

Below the Belt: Looking into the Matter of Adventure-Time

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Bakhtin's discussion of the Greek romance in his essay 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel'¹ has prompted a significant amount of debate among classical scholars. Critics chiefly contest Bakhtin's conceptualization of the chronotope 'adventure-time' that Bakhtin posits as characteristic of this ancient novelistic form, arguing that Bakhtin's chronotope seems to deny the significance of the events that occur between the beginning and end of the novel. Indeed the adventure-time chronotope does leave relatively unexplored the bulk of the events that constitute the narrative. Yet, at the same time, the concept helpfully demarcates a problematic gap in these Greek romances between the narrative frame that begins and ends the novels and the matter of adventure-time, which I will henceforth refer to as "content," contained within this frame.² For the events of the romances describe the tensions and torments of erotic subjectivity, played out upon the surface of physical bodies that are only obliquely acknowledged in Bakhtin's conception of adventure-time. The bodies of the hero and heroine, in suffering the hidden pains of *eros*, express inner complications that prove as resistant to any normalizing theory of narrative as they do to the ideology of the society which seeks to constrain them. Thus adventure-time, in veiling over the insistent persistence of the biological bodies that provoke these adventures, in fact emphasizes a gap that occurs on both the level of the narrative and of the characters themselves. The disconnect between the narrative frame and the erotic adventures (or content) of these novels is recapitulated in the gap

¹ Bakhtin 1981, 84–258.

² In her sociological study of the ancient Greek novel, S. MacAlister also notes the productive frame that Bakhtin's adventure-time chronotope creates. MacAlister 1991, 39.

between outer expression (that is, bodily interaction with the world) and the inner experience (personal, hidden emotions or feelings) of the hero and heroine in the course of those adventures. Concentrating primarily upon Achilles Tatius' *Leukippe and Cleitophon*, this essay will explore the tension between Bakhtin's concept of 'adventure-time' and the erotically troubled bodies moving about within this chronotope.

In demarcating the travels of the hero and heroine within the adventure-time chronotope, Bakhtin follows the impetus of the novels themselves, which repeatedly invite us, as readers, to investigate these bodies by representing their torments as the object of a fascinated gaze: the gaze of the narrator and his implicit and explicit audience. The body, which endures both the invisible wounds of *eros* and the visibly apparent wounds of torture and mutilation, marks the conjunction of public and private, exterior and interior, in the romance.³ The function and significance of the body is perhaps most emphatically foregrounded by the performance of numerous mutilations and near death experiences that the female heroine, in particular, suffers in the course of the novel. Thus the question of gender inevitably arises in this bodily investigation. This is not surprising, since the romances emerge in this study as a place in which the individual, with all of its disruptive desires in tow, is imagined in the process of becoming subject to culture, which requires the mastery of unruly impulses and the establishment of a socially approved sexual identity.

I The Chronotope and Adventure-Time

Noting the genesis of Bakhtin's conception of the chronotope in both Einstein and Kant, Bracht Branham explains its double function in Bakhtin's literary criticism:

³ Bakhtin's concern with the uneasy tension between the private and the public body emerges most clearly in his later study of Rabelais. Darko Suvin sees a radical difference in Bakhtin's treatment of the private body, characterized as isolated and repressed, and the public body, which seems almost utopian in its grotesque exhibitions and manifestations of bodily functions such as sex and digestion. To a certain extent, this essay calls into question the possibility of Suvin's conclusive call for a materialist yet dialectical theory of the body: Suvin 1989.

The idea seems to have two aspects as Bakhtin develops it: the founding or ‘indispensable’ assumptions of a genre (or indeed any utterance), which themselves may never be the object of representation and yet shape the parameters of the way that spatial and temporal relationships are ‘artistically expressed’ in a given genre; and how these ‘appropriated aspects of reality’ are used to articulate the specific meaning of a ‘concrete artistic cognition’ or artifact ... As a fundamental working assumption that shapes the genre’s way of seeing reality, it should provide an analytic framework for understanding how and why each genre (or sub-genre) ‘is adapted to conceptualizing some aspects of experience better than others.’⁴

The chronotope represents an inherently anthropologic approach to genre, positing the work of literature in terms of a textual world-making that reflects a concrete stance toward the real world, an attitude made possible by the manner in which space and time are imagined in the text. As Bakhtin explains, ‘The chronotope as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as well. The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic.’⁵ Thus, the chronotope is significant precisely because it introduces into the literary form and the language events depicted in it a certain physicality—that is, the terms of man’s phenomenal experience of the world and consciousness. The chronotope highlights the phenomena of bodies moving through and interacting within the created ‘physical’ environment of the narrative: ‘Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history.’⁶ Yet Bakhtin’s use of metaphorical language here complicates the attempt to interpret his meaning in literary terms.⁷ The formula ‘Time ... takes on flesh’ suggests an ambiguo-

⁴ Branham 2002, 165–6 (quoting Morson and Emerson 1990, 276).

⁵ Bakhtin 1981, 85.

⁶ *Ibid.* 84.

⁷ Jay Ladin, in his essay ‘Fleshing out the Chronotope,’ notes how Bakhtin’s highly metaphorical language accounts for part of the difficulty in the ‘application’ of Bakhtin’s thought in ‘critical analysis.’ Ladin ultimately posits film as the most likely mode for bypassing the metaphoric appearance the chronotope suggests when applied to literature. Yet while Ladin’s ensuing discussion of film and the chronotope successfully addresses the visual experience of the material film (i.e., the fusion of scenes and images that extend over the temporal length of the film), his approach surprisingly avoids an overt con-

ous *materiality* of the literary event. This fleshly interaction of time, space, and body within the text appears perhaps most clearly in Bakhtin's description of the chronotope typical of the early Greek romance, adventure-time.

