

I. The Clement Romance Is It a Novel?

ISTVÁN CZACHESZ

In the modern history of research, the identification of the Pseudo-Clementine narrative as a novel has gone basically unchallenged since Erwin Rohde¹. In his recent monograph, Meinolf Vielberg discussed *Recognitiones* as a family romance². The present contribution questions the widespread classification of the Pseudo-Clementines as a Christian novel. I will show that such an identification is oversimplifying and we can use the notion of ‘romance’ or ‘novel’ in a meaningful way to understand the Pseudo-Clementines and its place in ancient literature only after we have undertaken a more differentiated analysis of its genre. I will refer to the common plot of the Greek *Homiliae* and the Latin *Recognitiones* as ‘the Recognitions’.

My argument will be arranged under six headings: (1) Remarks on the notion of the ‘ancient novel’; (2) The usefulness of lists of motifs; (3) The motif of lineage and virtues; (4) The motif of spiritual

¹ E. Rohde, *Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer* (Leipzig, 1914) 476.

² M. Vielberg, *Klemens in den pseudoklementinischen Rekognitionen. Studien zur literarischen Form des Spätantiken Romans* (Berlin, 2000) esp. 21-23, 113-129. Cf. L. Cirillo and A. Schneider, *Les ‘reconnaissances’ du pseudo Clément. Roman chrétien des premiers siècles* (Turnhout, 1999); A. Siouville and Ch. Jambet, *Les Homélie clémentines* (Lagrasse, 1991).

development; (5) The motif of separation and reunion of families; (6) The motif of apostolic visitation.

1. The genre of 'novel'

We should not forget where the notion of 'novel' or 'romance' originated. Most importantly, there was no such genre in antiquity³. The term 'romance' originally designated medieval literature in the French folk-idiom rather than educated Latin⁴. The words 'Romance' or 'novel' were applied to Heliodorus and other ancient narratives when they became widely known in the Renaissance.

This does not mean we are not allowed to use the word 'novel' in the study of ancient literature. Yet we have to be aware that speaking of ancient novels is not the same as speaking of ancient epics, historiography, or drama. Even more important is that the designation 'novel' becomes almost meaningless when applied to all sorts of texts from Xenophon's *Education of Cyrus* to Heliodorus, the *Apostolic Acts*, and the *Pseudo-Clementines*. We have to be especially careful when applying the term 'novel' to works that belong to another, clearly defined genre, such as historiography or biography. It is questionable how far a text can be considered as a 'novel' if it is described as a 'biographically presented novel of education or development'⁵.

It seems a more fruitful strategy to restrict the notion of novel or romance to the Hellenistic erotic novels (such as Heliodorus) and their parodistic variants (such as the *Ass Novel*). In choosing this alternative we are following for example M. v. Albrecht and N. Holzberg, whose concept of a novel also Vielberg adopts as his

³ C. Kerényi, *Die Griechisch-orientalische Romanliteratur in Religionsgeschichtlicher Beleuchtung: Ein Versuch mit Nachbartrachtungen* (Darmstadt, 1962²) 1-2.

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⁵ R. Helm, *Der antike Roman* (Göttingen, 1956) 5; Vielberg, *Klemens*, 134.

'novel in a strict sense'⁶. Thus a novel offers an entertaining narrative of the love, separation, spectacular misfortunes, adventures, fidelity, and ultimate reunion, of their wellborn and handsome hero and heroine. In addition to that, there existed a number of ancient genres and individual works, both before and after the appearance of the Hellenistic novel, which employed more or less novelistic elements. Such a definition of the novel excludes the Pseudo-Clementines⁷, yet there remain several meaningful ways, as we will see, in which it can be compared with the novels.

2. *Motifs and their function*

The study of ancient texts often proceeds from setting up lists of motifs. It was in this way that Rosa Söder studied the Apocryphal Acts, describing their relation with the ancient novels, and Vielberg applies the same strategy to the Recognitions. Vielberg mentions six motifs (of which he only studies the last two in depth) that connect the Recognitions to the novels⁸.

1. *Love (Eros)*. In the novels, love initiates the narrative plot. In the Recognitions, the love of Faustinus' brother for his sister-in-law makes Mattidia leave his family.

2. *Sea voyage*. Shipwreck and pirates shape the fate of the heroes in ancient novels. In the Recognitions, Mattidia's ship sinks on the journey to Athens and his sons are kidnapped and sold by pirates.

3. *An island and a temple*. An important scene of the *Recognitions* is set on Aradus, the same island which occurs in Chariton's

⁶ M. v. Albrecht, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur* (München, 1994) vol 2, 955; N. Holzberg, *Der antike Roman* (München, 1986) 33; Vielberg, *Klemens*, 134.

