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Eternal Punishment as Paideia: The Ekphrasis of Hell in the Apocalypse of Peter and the Apocalypse of Paul

Meghan R. Henning

Abstract

Much of the history of scholarship on “hell” has been devoted to tracing genetic relationships between older texts and more recent ones, typically based upon generic elements or the specific features of hell’s landscape. This paper suggests a new direction for classics and New Testament study, focusing instead on the rhetorical function of hell in antiquity. This paper argues that the ancient conventions of descriptive rhetoric were at work in the depictions of Hell that we find in the Jewish and early Christian apocalypses. It begins with a definition of these rhetorical devices by examining the Progymnasmata as well as Quintillian’s work on rhetoric and discusses the role of the rhetoric of description in the overall Greek and Roman programs of paideia. Next, this paper demonstrates that these rhetorical devices were at work in various ancient depictions of Hades (with examples chosen from Greek and Latin authors such as Homer, Plato, Virgil, Lucian and Plutarch). Finally, this paper shows that this rhetorical technique was also at work in the early Christian apocalypses and concludes that apocalyptic authors, like the Greeks and Romans before them, used these rhetorical techniques to “emotionally move” their audiences toward “right behavior.”

I. Introduction

As early Christians began to develop their own paideia, or program of ethical and cultural education, they drew upon a popular pedagogical tool that was available to them through Greek and Latin literature and Jewish Apocalypses, namely the rhetoric of the netherworld. In the twentieth century, scholars debate whether early Christians borrowed their images of hell from “pagan” understandings of Hades ¹ or from the tours of hell in the Jewish apocalypses.² More recently, the conversation attempts to mediate between those two perspectives, or to challenge linear notions of “influence” altogether.³ For instance, Jan Bremmer proposes that recent insights

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¹ Albrecht Dieterich, Nekyia: Beiträge zur Erklärung der neuentdeckten Petrusapokalyse (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1969), 19–45; Wilhelm Bousset, Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus (New York: Abingdon, 1970), 60–68; Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 1:14–15. Dieterich’s work was foundational for twentieth century scholarship and argued for Orphic-Pythagorean influence upon the Egyptian Christian community that produced the Akhmim fragment in which the Apocalypse of Peter is preserved. Bousset (Kyrios Christos, 65-66) argues that the New Testament passages referring to hell are “echoes” of the myth of the redeemer’s struggle with the demons of the underworld, “a myth which originally has nothing to do with the person of Jesus but only later has been adapted to him.” Similarly, Bultmann (Theology of the New Testament, 1:14-15) contends that the threat of “hell-fire” in the synoptic gospels is “only a primitive expression for the idea that in what a man does his own real being is at stake — that self which he not already is, but is to become.”


³ For instance, see Richard Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter: A Jewish Christian Apocalypse from the Time of Bar Kokha,” in The Fate of the Dead: Studies in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses, NovTSup 93, ed. idem (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 207. Bauckham notes that Himmelfarb has “probably played down too much the extent to which this development was indebted to Greek ideas.” He rightly contends that while the Apocalypse of Peter
into ancient Orphism suggest a multi-directional flow of ideas in which Virgil was influenced by the Jewish Sibylline Oracles and, in turn, some Jews were inspired by the Orphic tradition. In addition to acknowledging that there are different kinds of “influence” at play in the ancient world, Bremmer’s work also demonstrates that the matter of the influence of Greek and Latin literature upon the Jewish apocalypses is not a “yes or no” question. In this regard, Bremmer’s arguments have paved the way for my own, in which I contend that the Jewish and Christian apocalypses utilize the Greek and Latin rhetoric of visual description (ekphrasis, enargeia) and the form of the descriptive tour (perigeisis), but also utilize imagery that would appeal to their unique audiences.

Rather than tracing genetic relationships between older texts and more recent ones, I will look at the mode of presentation of scenes of eternal torment and the effect that this rhetoric had upon ancient audiences. I will focus on the specific ways in which Greek and Latin texts employed Hades as a tool for ethical and cultural education, and then I will compare that pedagogical model to the descriptions of hell in the Apocalypse of Peter, and the Apocalypse of Paul. Focusing on the rhetorical function of hell in antiquity, I argue that the rhetorical devices of ekphrasis and enargeia were at work in the depictions of Hell in the early Christian apocalypses. For early Christians, like the Greeks and Romans before them, these rhetorical techniques were used to “emotionally move” their audiences toward “right behavior,” and a better understanding of the rhetoric of eternal punishment can provide invaluable data about the attempts of early Christians to establish, fortify, and expand their fledgling communities.

II. Greek and Latin Texts: Hades as Paideia

Greek and Latin texts use depictions of Hades in the service of a broader program of ethical and cultural education known as paideia. Most studies of paideia, or Greek and Roman education, focus on the set of educational practices that were used to train literate males in the art of rhetoric. The reason for this overwhelming focus on paideia as rhetorical training was certainly influenced by Jewish apocalyptic, the Jewish apocalypses may also include traditions that were derived from Greek katabasis literature.


5 Although the Christian apocalypses are the focus of this paper, elsewhere I argue that the Jewish apocalypses are also influenced by the rhetoric of description in the Greek and Latin depictions of Hades. See Meghan R. Henning, Educating Early Christians through the Rhetoric of Hell: “Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth” as Paideia in Matthew and the Early Church, WUNT 2.382 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 83-107.

6 M. L. Clarke, Higher Education in the Ancient World (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971), passim; Stanley F. Bonner, Education in Ancient Rome: From the Elder Cato to the Younger Pliny (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), passim; Raffaella Cribiore and American Council of Learned Societies, Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), passim; Teresa Morgan, Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), passim; Raffaella Cribiore, Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2001), passim. See also Ruth Webb’s description of paideia as
is largely due to the remarkable amount of evidence available for the reconstruction of this facet of ancient schooling. Recent studies on ancient education conducted by Raffaella Cribiore and Teresa Morgan mine the educational materials preserved on papyrus, ostraca, waxed or whitened wooden tablets and even parchment for evidence of the kinds of exercises performed by students and teachers in antiquity.  

