

CHAPTER 25

Greek Novel and Greek Archaic Literature

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The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are the primary models for all the Greek novelists. In the language of modern literary criticism, we would say that Homeric epos is a necessary hypotext for those fictional prose stories that Greek literature increasingly produces starting from the late Hellenistic period.

This is true in the first instance for the structure of the novel: a standard Greek novel is nothing else but a rewriting of the Odyssean plot. If we reduce the *Odyssey* to its nuclear core, the poem is the story of a man (Odysseus) who leaves his home and his family and fights for many years against misfortunes of every kind before coming back to his land and being reunited with his wife (Penelope). The *Odyssey* obeys a principle of circularity both spatial (from Ithaca to Ithaca) and temporal (Odysseus' house after the hero's return regains its ancient splendor, as it was before his departure). The ultimate meaning of the poem is concentrated in the long scene of Book 23, where "he" and "she" are finally together in their wedding bed, as they were every night in the good old days, and tell in turn what they have passed through: the past and retelling the past become conditions for a re-appropriation of self-identity.

Thus, we have a first point: the "compatibility" of the *Odyssey* with the standard contents of the Greek love novel. Like the *Odyssey*, a Greek love novel tells about two lovers who are separated by destiny and undergo a long sequence of misadventures: they travel by sea, face terrible dangers, and must resist the attempts of insidious seducers until they are reunited and can enjoy a happy life together. No wonder the *Odyssey* has been called "the first Greek novel," and Greek romance has been considered a kind of new epic, adapted to the habits of a post-literate society (Perry 1967, 44–54; Hägg 1983, 111; Reardon 1991, 15–16). The question now is: does the new genre define itself by borrowing themes, patterns, and situations from Homeric epic, through a

conscious process of imitation (or re-creation, as it would be tempting to call such an operation)? Or shall we think that the *Odyssey* and more generally the archaic epic embody an archetypal system of images and stories, which reemerges in the Greco-Roman Empire with still-recognizable but yet different forms in response to new social and intellectual challenges?

Seeking an answer to this question would involve the controversial debate on the origin of the Greek novel, which has long been a central point in the scholarly discussion but has lost today most of its appeal. However, if we look at the literary texture of the novels and try to determine the nature and extent of the Homeric presence in them, the problem can be faced in other and probably more suitable terms. Let us consider the romance of Chariton of Aphrodisias, the novelist who is likely to be the oldest of the corpus (Tilg 2010, 36–79, after revisiting the evidence, agrees with a mid-first-century-AD dating) and whose work can be seen as the prototype of the new genre. The novel tells the story of a young charming lady who is abducted from her town (Syracuse, which is presented as the center of the Greek world) and from her husband and brought to East, where she is forced to marry another man; in Miletus and later in Babylon, Callirhoe becomes the object of a conflict between Chaereas and Dionysius (her first and second husbands, respectively), until Chaereas, after triumphing in the war against the Persians, recovers her and brings her back to Syracuse.

It is immediately clear from this simple summary that Callirhoe is conceived by the novelist as a second Helen and her adventures as a second *Iliad*. The intertextual play is piloted by a very consistent sequence of quotations from both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. In fact, as scholars do not fail to notice (e.g. Robiano 2000), Chariton is the novelist who most often quotes Homeric passages, to such an extent that his discourse can be seen as the interplay between the main narration and a “second-level text,” which is insistently called to mind. The equation of Callirhoe to Helen is explicitly expressed by Dionysius at 2.6.1 (“I was hoping she was Aphrodite’s gift to me and was painting for myself a life happier than that of Menelaus, Spartan Helen’s husband—even Helen, I imagine, was not as beautiful as she is”)¹ and at 5.2.8 (“Menelaus could not keep Helen in security in virtuous Sparta. King though he was, a barbarian shepherd supplanted him; and there is many a Paris among the Persians”). The most telling passage, however, is 5.5.9: “So she entered the courtroom looking like Helen when the divine Homer describes her as appearing among the elders *around Priam and Panthous and Thymoetes*. Her appearance produced stunned astonishment and silence; *everyone prayed to lie in bed beside her.*”