⁷ Albrecht, *Geschichte*, ###; H. Kuch, 'Die Herausbildung des antiken Romans als Literaturgattung', in H. Kuch *et al.*, *Der antike Roman* (Berlin, 1989) 11-51.

⁸ Vielberg, *Klemens*, 112-29.

novel. It is here in front of the temple with the magnificent works of Pheidias that the apostle Peter meets Mattidia, and Clement is reunited with his mother. Both temples and works of art fulfil important roles in the novels.

4. *Symbolic names.* Names in the novels often refer to the roles of the characters or the scene of the narrative. The family of Clement wear dynastic names of the emperors of the first and second centuries, and names from the New Testament appear in the narrative.

5. *Family history.* Recognitions as a whole is identified by Vielberg as family history, but he fails, in my view, to explain the role of family history in the ancient novel in general.

6. *Numbers.* Symbolic numbers play an important role in the novels as well as in the Pseudo-Clementines.

Vielberg's list exemplifies the usual shortcomings of such lists of motifs. A study of motifs may reveal similarities between texts, yet looking at such inventories does not inform us about the underlying structures of the respective narratives, and the functions that the motifs fulfil in those structures. For example, love between hero and heroine that endures in all hardships, fulfils a different function in the narrative than the love of Mattidia's brother-in-law for her (*Recognitiones* VII.15-6) or Mattidias purported love for her slave (*Homiliae* XIV.6) that in the two versions of the Pseudo-Clementines cause the separation of the family.

In the rest of my contribution, I will analyze how the narrative plot of the Pseudo-Clementines unfolds, and look for its place in ancient literature based on such observations.

3. *Lineage and virtues*

In the opening chapters of the *Recognitions* we read about young Clements' spiritual development. First of all we are informed that Clement was a Roman citizen who lived a virtuous life (*sôfronos zêsai dedynêmai*) from his childhood. A statement of the lineage and virtues of the hero seem to have been an established way to begin

ancient narratives. Similar statements are found, among others, at the befinning of Xenophon's *Ephesian Tale*⁹, the *Alexander Romance*¹⁰, the *Book of Tobit*¹¹, as well as several of Nepos' biographies¹².

A look at those introductions, however, immediately reveals a major difference in the respective virtues attributed to the heroes. Xenophon's hero, Habrocomes, was especially handsome; Alexander was excellent in body and soul, successful, and brave; the third one, Tobit, was righteous and did much charity. Nepos

⁹ 'Among the most influential citizens of Ephesus was a man called Lycomedes. He and his wife, Themisto, who also belonged to the city, had a son Habrocomes; his good looks were phenomenal, and neither in Ionia nor anywhere else had there ever been anything like them.' *An Ephesian Tale* 1.1, trans. G. Anderson in B.P. Reardon, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (Berkeley, 1989) 128-69.

¹⁰ 'No finer or more courageous man is held to have existed than Alexander, king of Macedon. (...) The deeds of Alexander, the excellences of his body and and of his soul, his success in his actions, his bravery, are our present subject.' *The Alexander Romance* 1.1, trans. K. Dowden in Reardon, *Ancient Novels*, 654-735.

¹¹ 'This book tells the story of Tobit son of Tobiel son of Hananiel son of Aduel son of Gabael son of Raphael son of Raguel of the descendants of Asiel, of the tribe of Naphtali (...). I, Tobit, walked in the ways of truth and righteousness all the days of my life. I performed many acts of charity for my kindred and my people who had gone with me in exile to Nineveh in the land of the Assyrians.' *Tobit* 1.1-3, tans. *New Revized Standard Version* (Grand Rapids, 1989).

¹² E.g. Miltiades: 'At the time when Miltiades, the son of Cimon, an Athenian, was eminent above all his countrymen, both for the antiquity of his family, the glory of his forefathers, and his own good conduct (...)' Nepos. *Lives of Eminent Commanders* 1.1, trans. J.S. Watson, in *Justin, Cornelius Nepos, and Eutropius* (London, 1886). Cf. the 'Alexandrian type' of biography in F. Leo, *Die griechisch-römische Biographie nach ihrer litterarischen Form* (Leipzig, 1901), 118-45, 318-20.

emphasizes the military genius of his generals. Our hero, in turn, has only one virtue, and this is 'chastity' (*sôfrosynê*). It is not by chance which virtues appear in the opening sentences: usually they play a central role in the respective narratives and determine the lot of the hero. Habrocomes' self-deification will evoke the anger of Eros; Alexander's military virtues will destine him, as his father's dream foretells, to 'wage war with all'¹³; in the Book of Tobit, it is because of the father's charity that God sends the archangel Raphael who assists his son in marrying Sara and healing his father¹⁴.