Bakhtin explains that adventure-time is characterized by 'a *technical, abstract connection between space and time*, by the reversibility of moments in a temporal sequence, and by their *interchangeability in space*.'⁸ In this sense, the storyline might be imagined as a tightrope: if the rope were looped over so that beginning and end touched, one might skip easily over the dangling middle, unaware of what had been missed. The novel begins with love at first sight and ends with marriage: 'Two adjacent moments, one of biographical life, one of biographical time, are directly conjoined.'⁹ Bakhtin consequently locates the adventures of the novel outside of biographical time, since the characters of the heroes seem unchanged at the conclusion: '[I]n [the Greek romance] there is a sharp hiatus between two moments of biographical time, a hiatus that leaves no trace in the life of the heroes or in their personalities.'¹⁰ Instead, between the first moments of love and the *telos* of marriage (or, as Bakhtin puts it, 'the arousal of passion, and its satisfaction'), the hero and heroine are inevitably separated, each suffering a series of adventures in foreign lands as they struggle to reunite again. Yet, he argues, despite the amount of suffering that each undergoes, the main characters do not demonstrate any noticeable development but instead remain the same, with 'no potential for evolution, for growth, for change ... What we get is a mere affirmation of the identity between what had been at the beginning and what is at the end.'¹¹ This dream-like lack of consequence in adventure-time is enhanced by its exotic locations, which seem more generic than real; the touristic descriptions of these alien lands suggest that they are consequently untouched by history.¹² In addition, the events that take place are overwhelmingly caused by random contingency, quirks of fate, or tricks of

sideration of the body itself, either in the film or in the audience: Ladin 1999, 212–213 and 228–229.

⁸ Bakhtin 1981, 100, his emphasis.

⁹ *Ibid.* 89.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 90.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 110.

¹² See Branham 2002, 183n25. In contrast, Suzanne Saïd argues that specific details describing well-known (even touristic) landmarks emphasize the distinctive particularity of the lands through which the lovers travel. Saïd 1994, 216–236. For a similar emphasis upon the realism of the worlds evoked in the Greek romances, see Bowie 1999, 52.

chance—nonhuman forces, for the most part, that act suddenly upon the lives of the surprised hero and heroine. There are no series of hours and days developing into what would seem a normal progression of human life. The abstract world of contingency and chance thus becomes for Bakhtin a place in which the *endurance*, rather than the development, of the hero and heroine as individuals is demonstrated.¹³

Bakhtin's assessment of the conventional frame of the romance plot foregrounds a sharp contrast between the story's frame (the beginning and end of the novel) and its narrative contents (the adventures in which the hero and heroine suffer physical and emotional hardships as they travel through foreign countries). Yet, in demarcating the gap between the frame and its content, Bakhtin marginalizes the matter of these adventures. Rather, the lovers' adventures become for Bakhtin a series of interchangeable episodes demonstrating a metaphysical ideal of an enduring individual. This abstraction of the human body emerges despite his pointed consideration of the physicality of the chronotope, which he notes appears most clearly in the initial meeting that inevitably befalls the hero and heroine by chance. The meeting represents a point of contact, and particularly physical contact; in the Greek romance, this contact is very much that of the meeting of human bodies. Yet Bakhtin notes,

It is nevertheless a living human being moving through space and not merely a physical body in the literal sense of the term. While it is true that his life may be completely passive—'Fate' runs the game—he nevertheless endures the game fate plays. And he not only endures—he keeps on being the same person and emerges from this game, from all these turns of fate and chance, with his identity absolutely unchanged.¹⁴

¹³ J. Perkins' study helpfully highlights the influence of Stoicism upon texts produced under the Roman Empire, particularly Early Christian narratives. Unlike Bakhtin, though, Perkins doesn't distinguish between the opening and closing frame of the novel and the matter of the adventures contained within this frame. Thus while she helpfully illuminates the endurance of the lovers throughout their adventures in light of Stoicism, her analysis conflates the social body and the individual body of the beloved, suggesting that the social structures of marriage (and the tenets of Stoicism) permeate equally the various parts of the narrative and that thus the social order is celebrated in the romance, an idea that is clearly contradicted by the matter that constitutes the majority of the novels: the lovers' individual adventures in alien lands. Perkins 1995, 47–80.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 105.

Although the adventures manifest themselves primarily in bodily experiences, Bakhtin here strives to grasp the genre's sense of a 'living human being' that exceeds the 'mere physical body.' His conception of the adventure-time chronotope minimizes bodily experience by positing a theory of the emerging novel that reads the human bodies moving about within the text as signifiers of a fairly minimal conception of being 'human.' Thus his account of the chronotope reflects the point of view of the framing poles of the narrative, subordinating the fleshly body to the idea of the enduring, public image of an individual that he sees as the 'artistic and ideological meaning of the Greek romance.'¹⁵ Yet, I suggest, this ideal public image endures not *despite* the lovers' adventures, but precisely *because* of the bodily sufferings they experience in the suspended animation of adventure-time. In other words, the matter (or content) of adventure-time manifests a concern with the gap between inner and outer (between personal and public) experience by means of repeated scenes of bodily violation and invasion. Adventure-time thus presents a series of explorations of inner experience, all of which contribute to the final conclusion of the narrative, in which the authenticity of inner experience is verified and codified in societal terms, enabling the lovers to once again take up their respective (and respectable) roles in society.

IIa Defending the Novel against Adventure-time

As I have noted, Bakhtin's conception of adventure-time in the ancient Greek novel seems to have provoked the bulk of the criticism of his theory of the novel, particularly by critics who seem to feel the theory threatens to detract from the value of the Greek romance as a literary genre.¹⁶ Arguing

¹⁵ Ibid. 107.