These materials reflect the priority that was given in antiquity to the study of Homer. Among those school texts that cite the Odyssey, the two most popular books are books 4 and 11. Although the educational texts themselves are not prolific enough to indicate which parts of the Odyssey teachers prefer, the papyri indicate that ancient education shapes readers interests in such a way that the tour of the underworld in Odyssey 11 is one of the two most popular books of Homer’s Odyssey.

In Latin education, being educated means knowing Vergil. By the first century C.E., therefore, Homer and Vergil are the educational standards. Quintilian refers to the “accepted practice” of students’ beginning their education with Homer and Virgil. Elsewhere, Vergil and Homer are not simply read in classrooms but also “burned into the memory” of students at an early age. In his reflections on his education in Greek and Latin literature, Augustine describes his frustrations that he had to “learn by heart the wanderings of some Aeneas” and was forced to.

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7 Cribiore and American Council of Learned Societies, Writing, Teachers, and Students, 13–26; Morgan, Literate Education, 39; Cribiore, Gymnastics of the Mind, 4–5.


9 Cribiore (Gymnastics of the Mind, 197) notes that this preference was likely due to the fact that these are the chapters of the Odyssey that follow the main characters of the Iliad. The readers “longed to meet again in the Odyssey the figures known from the Iliad and read books 4 and 11 with special attention.” See also the discussion of the Odyssey in Porphyry’s Quaest. Hom., which is also preserved in the scholia. Robert Lamberton, Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition, Transformations of the Classical Heritage 9 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 108.

10 Cribiore, Gymnastics of the Mind, 196 n. 52, 197.


12 Quintilian, Inst. 1.8.4. Quintilian says that the Greek and Latin languages should be on “equal footing” in an educational context (Inst. 1.1.12–14), and his comment suggests that at least some students would have read and memorized both Homer and Vergil in the original language of each text. On the matter of bilingualism in ancient education, see also James N. Adams, Bilingualism and the Latin Language (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 9–18.

13 Peter Brown, Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire, Curti Lectures 1988 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 39. See also the claim of Niceratus at Xenophon’s Symp. 3.5, “ ‘My father focused his care on ensuring that I would turn out to be a good man,’ he replied, ‘and forced me to learn every line of poetry that Homer wrote. Even now I could recite the whole of the Iliad and the Odyssey by heart.’”
memorize Homer as well.\textsuperscript{14} Whether students are memorizing the stories of the descent to Hades in \textit{Odyssey} 11 and 24 or the adventures of Aeneas in \textit{Aeneid} 6, the sources on ancient education suggest that the underworld is used as a means of grammatical and cultural education.

In particular, Greek and Latin depictions of Hades utilize \textit{ekphrasis}, the ancient convention of descriptive rhetoric. The primary source for understanding the rhetorical concept of \textit{ekphrasis} is the \textit{Progymnasmata}.\textsuperscript{15} This set of elementary exercises demonstrates that \textit{ekphrasis} is an elementary building block of \textit{paideia}.\textsuperscript{16} The term \textit{ekphrasis} is “well established” by the time Theon writes the \textit{Progymnasmata},\textsuperscript{17} which contains the earliest extant usage of the term.\textsuperscript{18} Theon defines \textit{ekphrasis} as “descriptive language, bringing what is portrayed clearly before the sight. There is ekphrasis [sic] of persons and events and places and periods of time.”\textsuperscript{19} Unlike other \textit{Progymnasmata} exercises that are defined in formal terms, \textit{ekphrasis} is defined “primarily in terms of its effect on the listener.”\textsuperscript{20} In effect, “ekphrasis is a speech which ‘leads [the audience] around,’” so that the readers feel as if they are eye witnesses.\textsuperscript{21}

The primary function of \textit{ekphrasis} is to persuade the audience especially by evoking emotion.\textsuperscript{22} Take, for instance, Quintilian’s book 8 of the \textit{Inst.} (8.3.67-9), which illustrates the

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\textsuperscript{14} Augustine, \textit{Conf.} 1.13–14. Although Augustine was presumably not yet a Christian at the time of his education in Greek and Latin literature, there is evidence in Paulinus of Pella (\textit{Eucharisticon} 61–84, 113–40) that Homer and Virgil were used to educate Christians.

\textsuperscript{15} The use of \textit{Progymnasmata} was less common in the schools of Roman rhetors in 1\textsuperscript{st} century CE since apparently Roman educators often thought elementary education was beneath them. Raffaella Cribiore has pointed out, however, that the exercises of the \textit{Progymnasmata} were being copied in the fourth century by Libanius, and his use of them suggests that he saw them as part of his duties as a rhetor. Raffaella Cribiore, \textit{The School of Libanius in Late Antique Antioch} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 143–47.

\textsuperscript{16} Webb, \textit{Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion}, 17. For additional sources on the manner in which the rhetorical tradition was preserved and passed on via the \textit{Progymnasmata}, see Robert A. Kaster, \textit{Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity}, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 11 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), passim; Aline Rousselle, “Images as Education in the Roman Empire,” in \textit{Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity}, ed. Yun Lee Too (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 373–403; Morgan, \textit{Literate Education, passim}. Cribiore (\textit{School of Libanius}, 146) has demonstrated that many students may have encountered the \textit{Progymnasmata} as the main source of their rhetorical training.

\textsuperscript{17} Unless otherwise noted, the citations from the \textit{Progymnasmata} refer to George A. Kennedy’s translation and notes. George A. Kennedy, trans., \textit{Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric}, WGRW 10 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).