Here, Chariton is describing the reactions of the crowd to Callirhoe’s appearance in the courtroom in Babylon; we have a sequence of two Homeric quotations. The first one is from *Iliad* 3.146 and refers to the scene in which Helen makes her appearance on the wall of Troy, in response to Priam’s call, and provokes the astonished admiration of the elderly Trojans. The second quote is taken from *Odyssey* 1.366 (= 18.213) and describes the violent desire that Penelope arouses in her suitors when she enters the banquet hall after leaving her rooms. The comparison to Helen confirms the connotation of Callirhoe as a *femme fatale* whose fascination no man can resist; but the assimilation to Penelope, the proverbial faithful wife and the final target of Odysseus’ peregrinations, suggests that the Iliadic story of the novel will have an Odyssean conclusion: this Helen is, after all, as virtuous as the most virtuous of women (Fusillo 1990, 41).

Another sequence of quotations points at the passionate friendship of Achilles and Patroclus, which is a basic theme of the *Iliad*. Already at the beginning of the story (1.4.6), Chariton comments on the reaction of Chaereas to the (false) news of Callirhoe's infidelity by quoting *Iliad* 18.22–24, the passage in which Achilles, on hearing of the death of Patroclus, loses his self-control (“a black cloud of grief covered him”), takes with his hands dark dust, and pours it over his head. The scene of Patroclus' soul appearing in Achilles' dream at *Iliad* 23.66–67 is evoked at 2.9.6, when Chaereas appears in Callirhoe's dream to suggest to her what to do: “All night long she pursued these thoughts; and as she did so, sleep stole over her momentarily, and a vision of Chaereas stood over her, *like to him in stature and fair looks and voice, and wearing just such clothes.*”

The same episode is alluded to at 4.1.3: trying to convince his wife to erect a tomb for the (supposed) dead Chaereas, Dionysius quotes *Iliad* 23.71 (“Bury me so that I may pass through the gates of Hades as soon as possible”). Achilles' grief for the death of his beloved friend is a paradigm also in the second part of the romance, when the lovers have ceased to mourn each the loss of the other: at 5.2.4, Chaereas, who has been forbidden by Mithridates to see Callirhoe, expresses his desperation by imitating Achilles' mourning gestures; at 5.10.9, Chaereas, who has misinterpreted the silence of Callirhoe in the courtroom as a sign of indifference toward him, decides to kill himself and claims that not even in the Hades he will forget his beloved, repeating Achilles' promise to Patroclus at *Iliad* 22.389–390 (“Even if in Hades people forget the dead, even there I shall remember you, my dear”).

In other words, the passionate love of the two protagonists, which seems to be the central interest of the novelist, is consistently refocused on the archetypal *philia* between Achilles and Patroclus, exactly as the character of Callirhoe is developed through systematic allusions to the Homeric heroines Helen and Penelope. It is hardly plausible to explain this treatment of the epic tradition as a pure, literary game. The great presence of Homeric material, and particularly the massive introduction of poetic quotes into the connective tissue of the prose narrative, should rather be assigned to an artistic intention. “Homerizing” in such a spectacular manner can only mean that Chariton wishes to present himself as a new Homer. If Homer is the father of Greek literature, it makes sense that the inventor of a new literary form, which is expected to become the new epic, tries to legitimate his creation by evoking his authoritative ancestor.

The second novelist in the corpus, in a chronological sequence, is Xenophon of Ephesus (*pace* O'Sullivan 1995, who tries to date him before Chariton). Xenophon's relationship to Homer at first sight seems to be rather weak: scholars do not trace in the *Ephesiaca* any quotation of the Homeric epic (or of any other text of archaic and classical Greek literature), and this lack of interest in intertextuality is usually seen as a sign of Xenophon's scant literary knowledge. It is generally accepted opinion that this pre-sophisticated novel is a sort of narrative machinery: the novelist seems proud of his ability to control a complex and intricate story, where episodes succeed each other with breathless rapidity and mechanical rhythm, in a potentially endless sequence.