¹⁶ For example, in *The True Story of the Novel*, Margaret Anne Doody's treatment of this ancient form emerges from her desire to designate the form as generative of the modern novel, an argument that seems to necessitate, for her, establishing the ancient novel as 'high' art rather than the 'low' or 'popular' art with which it has been frequently associated. In drawing a connection between the ancient and modern novel, Doody contradicts Bakhtin's sense of adventure-time with her claim that the progression of time is essential to the novel. Yet her sense of the temporal element of these novels seems to include every sort of time besides that which evolves in the present and passes into the past. Doody's conception of time combines the historical and anachronistic—time out of time—with the mythical and the ritual, which gain their potency by their 'escape' from

against Bakhtin's contention that the romances unfold only in space, and not in time, David Konstan emphasizes the lovers' developing experience of *eros* as an essential aspect of their adventures. Konstan reads Bakhtin's concept of adventure-time as overlooking the various events of the novel, reducing them to a 'parenthesis,' in the process of demonstrating the unchanging nature of the hero and heroine. For Konstan, by contrast, the individual events are essential to the novels, in that they prove a 'development' of fidelity of the lovers for each other. In fact, one of Konstan's stated objects in his study of the Greek romance, lies, he suggests, in proving just the opposite of Bakhtin's static adventure-time; Konstan aims to 'exhibit a movement in the Greek novel by which the loyalty appropriate to marriage is distinguished from the spontaneous erotic attraction that brought the couple together in the first place.'¹⁷ By means of the illustration of this progress of fidelity, Konstan seeks to demonstrate his larger claim that what makes the genesis of the romance innovative, in its earliest inception in the ancient Greek novels, is the unique conception of *eros* in these texts.

According to Konstan, *eros* emerges as distinct from its form in the literary genres that precede it; for in the Greek romance, he argues, *eros* incorporates its sense both as passion or desire and as the sort of faithful love embodied in marriage. In the ancient novel, he argues, 'erotic attraction is represented as a uniform and undivided motive ...' and '... everyone who is under the spell of *eros* wants it to last forever.'¹⁸ In other words, sexual attraction isn't divided into *either* lust *or* the desire for marriage; *eros* includes both, undifferentiated, in the novels. For this reason, Konstan asserts with an oblique nod toward Bakhtin, it may seem to a modern reader as if nothing really happens in them.¹⁹ Because the novels don't describe a division of *eros* between a lower, bodily love and a higher more enduring love, he continues, they don't describe a development of the hero or heroine in which he or she evolves from a base desire to an appreciation for the rewards of a higher love, such as marriage. Rather, the novels demonstrate an endurance of this feeling of undifferentiated *eros*, an endurance of loyalty or fidelity. In order to demonstrate this fidelity of *eros*, of course, the hero and heroine

normal time. Thus her assessment of time in the Greek romances continues to remain outside of progressive time, like Bakhtin's adventure-time. Doody 1997, 136.

¹⁷ Konstan 1994, 11.

¹⁸ Ibid. 43.

¹⁹ Ibid. 45.

must remain unchanged—an argument that begins to sound suspiciously like Bakhtin's.²⁰ Yet the manner in which Konstan arrives at this juncture is worth examining further here, for, as I will demonstrate, Konstan's conception of symmetry in the Greek romance, by means of what it fails to address, resonates productively with Bakhtin's adventure-time chronotope.

Iib Marriage, Chastity, and the Case of the Missing Body

As I have noted, Konstan's thesis is that love takes a particular form in the ancient romances that 'distinguishes them as a genre from all other amatory literature in the classical world,' as well as from the Roman novels. Specifically, complete symmetry between the hero and heroine—a balance Konstan finds manifested in everything from their social class to their ages to the intensity of their desires for each other—seems to enable a uniquely novel form of *eros* that itself maintains an equal balance between bodily lust and the sort of 'higher affection' that leads to marriage.²¹ Konstan suggests that 'the reciprocal love between the primary couple is constituted in the Greek novels as the basis for an enduring relationship of marriage, in contrast to modes of *eros* that arise in situations marked by an asymmetry of power and feeling,' such as that found between an *erastes* and *eromenos*.²² Of course, as Konstan admits, the lack of equality he finds inherent in homoerotic relationships is also reflected in the common Greek conception of marriage, in which the marriage is arranged by men (the fathers of the groom and bride or the groom and the father of the bride) with the woman playing the role of passive object in the exchange.²³ Nevertheless, the special *eros* of the Greek

²⁰ as Branham also points out: 'But when we inspect [Konstan's] argument carefully, it turns out to support not the reality of change but the importance of endurance and constancy, the very qualities Bakhtin attributes to the genre. And constancy as a theme may well seem oddly suited to an emphasis on change or development': Branham 2002, 173.

²¹ In this sense, Konstan's argument echoes Foucault's discussion of the transition of *eros* from a relation of power between men to an ideal of symmetry between man and woman. For Foucault, however, this erotic development provides a basis for considering a simultaneous change in the relation to the self, a central concern of this essay, as well. Foucault 1986, see especially 189–232.

²² Ibid. 36.

²³ Winkler (1994: 28) notes the deviation in the conception of marriage featured in the Greek romance, which, he argues, invests the idea of marriage with love (rather than economy) for the first time, in sharp contrast to earlier literary and social conventions. In contrast, Brigitte Egger (1999: 131) argues that the marriages featured in the Greek ro-

romances, he asserts, describes a bodily desire that both lovers want to last forever; thus *eros* acquires the uniform motive of marriage.²⁴

Konstan finds that, throughout their adventures in the novel, the hero and heroine enact this symmetry by exhibiting equal levels of passivity or activity as they struggle to maintain their fidelity toward each other in the face of dangerous threats to it. Arguing that this fidelity doesn't necessarily represent the same idea as chastity, he notes that the hero or heroine, if coerced, might well have sex with another yet still be considered to have remained loyal to his or her beloved. Thus, he concludes, the romances describe an *eros* that doesn't distinguish between body or spirit, a nondiscrimination made apparent by the fact that the body becomes an insignificant factor in determining fidelity in love.

While such a utopian scheme of desire clearly privileges heterosexual relations that culminate in the 'higher' love of marriage, Konstan's theory seems perhaps most questionable in its conception of an *eros* that is prompted by bodily desire, yet transcends that desire to reach its spiritual aim, while at the same time not differentiating between bodily and spiritual affections. In order for such an endurance of body and spirit to be the case, it stands to reason, the body must remain a factor in the equation.²⁵ Yet Konstan insists that the fidelity that reflects this unchanging and enduring *eros* rises above any bodily associations of chastity.