\textsuperscript{19} Aelius Theon, \textit{Progymnasmata} 7.118. Kennedy, \textit{Progymnasmata}, 45. ‘Εκφρασίς ἐστι λόγος περιηγηματικός ἐναργῶς ὑπὸ ὅπως ἔγγον τὸ δηλούμενον \textit{In the Greek sources, the elementary exercise of “placing before the eyes” is called \textit{ekphrasis} while in the Latin sources other terms are used for the same rhetorical concept. For example, Aristotle’s definition of \textit{ekphrasis}’ ability to place something “before the eyes” equates \textit{ekphrasis} with other rhetorical terms for vivid description such as ἐνάργεια, διατύπωσις, and διαγράφῃ. See Aristotle, \textit{Rhet.} 3.11 (1411b.24–25). Webb (\textit{Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion}, 51–52) notes that these terms are sometimes distinguished from one another, and at other times used interchangeably.}

\textsuperscript{20} Webb, \textit{Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion}, 51.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 52. Theon claims that the audience should “almost see” and Nicolaus says that the difference between \textit{diegesis} and \textit{ekphrasis} is that \textit{ekphrasis} attempts to make the listeners into spectators. Aelius Theon, \textit{Progymnasmata} 7.119; Nicolaus, \textit{Progymnasmata} 11.68 (Kennedy, \textit{Progymnasmata}, 46–47, 166).

\textsuperscript{22} For instance, \textit{ekphrasis} could be used in a judicial speech to “be more persuasive.” See Nicolaus, \textit{Progymnasmata} 11.69. See also Quintilian (\textit{Inst.} 6.2.29-30), who explains, “What the Greeks call phantasiae are the means by which images of absent things are represented to the mind in such a way that we seem to see them with our eyes and to be in their presence. \textit{Whoever has mastery of them will have a powerful effect on the}
difference between an ekphrastic display of the sack of a city and a simple statement of the facts. The simple statement of facts, as Quintilian notes, “does not touch the emotions.” 23 Instead, the use of enargeia or “vividness” evokes pity and concern for the residents of the city. Quintilian explains:

No doubt, simply to say “the city was stormed” is to embrace everything implicit in such a disaster, but this brief communiqué, as it were, does not touch the emotions. If you expand everything which was implicit in the one word, there will come into view flames racing through houses and temples, the crash of falling roofs, the single sound made up of many cries, the blind flight of some, others clinging to their dear ones in a last embrace, shrieks of children and women, the old men whom an unkind fate has allowed to live to see this day; then will come the pillage of property, secular and sacred, the frenzied activity of plunderers carrying off their booty and going back for more, the prisoners driven in chains before their captors, the mother who tries to keep her child with her, and the victors fighting one another wherever the spoils are richer.24

Through his description of enargeia, Quintilian “discloses his understanding of the psychological processes involved in arousing emotion rhetorically.” 25 If enargeia is executed correctly, the “emotions will ensue just as if we were present at the event itself.”26

Likewise, Aristotle offers an anthropological explanation for how ekphrasis works and argues that a sensory perception impresses a mental image on the soul, just as an image is stamped into wax. The soul then associates this image with similar images and emotional responses that are already familiar and responds in kind.27 According to this understanding

emotions. Some people say that this type of man who can imagine in himself things, words and deeds well and in accordance with truth is ‘good at imagining.’”

23 Webb (Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion, 74) argues that Quintilian’s discussion of enargeia is closest to the Greek concept of ekphrasis although Quintilian does not treat ekphrasis in his preliminary exercise. Her argument is contrary to those who have looked for ekphrasis in his treatment of digressio or excursus, likely because previous discussion of ekphrasis has limited the concept to narrative pauses and descriptions of works of art. Instead, Webb (Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion, 90) equates ekphrasis in the Progymnasmata with Quintilian’s treatments of enargeia, “the quality of language that appeals to the audience’s imagination.”


25 For Webb (Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion, 90), Quintilian’s discussion of enargeia helps to fill in the gaps left by the Progymnasmata regarding how the rhetorical effect is achieved. For a detailed discussion of the way that the rhetorical theory on ekphrasis functions in ekphrastic epigrams, see Simon Goldhill, “What Is Ekphrasis for?” CP 102 (2007): 1–19.

26 Quintilian, Inst. 6.2.32. See for example the discussion of ekphrasis in the Iliad in Laura Slatkin’s essay. Slatkin argues that the focalization of a fallen warrior incites the other characters (even the gods!) to feel emotions of pity, grief, and vengeance. Through the character’s visions, the reader is also overcome with the same emotions. Laura M. Slatkin, “Notes on Tragic Visualizing in the Iliad,” in Visualizing the Tragic: Drama, Myth, and Ritual in Greek Art and Literature: Essays in Honour of Froma Zeitlin, ed. Christina Shuttleworth Kraus (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 19, 23. Quintilian (Inst. 6.2.30) instructs that to use this “vividness” to his advantage, an orator must be able to present images “in accordance with the truth” (secundum verum). See also, Quintilian, Inst. 4.2.34. Webb (Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion, 117) emphasizes that with regard to ekphrasis and enargeia “truth” is defined as “verisimilitude.” For the speech to have the desired impact on the audience, the orator must conform to the “culturally accepted ‘truth.’” Likewise, Doxapatres argues that in the ekphrasis of a battle, one should supplement the description with details that fit the audience’s expectations of the genre. Doxapatres (Homiliai 524–525) states, “For they say that even if these things did not happen, it is still permissible to say they happened because they are accepted as happening.”

27 I am grateful to Troy W. Martin for these references to Aristotle’s understanding of the way that mental imagery works. Aristotle Mem. rem. 450A-B; idem, Rhet. 2.2-11.
of the way in which *ekphrasis* functions, ekphrastic depictions of hell in antiquity would require the audiences to be familiar with the images used so that the imagery could “bring what is being shown before the eyes.”

One of the analogies used to describe *ekphrasis* is that of a “journey” or *periēgēsis* in which the speaker is a tour guide leading the audience around the site that is being described. *Periēgēsis* is the rhetorical principle at work in the city descriptions found in epideictic speeches, such as “Aphthonius’ own model ekphrasis of the Alexandrian acropolis which is structured as a tour around the building.”

The rhetorical effect of *periēgēsis* is that the author is not only able to make a sight appear before the audience but is also able to direct the audience’s attention so as to add “order and meaning to the undifferentiated mass of sights which is presented to the visitor.” This way of describing the rhetorical task of *ekphrasis* as a journey is particularly relevant to the Christian tours of Hell in which the narrator is truly a guide bringing the sights of Hell “before the eyes” of the readers.

