a later addition to the Acts of Peter than the Coptic fragment, and was redacted to mirror the story of Peter's daughter. Yet despite its linguistic similarities, and the shared theme of an apostolic "anti-healing," the women in these stories are evaluated very differently, with Peter's daughter elevated as a spiritual example and Rufina spurned for her adulterous behavior.

66. See the discussion of the imagery of eyes leading a person to sin in Mark 9.42–48. Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007), 449–51.

67. See Moss, "Blurred Vision and Ethical Confusion," on this possible "double meaning" behind Ptolemaeus's blindness.

68. BG 8502.4:138 (Schneemelcher, 286): "Then he did see with the eyes of his flesh and with the eyes of his soul, and many people set their hopes on Christ."

God and had been made whole.” In this way, Peter argues that he has re-inflicted this “bodily-un-wholeness” upon his daughter in order that others may experience the kind of physical and spiritual “wholeness” that her disability afforded for Ptolemaeus. Ptolemaeus’s spiritual transformation demonstrates that the strange episode in the Coptic fragment is not simply about the “enkratite ideal” or “God’s providence,” as scholars have previously asserted, but the pedagogical efficacy of Peter’s daughter’s disability and Peter’s ability as an apostle to wield this pedagogical tool. In fact, the “epilogue” of this *chreia* elaboration, which is typically read as a simple statement about divine providence, actually recapitulates the audience’s response of fear, reminding readers to “be sorrowful, watch, and pray” for the goodness of God that is promised to them.⁶⁹ In this final section of the text, the readers are reminded that this story of apostolic power and spiritual transformation should motivate them to exhibit watchfulness, so that they might be on the lookout for similar manifestations of divine power at work in the world.⁷⁰

In Pseudo-Titus, the death of the Gardener’s daughter has similar themes, emphasizing the spiritual “expediency” of placing one’s virgin daughter out of “harm’s way” through a divine act of “anti-healing.” Unlike the much longer and more complex story of Peter’s daughter, the perception of the apostolic healing in this text is inextricably bound up in its expression of the enkratite ideal.⁷¹ In this story, an unnamed gardener sought out Peter and asked him to pray for his only daughter. When Peter prays that the Lord will do what is “expedient for the daughter’s soul,” she immediately dies, an event interpreted by both Peter and the narrator of the text as a “divine blessing.”⁷² The gardener is understandably upset and demands

69. BG 8502.4:140 (Schneemelcher, 286).

70. For later readers, who read this fragment as part of the Acts of Peter (whether in a continuous Greek text, as Thomas supposes, or as related Acta associated with Peter), this statement could be understood as a directive to see the other demonstrations of Peter’s power in the Acts of Peter as the promised manifestations of the “goodness of God.”

71. For a more thorough discussion of the specific attitudes toward sexuality and women in the Acts of Peter, see Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy*; Kate Cooper, “Apostles, Ascetic Women, and Questions of Audience: New Reflections on the Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocryphal Acts,” in *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 31 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992): 147–53; Bremmer, “Aspects of the *Acts of Peter*,” 1–20; Meghan Henning, “Paralysis and Sexuality in Medical Literature and the *Acts of Peter*,” *Journal of Late Antiquity* 8 (2015): 306–21.

72. See the Latin text of Pseudo-Titus in D. De Bruyne, “Nouveaux fragments des Actes de Pierre, de Paul, de Jean, d’André et de l’Apocalypse d’Élie,” *RBén* 25 (1908): 149–60, esp. 151–53. For an English translation, see Wilhelm Schneemelcher, “The Acts of Peter,” 287. Compare this passage with the immediate paralysis at the

that Peter raise his daughter from the dead. Once raised, the daughter is seduced by a houseguest who masquerades as a believer, and runs away never to be seen again. In contrast to the story of Peter's daughter, here the daughter's death does not effect spiritual edification for others. In this pericope, Peter is primarily concerned with how the young virgin's sexuality will affect her father, interpreting her death as a state of "heavenly grace," in which she is able to "escape the shamelessness of the flesh."⁷³ While the pedagogical rhetoric of the *chreia* elaboration is absent in this shorter story, the story of the Gardner's daughter shares several of the Coptic fragment's basic plot points, depicting Peter as the powerful apostle whose words violently "rescue" a virgin daughter.