In his valorization of (spiritual) fidelity over bodily chastity, Konstan cites two exceptions to this rule. In Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, the heroine Callirhoe, split from her first husband (the hero Chaereas, who she believes is dead) is compelled to marry the nobleman Dionysius in order to provide a life and future for Chaereas' child, with which she is pregnant.

mance present a situation in which females have no rights or choices, a scenario that she suggests would have been outdated and in conflict with the actual situation of women at the time the novels were written.

²⁴ Achilles Tatius' characterization of Kleinias' love for his boyfriend Charikles, and the devastated emotional response Kleinias has when his lover is thrown from his horse and killed, undermines Konstan's assertion that only heterosexuals demonstrate a desire for their *eros* to last forever. Before Charikles is killed, Kleinias expresses his painful feelings of love for Charikles in the same terms of actual bodily torture that the heterosexual lovers also typically use (1,11–13).

²⁵ Notably, Simon Goldhill reads the relation of chastity to the body in the Greek romances as a reflection of a similar distinction made in Christian homiletics on virginity, which distinguish between *integritas* (wholeness, integrity, being untouched) and *sanctitas* (holiness, purity, untouchability). Goldhill 1995, x.

Despite this sexual union with Dionysius, Chaereas forgives her for straying and reaccepts her as his wife when they're reunited—a gesture which Konstan reads as demonstrating the endurance of fidelity despite bodily transgression.

The bulk of Konstan's argument, though, rests on his analysis of another exception, in Achilles Tatius' *Leukippe and Cleitophon*, in which the hero Cleitophon is guilty of a sexual dalliance with the noblewoman Melite. In this case, he has agreed to marry Melite in the belief that his beloved Leukippe is dead or lost forever. Cleitophon successfully postpones consummating the union, however, until he finds Leukippe alive again. In a parting gift to the love-suffering Melite, he only then submits to her desires, in an act of both sympathy for her and respect for the god of love, whom he fears he might otherwise offend. While Konstan posits that in this case Achilles Tatius may be self-consciously pushing the form to its limits, he nevertheless uses this episode as the central demonstration of the distinction he draws between chastity and fidelity. For the novel ends with two of tests of 'honor' which, he claims, 'do not make sex the essential criterion of fidelity.'²⁶ The basis of this conclusion lies in the fact that the tests go off without a hitch, despite the fact that Melite and Cleitophon have had sexual relations. Unfortunately, this conclusion omits the fact that the two ordeals are testing Melite and Leukippe, not Cleitophon. Thus, Leukippe easily passes the test, which assesses her virginity, since she has remained chaste throughout the story. Melite also passes the test, since the stated purpose of her trial is to determine whether or not she committed adultery while her husband Thersandros was away. Since she and Cleitophon had their sexual encounter after Thersandros returns, she too passes.²⁷

²⁶ Ibid. 53.

²⁷ S. Schwartz has argued (in this journal) that the trial in Achilles Tatius subverts what she sees as the typical role of the trial in the Greek romance: to demonstrate 'justice' in reconfirming the importance of marriage over adultery. She suggests that this particular trial, however, deviates from the norm in enabling Cleitophon to commit adultery yet 'get away scot-free.' Her emphasis upon the trial scene helpfully underscores its traditional importance as a concluding device, though I disagree with her interpretation of the trials as concerned with 'justice.' Rather, I am arguing here that the trials, in their formality and public nature, have the function of reinstating the forms of society upon the errant lovers and simultaneously returning the reader to the social form or frame of the novel as a whole (in contrast to the matter of adventure-time). Schwartz 2000–2001, see esp. p. 110.

Contrary to Konstan's assertion, then, in both cases the clear focus of the trials pinpoints bodily chastity. In fact, the background myths which explain the rituals of each test emphasize bodily lust and resistance. Leukippe's test in the cave of Pan refers back to a frustrated lust the god held for the virgin maiden Syrinx; in order to escape his advances, the maiden's body must metamorphose into a set of pipes (which are then often fondled and blown upon by Pan). The ritual test Melite undergoes refers back to another bodily transformation, that of the virgin Rhodopis, who is beguiled by the arrow of Eros into forsaking her vow of loyalty to Artemis in pursuit of her desire for the young man Euthynicus. As a result, Artemis turns the maiden into a spring of water on the spot; it is in this spring that Melite must bathe, a tablet around her neck inscribed with Thersites' accusation. The women's effortless passing of these tests (even in the case of Melite, who is, in fact, actually guilty of adultery) suggests the tests are rather *pro forma* than serious examinations. In this sense, these bodily trials emphasize the disconnect between the private experience of the body and the public perception of it. While Melite has, in fact, committed adultery with Cleitophon, she is able to escape punishment for it because of a semantic distinction, a technicality of language that communicates to the witnessing public her (false) innocence.

Yet Konstan's claim that fidelity remains distinct from chastity represents a persistent aspect of his general argument for the symmetry demonstrated by the hero and heroine in these early novels. For the undifferentiated quality that he identifies in the *eros* of Greek romance bolsters his claims that the hero and heroine maintain a balance that avoids the typical discriminations of gender.²⁸ This desire to establish gender equality in the lovers all but eliminates the body (and hence gender) from the novels altogether. Not coincidentally, in this pointed avoidance of the body, Konstan's notion of unchanging endurance echoes Bakhtin's theory of static individuals in the midst of adventure-time perhaps most closely.

For, upon closer examination, Bakhtin's own conception of the Greek romance similarly avoids an *overt* conceptualization of the physical body as a factor in adventure-time, even though his explanation of the endurance of

²⁸ In fact, Konstan criticizes scholars such as Carolyn Walker Bynum for reading issues of chastity in terms of gender: 'It is easy to see the vast distance between this gender-polarized narrative pattern [i.e., Bynum's reading of chastity in medieval hagiographies], with its emphasis on chastity in women and moral activism in men, and the paradigm that informs the ancient Greek novel': Konstan 1994, 58.

human identity in the Greek romance (see above, Part I) clearly emphasizes the phenomenal existence of the individual. Despite the fact that his conception of the chronotope emerges in terms of the fleshiness or phenomenality of events in space and time, Bakhtin's conception of the human being 'living' within the chronotope evidently does not hinge on the physical body per se (nor, therefore, does it take into account the question of gender). His efforts to pursue the body as meaning more than itself demonstrate this abstract concern, as Bakhtin considers the recurring motifs in Greek romance of disguise, recognition, betrayal, false death, and tests of fidelity as various tests of 'the heroes' integrity, their selfhood.²⁹ For Bakhtin, the *appearance* of integrity or enduring identity takes precedence over a close consideration of the bodily trials that make such identity manifest in society, particularly in the Greek romance. In this sense, Konstan's attempts to remove the body from *eros* seem to echo Bakhtin's own omission; as such, Konstan's most radical claim of all, that the hero and heroine suffer equal hardships in the course of their adventures, becomes even more significant in its marked avoidance of the body.