The use of *ekphrasis*, however, is by no means limited to tour literature or descriptions of places. Despite the general advice one finds in the *Progymnasmata* on how to create one’s own *ekphrasis*, there are no rigid or consistent stylistic restrictions. In fact, there is great variety among the examples of *ekphrasis* that are chosen from classical literature for the *Progymnasmata*. Although previous scholarship on descriptive rhetoric in antiquity limits *ekphrasis* to narrative pauses or descriptions of works of art, Ruth Webb’s recent

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28 Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 10.22. Some churches in antiquity felt terror upon reading the Apocalypse of Peter, while the images do not really hold the same sway today.


30 Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata* 47–49. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 118, elaborates that what Aphthonius describes is better known as the Serapeum, “an extensive shrine on a low hill in the southwestern quarter of the city.” Webb (Ekphrasis, *Imagination and Persuasion*, 55) notes, “Aphthonius is the only one to give advice about the description of places. Despite the fact that his model ekphrasis is of a place, the Alexandrian acropolis, his instructions are brief to the point of obscurity. In describing places, as well as periods of time, one should include the surroundings (*ta periechonta*) and contents (*ta en autois huparchonta.*)”

31 Webb (Ekphrasis, *Imagination and Persuasion*, 54) elaborates: “Ekphrasis in some cases, therefore does not only make ‘visible’ the appearance of a subject, but makes something about its nature intelligible, an idea which is encompassed by the verb δῆλον which can mean to explain, to reveal to the intellect, as well as to show.”


34 Some Homeric descriptions that are used to illustrate *ekphrasis* take up only one or two lines of epic verse. See the description of Thersites in *Iliad* 2.217 and 219 and the description of Eurybates in *Od.* 19.246. Other ancient examples of *ekphrasis* are much longer. See the description of the Shield of Achilles in *Iliad* 18 or the night battle in Thucydides, *Hist.* 7.
contribution to the study of ekphrasis emphasizes the diverse circumstances in which the rhetorical device could be used. According to the examples cited by Theon, ps.-Hermogenes, Aphthonius and Nicholaus, ekphrasis may be applied to descriptions of places, times, events, persons, or things and can occur in a variety of genres of literature from epic poetry to historical narratives. These variations in the length and style of ekphrastic examples from Greek and Latin literature provide comparative examples of ekphrasis that occur in the ancient descriptions of Hell, take different forms, and occur in a variety of literary contexts.

As a rhetorical device that has the power to connect emotionally with an audience and persuade them, ekphrasis is a powerful tool for communicating ethical values. Children learn the traditional images of the mythic heroes as they became familiar with the epic texts. In this regard, the images become a part of the students’ everyday vocabulary of moral and social values. For instance, meeting the “black buttocks” means meeting Heracles and is “a threat that mothers made to their children if they misbehaved.” Imagery is thought to have so powerful an effect on the ethical character of the student that ancient writers on education are interested in censoring images deemed “morally incorrect.” The abundance of mythic imagery in the educational texts together with the teachings on

35 Webb (Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion, 68) argues, “So while some ekphraseis might, like descriptions as broadly defined in modern terms, constitute a narrative pause, or a separable passage, even when woven into their contexts, others such as Thucydides’ night battle, or Libanios’ ekphraseis of the Kalends or the hunt, constitute narratives (in the sense of accounts of actions unfolding in time) in themselves.” For an excellent discussion of the literary and historical issues involved in determining the relationship between ekphrasis and its literary context, see D. P. Fowler, “Narrate and Describe: The Problem of Ekphrasis,” JRS 81 (1991): 35. After entertaining the range of theoretical arguments in the last century regarding narrative and description, Fowler concludes that ekphraseis cannot be “separated from their contexts—or reduced to them.” Contra Valentine Cunningham’s argument that presumes ekphrasis is a break from the narrative and inextricably linked to the plastic arts. Valentine Cunningham, “Why Ekphrasis?” CP 102 (2007): 57–71.

36 See Theon, Progymnasmata 118; Hermogenes, [Progymnasmata] 22; Aphthonius, Progymnasmata 46–47; Nicholaus, Progymnasmata 67–68. While many examples of ekphrasis occur in narrative sections of speeches, the application of the rhetoric of description is not limited to speeches. Webb (Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion, 63) notes, “Many of Theon’s examples of diēgēsis are drawn from historiography (Thucydides, Philistos, Herodotos) and Homeric epic, as well as from orators such as Demosthenes.” Hamon and Baudoin (“Rhetorical Status of the Descriptive,” 4) argue that description does not belong to any particular genre.

37 There is generic diversity both between the Greek and Roman literature (i.e. Homer’s Odyssey vs. Plato’s Republic) as well as the Christian “hell texts” (i.e. Matthew vs. the post-NT apocalypses). As Ian Morris is careful to note, these generic differences should not be mistaken for “development” of the idea of hell but should be compared as iterations of an idea in different social contexts. See Ian Morris, “Attitudes toward Death in Archaic Greece,” Classical Antiquity 8 (1989): 313.

38 Rousselle, “Images as Education,” 376–79.


40 Aristotle (Pol. 7.17) wants to shield children from immoral stories, as well as obscene statues and paintings. See also Eusebius’ citation of Plato, Resp. 2.378C1–D7 in Praep. ev. 2.7.6–7. Here, Eusebius uses Plato to argue against exposing children to the ethical education implicit in the Parthenon frieze of the gigantomachy because it would interfere with the ethical message that quarrelling with one another is wrong. Rousselle, “Images as Education,” 379.
description used by grammarians and rhetors lead one to imagine Greek and Roman educational systems in which the interpretation of imagery is common currency.\footnote{Ibid., 403.}

The cash value of this common currency is evident in the texts that describe Hades and use vivid imagery to convey ethical or cultural lessons. Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* uses the depiction of Sisyphus and the “ruthless stone” as an example of visual rhetoric that uses “words that signify actuality” to “set things before the eyes” (3.11.2-3). In this brief example of *enargeia*, Aristotle demonstrates that Homer’s depiction of the punishment of Sisyphus in Hades “gives movement and life” to the inanimate stone (*Rhet.* 3.11.4) to make the punishments described seem “real” and close at hand for Homer’s audience.

