Contesting Authority: the Greek Versions of Esther as Resistance Literature

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Harriet Tubman's journeys to the South were perilous beyond description. During her nineteen consecutive trips, Tubman risked death, enslavement, and torture in order to help more than 300 slaves escape to freedom. Crucial to her strategy of emancipation was the use of spirituals as coded resistance songs. These songs were accepted and lauded by both slaveholders and enslaved overseers for their apparent acceptance of Christian (i.e., Euro-American) morals. Under the guise of Christian piety, however, Tubman was able to use these spirituals as hidden transcripts to mobilize the slaves. Whenever Tubman planned an escape, the slaves sang in the fields "swing low, sweet chariot coming for to carry me home" or "steal away, steal away to Jesus! Steal away, steal away home, I ain't got long to stay here" to signify their trips to the North.[1] While feigning adherence to the master's Christian narratives, the enslaved men and women were in fact telling their own story, one of hope and resistance.

In this essay I propose to read the Greek versions of Esther as resistance literature. It is the thesis of this paper that the Greek versions of Esther show a heightened similarity with the wildly popular genre of the Greek romance than does the Masoretic text, and that through this marked similarity with the romance genre, the Greek books of Esther carried the potential to function as coded commentaries on Hellenic values. The Greek romances tell stories of arduous love trials which happily end with the institution of marriage and re-inscription of the paterfamilias and civic duty. The Greek versions of Esther, however, heighten their similarities with the romance genre only to subtly convey a critical difference. In the Greek books of Esther it is God who is inscribed as sovereign Lord; the paterfamilias and larger Greek society are usurped by the Jewish deity.

Theorist James C. Scott writes that "discretion in the face of power requires that a part of the 'self' that would reply or strike back must lie low."[2] This self "finds expression in the safer realm of…a 'hidden transcript' that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant."[3] According to Scott, in a situation where the ruling class dominates oppressed peoples, "there exists a public transcript of events managed by the ruling elites and hidden transcripts of the same events produced by the oppressed."[4] In Scott's analysis, "hidden" transcripts" refer to "discourse that takes place 'offstage', beyond direct observation by power holders."[5] Whereas public transcripts depict the world as the elite themselves would have it seen, hidden transcripts adopt the *form* of public discourse while actually serving to undermine prevailing ideology.[6] Prevailing ideologies are critiqued using their very form and content; for those "in the know," the master's tools are dismantling the master's house. In light of Scott's analysis it becomes clear that the Greek versions of Esther were able to pursue their own agenda, using the genre of hegemonic powers to critique the very values of Hellenic society.

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[1] Mona A. Stubbs, "Subjection, Reflection, Resistance: A Three-Dimensional Process of Empowerment in Romans 13 and the Free-Market Economy" *SBL 1999 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 392.

[2] James C. Scott *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 114.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Stubbs, 391.

[5] Scott, 18.

The Greek Versions of Esther

The Greek books of Esther contain significant divergences from the Masoretic Text. In addition to our Masoretic text there exists an independent Greek Alpha Text (AT) as well as the rather loose Septuagint translation which supplements the Hebrew text with six additions with no Hebrew parallels (Additions A-F).[7] Whereas the AT is perhaps best described as a terse or "tighter" rendition when read alongside its two related versions, the LXX Additions greatly expand upon the MT, imparting numerous unique characterizations and theologically poignant themes entirely absent in the Hebrew.[8] Addition A (which precedes the first chapter of the MT) details Mordecai's dream wherein God sends a restorative stream to humanity; Addition F later interprets the river of Mordecai's dream as being Esther, who is characterized as God's gift to the nations. Additions B and E elaborate in befuddled language "imitating Ptolemaic official-ese"[9] (a point to which we shall return to later) upon Artaxerxes' royal decrees. Addition C recounts Mordecai and Esther's prayers to God for Israel's deliverance, and Addition D drastically reshapes the figure of Esther, characterizing her as exceedingly fearful of Artaxerxes, leaning on her maid for support, and fainting in the king's presence.