Yet the body, as the locus of the *eros* which ignites the plot, actually indicates an essential concern of these early novels. Indeed, the relegation of the body to a metaphorical status by both Bakhtin and Konstan reflects the central problem raised by the literal presence of the flesh in these novels. As I will show, the novels depict the body as a locus of *eros* that resists being successfully integrated into the enclosing frame of the novels. The fleshly body, in its continuous and uncontrollable responses to desire, introduces a persistent emotional excess that precludes any unified or stable articulation of private human identity in the social realm, while prompting the metaphorical mastery of the body by the gaze of the narrator, the author, and the critic.³⁰

²⁹ Bakhtin 1981, 106.

³⁰ H. Morales 1995 argues that the Phoenix in the story represents Leukippe, both creatures willing to be tamed. Morales notes the emphasis in the myth of the Phoenix on the sight of its genitalia as proof of its authenticity. In this sense, my discussion of the gaze and mastery resonates with Morales' argument that the gaze produces authenticity. Morales 1995.

IIIa The Wounded Body and the Wound of Eros

The Greek romances are replete with scenes and threats of physical mutilation, torture, and near-death or even apparently fatal encounters, in both the plot of the narratives and in ekphrases of paintings and mosaics that appear frequently in the texts. For example, in Chariton's novel, the heroine Callirhoe suffers two *Scheintode* and the hero Chaereas one; in Achilles Tatius' novel only the heroine Leukippe undergoes such apparently violent demises, appearing to die three times in addition to suffering a bout of madness in which she loses herself to such an extent that she ignores all conventions of modesty and exposes herself; in Heliodoros' novel, too, the heroine appears to suffer violent deaths on several occasions. In addition to the *Scheintode*, the novels present numerous references to bodily mutilation, in the guise of both accidental suffering and legally imposed torture.

The elaborate descriptions of these spectacular scenes of violence in the narrative are echoed by the frequent ekphrases that foreshadow events in the main narrative.³¹ The distinct correlation between violence experienced by characters and violence represented by artifacts emerges unmistakably in the ekphrasis that introduces Achilles Tatius' novel. The narrative opens with an unnamed narrator describing a painting he is examining, a picture of the rape of Europa by Zeus in the form of a bull. The narrator describes the artist's depiction of the scene of the beautiful maiden (καλή παρθένος) astride the bull with particular attention to the appearance of the maidens who witness her abduction:

At the far end of the meadow, where the land jutted out into the sea, the artist had placed the maidens. Their pose expressed both joy and fear ... Their faces were blanched, a wry twist at the corners of their mouths, eyes wide and staring out to sea. Their mouths were slightly open, as if a

³¹ For the use of ekphrasis to prompt or guide the reader's interpretation see Bartsch 1989, especially 7, 39, and 177, and Montague 1992, 244. J. Heffernan's exploration of ekphrasis, echoing that of Bartsch, suggests that the ekphrases in Achilles Tatius' novel prefigure the events that follow. While I agree with this general idea, Heffernan's conclusion that the paintings construct a close correspondence between rape and marriage depends upon a fantasy of male figures as violating and powerful throughout the novel. His argument here disregards the Greek, which draws such a clear relation between the violation of Prometheus and the subsequent apparent violation of Leukippe, and thus disregards the male gender of the violated Prometheus, which subverts his gendered formula. Heffernan 1993, 53, 57–58.

moment later they would actually scream in fear; they reached out their arms toward the bull.³²

In his assessment of the image, the narrator links the beauty of the maidens directly to the fear they express.³³ Moving from this description of the helpless onlookers' response, he turns his focus upon the bull (Zeus) carrying away Europa, devoting attention to both the massive strength of the bull and the overtly erotic appearance of the young woman perched on his back:

There was a chiton over the maiden's chest down to her genitals [αἰδοῦς]; from there on a robe covered the lower part of her body: the chiton was white, the robe red, and the body showed subtly through the clothing—navel well recessed, stomach flat, waist narrow, but with a narrowness that widened downward towards the hips. Breasts gently nudging forward: a circumambient sash pressed chiton to breasts, so that it took on the body's form like a mirror.³⁴

Both the maidens' and Europa's depictions attach an explicit erotic beauty to the scene of impending sexual violence, as the bull, led by the child-god Eros, swims out toward the horizon, with Europa captive on his back.

As the narrator remarks upon his admiration of the painting (Ἐγὼ ... ἐπήνουν τῆς γραφῆς), a stranger who turns out to be the hero of the novel, Cleitophon, approaches and engages him in conversation. The painting provokes Cleitophon to launch into a description of his own troubles in love, and it is Cleitophon's narration of these trials that comprises the rest of the novel (the anonymous narrator never reappears).³⁵ In the story that follows, detailed ekphrases of paintings and descriptions of exotic animals alternate

³² *Leukippe and Clitophon*: 1,1,7–8. Throughout this essay, I have provided John J. Winkler's excellent translation of the novel; on a few occasions, which I note, I have found it necessary to modify his language slightly.

³³ Richlin 1992 provides a helpful analysis of the use of terror to enhance beauty in the *Metamorphoses*; see esp. her analysis of the myth of Daphne and Apollo, 162–5.

³⁴ 1,1,10–11, translation modified.