The use of *enargeia* to depict the sights and sounds of Hades is not unique to *Odyssey* 11 but is a rhetorical strategy that is common to Greek and Latin depictions of Hades. In Vergil’s *Aeneid* 6, the language of vision abounds and invites the reader to connect with the tragic experiences of the characters Aeneas encounters.\footnote{Smith points out numerous places in Book 6 where the language of visualization is utilized to describe Aeneas’ conversation with his father. Alden Smith, *The Primacy of Vision in Virgil’s Aeneid* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 85–89. See also the focus on Aeneas’s perception of a scene in *Aeneid* 1.441–493, where Aeneas looks at the depiction of events from the Trojan War. Fowler, “Narrate and Describe,” 31.} When Aeneas first arrives at the river Styx, for example, he sees the crowd of the dead who are rushing at the banks of the river, and the group includes “boys and unwedded girls, and sons placed on the pyre before their parents’ eyes” (*ante ora parentum*).\footnote{Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.308, emphasis mine.} Vergil does not merely list the people present at the Styx, but he uses the language of visualization to place the sadness of premature death and parental loss “before the eyes” of Aeneas as well as the reader.\footnote{Smith argues that this image is an example of the way that “Aeneas’ vision never becomes so optimistic as to lose a connection with the past, a state underscored here by the description of parental loss.” Smith, *The Primacy of Vision in Virgil’s Aeneid*, 83.} In the reunion between Aeneas and his father Anchises, visual language is used extensively. At the moment Anchises sees Aeneas across the meadow, he is overcome with tears and exclaims, “Is it given to me to see your face (*datur ora tueri*), my son, and hear and utter familiar tones?”\footnote{Vergil, *Aen.* 6.688–689, emphasis mine.}

After their emotional greeting, Anchises summarizes for Aeneas the punishments that are used to purify the souls who are “not entirely freed from all evil” before they return to earth for another incarnation.\footnote{Ibid., *Aeneid* 6.735–751.}

In Lucian’s depictions of Hades, the *ekphrasis* of the sights, sounds and smells appeals to the audience’s senses. Although Lucian’s works are parodies, they still use many of the same rhetorical features as other depictions of Hades.\footnote{While other texts may state their pedagogical purpose more plainly, Lucian’s parodies educate audiences through the mechanisms of exaggeration and humor. Katerina Oikonomopoulou (“Journeying the Underworld of Lucian’s *Cataplus*,” in *Education and Representations of the Beyond in Later Antiquity*, ed. A. Lefteratou, K. Stamatopoulos, and I. Tanaseanu-Döbler [Göttingen, Forthcoming] cautions, however, that we have to be careful not to presume that Lucian’s criticism is always constructive. See also Joel C. Relihan, *Ancient Menippean Satire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), passim; Stephen Halliwell, *Greek Laughter: A Study of Cultural Psychology from Homer to Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), passim.} As Menippus arrives at the place of

\footnote{Ibid., 403.}

\footnote{Smith points out numerous places in Book 6 where the language of visualization is utilized to describe Aeneas’ conversation with his father. Alden Smith, *The Primacy of Vision in Virgil’s Aeneid* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 85–89. See also the focus on Aeneas’s perception of a scene in *Aeneid* 1.441–493, where Aeneas looks at the depiction of events from the Trojan War. Fowler, “Narrate and Describe,” 31.}

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\footnote{Vergil, *Aen.* 6.688–689, emphasis mine.}

\footnote{Ibid., *Aeneid* 6.735–751.}
punishment, he relays that “there were many pitiful things to hear and to see.” He hears the sounds of scourges, the wailing of the people who are being roasted, and the pillories and wheels. He smells and sees the dead from antiquity. They are “moldy” and reduced to bare skeletons staring at him “horridly and vacuously and baring their teeth.” Menippus reflects on these vivid images that convey the virtues of poverty. In the place of punishment, the poor receive half as much torture as the rich, and the skeletons on the Acherusian Plain all look alike. Lucian’s *ekphrasis* of the punishments of the rich and powerful is much more vivid than the other punishments he recounts and communicate explicitly the “moral” of Menippus’ tale. For instance, Lucian describes the punishment of the wealthy who are turned into donkeys and made to bear the burdens of the poor for 250 years.

Plutarch’s *On the Delays of the Divine Vengeance* similarly contains vivid description of specific kinds of punishment, each with its own “moral” to be learned by Thespesius. The punishments are described in vivid detail down to the colors of the bruises left by various vices that Dikê attempts to “heal” through her punishments. Plutarch writes, “One is drab brown, the stain that comes of meanness and greed; another fiery blood-red, which comes of cruelty and savagery; where you see the blue-grey, some form of incontinence in pleasure has barely been rubbed out; while if spite and envy are present they give out this livid green, as ink is ejected by the squid.” With the description of each punishment Plutarch makes clear what kind of vice has led to this kind of torment. The vivid descriptions of the punishments elicit an emotional response from Thespesius on the level of the text and in turn from Plutarch’s readers. The *ekphrasis* of the souls that are undergoing punishment in Hades in Plutarch’s *Divine Vengeance* makes the ethical message of the punishments clear: protect your soul from irrationality and the passions in your mortal life, lest it need to be “purified” through caustic punishments after death that “far transcend those that pass through the flesh.”

