

When Rhoda Opens the Door: Reimagining Ancient Households from the Perspective of the Least *for* the Least

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Abstract

This article brings first-century Graeco-Roman slavery, ancient household systems and gender into focus through an analysis of Acts 12:12–17. By retracing Rhoda’s social location and efficacy in Mary’s οἰκία, the παιδίσκη is brought to the fore in a hermeneutical agenda that seeks to unmute utility from the interpretive margins. Using a sociology of knowledge, Rhoda’s profile in the ancient world is painted in vivid vogue, demonstrating the social maze she had to navigate for her to be. From here, the slave’s social performance is considered in the same context as her unrelenting herald of Peter’s emancipation. From this position, a critical correlation is drawn between the Rhoda of the text and Southern African Rhodas in front of the text with the hope of reimagining ancient households. Finally, it is posited that hearing the narratives of both categories of “Rhodas” enlivens the text, unmuting the slaves occupying the margins to the benefit of contemporary groups shaped by this tradition.

Key Terms

Graeco-Roman slavery; *Haustafeln*; running slaves; Southern Africa; Acts; Rhoda

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