³⁵ Most's speculations on the cause of this disappearing narrator as prompted by a tension between self-disclosure and self-sufficiency are irrelevant here. However, he does helpfully suggest, as others have, that this initial narrator may be seen as a stand-in for the reader (133); this supposition supports my own argument that the reader (following the example of the anonymous narrator) is encouraged to view the ensuing scenes of violation in the romance with aesthetic admiration. Most 1989.

with Cleitophon's account of events in their own adventures with which the descriptive images clearly resonate. As I will demonstrate, this first ekphrasis establishes a precedent of aesthetic enjoyment of the visual synthesis of beauty and violence that also echoes throughout the narrative, with regard both to the paintings and touristic spectacles and to the actual events which they foreshadow, as well.

Cleitophon begins his story by relating the details of his first meeting with Leukippe, with whom he immediately falls in love. Occurring only a few paragraphs after the opening, Cleitophon's description of his first sight of her echoes quite clearly the initial ekphrasis:

Her face flashed on my eyes like lightning. Such beauty I had seen once before, and that was in a painting of Europa on a bull: delightfully animated eyes; light blond hair—blond and curly; black eyebrows—jet black; white cheeks—a white that glowed to red in the center like the crimson laid on ivory by Lydian craftswomen. Her mouth was a rose caught at the moment when it begins to part its petal lips.³⁶

Cleitophon's nominal reference to the painting combined with his description of Leukippe, particularly her parted red lips, draws an unmistakable reference to the appearance of Europa and her maidens in the previously described painting. In evoking this comparison, Achilles Tatius places Leukippe in the position of Europa, whose aesthetically pleasing appearance is linked directly to her apprehension of sexual violence. Cleitophon's descriptions of both scenes provide a potential guide for the reader's 'eye,' as well, which in following his narration also follows his gaze, a phenomenon to which we shall return shortly.³⁷

Yet Cleitophon troubles this neat formula by extending the threatened violence to refer to the wound of *eros* that he himself is about to suffer: 'As soon as I had seen her, I was lost. For Beauty's wound is sharper than any weapon's, and it runs through the eyes down to the soul. It is through the eye that the wound of *eros* passes [ὄφθαλμὸς γὰρ ὁδὸς ἐρωτικῶ τραύματι]'³⁸ This series of related images, all of which link *eros* (and the beauty that

³⁶ 1,4,3–4, translation modified.

³⁷ For Achilles Tatius' use of ego-narrative and its determination of the reader's perspective, see B. P. Reardon 1991, 119–120 and 1999, 241–258.

³⁸ 1,4,4–5, translation modified.

prompts it) to images of physical violence, produce an ambivalent notion of the body as both potent and vulnerable: the body can unintentionally and unwittingly inflict the wound of *eros* by its mere appearance, yet can then also be wounded by *eros*, either literally, as in the case of Europa's rape, or figuratively, as in the case of the 'wound' of *eros* that Cleitophon describes here. The motif of *eros* as physically wounding occurs with overwhelming frequency in the Greek novels. As in this series of images, the power of *eros* to wound registers on multiple semantic planes, as the narrative alternates between visual representations of violence, actual threats of violence, and the metaphorically violent effects of *eros* on the lovers' souls (expressed and perhaps experienced as violent effects on their bodies).

Images of wounding play an important role not only because of the pain that characters experience as a result of being either literally or metaphorically penetrated by *eros*, but also in the staging of suffering or dismemberment that is witnessed by others. In particular, the characteristic trope of the *Scheintod*, or 'false death' (almost a generic signal in its own right), achieves its effect only in the process of being witnessed by others, particularly when the male lover gazes at his heroine apparently being murdered before his eyes—and, in every case, in a manner that pointedly violates the integrity of the body. This key biographical moment is reflected upon from various angles in repeated scenes of voyeurism by characters and readers. The reader takes vicarious pleasure in the spectacle as he or she follows the gaze of the admirer.

The significance of this exchange is emphasized by its repetition throughout the narrative. In Achilles Tatius' novel, Leukippe's first apparent death is prefigured both by a dream her mother has the night Leukippe and Cleitophon plan to elope and by an ekphrasis that directly precedes the scene of her 'murder' by pirates. As Cleitophon steals into Leukippe's bedroom in the beginning of the novel, intending to consummate their union, her mother has a dream in which 'It appeared to her that some plunderer with a naked sword took her daughter, snatching her away, and throwing her over on her back, he ripped her open with the blade, up to the middle of her stomach, beginning from her genitals [ἔδόκει τινὰ ληστήν μάχαιραν ἔχοντα γυμνὴν ἄγειν ἀρπασάμενον αὐτῆς τὴν θυγατέρα καὶ καταθέμενον ὑπτίαν, μέσσην ἀνατέμνειν τῇ μαχαίρᾳ τὴν γαστέρα κάτωθεν ἀρξάμενον ἀπὸ τῆς αἰδοῦς].'³⁹ Leukippe's mother, thus warned, flies to her daughter's room,

³⁹ 2,23,5, translation modified.

catching the two together, and consequently prompting the series of events which lead to their flight from the land. Her mother, furious and anxious that Leukippe has not managed to retain her virginity, threatens to torture Leukippe's slave girl Kleio, in order to provoke a full confession. Cleitophon, Leukippe, Kleio, and Cleitophon's manservant Satyros (who is in love with Kleio) flee just in time to save Kleio from torture.⁴⁰ Leukippe herself is relieved to be united with her lover, escaping her mother's shaming and wounding⁴¹ accusations.

Shortly after they embark on their adventures, however, they are shipwrecked at sea and land at Pelousian, where they visit a temple to Zeus Kasios that features a painting of Andromeda and Prometheus, which Cleitophon describes fully in an ekphrasis. The hero describes Andromeda's appearance first, dwelling on her beauty as she struggles, pinned to a cliff, watching an approaching sea-monster:

There is a curious blend of beauty and terror [κάλλος ... καὶ δέος] on her face: fear appears on her cheeks, yet a bloomlike beauty rests in her eyes. Her cheeks are not quite perfectly pale, but brushed with a light red wash; nor is the flowering quality of her eyes untouched by care—they seem like violets in the earliest stage of wilting. The artist had enhanced her beauty with this touch of lovely fear [ὅπως αὐτὴν ἐκόσμησεν ὁ ζωγράφος εὐμόρφῳ φόβῳ].⁴²

As in the ekphrasis of Europa, Andromeda's beauty is perceived as heightened by her terror. The combination of paleness and redness on her skin recalls that of the maidens and Europa, whose diaphanous gown is also echoed by Andromeda's own garment: 'the whitest of robes, delicately woven, like spider-web more than sheep's wool.' Cleitophon's description emphasizes the contrast between the grace of the maiden and her imprisonment, framing her appearance in terms of her impending union with death:

⁴⁰ Renate Johne considers Leukippe's anger and decision to flee from her mother as the beginning of a process of becoming an independent individual: 'The desire for erotic self-determination without any parental restriction arises for the first time.' Johne 1996, 188.