Both stories not only depict the apostolically-inflicted harm as more "expedient" than the social precariousness of a virgin daughter, but the parallel narratives also emphasize the power of Peter, which is able to alter the physical state of each young woman with only a prayer. Christine Thomas has noted the similarities between these two stories, and argued that the story of Peter's daughter is a reworking of the story of the Gardener's daughter.⁷⁴ As Thomas notes, the story about the Gardener's daughter is much shorter than the story about Peter's daughter and none of the characters except for Peter have names; however, this does not necessarily mean that the former is the more primitive version of the tale. The story of Peter's daughter is more "difficult" to understand, seeming to attribute

conclusion of the apostle's speech in the stories of Rufina and Simon Magus (Acts of Peter *Act. Verc.* 2; 32). The immediate death of a character at the words of the apostle is commonplace in the Acts of the Apostles as well (Acts 5.5; 5.10); as well as immediate death upon hearing the words of the Lord (Acts 12.23).

73. In accordance with this rhetorical pattern of *chreia* elaboration in the Acts of Peter, another writer who has related a version of this story, associates the story of the Gardener's daughter with the following quotation from a thirteenth-century collection of apophthegms: "Peter, speaking to a (man) who bitterly complained at the death of his daughter, said: 'So many assaults of the devil, so many struggles with the body, so many disasters of the world she has escaped; and you shed tears as if you did not know what you yourself have undergone (i.e., what you have gained)'" (found in a Cambrai MS, and printed with the extracts of the Acts of Titus by Dom de Bruyne). Here, Peter's language to the mourning father mirrors his own attitudes toward the paralysis of his daughter, concluding that the death of this man's daughter is "more useful" for daughter and father alike. In this text, whether original to the ancient Acts of Peter or not, we witness an author seeking to offer an *epilogue* to the story of the Gardener's daughter, in an attempt to assign purpose to a seemingly cruel miracle by placing a pithy bit of "wisdom" on the lips of the apostle.

74. Thomas, *Acts of Peter*, 68, argues, "It is in the realm of possible literary practices that a story such as that of the gardener's daughter would be elaborated in the direction of the story of Peter's daughter."

serious cruelty to the figure of Peter. The story of Peter's daughter also contains direct quotations from the apostle. For these reasons, we believe that the *chreia*, or question and answer about Peter's paralyzed daughter probably came first, initially circulating as a "difficult saying" attributed to Peter. We can then imagine that a later editor came along and elaborated the *chreia*, ameliorating this "difficulty" by imbuing it with theological significance.

Finally, in the *Actus Vercellenses*, we have two more instances of pedagogically motivated "anti-healings," in which disability serves as evidence of Simon Magus's apostolic inferiority. In one demonstration of Peter's apostolic power, he commands an infant to go and tell Simon Magus, "Jesus Christ says to you, 'Be struck mute by the power of my name (*Ommutesce coactus nomine meo*), and depart from Rome until the coming Sabbath.'"⁷⁵ The apostolically-commissioned baby's words take their effect immediately, and Simon Magus is temporarily disabled (*Continuo autem ommutescens*). Later, in the final confrontation between Peter and Simon Magus, Peter himself speaks the prayer that disables Simon, asking the Lord to "let him fall down from this height and be crippled, but not die (*Sed non peto ut moriatur, sed aliquid in membris suis vexetur*); but let him be disabled and break his leg in three places!"⁷⁶ Simon's leg is indeed broken in three places, and the story quickly shifts to Simon's friend Gemellus, who is transformed by this event, running to Peter and confessing his desire to follow Christ.

Parallel to the stories of the "anti-healing" of Peter's daughter or the Gardener's daughter, the injuries that are inflicted on Simon Magus are described in terms of their "utility" to Peter, able to bring about transformation among the audience. Unlike the stories of Peter's daughter, or the Gardener's daughter, in each of the instances of Peter harming another person in the *Actus Vercellenses* there is no indication that this injury is in any way "expedient" for Simon. Instead, Simon's body is merely a pedagogical device, introduced into the narrative for the singular purpose of educating others. If the written form of these miracle stories was composed around roughly the same time as the Coptic fragment, the fabula behind the Simon Magus narratives in the *Actus Vercellenses* offers yet another distinctive example of a second century tradition about Peter performing anti-healings.⁷⁷

75. *Acts of Peter* 15.

