

UNDISCUSSED TESTIMONIUM
OF ΤΑ ΥΠΕΡ ΘΟΥΛΗΝ ΑΠΙΣΤΑ
(EUSEBIUS, C. *HIER.* 17)

Τὰ ὑπὲρ Θούλην ἄπιστα, the strange novel of Antonius Diogenes¹, preserved only in Photius' epitome (*Bibl., cod.* 166, 109 a – 112 a) and some fragments, is also known from a few *testimonia* (but it seems well that, in comparison with the novels preserved, *The Incredible Things beyond Thule* enjoyed more testimonies). One of these testimonies appears to have been overlooked by those interested in this novel. This short notice concerns Eusebius' mention of novel's title, in the early fourth century, implying, in addition, a meaning of highly unreliable account for Antonius' writing.

The text runs as follows:

Eusebius, *Contra Hieroclem* 17:

Ταῦτα καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ δευτέρου παραθέμενοι ἴωμεν ἐπὶ τὸ τρίτον τὰ κατὰ τοὺς βεβοημένους ἐποψόμενοι Βραχμᾶνας· ἔνθα δὴ τὰ ὑπὲρ Θούλην ἄπιστα καὶ εἴ τι περ ἄλλο τερατώδεις ποτε μυθολόγοις τισὶν ἀναπέπλασται, εὖ μάλα πιστὰ καὶ ἀληθέστατα, ὥς ἐν παραθέσει τούτων, ἀναφανθήσεται².

And, in Conybeare's translation: "After setting before you these incidents out of the second book, let us pass on to the third, and consider the stories about the

¹ See M. Fusillo, s.u. *Antonios* [3, *Diogenes*], in *Der Neue Pauly*, I, Stuttgart, 1996, 806–807.

² Ed. É. des Places, Paris, 1986, 138, II. 1–5 (*Eusèbe de Césarée, Contre Hiéroclès*. Introduction, traduction et notes par M. Forrat; Texte grec établi par É. des Places, Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1986 [*Sources Chrétiennes*, 333]). It is noteworthy that des Places recognized without difficulty Antonius' novel (mentioned in his *apparatus* for *Fontes*), since he had published few years before a new critical edition of Porphyry's *Life of Pythagoras* (Paris, Belles Lettres, 1982), where this novel is an important source. Consequently, M. Forrat translated as "les «Merveilles d'au-delà de Thulé»" (p. 139, and n. 1; and then follows: "et tout autre récit prodigieux jamais inventé par les mythologues apparaîtront tout à fait dignes de foi et véridique, en comparaison de cette histoire"); this is the usual French translation, and also the translation from des Places' edition of Porphyry (but see René Henry's more appropriate *Les merveilles incroyables d'au delà de Thulé*). Another editor of Porphyry, A. Nauck, mentioned too Eusebius' passage for the novel (*Porphyrii philosophi platonici opuscula selecta*, Leipzig, 1886, XI n. 5).

far-famed Brahmins. For here we shall have to admit that *The Incredible Things beyond Thule*, and any other miraculous legends ever invented by any story-tellers, turn out to be by comparison with these quite reliable and perfectly true³.

M. Forrat dated Hierocles' anti-Christian treatise (traditionally known as *Lover of the Truth*) to 303, and Eusebius' refutation to 311–312⁴. The method of Hierocles (pagan governor of Bithyny under Diocletian)⁵ consisted mainly in raising a parallel between Jesus and his religious hero, the divine Apollonius of Tyana (by charging the founder of Christianity of imposture and lesser importance in comparison with Apollonius); and, since his main source was Philostratus' "hagiographic" *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, Eusebius's refutation was directed principally against the work of the Athenian rhetor.

Hierocles attacks Jesus Christ in two ways: the proof of magic; and the Euhemerism. Therefore, the critical method used by Eusebius consisted in returning to Hierocles the charge of credulity (which he imputed to the Christians); he begins by refuting the historicity of Philostratus' work (choosing his weakest points: incoherence, contradictions, untruthfulness, excess of marvels). Even if he gives to the reader the impression that he follows with accuracy the development of Philostratus, in fact he chooses everything good for ruining Apollonius' reputation, namely the prodigies the most untrustworthy (as, by example, his insistence on the Brahmins, chapp. 17–25)⁶.

³ Trans. F. C. Conybeare, Philostratus. *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana. The Epistles of Apollonius and the Treatise of Eusebius*, II, Cambridge (Mass.)–London, Loeb, 1950, 525 and 527. Conybeare gives simply, in his translation, "the tales of Thule". As pointed Hägg, *Contra Hieroclem* has through the centuries been secured life and potential readership principally as a regular appendix to the editions of V. Apoll.