⁴¹ As Cleitophon explains here, 'like arrows aimed at a target and hitting it dead center, words pierce the soul and wound it in many places' (2,29,3).

⁴² 3,7,3–4.

Her arms were spread against the rock, bound above her head by a manacle bolted in the stone. Her hands hung loose at the wrist like clusters of grapes. The color of her arms shaded from pure white to livid, and her fingers looked dead. She was chained up waiting for death, wearing a wedding garment, adorned as a bride for Hades.⁴³

Andromeda's beauty in this scene emerges in connection with her entrapment, as she struggles underneath the gaze both of the (rather phallic) monster, whose sinuous neck and tail arch toward her, and of Perseus, her approaching saviour,—as well as the admiring gaze of Cleitophon and Leukippe and, by extension, the novel's audience.

The 'sequel' painting describes the corresponding pain of Prometheus, pinned to the ground as the eagle burrows into his stomach, eating his liver. As Cleitophon remarks, 'You would have pitied the pain in this painting [ἠλέησας ἂν ὡς ἀλγοῦσαν τὴν γραφήν].'⁴⁴ While the depiction of Andromeda's beauty echoes the prior descriptions of Europa and Leukippe, here the eagle consuming Prometheus' liver resonates with both the dream of Leukippe's mother and the torturous death that Leukippe herself will appear to suffer later in the same chapter:

A bird feasted on Prometheus' stomach. It stood there ripping it open, or already had ripped it open; and its beak dipped into the hole, and it appeared to be digging the wound, seeking the liver, which was visible because the painter depicted the wound as laying open ... [ὄρνις ἐς τὴν τοῦ Προμηθέως γαστέρα τρυφᾷ· ἔστηκε γὰρ αὐτὴν ἀνοίγων, ἤδη μὲν οὖν ἀνεωγμένην· ἀλλὰ τὸ ῥάμφος ἐς τὸ ὄρυγμα καθεῖται, καὶ ἔοικεν ἐπορύττειν τὸ τραῦμα καὶ ζητεῖν τὸ ἦπαρ· τὸ διόρυγμα τοῦ τραύματος·]. Τὸ δὲ ἐκφαίνεται τοσοῦτον, ὅσον ἀνέωξεν ὁ γραφεὺς τὸ διόρυγμα τοῦ τραύματος.⁴⁵

The violent penetration of Prometheus by the eagle echoes the mother's vision of her daughter stabbed in the belly, suggesting a sexual violence implicit in both scenes. Prometheus' male gender here subverts what, in the case of Europa, Andromeda, and Leukippe, appeared to be a trend of vio-

⁴³ 3,7,4–5.

⁴⁴ 3,8,5.

⁴⁵ 3,8,1–2, translation modified.

lence directed toward the female sex; in particular, his violation resonates significantly with that of Leukippe, in her mother's dream. The penetration of the stomach (*γαστέρα*) here recalls the association of the *γαστέρα* with the genitalia (*αἰδώς*), connected by the ripping wound of the dream-marauder's knife; by association, then, this scene also conveys the suggestion of not only penetration but sexual violation.

Moreover, the violation of Prometheus is witnessed, as in the cases of the violated females, by the observant male hero depicted within the painting, as well as by the male hero narrating the ekphrasis of the scene to the characters and the readers. The witnessing of this violence is emphasized, as it is in the scene of Andromeda, as Cleitophon describes Prometheus' own fascination with his wound: '... he stares both at his own wound and at Herakles [who, like Perseus, also looks on as he approaches to relieve Prometheus' suffering], wanting to concentrate on the hero but forced to focus at least half of his attention on his own agony.'⁴⁶ As in the case of the abduction of Europa (and as will shortly occur again with Leukippe's mutilation), the scene of violation, although inflicted upon a male figure, nevertheless provokes the same irresistibly fascinated gaze, represented as an essential aspect of that scene.

Just after this description, Cleitophon relates in a brief sentence their leaving the temple, taking two days of rest, then hiring a boat and setting off in search of their friends. Immediately, however, the boat is overtaken by bandits who kidnap the hero and heroine. When the bandits call for a sacrificial virgin, Leukippe, of course, is taken from Cleitophon. Later that day, the Egyptian army arrives, Cleitophon and the other captives escape to join them, and by the end of the day the army is victorious, though many of the bandits escape safely to the opposite side of a chasm. Early the next day, Cleitophon watches the bandits on the other side of the trench prepare an altar for sacrificing Leukippe. The hero describes the ensuing event in detail:

Then at a signal they all moved far away from the altar. One of the attendants laid her on her back and tied her to stakes fixed in the ground, as sculptors picture Marsyas bound to the tree. He next raised a sword and plunged it into her heart and then sawed all the way down to her abdomen. Her viscera leaped out. The attendants pulled out her entrails and carried them in their hands over to the altar. When it was well done they

⁴⁶ 3,8,7.

carved the whole lot up, and all the bandits shared the meal. [εἶτα ἀπὸ συνθήματος πάντες ἀναχωροῦσι τοῦ βομοῦ μακράν· τῶν δὲ νεανίσκων ὁ ἕτερος ἀνακλίνας αὐτὴν ὑπτίαν, ἔδησεν ἐκ παττάλων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐρηρησιμένων, οἷον ποιοῦσιν οἱ κοροπλάθοι τὸν Μαρσύαν ἐκ τοῦ φυτοῦ δεδεμένον· εἶτα λαβὼν ξίφος βάπτει κατὰ τῆς καρδίας καὶ διελκύσας τὸ ξίφος εἰς τὴν κάτω γαστέρα, ῥήγνυσι· τὰ σπλάγχνα δὲ εὐθὺς ἐξεπήδησεν, ἃ ταῖς χερσὶν ἐξελκύσαντες ἐπιτιθέασι τῷ βομῷ, καὶ ἐπεὶ ὠπτήθη, κατατεμόντες ἅπαντες εἰς μοίρας ἔφαγον.]⁴⁷