In regard to the so-called "original" language of the LXX Additions, Michael Fox succinctly summarizes the majority opinion: "Additions B and E were undoubtedly composed in the Greek, while F probably was; C and D were probably composed in Hebrew or Aramaic, while A is uncertain." The troubled concept of originality (a topic which belies numerous intriguing presuppositions and misunderstandings in biblical scholarship), however, need not detain us here, for I will treat all three versions as meaningful, fully-realized texts. In other words, I am less concerned with provenance and Hebrew substrata underlying the LXX additions than with the ways in which the AT, LXX, and MT served their own unique functions in their respective communities.

It is precisely these context-specific functions which comprise the bulk of our inquiry in the present essay. Linda Day's survey of the Esther stories in biblical scholarship shows that the overwhelming trend in recent study has been to analyze the Greek versions and their relationship with the MT in redaction critical, source critical, and text critical focus; "the overriding concern has been with the origins and textual history of the story....While the new insights gained from these recent excellent studies...are indeed important for our understanding of the three versions, the almost sole focus upon redactional history has left many other areas yet unexplored."[10] The present examination of the ways in which the Greek versions' heightened affinity with the romance genre might have functioned in their respective communities is offered as an attempt to chart these unexplored areas in recent scholarship.

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Also instructive for our purposes is Fox's observation that "the disparate origins of the Additions means that the LXX did not have a single writer. The LXX's ideology resulted from the contributions of several persons, starting with the translation of the MT and including the supplementation by the Addition[s]." Michael Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdman's Press, 2001), 266.

[8] There exist two divergent textual traditions of the LXX, the dominant tradition represented by Codex Vaticanus and the "variant"/later tradition attested by the B text. Differences between the LXX traditions do not affect our present study and thus for the sake of clarity the two recessions will not be differentiated from one another.

[9] Ibid.

The Three Versions of Esther and the Genre of the Greek Romance

The Greek romance or novella designates a genre of literature chiefly attested by five complete texts (Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe*, Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon*, Xenophon's *Ephesian Tale*, and Heliodorus's *Ethiopian Tale*)[11] as well as numerous papyrus fragments.[12] The papyrus fragments have been discovered over a widespread geographic area, which attests to the genre's enormous popularity and distribution. The papyri date from the fourth to first centuries B.C.E. and the complete novels have been variously dated from ca. 100 B.C.E. – ca. 400 C.E. The genre drew upon earlier traditions of epic, Attic drama and comedy, historiography, and the Alexandrian love-elegy.[13] Scholars have also tried to account for Egyptian and Persian motifs in the Greek novel by arguing for Egyptian and/or Persian origin and influence.[14]

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[10] Linda Day, *Three Faces of a Queen: Characterization in the Books of Esther* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 17.

[11] Translations of all five novels can be found in B.P. Reardon, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

[12] John Barnes, "Egypt and the Greek Romance" *Internationalen Kongress für Papyrologie* 5 (1956) 29-3[12]Also instructive for our purposes is Fox's observation that "the disparate origins of the Additions means that the LXX did not have a single writer. The LXX's ideology resulted from the contributions of several persons, starting with the translation of the MT and including the supplementation by the Addition[s]." Michael Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdman's Press, 2001), 266.

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[12] Ibid.

[12] Linda Day, *Three Faces of a Queen: Characterization in the Books of Esther* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 17.

[12] Translations of all five novels can be found in B.P. Reardon 6.

[13] Gareth Schmeling, *Chariton*, (New York: TWAS, 1974).

[14] Scholars have linked the Greek texts with quasi-historical Egyptian romances (i.e. Dream of Nectanebus ca. 200 B.C.E.), historiographies of Persian luminaries, and the Alexandrian love-elegy. Giuseppe Giangrande provides the best argument for foreign (and particularly Egyptian) influence "On the Origins of the Greek Romance" *Eranos* 60 (1962) 132-59. The general consensus today is that the Greek novel represents an amalgamation of various styles and influences. Possible Persian and Egyptian influence is especially intriguing in light of the book of Esther's Persian setting, and the LXX Additions D and E use of Egyptian imagery.