Nevertheless, a more accurate analysis of the *Ephesiaca* can lead to different conclusions. Allusions to the opening lines of both *Iliad* and *Odyssey* can be detected in the first chapters of the novel. The motif of Achilles' rage (“rage,” Greek *menis*, is the first word of *Iliad*'s first line) is echoed at 1.2.1, where it is said that “Eros was furious” at the arrogance of Habrocomes. To express Eros' fury, Xenophon employs the verb *menia*, whose

etymological relation to *menis* is obvious. Thus, at the very beginning of the romance, we are told that the whole story of Habrocomes shall be interpreted as the consequence of the rage of Eros, exactly as in the opening scene of the *Iliad*; the whole matter of the poem is presented as the consequence of Achilles' rage. A few paragraphs later, it becomes clear what the result of Eros' revenge will be. At 1.6.2, Apollo's oracle sings "But for them I see terrible sufferings (*deina pathē*) and toils that are endless": the sufferings that the two protagonists are going to experience immediately remind the reader of the many sorrows at sea that Odysseus suffered, as we are told at *Odyssey* 1.4 (*polla en pontō pathen algea*). And this Odyssean perspective is reinforced at 1.10.3, where the parents of Anthia and Habrocomes decide to let them depart for the promised journey, leaving for a while Ephesus ("They were to see some other land and other cities, and palliate the effect of the divine oracle"): Odysseus too "has seen the cities of many people and has learned their ways" (*Odyssey* 1.3). In many other passages (e.g. 5.1.13; 5.14.1), the tortuous wanderings of the protagonists are defined by the verb *planaō*, which is almost equivalent to Homeric *plazomai*, the very mark for Odysseus' endless journey.

The Iliadic motif of rage as a starting point of the action and the Odyssean frame of the difficult return home inspire the literary program of Xenophon's novel. On the other hand, his treatment of the epic model is peculiar: he reuses Homeric material by deconstructing it and reassembling it into a new story line. A good example is the episode of Manto in Book 2. Manto, the daughter of the Tyrian pirate Apsirtus, is a perverse doublet of Homeric Nausicaa. Her portrait builds slowly, with details that increasingly reinforce her correspondence to the epic archetype (though refocused on the negative role of the rival): Manto, like Nausicaa, is ready for marriage (2.3.1); after falling in love with Habrocomes, she dares not speak with anyone of her family for fear of her father and decides to confess her love to Rhoda, a girl her own age (2.3.2–3); similarly, Nausicaa sees in a dream Athena, who appears to her in the shape of a girl of like age, and, speaking with her father, is ashamed to talk about marriage (*Odyssey* 6.22–23; 66–67). Although no explicit clue—no direct quotation, no mention of proper names—is offered to the reader, he is challenged to detect in the episode the hidden Homeric source.

In other words, while in Chariton's novel fragments of Homeric poetry are inserted into the narrative in order to activate an interplay between the two semiotic systems, in Xenophon's the same interplay is produced by a symmetrical balance of episodes. The story of Eudoxus, the Ephesian doctor who visits Anthia in Tarsus asking her to be accompanied home (3.4–6), is mirrored in the episode of Odysseus in Scheria: Anthia plays the role of the Phaeacian rulers and promises the doctor that she will take care of his *parapompē* (his transport home: the word is a quasi-citation of *Odyssey* 7.151 and 317). The encounter of Habrocomes with the old fisherman Aegialeus (5.1), who after hearing from him of his love for Anthia tells him his own story, has its model in *Odyssey* 14–15: from the pathetic narration of his friend, Habrocomes learns what real love is, just as Odysseus in the long talk with swineherd Eumaeus understands how faithful a good old servant can be.