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49 Ibid., 15.
50 Ibid., 14–15.
52 Ibid., *Men.* 20. These punishments of the rich and powerful reverse the social roles of individuals on earth. There is an overlap between the “role reversal” that we see in Lucian and the measure for measure punishments of the apocalypses, in the sense that both seek to match earthly crimes with otherworldly punishments that “fit” the earthly offences. See also the ekphrasis of the punishment of the powerful: “But you would have laughed much more heartily, I think, if you had seen our kings and satraps reduced to poverty there, and either selling salt fish on account of their neediness or teaching the alphabet, and getting abused and hit over the head by all comers, like the meanest of slaves.”Ibid., *Men.* 17.
53 A different goddess is “warden and executioner” of each type of punishment. Poinê deals swiftly with those who committed minor misdeeds by snatching up their possessions but doing no bodily harm. Dikê deals with the souls of those whose “viciousness is harder to heal” by laying bare their errors and violently stripping them of their passions. Finally, Erinys punishes those whose souls are “past all healing” by dealing with each one “piteously and cruelly” and imprisoning them. Plutarch, *Sera* 564F–565F.
54 Ibid., *Sera* 565C.
55 See also the “souls of those whose wickedness was due to insatiable and overreaching avarice,” who are dipped first into a lake of molten gold, then into a lake of freezing cold lead, then into a lake of iron, and finally into the lake of gold again. With each change in temperature and substance the souls undergo horrible agony. Plutarch, *Sera* 567C–D.
56 Ibid., 566F.
57 Ibid., 567B, 565B.
While Lucian and Plutarch provide ethical lessons, Aristophanes’ *Frogs* describes Hades in a way that provides cultural education for the audience. At the end of the play, Pluto commissions Aeschylus to return from Hades to Athens and “educate the thoughtless people” (καὶ παίδευσον τοὺς ἀνεήτους).\(^{58}\) Pietro Pucci uses the dialogue between Euripides and Aeschylus in Hades (Aristophanes, *Ran*. 1008-12) to illustrate that ancient poetry has a pedagogical function “to make people better citizens.”\(^{59}\) Of course Aristophanes’ own work strives to live up to these standards of poetic achievement by putting advice about how to save the Athenian *polis* on the lips of Euripides and Aeschylus.\(^{60}\) This advice is similar to the political virtues emphasized at the end of the *Aeneid* (6.740-55). In this vision of the future, the review of Roman heroes elevates the virtues of patriotism, selfless service to the state, and political achievement.\(^{61}\)

### III. The Spectacle of Punishment as *Paideia* in Early Christian Apocalypses

Parallel to Plutarch’s use of the spectacle of punishment as *paideia*, the early Christian apocalypses employ the rhetoric of description for pedagogical ends. The Apocalypse of Peter and the Apocalypse of Paul have a similar rhetorical orientation to the *periēgēsis* of the Greek and Latin texts and take the reader on a tour of the horrors of hell that reveals the consequences of disbelief and the ethical and cultural requirements of early Christian *paideia*. In these early Christian tours of hell, the audience is led around the dwelling places of the damned by means of a tour guide, topographical descriptions, and directional language. On the tour, the audience encounters vivid depictions of sinners and their punishments in each place.\(^{62}\) Along the way, the “tourist” takes note of the distinctive topography of each locale that includes but is not limited to rivers of fire, deep pits, a pit of fire, a pit that has the appearance of blood, a pillar of fire, the Acherusian field, and a place of ice and snow.\(^{63}\) These tours are also marked with directional cues providing the reader with the sense of order and differentiation that is characteristic of *periēgēsis*. The Apocalypse of Peter and the Apocalypse of Paul use prepositions as relative directional markers connecting one place to the next.\(^{64}\) Each of these apocalypses also gives

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59 Pucci, Pietro, “Euripides and Aristophanes: What does Tragedy Teach?” in Kraus, *Visualizing the Tragic*, 105–6. Pucci’s overarching thesis is based on the theory of Nicole Loraux, who argues that the “political” dimension of tragedy is often “anti-political” or transgressing the ideology of the polis.
61 Gordon W. Williams (Technique and Ideas in the Aeneid [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983], 55–56) argues that this ending portion of *Aeneid* 6 exalts *iustitia* and *pietas* as well as the importance of a political career in a way that closely parallels the dream of Scipio in Cicero’s *De republica*. Raymond J. Clark (*Catabasis: Vergil and the Wisdom Tradition* [Amsterdam: Grüner, 1979], 223) argues against the parallel to Cicero.
62 In many ways, these elements are similar to the evidence of *periēgēsis* that one observes in I *Enoch*. Jan Bremmer (“Tours of Hell,” 13-34) has argued that the presence of I *Enoch* and the Apocalypse Peter in the Akhmim fragment suggests that a later compiler, and subsequently some ancient audiences saw a connection between the two works. For some later audiences then, the rhetoric of the Apocalypse of Peter mirrored that of Enoch’s tour.
63 For a detailed comparison of the geography and environmental punishments in each apocalypse, See Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 113–15.
64 For example, the “river of boiling fire” is “beyond” the “great river of water” that encircles the earth and serves as the foundation of the heavens (Apoc. Paul 31). Likewise, those who persecute the righteous are punished “near” those who chew their tongues because they slandered and doubted the righteousness of Jesus (Apoc. Pet. 9).
more concrete references to biblical places to help the reader fit this tour into their existing spatial schema. The reader is transported to the distinctive parts of “hell” in a way that allows the reader to spatially differentiate between the sights, sounds, and smells of each set of punishments.

The paideia of these journeys to hell is not only conveyed through the spatial and analytical elements of periēgēsis but also through “what is portrayed clearly before the sight.” In the context of apocalyptic literature, verbs of sight and sound are common generic features and logical ways of communicating the vision that the apocalyptic author wishes to “reveal.” In the apocalypses that describe hell, these verbs are not merely a means of introducing a visionary sequence. Instead, the act of perception is coupled with the emotional responses of the characters in the text and functions to “move the audience.” Peter describes the emotional responses to the perception of the final judgment and eternal punishment of “evil-doers.” He (Apoc. Pet. 3) states, “We saw how the sinners wept in great distress and sorrow, until all who saw it with their eyes wept, whether righteous, or angels or [Jesus] himself also.” Peter’s mournful and merciful response is similar to the response of Aeneas’s late father Anchises who is overcome with tears the moment that he sees Aeneas. For the apocalyptic authors, as for Vergil, the ekphrasis of the afterlife is directly connected to the emotions of sadness and grief.