As the terms “novel,” “novella,” and “romance” are used nearly interchangeably, there exists considerable confusion over the meaning and use of these terms.[15] Most broadly defined, the genre refers to a series of texts wherein a young aristocratic couple falls in love, is separated, and endures numerous trials and tribulations which prove their fidelity to one another and ultimately lead to their happy reunion.[16] The gods (and, predictably, Aphrodite in particular) feature prominently, serving as catalysts for inspiration and movers of the storyline. Female characters also feature prominently in the narratives and are invariably characterized as respectable, educated, awe-strikingly beautiful, excessively emotional, and fabulous wealthy. The women unanimously exhibit little power over their environments; their circumstances and fates are controlled by the dictates and whims of powerful men. The female protagonists are also pivotal to plot and form: “from early on in the story it is made obvious that she [the heroine] is the one who will be central to the action and with whom the reader is to identify.”[17]

A few scholars have noted in the Hebrew MT itself similarities between the story of Esther and the Hellenistic novel. LaCoque locates similarities with the Greek novel in Artaxerxes’ erotic relations and the book of Esther’s extensive use of pathos. Since LaCoque presents the most sustained and fervent connection between (the MT) Esther and the Greek novel, his argument deserves to be quoted at length.

> For the story is not merely popular literature; displays features of the Greek romance....It is characterized by its main ingredients: love and journey/quest or military prowess. It also ends happily after dramatic reversals of fortune, the villain being routed by the hero, and the heroine vindicated in her chastity. The plot uses pathos, often heavily. The romance is intended to stir in us basic emotions of fear, sympathy, and relief. One way to achieve this is by letting the characters of the drama profusely express their own emotions.[18] ...the present emphasis on the erotic aspect as a means of overcoming the enemy points definitely in the direction of the Hellenistic novel...It is characteristic of this literary genre, for example, that both [here LaCoque includes both Judith and Esther] strip off their mourning clothes and don queenlike attire.[19]

Similarly, Wills argues that the increased number and importance of female characters points towards affinities with the Greek romance. Wills identifies the Hebrew Esther as a “proto-romance of adventure of peril and escape,” explaining that in all pertinent texts “women characters are added in great numbers, and are invested with the main weight of the emotional tribulations, perils, and decisions of the story. The emotional sympathies of the audience are with the women... [evoking] a closer, more emotional response from the audience than is present in other narratives. The identification of the audience with weak, vulnerable, buffeted characters is closer and more direct).[20]

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[15] Fox, 144.

[16] For fuller description, see the helpful introductions in the following: David Konstan, *Sexual Symmetry: Love in the Ancient Novel and Related Genres* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); J. Tatum, ed., (*The Search for the Ancient Novel* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999); and Gareth Schmeling *The Novel in the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

[17] Day, 217.

[18] Andre LaCoque, *The Feminine Unconventional: Four Subversive Figures in Israel’s Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 45.

[19] Ibid. 73.

J.M. Sasson arrives at much the same conclusion as Wills and LaCoque, although from a different angle. Sasson leaves aside issues of female prominence, excessive character emotion, and audience pathos to study instead the role of comedy in the book of Esther. For Sasson, the book of Esther's emphasis on the reversal of fortune and extended hyperbole signify an affinity with the Greek novel:

> the comic potential of the story is richly exploited, and laughter at human vanity, gall, and blindness becomes the vehicle by which the writer gives his tale integrity and moral vision....we can say that this is essentially the same literary mode, adopted by Hellenistic romances....In all such stylized, farcical narratives, the laughter is broad and comes from the incongruity of situations and from the sharp reversals of fate.[21]

M. Fox and L. Day similarly identify extensive areas of connection between Esther and the Hellenistic romance, yet arrive at more cautious conclusions. Fox identifies the book of Esther's emphasis on luxury as a point of connection between the biblical text and the Greek romance, citing Eduard Schwartz's remark on a novella by Ctesias, that it "breathes seraglio and eunuch perfumes, mixed with a disgusting stench of blood" as capturing something of the book of Esther's atmosphere.[22] Fox, however, concludes that the book of Esther cannot be classified as a Hellenistic romance because firstly, the romances were never meant to be taken as historically accurate.[23] Day finds the comparisons with the Hellenistic novel to be illuminating but denies any direct dependence on the grounds that the book of Esther lacks the common romance elements of romantic love and travel to foreign lands.[24]

We have seen in the scholarship reviewed above a number of divergent claims regarding the MT's relationship to the Greek romance. In sum, we might conclude that: LaCoque and Sasson enthusiastically endorse a strong link between MT Esther and the novella, citing extensive use of humor, pathos, and the erotic in support of their claims; Wills identifies the book as a "proto-romance," arguing that many of the motifs of romance are similarly found in contemporary Jewish literature; and that Fox and Day are much more cautious.[25]

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[20] Ibid. 191.