Many other scenes could be analyzed, but let us consider more closely the character of the female protagonist. In the final section of the novel, there is a crescendo of situations that increasingly define Anthia as a new Penelope (Tagliabue 2011). When Perilaus forces her to accept him as a husband, Anthia feigns to agree but asks for a delay (2.13.8); this stratagem is a variant of Penelope's famous ruse of weaving and unweaving the loom

for Laertes (*Odyssey* 2.96–98). The name of the good robber who in Egypt takes care of the heroine and protects her from the rage of the dogs is Amphinomus (4.6; 5.2–4); the same name is shared by the good suitor who in Odysseus' palace shows his wisdom and his affability and is appreciated also by Penelope (*Odyssey* 16.397–398). In her dream in Tarentum, Anthia sees herself and Habrocomes lying together as in their old happy days (5.8.5); Penelope, too, dreams that she has slept with her man, as young as he was before his journey to Troy (*Odyssey* 20.88–89). Finally, when the two protagonists join together in Rhodes, their nightly conversation is modeled on the famous “wedding night” of *Odyssey* 23: in both texts, the two partners go to bed as the other characters are sleeping, and silence reigns over the house; both in the poem and in the novel, the lovers spend the whole night telling each other the long story of their sufferings. Here, the association of Anthia with Penelope is particularly emphasized: as Penelope insists on the violence of the suitors, who have been pressuring her to remarry (23.302–305), so Anthia tells Habrocomes the long list of her trials (5.14.2). The characterization of the heroine as a new Penelope fighting for her chastity seems to belong to the deepest level of Xenophon's artistic program; the whole novel can be read, then, as a quasi-allegorical rewriting of Homer's poem. We should not forget that Ephesus (the fatherland of Xenophon and the setting of the story) was, in Hellenistic times, a major center of Homeric tradition (West 2001, 142); literary sources trace in the Ephesian Artemision the signs of a heroic cult of Penelope as a symbol of conjugal fidelity. In this case, Xenophon's relationship to Homer would be a substantial one.

Leucippe and Clitophon was probably written in the second half of second century AD. The Greek love novel is, at this time, a well-established genre, with rules and conventions that have been defined by the work of a generation of writers. As a second-generation novelist, Achilles Tatius is not interested any more in keeping to the well-worn track; he is, on the contrary, attracted by the possibility of exploring new solutions. On the one side, *Leucippe and Clitophon* is a “standard” novel because it contains all the ingredients that define the new genre (lovers who are separated and reunited, travels and tribulations, rivalry and fidelity, unexpected events), but it is very often the distortion of the convention that gives the romance its special flavor. This can explain Achilles' attitude toward the ancient literary tradition and, in particular, toward Homeric poetry. For the novelists of the first generation, Homeric heritage is an unquestionable point of reference: they “rewrite” Homer by reusing the raw material which is offered by the epic tradition. Achilles plays differently: in his novel, which is the product of an extended literary experimentation, he evokes the Greek literature of the past to underline his liberty to deviate from it. He reaches originality through and against the tradition (Reardon 1994, 81; Morales 2004, 65).

Achilles is, of course, a learned writer, perfectly aware that his implicit reader shares his sophisticated literary knowledge. He does not refuse to enrich his text with Homeric allusions, as at 5.13.1–2: “She really was beautiful; her skin you would have said was bathed in milk, and her cheeks the natural essence of rose. The gleam in her eye was unmistakably erotic.” Here, the novelist is describing the splendid beauty of Melite, the young Ephesian lady who has fallen in love with Clitophon. In the Greek text, we read that her eye *emarmairen marmarugēn Afrodision*, that is to say that Melite's luminous glance inspires desire (which is by no means strange: in erotic literature, the eyes are the way in for love). However, the well-cultivated reader catches a dissimulated quotation of

Iliad 3.397, where Helen recognizes Aphrodite from her “luminous eyes” (*ommata marmaironta*); so, by matching the text with its hypotext, he understands that the novelist suggests that Melite is not only a seductive woman, but really a new Aphrodite.