Although the language of perception is suggestive, the primary way in which ekphrasis elicits emotion from an audience is through enargeia or “vividness.” The depictions of hell that are contained in the post-New Testament apocalypses portray imagery that mirrors the rhetorical orientation of Greek and Latin depictions of Hades. For instance, the different categories of sinners in Apoc. Pet. 11-12 wear different colored garments that recall the different colored bruises left by various vices in Plutarch’s Moralia. The young women who lost their virginity before marriage are clothed in “dark raiments” (Apoc. Pet. 11), and the men and women who give alms and falsely claim to be righteous are clothed in “white raiments” (Apoc. Pet. 12). Just as Plutarch uses color to distinguish between those who are “green with envy” or “drab brown” because of meanness and greed, the apocalyptic author employs dark and white garments to differentiate between the unchaste and the falsely pious.

The vivid imagery that is used to describe the punishment of those who do not obey their parents and the unchaste in Apoc. Pet. 11 is also reminiscent of the ekphrasis of Hades in Od. 11. Those who disobey their elders are “punished with pain, with hanging up and with many wounds which flesh-eating birds inflict,” and the unchaste “shall be seriously punished and their flesh

65 See references to the Mt. of Olives (Apoc. Pet. 1; Gk. Apoc. Mary 1); the Mount of Transfiguration (Apoc. Pet.15); Paul’s “third heaven” (Apoc. Paul 19); the Gehenna of fire (Gk. Apoc. Ezra 1.9); and the lake of fire (Gk. Apoc. Mary 24).
67 As discussed above, the response of “weeping” is not unique to the Apocalypse of Peter but occurs in all of the apocalypses under discussion.
68 Bremmer, “Christian Hell: From the Apocalypse of Peter to the Apocalypse of Paul,” Numen 56 (2009): 315–16; István Czachesz, “Torture in Hell and Reality,” in The Visio Pauli and the Gnostic Apocalypse of Paul, ed. Jan N. Bremmer and István Czachesz (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 143. Both of these authors note that some of the punishments of hell parallel the tortures of the martyrs. Although the direction of influence cannot be determined, the shared imagery between the Acts of the Martyrs and the punishments of hell is suggestive. From a rhetorical standpoint, this influence could be an attempt to appeal to the “visual vocabulary” of early Christians.
69 Plutarch, Sera 565C.
will be torn in pieces” (Apoc. Pet. 11). The text makes clear that these fleshly punishments are meant to inflict anguish upon the wicked by explaining that “they shall be punished with these tortures, while they feel them.” The imagery of having one’s flesh “torn” or wounded by “flesh-eating birds” is similar to the punishment of Tityos (Od. 11.576-581), whose body was torn apart by vultures as punishment for his raping Leto. Apart from parallels between the specific imagery, the “fleshly” punishments of Apoc. Pet. 11 also function similarly to the punishments handed down by Minos in Od. 11.568-600. Odysseus watches in pity, as Tityos is torn apart by vultures, and the punishments of Tantalus and Sisyphus are described in vivid detail, but also more generally as “violent torment” (Od. 11. 581, 594). In both Apoc. Pet. 11 and Od. 11.568-600, the pain of punishment is “brought before the eyes” of the audience so that they are able to feel the anguish of eternal punishment.

The “vividness” or enargeia of hell in the apocalypses is not limited to visual description but also appeals to other senses. The weeping and wailing of the damned place the reader in contact with the “sounds” of hell. The Apocalypse of Peter describes the “foul smell” of the milk that comes forth from the breasts of the women who are being punished for killing their children (8) in contrast to the “beautiful” “fragrance of perfume” that wafts toward Peter and Jesus as they tour heaven’s paradise (16). Likewise, the imagery in the Apocalypse of Paul includes a range of foul smells that includes the “foul stench” of a wicked soul (16), “men and women clothed in rags full of tar and sulphurous fire” (40), and the “disagreeable and very evil smell which surpassed all the punishments” (41). These vivid depictions of the aromas of the afterlife add a further dimension to the ekphrasis of eternal punishment and enliven the reader’s experience of the journey as a “spectator.”

What is more, the texts themselves confirm that these depictions of hell are intended to educate the reader. In Apoc. Pet. 1, the frame of Jesus’ teaching on the Mount of Olives about the parousia establishes the entire apocalypse as a “lesson,” a teaching about the coming judgment and eternal punishment that the disciples hope will enable them to “perceive” and “instruct those who come after” them. Similarly, the angel explicitly tells Paul to share what he has learned with others. The angel says, “Follow me further and I shall show you what you

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70 Bremmer (“Christian Hell,” 301) details the parallels between Apoc. Pet. 11 and the content of Greek myth, including Od. 11. These parallels provide the starting point for our discussion of shared rhetorical orientation between Greeks and early Christians.

71 Contra Himmelfarb (Tours of Hell, 41–45) whose argument focuses on the possible genetic relationship between the katabasis literature and Jewish and Christian tours of hell. She contends that the Christian apocalypses owe more to the Jewish apocalypses than to Od. 11. Instead, I am arguing that the Apocalypse of Peter is drawing from both Jewish and Greek antecedents but shares the rhetorical orientation of the Odyssey.

72 As noted above, the torment of Sisyphus is used by Aristotle Rhetoric 3.11.2-3, as an example of enargeia.


74 See also the “foul pus” in the Greek text of Apoc. Pet. 31 that is mentioned in Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas, Das Petrusevangelium und die Petrusapokalypse: Die griechischen Fragmente mit deutscher und englischer Übersetzung. Neustamentliche Apokryphen 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 120. For discussion of the origin of the motif of “bad smells” in Plato and Aristophanes, see Bremmer, “Christian Hell,” 301.