[21] J.M. Sasson, "Esther" in *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (ed. R. Alter and F. Kermode; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 339. For the role of humor in the MT, see Yehuda Radday, "Esther with Humour" in *On Humour and the Comic in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Yehuda Radday and Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1990), 301-313.

[22] Fox, 145.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Day, 214-217, 221. At the present moment I am only representing Day's treatment of the MT. Day's analysis of the Greek versions' correlation with the Hellenistic novel (218-221), which is much more pertinent to our present study, will be engaged with shortly.

[25] "The Scroll does show some affinities to the Hellenistic novella....Still, the Scroll cannot be classed as a romance" Fox 145; "The best conclusion with regard to a connection with the ancient novel genre is that the Esther story...[represents] part of a general trend during the Hellenistic period to highlight female characters in literature," Day 221.

Reworking in the Greek Books of Esther

The Greek versions of Esther evidence editorial strategies wrought to draw the book in line with the Hellenistic romance. Through altered characterization, significant keywords, and increased emotional response the AT and LXX figures of Esther begin to closely resemble the heroines of the Greek novel. To begin, the character of Esther's transparent pathos and excessive emotions (already detected by LaCoque, Fox, and Wills in the MT) are demonstrably exaggerated in both the AT and LXX. As compared with the MT, the Greek versions "reveal much more of Esther's inner life, which is akin to the narrative technique of the novel. In both we are told considerably more about her emotional state as well as her being more subject to her emotions' power."[26] Esther is more lonely and anxious in the LXX; her knowledge of the Jewish peoples' misery causes her a great deal of emotional pain. Esther's emotional characterization and transparency of pathos is perhaps best evidenced by the Greek version's repeated use of garments and facial expressions which mirror her inner feelings. In the AT and LXX Esther's clothing and facial expressions reflect her state of mind; "she uses clothing to express feelings of grief and anxiety (14:2), her face to feign great happiness (15:5)."[27]

The heroines of the Hellenistic romance possess little power over their environments. The women in these narrative worlds are invariably victims–the object of innumerable abductions (often by pirates, occasionally country ruffians), indentured servitude, and dramatic (if predictably foiled) rape assaults. Throughout these tribulations the heroines are helpless and passive–in short, compliant, physically weak, and acted upon. Lacking the inner, manly fortitude to stand erect, the women become malleable, demonstrating their weakness by fainting or somehow falling to the ground.

Similarly, the Greek books of Esther emphasize their heroine's passivity and fragility. In these versions Esther is significantly more passive, often expecting others to save her (4:11, 12; 14:3, 14, 19), and dutifully obedient to Mordecai. The LXX of 4:14, for instance, interprets Esther's call to duty not in terms of silence (Heb. *hrs*, "to be silent not to talk") but in terms of obedience to Mordecai, replacing the verb with *parakouō* ("to take no heed of, to disobey, to act contrary to,"[28] with the effect changing from "for if you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another quarter" (4:14 JPS) to "for if you *disobey*, relief and deliverance..." To cite another example, LXX 8:6 also adds the verb *swzō* in the passive, expressing the notion "how shall I be saved/escape?" where it is missing entirely from the MT, changing the verse from "For how can I bear to see the disaster which will befall my people? And how can I bear to see the destruction of my kindred?" (8:6 JPS) to "and how can I be saved from the destruction of my fatherland (*patridos*)?"

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[26] Day, 221.

[27] Ibid. 177.

[28] Hanna Kahana, *Esther, Juxtaposition of the Septuagint Translation with the Hebrew Text* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 204-5.