In the Recognitions, the virtue of chastity will determine the fate of the hero as well as of his family. The *sôfrosynê* of young Clement refers not only to his self-continnence but also to his search for the meaning of life. His spiritual quest will eventually take him to Barnabas and finally make him a disciple of Peter. His mother's chastity, on the other hand, will make her leave his husband and thereby initiate another chain of actions in the narrative.

In sum, although lineage and virtues open some ancient novels, such a beginning is by no means restricted to the romance. The virtues mentioned in the beginning determine the unfolding of the narrative plot. Without going into detail, we can conjecture that this organizing principle relies on the value system of the intended readership as well as the essentialism of ancient psychology. According to the latter theory, people's unchangeable characters determine them to particular roles and destinies in life and fiction: this basic conviction can be identified both in literary theory (such as Aristotle's *Poetics* 6) and the 'flat' characters of the ancient novel.

4. *Spiritual development*

In the first chapters of the Recognitions, young Clement tackles philosophical issues, such as mortality and eternal life. He also frequents the schools of philosophers, but is disappointed of 'the

¹³ *The Alexander Romance* 1.8.

¹⁴ *Tobit* 12.13-4.

endless setting up and refutation of views' on soul and mortality¹⁵. He makes up his mind to visit the shrines of Egypt and see if the souls of the dead appear to him in necromancy¹⁶. Suddenly rumors arrive at Rome of Jesus' ministry in Judea, then a missionary (Barnabas in the *Recognitiones*) appears in the city, and Clement soon becomes a disciple of Barnabas¹⁷.

Stories of joining a philosophical school are told, among others, in the biographies of Diogenes Laertius. Xenophon, for example, becomes a student of Socrates when the latter asks him whether he knows where 'men become good and honorable' (*kaloï kagathoi*)¹⁸. Xenophon in his *Memorabilia* reports that Socrates left the schools of natural philosophers so that he might dedicate himself to the study of human life (*anthrôpinoi skopoi*)¹⁹. Zeno of Citium, after asking the oracle how he should attain the best life, reads Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, and he likes it so much that he wants to join a school of philosophy and ultimately becomes a student of Crates²⁰. Philostratus in his *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* describes the education of his hero and how he became dissatisfied with various philosophical schools and masters, until he began to establish his own way of philosophical life²¹.

Although the *Recognitions* might have used the motif of a philosopher's *Werdegang*, a more straightforward example is found in the writings of Justin Martyr. In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin tells how he successively attended various philosophical schools and became disappointed with each one of them²². Finally he meets and

¹⁵ *Homilies* 1.3; *Recognitions* 1.3.

¹⁶ *Homilies* 1.5; *Recognitions* 1.5.

¹⁷ *Homilies* 1.9-14 (in Alexandria); *Recognitions* 1.7-11 (in Rome).

¹⁸ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 2.48.

¹⁹ Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.1.16.

²⁰ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 7.2.

²¹ Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 1.7-8.

²² 'Being at first desirous of personally conversing with one of these men, I surrendered myself to a certain Stoic; and having spent a con-

old man who introduces him to the philosophy of the ‘friends of Christ’²³.

We have to notice that the message of *Recognitiones* 1.7 echoes the stoic urge for *metanoia*: ‘Therefore change your life from the worse to the better, from things temporal to things eternal; for know ye that there is one God, who is in heaven, whose world ye unrighteously dwell in before his righteous eyes.’ The same warning is already known from the Lukan *Acts*, from the speeches in Lystra (also featuring Barnabas), Athens, and before Agrippa²⁴. Since the stoic background of such texts has been explored by Eduard Norden and Arthur Nock²⁵, we can restrict ourselves to one illustration from a disciple of Seneca: ‘O poor wretches, learn, and come to know the causes of things, what we are, for what life we are born, what the assigned order is (...), what kind of man God ordered you to be and

siderable time with him, when I had not acquired any further knowledge of God (for he did not know himself, and said such instruction was unnecessary), I left him and betook myself to another, who was called a Peripatetic, and as *he* fancied, shrewd. And this man, after having entertained me for the first few days, requested me to settle the fee, in order that our intercourse might not be unprofitable. Him, too, for this reason I abandoned, believing him to be no philosopher at all. But when my soul was eagerly desirous to hear the peculiar and choice philosophy, I came to a Pythagorean, very celebrated – a man who thought much of his own wisdom. (...) In my helpless condition it occurred to me to have a meeting with the Platonists, for their fame was great.’ *Dialogue with Trypho* 2, trans. *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, vol 2 (Edinburgh 1892).