75 The Apocalypse of Peter (16) also ends with a heavenly scene in which Peter and the disciples are exhorted that “thine eyes must be opened and thine ears unstopped.” For discussion of the elements of a post-Easter triumphal ascension in Apoc. Pet. 17, see Ernst Kübler, Studien zum Te Deum and zur Geschichte des 24 Psalms in der alten Kirche (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958), 53–55.
ought to tell openly and report” (Apoc. Paul 21). The narrative frame of the Apocalypse of Paul also confirms that the visions of heaven and hell are intended to educate the audience and begins and ends with the discovery of the hidden text under Paul’s house. Just before the end of the Apocalypse of Paul, the Lord speaks to Paul after his death and explains the pedagogical function of this “hidden text.” The Lord asks, “Paul, have I shown everything to you so that you should put it under the wall of a house? Then, the Lord commands, “Rather send and reveal it for its sake so that men may read it and turn to the way of truth that they may not come into these bitter torments (Apoc. Paul 51 [longer ending]).” For the Apocalypse of Paul, the “bitter torments” are intended to “turn” the reader toward the “way of truth.”

As in the depictions of Hades by Plato, Lucian, and Plutarch, the apocalypses use the ekphrasis of punishment as the site for paideia. In the ekphrasis of Hades, the ethical and cultural content of each author’s paideia varies with each text presenting its own “morals” for the formation of an ideal citizen. Whereas Plato and Plutarch focus on the care of individual souls, Aristophanes and Vergil focus on the virtues required to make people “better citizens.” In this way, the Apocalypse of Peter primarily follows the model of Plato and Plutarch by emphasizing the punishment of specific individual sins (i.e., fornication and murder).

76 For a brief discussion of the pedagogical function of hell in the Apocalypse of Paul, see Kirsti Barrett Copeland, “Thinking with Oceans: Muthos, Revelation and the Apocalypse of Paul,” in Bremmer and Czachesz, Visio Pauli, 81–86.


78 For another description of the efficacy of the apocalypse, see also the Gk. Apoc. Ezra 7.9-12 in which God commands Ezra to “give to all who transcribe this book, and have it, and remember my name, and honour my memory, give them a blessing from heaven…and as many as have not believed in this book shall be burnt up like Sodom and Gomorrah.” In contrast, the Greek Apocalypse of Mary does not understand itself as the exhaustive guide to ethical behavior and eternal salvation but directs the readers instead to the law of Moses, the Gospel of John, and the epistles of Paul as the standards for judgment (Gk. Apoc. Mary 27).


80 Himmelfarb (Tours of Hell, 121–22) observes that in the Apocalypse of Peter the specific measure-for-measure hanging punishments are more dominant than the general environmental punishments and the reverse is true in the Apocalypse of Paul. Patrick Gray (“Abortion, Infanticide, and the Social Rhetoric of the Apocalypse of Peter,” JECS 9 [2001]: 336) identifies the rhetoric of Apoc. Pet. 8 as “conversionist-countercultural rhetoric.” The vices included in the Apocalypse of Peter are: blasphemy (7); plaited hair (fornication/adultery in Greek text); fornication (men) (7); murderers (7); abortionists/those who kill children (8); persecutors and betrayers of righteous ones (9), slanderers and doubters (9), those who testified falsely against the martyrs (9), those who trusted in riches/despised widows/woman with orphans (9) (all things in chp.9 are subsets of the first element), those who lent money and practiced usury (10), idol worshipers (10), those who cut their flesh (10), men who “defile themselves with one another in the fashion of women” (10), manufacturers of idols (10), those who do not honor father and mother (11), those who do not retain virginity before marriage (11), disobedient slaves (11), unrighteous almsgivers (12), and sorcerers and sorceresses (12).
While the Apocalypse of Paul contains many of the same individual vices, it also describes the punishments that are assigned to dishonest leaders of the community and those who exclude themselves from the Christian community through their failure to accept core confessional values. Bremmer notes that the social boundaries within the church as drawn by the Apocalypse of Paul no longer separate pagans from the church (cf. Apocalypse of Peter) but instead delineate doctrinal boundaries. Not only does the Apocalypse of Paul include punishments for sins against the community that are not punished elsewhere, but it does so in a way that recalls the communal ethic of Matt 25, where Jesus teaches that the Son of Man will indict those who do not take care of others and he will send them away into eternal punishment. Jesus says, “I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me. (Matt 25:42-43, NRSV).

In Apoc. Paul 40, Paul similarly witnesses the punishment of people who wore “our raiment” or “holy clothes” but failed to welcome the “other.” “They did not arrange a single Agape meal and had no compassion on the widows and orphans; they did not take in the stranger and the pilgrim, nor present a gift nor show mercy to their neighbor.” The Apocalypse of Paul makes Matthew’s condemnation of those who do not extend hospitality to “the least of these” even more specific and demonstrates that their wickedness is not only in their lack of concern for the other but also in the dishonesty of wearing clothing to identify themselves as “holy.” The paideia contained in the Apocalypse of Paul emphasizes a communal ethic and encourages its readers to don virtues that will build and maintain the social fabric of early Christian communities. In this regard, the pedagogical orientation of the Apocalypse of Paul, the depiction of hell is more akin to that of Vergil, whose review of Roman heroes elevates the virtues of patriotism, selfless service to the state, and political achievement. While each of the apocalypses conceives of hell as a component of Christian paideia, therefore, the specific expression of that paideia is shaped by the unique historical context of each text.

IV. Conclusion

This investigation of the rhetorical devices of ekphrasis, enargeia, and periēgēsis shows that vivid description could turn an ancient listener into a spectator by making an emotional impact.
on the audience. The survey of the Greek and Latin depictions of Hades demonstrates that the concept of Hades is presented ekphrastically. This presentation has an emotional effect on the audience and moves them towards specific behaviors or a specific type of engagement in the polis. In this regard, the depictions of Hades in Greek and Latin literature serve as an integral component of the broader program of ethical and cultural education known as paideia. The early Christian depiction of hell in the apocalypses functions similarly and uses the popular “tour” format of periēgēsis that can be observed in the Jewish apocalypses as well as in the Greek and Latin depictions of Hades. Through the rhetorical device of ekphrasis, the early Christian reader is transformed into a “tourist” and a “spectator” who witnesses the gruesome horrors of hell firsthand. This view of hell is intended to “move the reader” to repent and behave ethically in this life to avoid a disgusting and painful fate in the next life. For the early Christian community, as for Greeks and Romans, the pedagogical rhetoric of “hell” promotes social cohesion and structure.