Like the heroines of Greek romance, the LXX Esther is prone to fainting spells and unspecified falls to the ground.[29] Unlike her more surefooted MT counterpart, LXX Esther needs help standing before the king after falling before his feet (LXX *exεgerthε* [*egeirō*] *de Estēr parestekenai tō Basilei* "and Esther *was raised up* to stand before the king" as opposed to the MT "and Esther arose and stood before the king" (8:4 JPS). Esther's helplessness and physical weakness, however, is perhaps best seen in her extended fainting spell before the king in a Septuagint addition completely absent from the Hebrew original:

> She took along with her two servants, and upon one she leaned as if being delicate, and the other one followed along, supporting the burden of her cloak. And she was blushing in the height of her beauties, and her face was as though amicable. But her heart was cramped up. And going through the doors, she stood before the king...and the queen was afraid, and her face changed over in faintness, and she bent over upon the head of the servant who was in front. LXX Addition D[30]

In just a few short verses Esther: faints before a male authority; twice leans on her maids for support, once because her cloak is too burdensome to carry alone, and later to recover after fainting; is characterized as "delicate," "afraid," and "blushing"; twice allows her emotions to be reflected on her face ("her face as though amicable," "her face changed over in faintness"); and is possessed of a "cramped heart." Adele Berlin has observed how in these emotionally-laden characterizations, Addition D the Septuagint "seems to move in the direction of the style of the Greek novels, with emotional and psychological dimensions that are absent in the Masoretic Text....this [Addition D] is the stuff of Greek romances (and modern ones too), and in utter contrast to the sparseness of the Masoretic Text."[31] Fox agrees that "the atmosphere of Addition D is strongly redolent of scenes from Hellenistic romance."[32]

Esther's leaning on her maids in Addition D alerts us to another commonality between LXX/AT and the Hellenistic novella: both Greek versions and all extant romances employ a disproportionately high number of female servants. The Greek Esther's isolation and loneliness, combined with her reliance on female attendants, comprises another point of connection with the Hellenistic romance. The heroines of the Greek romances invariably live without personal relationships except that of their heroes; they have no female friends and instead rely heavily on servant women for emotional and physical support.[33] Similarly, in episodes like LXX Addition D, the Greek versions of Esther depict the heroine as emphatically isolated and dependent upon her female slaves. Both the AT and LXX Addition D employ the term *abras* ("a lady's maid" TGL 76; "favourite slave" LSJ 3), a unique term for female slaves/servants/ladies-in-waiting.[34] Indeed, the term seems to have been used exclusively by our extant romances, AT and LXX.[35]

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[29] Fox concludes: "The human Esther in the LXX is a much frailer, more stereotypically feminine character than in the MT. Like a Victorian she gasps and faints in anxiety when approaching her powerful, frightening, yet kindly husband (swooning is a favorite device in Hellenistic romance)." 272.

[30] Trans., Day 85-6.

[31] Adele Berlin, *Esther* (Philadelphia: JPS, 2001), li. Also of note is Berlin's observation that Josepheus' account (*Jew. Ant.* 2.6) adds similar romantic elements to the story (ibid. lii).

[32] Fox, 272; Fox cites the following episode from Chariton's *Chaeraes and Callirhoe*: "So he [Chaereas] crossed the threshold, and when he saw her lying there on the ground with her head covered up, the way she breathed and held herself caused his heart to flutter; he became excited, and would certainly have recognized her had he not been quite convinced that Dionysius had recovered Callirhoe. He approached her gently. "Don't be afraid, lady" he said, "whoever you are–we are not going to violate you. You shall have the have the husband you want." Before he had finished speaking Callirhoe recognized his voice and uncovered his head. They both cried out at once, "Chaereas!" "Callirhoe!" and embracing each other they fell to the ground in a faint." 8.1.7-8.

In addition to their possession of servants/slaves, the heroines of the Hellenistic novella attest their wealthy upbringings through their access to education. Like the heroines of the Greek romance, the MT, AT, and LXX all describe Esther as being able to read and write. The AT and LXX, however, heighten Esther's received education, particularly her proficiency in writing and educational training in Jewish classical literature.[36] Of all three versions, the AT most clearly describes Esther as intelligent, literate, and knowledgeable of current political events (4:4-7; 9:12); in the AT, "on the whole, Esther possesses a range of intellectual abilities, from book-learning to practical planning."[37] Similarly, the LXX also explicitly identifies Esther as well-educated and book-learned: "And I have heard from the book of my ancestors" (*egō de akousa patrikos mou biblou* Addition C, 14:4).