Other, more ingenuous, allusions to the *Iliad* are at 2.1.1, where the theme of Leucippe’s song is the fight between the boar and the lion (the simile of *Iliad* 16.823–826), and at 2.15.3, when the color of the Egyptian ox is compared to that of Thracian horses “whose praises have been sung by Homer” (*Iliad* 10.437). In other cases, however, Homeric discourses are put into the mouth of characters in order to produce a humoristic effect, due to the contrast between the authoritative tone of the quotations and the much more trivial contest in which the discussion develops. A good example is the long speech pronounced by Clinias, Clitophon’s cousin, in reaction to the bad news that his boyfriend Charicles has been promised in marriage by his father (1.8). To demonstrate the terrible evil that women are, he quotes Hesiod’s *Works and Days* 57–58 (the words that Zeus says when he is going to send on the earth Pandora, the first woman who will destroy men’s life); then, after a long enumeration of tragic heroines, he quotes *Iliad* 2.478, a line in which Agamemnon (slain by his perverse wife Clytemnestra) is compared to Zeus for his celestial beauty. Very close in tone is the passage in which the Egyptian Menelaus (the name is itself a Homeric mark), defending the superiority of homosexual love, quotes *Iliad* 20.234–235 and the abduction of Ganymede to support his argument that boys are more seductive than girls: “If you would like a poetic testimony to the heavenly ascent of beauty, listen to Homer: *The gods caught up Ganymede to pour wine for Zeus because he was beautiful and they were glad to have him among them*. No woman has ever ascended to the heavens because of her beauty (2.36.3).”

Both Clinias and Menelaus quote old father Homer in dialogues not about poetry or philosophy but on sexuality: this does not mean that Achilles is mocking or parodying heroic values, but surely he is amusing himself and his readers with an unconventional use of poetry. There are two passages in the novel where this free attitude toward epic tradition becomes very clear. At the beginning of Book 6, Melite helps Clitophon escape from jail by giving him her cloths; as she has dressed him as herself, she says (6.1.3): “How much more lovely you have become in this dress. I once saw such an Achilles in a painting.” The reference is to the myth of Achilles in the island of Scyros: obeying his mother, who tried to protect him from being recruited for the Trojan war, the young hero lived at the court of King Lykomedes, dressed as a girl and hidden among the other girls of the family; but he revealed himself when, among the gifts offered by Odysseus to the king’s daughters, he chose a sword. The feminine image of Achilles is a kind of meta-literary mark: it points at an unheroic or even anti-heroic story—the “comic” romance written by an author named Achilles himself—which is more lovely than the “serious” novels where the male protagonists are often compared to the warrior Achilles of the Iliadic tradition (Morales 2004, 61).

The second passage is 3.20.4–7. Here, the author describes a trick sword with retractable blade, which is one of the props used by a professional stage actor to perform dramatic readings from the Homeric poems. The description insists on the fictitious and deceiving nature of the object, which seems to be a real weapon but, when someone tries to use it, reveals to be nothing more than pure illusion and appearance. Here, too, Homer symbolizes illusion and feebleness: but, in the following scene, the trick sword is used by Satyrus and Menelaus to deceive the robbers and save Leucippe: in the same

way—this seems to be the hidden meaning of the episode—the creative power of the romance can revitalize the exhausted Homeric tradition.

In other words, Homeric values are turned upside down, and the new values of the novel are established in systematic contrast to them. An extreme example is 1.8.6, where Clinias, supporting his argument that women are born evil, claims: “The wedding of Penelope, chaste creature, was the death of how many suitors?” Distorting the Homeric message could not find a more provocative formulation: because of her chastity, the virtue for which she is universally known (and paradigmatic for the Greek novel heroines), Penelope turns out to be guilty in her suitors’ death. A paradox, of course, but a paradox that shows how free Achilles is in scrutinizing and exploiting the texts of the past. This is probably the reason why he, alone among the Greek novelists, opens his intertextuality even to a “low” genre such as iambography. The verbal duel between the slaves Satyrus and Conops (2.21–22) contains a couple of Aesopic tales (the lion, the elephant, and the mosquito; the mosquito, the lion, and the spider): each tale is a veiled attack on the antagonist. Achilles here wants to evoke the aggressive use of the animal fable, which is a typical device of the archaic blame poetry: the most notable example is Archilochus’ iambic poem against Licambes, which is introduced by the fable of the eagle and the fox (Zanetto 2003, 326–327).