76. *Acts of Peter* 32. Solevåg, 15–16, argues that ultimately Peter's disabling of Simon serves to "prop up" Peter's masculinity, and demonstrate his superior power.

77. See Thomas, *Acts of Peter*, 26 and 32, for discussions of these specific chapters and their place in the textual tradition of the Acts of Peter. Thomas argues that

In this way, we can regard Acts 5.1–11, the Coptic fragment, the story of the Gardner’s daughter, and the Simon Magus stories as distinct developments of a Petrine tradition in distinct literary contexts.⁷⁸ In each story, we have the consistent elements of Peter, an anti-healing, and the elevation of Peter’s authority as a result of this anti-healing. Beyond the very basic aim of elevating the apostle’s authority, however, each retelling of the story varies quite a bit with respect to narrative detail and form. In some cases, the story is a true *Strafwunder* and the anti-healing is intended as a punishment that educates the audience. In the case of the Coptic fragment, the miracle is not punitive, and the pedagogy of the anti-healing is made more explicit through the rhetorical form of the *chreia* elaboration. This *chreia* elaboration allows an ancient author to provide a full defense of Peter’s strange response to the question about his daughter’s paralysis. Just as in the *chreia* elaboration on Alexander the Great’s saying on friendship, these stories of bodily-un-wholeness in the Acts of Peter demonstrate the lesson that is imbedded in Peter’s response to the crowds, and elevate the figure of Peter himself.

CONCLUSION

The rhetorical analysis of the story of Peter’s daughter reveals that this narrative contains an early oral tradition about Peter that is not primarily about sex or divine providence. In the Coptic fragment, the difficult saying that is attributed to Peter is elaborated according to rhetorical convention in order to edify Peter’s audience and to connect the tradition about Peter’s daughter to another Petrine tradition regarding Peter’s anti-healing. We suggest that the Petrine tradition of “useful” apostolic harm is behind the account of Peter in the New Testament (Acts 5.1–11), Pseudo-Titus, and the *Actus Vercellenses*. As we have demonstrated, there is a shared rhetoric about apostolic power between these texts that takes a discrete literary shape in each iteration.

In terms of the textual relationships of these traditions, the thesis we have put forward regarding the rhetoric of the Coptic fragment has several

these miracle stories were part of the original continuous Greek text of the Acts of Peter, along with the Coptic fragment, one of the earliest strata of the complex textual tradition she outlines.

78. When we speak here of a “Petrine tradition” that is “fluid” we do not imagine specific textual strata that are organized in a tight chronological schema, as Thomas does the various stages of the textual tradition of the Acts of Peter. Whether this tradition circulated orally, or in a written source or sources, any attempt to reconstruct it and its development would be speculative.

implications. First, the basic kernel of this story (the question and answer put to Peter about his daughter) represents a strand of tradition that is necessarily earlier than the earliest date that is typically given for the final redaction of the *Actus Vercellenses*. This basic *chreia* was then elaborated by an author who completed his work prior to the final redaction of the text, aware of the other miracle stories attributed to Peter that are thought to be part of the earliest stratum of the Acts of Peter. Second, the shared rhetorical orientation between the Coptic fragment and the other miracle stories attributed to Peter suggest that the elaborator of the *chreia* knew something of these other Petrine traditions and constructed his elaboration within this tradition about Peter's apostolic power to harm. We contend that this tradition about Peter was indeed fluid, and that this *chreia* was elaborated by a second-century author according to a shared set of traditions about Peter as the apostle of power. Although these texts were not composed in one stage as a single "Acts of Peter," their association with the figure of Peter, and their shared rhetorical function, indicate that they would have invited later thinkers like Augustine to associate them with one another as a particular strand of thinking about the person of Peter, a strand that exists alongside a variety of other Peter *mythoi* that make up the many hued tapestry of Petrine traditions.