²³ *Dialogue with Trypho* 3.1-8.2; cf. 2 *Apology* 13.

²⁴ *Acts* 14.15-7; 17.30-1; 26.18.

²⁵ E. Norden, *Agnostos theos. Untersuchungen zur Formgeschichte Religiöser Rede* (Leipzig, 1913), 13-29; A.D. Nock, *Conversion. The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford, 1933), 164-86.

where as a man you are placed'²⁶. Epictetus uses the image of the manager of a household to express the same idea: 'So it goes also in this great city, the world; for there is a Lord of the Mansion who assigns each and every thing its place.' Elsewhere he expresses his wish that 'our citizens may be converted and may honour the Divine and at last cease to be indifferent about the things that are of supreme importance.'²⁷

To summarize the argument of this section, the motif of spiritual development belongs to the philosophers' biographies more than to other genres. In the second century, theology emerged as *summa philosophia*, as it were, in the writings of the apologetes. Relying on that theological view, for *Recognitions* it was a logical step to feature conversion to Christianity as the fulfillment of spiritual development and a philosophical quest.

5. Separation and reunion of families

The separation and reunion of the hero's family is thought to be the most romance-like feature of *Recognitions*²⁸. Without denying the importance of recognition scenes in the novels²⁹, I would like to refer to the general use of this motif in ancient literature, a motif that occupied a central place already in Aristotle's *Poetics*. The most famous family narrative from antiquity is organized around separation and recognition: it is not a romance, but the myth of Oedipus. *Recognitions* are important in other genres as well, the recognition of

²⁶ Aulus Persius Flaccus, *Satires* 5.66; cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 10.12.

²⁷ Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.22.4; 2.20.21-22.

²⁸ The research is summarized by Vielberg, *Klemens*, 112-4.

²⁹ E.g. Xenophon, *An Ephesian Tale* 5.12-3 (husband with wife); Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe* 4.34-6 (father with daughter); Heliodorus, *An Ethiopian Story* 10.37-8 (father with daughter); *Apollonius King of Tyre* 48-9 (mother with husband, daughter, and son in law)

Odysseus by his nurse Eurycleia being just one example³⁰. Jewish literature is no exception: one of the most famous stories of the Old Testament is the family narrative of Joseph and his brothers, which is also based on separation and reunion. Recognition in this narrative occurs through the hero's revealing his identity³¹. In the New Testament, an interesting example is found in the narrative about the disciples of Emmaus (*Luke* 24.13-35).

As with other motifs, we also have to examine the role that the respective recognition scenes fulfill in the narrative structure. On one hand, there are narratives in which the separation and reunion of family members or lovers occur at the beginning of the plot, so that the resulting situation determines the whole narrative. This happens in the novels (as defined above) and in most other examples that have been mentioned. Minor variations are also possible within this type: sometimes one or more of the family members may or may not be aware of speaking with their relatives; the reader may or may not be informed of the characters' identities. Recognition is delayed in such cases, which creates tension and provides opportunity for the inclusion of various dramatic episodes (such as in the final chapters of the *Odyssey*). Yet at other times recognition follows without a delay. This suggests that the occurrence of recognition is more important for the structure of the plot than the eventual delay of recognition. Immediate recognition occurs in the parable of the prodigal son (*Luke* 15.11-32) and various folktales.

On the other hand, there are narratives, in which recognition does not serve as the conclusion of the whole narrative, but rather it appears as an episode that logically follows from the plot and sheds light on some important aspects of the narrative (such as the story of the disciples of Emmaus).

In the Pseudo-Clementine narrative, the recognition scene does not seem to function as the conclusion of the plot. This recognition scene is rather exceptional insofar as the family members are

³⁰ *Odyssey* XIX.386-507.

³¹ *Genesis* 37-45, recognition in 45.1-4.

introduced to the reader only shortly before the actual recognitions. The Pseudo-Clementine narrative can be called a story that includes an interesting recognition episode, but we can hardly identify in it the plot of a novel. At this point we can refer to similar episodes in the Apocryphal Acts. They also include several stories of separated families: wives are separated from their husbands in order that they realize the ideal of chastity and raise the anger of their husbands against the apostles³². Some husbands also refuse to sleep with their wives for the same reason³³. Family members are reunited in various ways in the gospels and Apostolic Acts, after they are healed, raised, or converted³⁴.