The romance of Heliodorus of Emesa owes a great deal of its originality to its being a hybridization of novel and epic. However, Homeric imitation is, in Heliodorus, much more elaborated and sophisticated than in the novelists of the first generation (the *Aethiopica* was written in third/fourth century AD; Morgan 1996, 417–421). It is a matter of a second-degree “Homericity,” so to say, which is filtered through a deep artistic self-consciousness.

The *Aethiopica* can be analyzed on three levels: the story, the narration, that is to say, how the story is “given” to the readers, and the literary message conveyed in the novel. The story is not so different from a “standard” plot of Greek love narrative: Theagenes and Charicleia are as beautiful and virtuous as the protagonists of such stories are expected to be; they travel from Greece to Egypt and then to Aethiopia, being several times separated and exposed to physical challenges and sexual assaults, until they are reunited; and, after passing the last trials, get married and start a long and happy conjugal life.

More interesting are the other two levels, where intertextuality plays a central role. As in the *Odyssey*—which is the obvious narratological model—the narration begins *in medias res*: the first scene describes the two protagonists lying on the Egyptian shore, surrounded by a chaotic mass of slain bodies; there has been a cruel fight, as the evidence of the carnage suggests, but the reader is in no condition to understand what happened, nor able to identify the characters, and his or her knowledge does not grow in the following episodes when a band of robbers come on the stage and take the two lovers prisoner. It is only at the end of Book 2 that, through the lengthy retrospective narration of the Egyptian priest Calasiris, we get the information we need: we are told that the boy and girl have fallen in love in Delphi, where Charicleia has been living for many years as a priestess of Artemis, and have fled from Delphi to reach Egypt and know there their final destination. At the end of Book 5, Calasiris’ narrative closes the circle: the internal narrator describes, from his subjective point of view, the same massacre that has been shown to the reader’s eye by the third-person narrator at the very beginning; flashback and main narrative merge together just at mid-point of the text. Heliodorus is, of course, perfectly aware that he is adopting the

Odyssean device of the metadiegetic narrative. He even goes beyond Homer, by multiplying the role of the internal narrator (a first “Odysseus” is Cnemon, the young Athenian who in the Herdsmen’s camp tells Theagenes and Charicleia the story of his life) and amplifying the metadiegetic technique (Calasiris’ narrative embeds narrations of second- and even third-degree intra-narrators; Morgan 2004b).

The interplay with the *Odyssey* is clearly and repeatedly alluded to. As Cnemon asks Calasiris to tell his story, the old Egyptian says: “You are carrying me to Troy” (2.21.5): these are exactly the words with which Odysseus begins his retrospective narration to the Phaeacians (*Odyssey* 9.39). As they enter the house where Calasiris stays, Cnemon asks him again to speak, but the other answers that the first thing to do is to eat: “Homer knew how the belly subordinates everything to itself, and that is what he had in mind when, in that memorable passage, he called it accursed” (2.22.5). This is an allusion to *Odyssey* 7.215–218, when Odysseus asks the Phaeacians to allow him to eat, before he can answer their questions, because the belly has its rights. Other explicit Odyssean markers are the passages in which Calasiris suggests a break, because much of the night is passed and it is time to sleep (4.4.2; 5.1.3); this motif evokes *Odyssey* 11.328–332, where Odysseus interrupts his account and says that it is too late to go on telling stories.