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APPENDIX

Chreia Elaboration and the Un-Healing of Peter's Daughter

Sections of <i>Chreia</i> Elaboration (κεφάλαια)	Excerpts from Short <i>Chreia</i> Elaboration Hermogenes, <i>Progymnasmata</i> 7–8	Excerpts from Longer <i>Chreia</i> Elaboration Libanius, <i>Progymnasmata</i> 3	Excerpts from <i>Acts of Peter</i> (Berlin Coptic Papyrus 8502)
Encomiastic (ἐγκωμιστικόν)	Isocrates was wise.	That Alexander, king of Macedonia was greatly admired and filled both continents with accomplishments and so far surpassed both his predecessors and his successors that he has not yielded first place, everyone I suppose, would agree, unless there is someone who is completely senseless or very foolish.	One of the crowd ventured to say to Peter “Look Peter, before our eyes you have made many who were blind to see, and the deaf to hear and the lame to walk, and you have helped the weak and given them strength.”
Paraphrastic (παραφραστικόν)	Isocrates said that the root of education is bitter but its fruit is sweet (and you will not state it in bare form, but expand the statement).	Therefore, someone approached him and said, “I would very much like to see your treasures, O King.” . . . He ordered him to look at his friends and said, “Look for no other wealth of Alexander. These are my treasures.”	“Why have you not helped your virgin daughter, who has grown up beautiful and has believed on the name of God? For she is quite paralyzed on one side. . . . We see the people you have healed; but your own daughter you have neglected” . . . [intervening story about her healing and un-healing] . . . but Peter said unto them: “As the Lord liveth, this is expedient for her and for me.”

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APPENDIX (*Continued*)*Chreia* Elaboration and the Un-Healing of Peter's Daughter

Rationale (αἰτία)	For the greatest things are wont to succeed through toil, and when successful bring pleasure.	Just how reasonably he considered this designation to be an appropriate one for his friends will be easier to judge if we examine the basic conditions and fortunes with which men must deal. . . . There is thus no situation you can mention that is beyond a need for friends.	For on the day when she was born to me I saw a vision, and the Lord said to me, "Peter today there is born for you a great trial; for this daughter will do harm to many souls if her body remains healthy."
From the Opposite (ἐκ τοῦ ἐναντίου)	Ordinary things need no toil and in the end give no pleasure, but things of importance are the opposite.	These, then, are not insignificant examples of the fact that Alexander gave a wise answer . . . anyone can see more accurately how important the relationship of friends is if he investigates those men who have been deprived of them.	Ptolemaeus, who had seen the girl with her mother bathing, sent for her to take her as his wife; He sent many times for her but could not wait.
Analogy (παραβολή)	For just as farmers need to reap fruits by working the soil, so also with speeches.	Moreover, friends can more reasonably be called "treasures" than the things that presently have that name.	—

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APPENDIX (Continued)

Chreia Elaboration and the Un-Healing of Peter's Daughter

Example (παράδειγμα)	Demosthenes by shutting himself up at home and working hard, later reaped the fruit in the form of crowns and testimonials.	One can, however, also look to the earlier times of the demigods and take examples from them.	“Now then it is right that you should know the fate of Ptolemaeus . . . [<i>story about Ptolemaeus's blindness and healing</i>] then he did see with the eyes of his flesh and with the eyes of his soul, and many people set their hopes on Christ.”
Testimony of Ancients (μαρτυρία παλαιῶν)	Hesiod said (<i>Works and Days</i> 289), “The gods put sweat before virtue,” and another poet says “The gods sell all good things to us for toils.”	One should not overlook Euripides . . . “There is nothing more precious than a true friend, next to whom everything else is second best.”	—
Brief Epilogue (ἐπιλογος βραχύς)	At the end you will put an exhortation to the effect that one must be persuaded by the person who has said or done this.	It is reasonable, therefore, that friends have been considered and have been called “treasures” by Alexander. Consequently it is the duty of intelligent men both to commend him for this saying and for them to imitate him by their deeds because there is no way that we are going to spend our lives happily unless we have many good friends.	Know then, O servant of Jesus Christ, that God cares for his own and prepares good for every one of them, although we think that God has forgotten us. But now, brethren, let us be sorrowful and watch and pray, and God's goodness shall look upon us, and we wait for it.