Yet the most interesting writing in this respect is the *Acts of Thomas*. In cc. 62-81 we read the story of a family separated by the demonic possession of mother and daughter. An officer of high standing sends his wife and daughter to a wedding banquet, who are attacked by demons on their way home. From that day, mother and daughter are locked up in a room. When the apostle hears the father's story, he exorcizes his wife and daughter, and reunites the family. The famous Hymn of the Pearl in *Acts of Thomas* 108-13, where the son of an Eastern king fetches a pearl from Egypt, can also be read as a family story of separation and reunion. In this narrative, the hero forgets *his own identity*, and in the end he has to *recognize himself*, as it were.

In sum, although the family history that is included in the Clementine Recognitions resembles a number of ancient narratives, its position within the plot is isolated, unlike the position of family stories in the novels. Yet the arrangement of the episode itself is novel-like without doubt and we cannot exclude that the author wanted to imitate the ancient novels when narrating the recognition scenes.

³² *Acts of Peter* 34, *Acts of Paul* 9-13; *Acts of Andrew* 14 etc.

³³ *Acts of Peter* 34.

³⁴ E.g. *Luke* 15; *Acts of John* ###; *Acts of Peter* ###.

6. *The motif of apostolic visitation*

In *Recognitiones* 1.6 we read how ‘rumors’ (*fama*) of Jesus’ ministry in Judea reached Rome. Hearing rumors of Jesus from Judea seems an established formula of the later Apostolic Acts, as a way of demonstrating that the respective Church was established as early as in Jesus’ life: similar motifs appear, for example, in the *Doctrines of Addai* (4th century) and the *Acts of Titus* (5th century)³⁵.

In the first book of *Recognitiones*, Peter announces his resolution to journey from city to city, even as far as Rome (***mechri Rômês autês***). This plan was clearly inspired by the ‘missionary plan’ that we read in the ascension scene of *Acts* as well as by the geographical unfolding of the narrative³⁶. Peter’s journeys in the *Recognitions*, however, often make the impression of visitations of church officials, very much in the style of the later Acts, rather than resembling the novelistic adventures of the earlier (canonical and apocryphal) Acts of the Apostles. As Peter and his companions arrive at a city, multitudes are greeting them, ‘in an expression of gratification’ and eager to get instruction³⁷; members of the local Church are sent out to receive them at the city gates and escort them to their lodgings³⁸; crowds of people are baptized (not less than ten thousand at a place)³⁹; and officials are ordained at all levels⁴⁰. When Peter founded churches, he ‘appointed over it as a bishop one of the elders who were with him’⁴¹.

We read similar records in the *Acts of Barnabas* and the *Acts of Titus*, both written in the fifth century. A major goal of those writings is to demonstrate the antiquity and apostolic origin of their

³⁵ *Doctrines of Addai* 2; *Acts of Titus* 2.

³⁶ *Acts* 1.8; 23.21.

³⁷ *Homiliae* 6.27, 8.1.

³⁸ *Recognitiones* 4.1; *Homiliae* 13.1.

³⁹ *Recognitiones* 3.72.

⁴⁰ *Recognitions* 3.66, 6.15; *Homilies* 11.36.

⁴¹ *Homilies* 7.5,12.

churches (on Cyprus and Crete, respectively). In sum, both the 'rumors from Judea' and the (fictive) records of official visitations suggest that *Recognitions* was written in the style of the later Acts.

7. Conclusions

What can we conclude from this survey about the relation of the *Recognitions* to the ancient novels? When looking at the overall design of the narrative, rather than at isolated motifs or solely at the recognition scenes, little ground remains for identifying this writing as an ancient novel. Important motifs of the ancient novel, such as love, sea voyage, and family history, color the story without deeply influencing the underlying plot.

The recognition scene remains the most important novel-like motif in the Pseudo-Clementines, although it can be found in a number of ancient genres, rather than only in the novels. Yet this motif, too, plays only a limited role in the plot. One can only speculate whether there had been a full-blown family history originally that has been later integrated into the extant form of the Pseudo-Clementines. Even if this were true, the question would remain whether the original family narrative was a novel.

The motifs that initiate and motivate the plot of the Pseudo-Clementines are biographical rather than novel-like. In this sense the *Recognitions* are related to ancient biography, especially the philosophers' biographies, the gospels, and the ideal biographies of Egyptian and Jewish literature. If we regard the reports of Peter's journeys, the book seems even less novelistic than the major Apocryphal Acts, rather resembling the official style of the later ones.

One can add that the large philosophical sections that we can find in the Pseudo-Clementines (and which we could not discuss in this essay) are not unusual for the canonical and apocryphal Acts, but would hardly fit into an ancient novel. From all of this we must conclude that the *Recognitions* as an ancient novel turns out to be a modern fiction.