However, the most spectacular Homeric focalizer is the scene in which Calasiris, during his stay in Zakynthos, sees in a dream Odysseus himself:

[...] as I slept, a vision of an old man appeared to me. Age had withered him almost to a skeleton, except that his cloak was hitched up to reveal a thigh that retained some vestige of the strength of his youth. He wore a leather helmet on his head, and his expression was one of cunning and many wiles; he was lame in one leg, as if from a wound of some kind. He stood by my bed and said, with a sinister smile: “You, my fine friend, are the only man who has ever treated us with such utter contempt. All others whose ships have passed by the island of Kephallenia have paid a visit to our home and deemed it a matter of importance to learn of my renown. You, on the other hand, have been so neglectful as to grant me not even the common courtesy of a salutation, despite my dwelling in the vicinity. But your omissions will be visited on you very soon. [...] However, to the maiden you have with you, my wife sends greetings and wishes her joy, since she esteems chastity above all things.” (5.22.1–3)

This passage is a collage of Homeric allusions. The name of the old man is given only later, but many points in the description are clues that the reader is challenged to recognize: the advanced age refers to the disguise given to the hero by Athena (*Odyssey* 13.430–432), the strong thigh revealed by the cloak evokes *Odyssey* 18.67–68 (preparing for the wrestling with Iros, Odysseus exposes his large thighs), the lame leg alludes to the hunting scene on Parnasus (*Odyssey* 19.450: Odysseus is wounded in his knee by the boar), and the leather helmet is part of Odysseus’ armor in the nocturnal raid of *Iliad* 10 (Morgan 1994, 110). Being visited in dream by Odysseus, Calasiris is legitimated to play the role of narrator: he “becomes” in a sense Odysseus, the story-teller *par excellence*, and his narrative is equated to the famous account given by the hero to the Phaeacians.

Odysseus’ ghost tells of the sympathy which Penelope (“my wife”) feels toward Charicleia because of her chastity. Assimilation of the heroine to Penelope is a common pattern of the Greek novel, but Charicleia also shares some Odysseus’ traits. She is the chief character of the whole story, which is the report of *her* return home; in the long journey from Delphi to Meroe, it is she who is guided by supernatural forces to regain

her natural position inside her family and her community: within the couple, she is the leader, while Theagenes plays a subordinate role. The final recognition of Charicleia through the ebony mark on her left arm (10.15.2) points at the scenes of *Odyssey* 19 and 24, when first Eurycleia and later Laertes recognize Odysseus by the scar on his knee (Fusillo 2006, 292).

On the other side, the *Odyssey* is not only the hypotext of the *Aethiopica* but also its meta-text. In a sort of dissertation inserted into his narrative, Calasiris comments on some Homeric passages about the gods' behavior: he reveals that Homer was born in Egypt and had Hermes as his real father; his wisdom and his extraordinary knowledge of divine and human things can be explained by his Egyptian origin and his mysterious birth (3.12–14). This is a key passage for the interpretation of the novel. Calasiris is clearly “inventing” a Homer who is a double of himself: an Egyptian wise man, who knows the hidden meaning of the stories. The message is clear enough: the allegoric interpretation of the Homeric poetry—offered by the internal narrator—is a theoretical model which can be adopted also for the extra-diegetic level. Like Odysseus' journey, Charicleia's return home can be read as a metaphor of a philosophical and religious lesson, which is taught by the novelist (third Homer) to his readers.

At 3.6.3, Heliodorus echoes Sappho's famous poem on the full moon (fr. 34 L-P: “The stars about the beautiful moon vanish very soon, when she is full and shines on the earth”): like the full moon, Charicleia lights up all space around herself. This quasi-quotation can be a link to *Daphnis and Chloe*, the fifth novel of the extant corpus. It is not the latest, because it can be dated to the second/third century AD, but it is unique in being a pastoral rewriting of the romance. The main characters are two adolescents who live in the countryside of Lesbos, taking care of their sheep and goats: the novelist is interested in describing how they fall in love without knowing what love is, and how their self-consciousness progressively grows, until they get ready for marriage and for a new life. Longus pays his debt to the conventions by inserting situations which are required by the rules of the Greek romance (separation of the protagonists, pirates, rivals); but these stereotypes are reduced to the minimum, while the most vital aspect of the novel is the tension between the (apparent) candidness or even naivety of the story and the elaborated technique of the writing.