⁴ Recently, T. Hägg asserted that the author of *Contra Hieroclem* was not the famous bishop of Caesarea, and consequently this theory would have the merit of solving the contradictions concerning the chronology as well as the paradox of "Eusebius the sophist"; the title of Hierocles' treatise would have been Φιλαλήθης λόγος πρὸς Χριστιανούς ["A truthful discourse (directed) to the Christians"]; also for him, the date of his redaction is before the persecutions (cf. *Hierocles the Lover of Truth and Eusebius the Sophist*, SymbOsl, 67, 1992, 138–150); accordingly, T. D. Barnes seems to accept that the author of *Contra Hieroclem* is an otherwise unknown accidental homonym (probably a Christian sophist in Asia Minor) (*Scholarship or Propaganda? Porphyry Against the Christians and its Historical Setting*, BICS, 39, 1994, 60 and n. 35).

⁵ For Hierocles, see T. D. Barnes, *Sossianus Hierocles and the Antecedents of the "Great Persecution"*, HSCP, 80, 1976, 239–252; and M. Forrat, *passim*.

⁶ M. Forrat, *op. cit.*, esp. 56–74.

So, this testimony⁷ turns out to be, chronologically, the second, after Porphyry's large use of the novel in his *Life of Pythagoras*⁸. More important is furthermore the treatment of Eusebius: he implies a highly unreliable image for *The Incredible Things beyond Thule*, as an obvious fictional work, in the field of paradoxographical and mythological literature.

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⁷ Other testimonies are collected in the excellent work of S. A. Stephens–J. J. Winkler, *Ancient Greek Novels. The Fragments* (Introduction, Text, Translation and Commentary), Princeton (New Jersey), 1995, 120–129: Epiphanius, *Adv. Haer.* 1.33.8 (καὶ Διογένη τὸν τὰ ἄπιστα γράψαντα); Servius, *ad Georg.* 1.30; Synesius, *Ep.* 128 (ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐπέκεινα Θούλης) (these three treat the novel as a benchmark of unbelievable, just like Eusebius' passage, unfortunately overlooked); *Schol. Lucian Ver. Hist.* 2.12 (τὰ ὑπὲρ Θούλην τερατολογούμενα – Rabe, 21, 23) (Stephens–Winkler, 130–147, including Photius' epitome too [from which we may cite, for the title, 109 a: Ἀντωνίου Διογένους τῶν ὑπὲρ Θούλην ἀπίστων λόγοι κδ'; and 110 b: καὶ συμπληροῦται Ἀντωνίῳ Διογένη ὁ εἰκοστὸς τρίτος λόγος τῶν ὑπὲρ Θούλην ἐπιγραφόμενων ἀπίστων]); consider also the fragments from John Lydus (*De mens.* 3.5: Διογένης ἐν τοῖς ὑπὲρ Θούλην ἄξιοι; and 4.42: Διογένης δὲ ἐν τοῖς τρισκαίδεκάτῃ ἀπίστων), and Porphyry (for instance V. *Pyth.* 10, Διογένους δ' ἐν τοῖς ὑπὲρ ἀπίστοις). From among the papyri proposed to belong to our novel, only two are undoubtedly convincing: PSI 1177, and P. Oxy. 3012. It is uncertain if the first one to mention the "Ἄπιστα" is Serenus Sammonicus (d. 212, mentioned by Servius in the company of Diogenes). M. Marcovich put in relation Porphyry V. *Pyth.* 44, Lydus *De mens.* 4.42, and Hippolytus *Ref.* 1.2.14–15, about the bean taboo; the common "Urquelle" would be Antonius Diogenes, expressly cited by Lydus, who indicates the text as belonging to the thirteenth book (*Pythagorica*, "Philologus", 108, 1964, 29–44, esp. 29–32; see also his edition of Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium haeresium*, Berlin–New York, 1986, 18, 51, 60–61). Some of the *testimonia* were mentioned previously in W. von Christ–O. Stählin–W. Schmid, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*, II, Munich, 1913⁵, 650 n. 7. Another testimony: Olympiodorus, *In Meteo.* 1.13 (AG XII, p. 108).

⁸ See the discussion for Antonius Diogenes' date in Stephens–Winkler, *op. cit.*, 118–199; the two papyri mentioned above may be assigned to the late second or early third centuries.