And finally, the Esther characters in LXX and AT appear quite are pious. Whereas God is never mentioned in the MT, in the Greek versions the character of Esther frequently prays to God, demonstrating considerable faith and receiving the benefits of God's favor. This is best seen in Addition C, an extended prayer in which Esther proclaims remarkable fidelity to God and confidence in God's redemptive powers (and she prayed to the Lord and said: "Lord, king, you alone are helper. Come help me who am debased and not having a helper besides you..." 14:2). Esther's piety and God's corresponding intervention are congruent with the Greek novel's pious heroines who pray to the gods and show steadfast faith in the deities' abilities and desires to intercede on behalf of humanity. Predictably enough, the love goddess Aphrodite features prominently in the romances, responding to her faithful devotees and acting as a prime mover of the plot.[38]

The Greek Books of Esther as Resistance Literature

Having demonstrated affinities between the Greek versions of Esther and the romance genre, I would now like to consider the ways in which the texts could have functioned as resistance literature for Jews in Antiquity. If my argument for AT and LXX editorial reworking of the MT to heighten correlation with the Hellenistic novella is convincing, the import of such redactions remains to be explored. Elaborating on James C. Scott's work on cultural and social resistance while using his own framework of "mimicry"–the ways in which the colonized are able of appearing to capitulate with the colonizer's demand for imitation while actually pursuing their own subversive force–Homi Bhabha provides a remarkable example of subversive practice operating under the guise of faithfulness. Disgusted by the perceived waste of distributing printed bibles to Indians, a perturbed missionary reported Hindus exclaiming:

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[33] Day, 219.

[34] The semantic range is unclear on this point, and we owe it to slaves (both ancient and contemporary) to think critically on this point - I would argue that slavery is clearly denoted in some of the examples cited below.

[35] See LXX Addition D, Chariton 1:4, 5, 12; 5:3, Heliodorus 8:7. A search of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* turned up no occurrences of the term outside the Hellenistic novella.

[36] Day, 220.

[37] Ibid. 194.

[38] Schmeling, 21.

> "We are poor and lowly, and we read and love this book" - "What is that book?" - "The book of God!"...[every Indian] would gladly receive a Bible. And why? That he may store it up as a curiosity; sell it for a few pice; or use it for waste paper."[39] While feigning acquiescence to British colonization/Christianization, Indians (if we are to believe the missionary's report) were able to gain economic profit while "wasting" their colonizer's tools of oppression.

I would like to suggest that the AT and LXX reworking of Esther carried the potential to serve as meaningful "hidden transcripts" to Jews in Antiquity. According to Scott, most forms of resistance "stop well short of collective outright defiance. Here I have in mind the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth."[40] Although everyday acts of resistance make no headlines, they still qualify as resistance in that they "deny or mitigate claims made by appropriating classes."[41] In light of Scott's analysis the Greek versions of Esther function as low-profile, effective forms of cultural resistance. Through their increased correlation with the Hellenistic romance, the Greek versions were in a position to be able to comment on a glaring difference between the book of Esther and the novella corpus. For unlike the Greek romances, in the book of Esther it is *God* whose lordship is ultimately affirmed and not the rule of the paterfamilias.

Susan Calef argues that the Greek novellas "prescribe or 'script' for ancient readers a sociosexual identity in the figures of the elite couple, whose spontaneous desire for one another, while potentially disruptive of the social order, is in the end harnessed to its needs through marriage... thus the romance legitimated the prevailing [patriarchal] social order and the elite's position in it."[42] The happy endings of Greek novels culminate in the reunion of two lovers who then live out the socially prescribed scripts of the patriarchal household, however the AT and LXX versions of Esther locate primacy and authority with God. For early Jewish readers, the Greek versions of Esther showed similarities with the Hellenistic romance, but depicting God's authority rather than civic hegemony. In this regard, the Greek versions of Esther demonstrate repetition with a major difference: the Hellenistic household is displaced by God's sovereignty.

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[39] Anund Messeh, The Missionary Register 1818 as cited by Homhi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 122.

[40] Scott, 29.

[41] Ibid 302

[42] Susan Calef, "Thecla 'Tried and True' and the Inversion of Romance" in *A Feminist Companion to the New Testament Apocrypha* (ed. Amy-Jill Levine; Sheffield: T&T Clark, 2006), 164. I am pleased to have realized the subversive potential inherent in the Hellenistic novella independently from Calef, who makes a similar claim that the Jewish-Christian *Acts of Paul and Thecla* might have similarly functioned as resistance literature for second century Jews.