The literary texture of *Daphnis and Chloe* has been investigated by many scholars (e.g. Hunter 1983; Morgan 2004a; Pattoni 2005), who have shown that the novel is full with echoes of and allusions to archaic, classic, and Hellenistic Greek texts. This is in close relation with the episodic nature of the book: in contrast with the other romances, where the episodes are variations upon the pattern of separation and danger and the adventurous dimension gives a coherent continuity to the story, in *Daphnis and Chloe* (where the protagonists live together and their love is not exposed to real risks), the episodes live independently: each scene has its color and its sources. Homer is quite often echoed, mostly in passages where the epic touch makes a humoristic contrast with the rustic or urban context. At 2.17.3, the farmers who attack the Methymnaeans are compared to starlings or jackdaws: the simile that at *Iliad* 17.755 is used for the Achaeans who are fleeing before Hector. At 4.3.4, at the end of the party organized by Dionysophanes, a servant takes the tokens of Chloe's identity and carries them round from left to right, showing them to everyone: at *Iliad* 7.183–184, the same maneuver is performed by the herald, who wants to identify the winner of the draw.

In other cases, the epic imitation goes beyond the reuse of Homeric phrasing and suggests the borrowing of scenes and situations. A splendid example is the bath episode in Book 1. Chloe falls in love with Daphnis when she sees him washing himself in the Nymphs' spring: the model is *Odyssey* 6, when Nausicaa, watching Odysseus as he sits on the seashore after bathing in the river, realizes how beautiful he is. Also, the story told to Daphnis by Lycanium at 3.16 about the loss of one of her 20 geese is based on the dream that Penelope tells to the disguised Odysseus about her flock of geese being preyed upon by an eagle (*Odyssey* 19.535–540).

The other voice of archaic poetry that most often speaks in Longus' novel is Sappho's. Longus' predilection for Sappho, which is unique among the novelists of the corpus, can be explained by a geographical proximity (the fatherland of the poetess was Lesbos) and, more important, by a thematic affinity. The chief interest of Longus is reproducing the psychology of the lovers and describing their emotional reactions to the novelty of falling in love. This topic is very close to that symptomatology of love that inspires many of Sappho's poems. The indolence of Daphnis and Chloe in doing their duty (1.13.6; 1.17.4) echoes fr. 102 L-P; their violent physical symptoms (pounding heart, shivers, sweat, aphasia: 1.13–14; 1.17) correspond to the description of fr. 31 L-P. The whole episode of 3.33.4–34, when Daphnis climbs an apple tree to catch the topmost fruit and give it to Chloe, is the expansion of fr. 105a L-P, a wedding song where the bride who has kept intact her virginity is compared to the unplucked apple.

Note

- 1 All translations of Greek novels are from Reardon 1989. Other translations are mine.

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Further Readings

- Fusillo, M. 1989. *Il romanzo greco: polifonia ed eros*. Venice: Marsilio (in Italian; French translation by M. Abrioux. 1991. *Naissance du roman*. Paris: Seuil). The first chapter provides an excellent overview on the Greek novel as a merger of previous genres.
- Morgan, J. 2008. "Intertextuality." In *The Greek and Roman Novel*, edited by T. Whitmarsh. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Since a systematic and comprehensive investigation of intertextuality in the Greek novel is still lacking, this synthetic discussion is very useful.
- Schmeling, G., ed. 1996. *The Novel in the Ancient World*. Leiden: Brill. Offers a general introduction to the ancient novel; the chapters on the single novelists give information also on their treatment of the literary sources.