The comparison to Marsyas fosters another moment of gender ambiguity (for the language here avoids any direct reference to her own gender), drawing attention to the manner in which Leukippe is bound and emphasizing the similarity of her plight to that of not only Marsyas but, again, the entrapped Andromeda and Prometheus. In turn, the sword plunged into her body and excavating her stomach (γαστέρα) recalls both her mother's dream and the eagle who feasts on Prometheus, the similarity to the latter extended by the bandits' cannibalistic feast on Leukippe's entrails.

Once more, though, the spectacle of wounding gains importance by being witnessed by Cleitophon, who thus occupies the position of Perseus and Herakles, in pointed contrast to his companions, who can't bear to watch the gruesome display: 'As each of these acts was performed, the soldiers and the general groaned aloud and averted their eyes from the sight. But I, contrary to all reason, just sat there gazing. The immeasurable evil left me thunder-struck [ταῦτα δὲ ὀρῶντες οἱ μὲν στρατιῶται καὶ ὁ στρατιῶται καὶ ὁ στρατηγὸς καθ' ἓν τῶν πραττομένων ἀνεβόων καὶ τὰς ὄψεις ἀπέστρεφον τῆς θέας, ἐγὼ δὲ ἐκ παραλόγου καθήμενος ἐθεώρουν. τὸ δὲ ἦν ἔκπληξις·].'⁴⁸ In his inability to turn away, even as his companions cannot bear to look, Cleitophon emphasizes his individual and active participation in the scene, as he gazes fascinated at the disembowelment of his lover. The language of Achilles Tatius here emphasizes Cleitophon's particular manner of looking; unlike the soldiers and generals, who simply 'see' her (ὀράω) and then turn their eyes away, Cleitophon gazes like a spectator (emphasized by the use of the verb θεωρέω) at the dramatic spectacle (τῆς θέας, a noun typically used to indicate a dramatic performance) of Leukippe's

⁴⁷ 3,15,4–5.

⁴⁸ 3,15,5.

mutilation.⁴⁹ Rapt with attention and immersed in the sequence of events, he stares at the scene as if at a painting, describing its details with a similar engagement, even voyeuristic enjoyment (in an echo of the aesthetic pleasure of the anonymous gazer who describes the first ekphrasis).

IIIb Gender, Culture, and the Erotic Gaze

The paradox of Cleitophon's horrified enjoyment of this scene, which encapsulates a typical association of torture and *eros* in the Greek romances, has raised an equally conflicted range of responses from scholars. While some easily dismiss the episode as an example of 'penetrating wit' or 'kitsch,'⁵⁰ others note the sadistic element of Cleitophon's gaze, a consideration which invariably raises the question of gender to varying degrees. In other words, Cleitophon's θεωρούμενος has prompted scholars to θεωρεῖν themselves—and, not surprisingly, by means of theory. The tension between the artificial spectacle and the fascinated witnessing of it demand a meta-looking, an analysis of the act of looking and of the spectacular object which is subject to that gaze. For example, while Konstan considers these scenes of violence as a demonstration of the passivity of the male lover, who is often paralyzed with fear in the face of danger to himself and his beloved, he also notes the voyeuristic quality of the spectacle:

There is ... an independent pleasure in the rhetorical embellishment and flair with which Leucippe's suffering is narrated, and the audience, watching her from a position of safety and detachment, is invited to be titillated at the spectacle. In addition, an element of aggression and control is inevitably created by the unseen observation of another, who is thereby reduced to the condition of an unwitting performer. Clitopho, for all that he is paralyzed by the sight of Leucippe's helplessness and vici-

⁴⁹ As Helen Morales notes in her forthcoming book 'Vision and Narrative in Achilles Tatius' (Cambridge UP, 2004), this is the only use of the verb θεωρέω in Achilles' novel, a fact that further emphasizes the uniquely important quality of Cleitophon's fascinated engagement with the spectacle here. I appreciate Professor Morales' generosity in alerting me to this detail.

⁵⁰ Goldhill 1995, 118 and Reardon 1999, 246, respectively. G. Anderson quips of Achilles Tatius' apparent 'fixation' with mutilated female bodies, 'If any author in antiquity embodies the values of the shower scene in 'Psycho', it is this one.' Anderson 1997, 2287.

victimization, is by virtue of being witness to it in a position of power over her. Clitopho's command of the narrative voice, together with the staginess of Leukippe's several encounters with death, makes him the onlooker in their relationship, and the effect of his gaze disrupts the parity or reciprocity between the lovers.⁵¹

As Konstan notes, Cleitophon's witnessing of the scene (along with the audience) has an element of aggression and mastery to it—a position that subverts any claim to parity between the hero and heroine, as he admits. Dutifully citing an observation by Luce Irigaray regarding mastery and the male gaze,⁵² Konstan notes that Cleitophon's narrative gaze makes the relationship between the two appear asymmetrical, a problem which he resolves by noting how Cleitophon's position as male narrator highlights his desire for Leukippe, an apparent asymmetry that is resolved by the revelation of Leukippe's reciprocal desire for him. Konstan's brief consideration of Cleitophon's fascination with Leukippe's apparent disembowelment in terms of the dominating/sadistic male gaze theorized by Irigaray echoes the discussion of this episode by others in terms of psychoanalytic and film oriented gender theory.

Brigitte Egger's and Helen Elsom's studies of the Greek romances⁵³ utilize feminist analyses of the gaze theorized by Teresa de Lauretis and Kaja Silverman, both of whom follow Laura Mulvey's groundbreaking work on the male gaze in cinema. The significance of the male gaze for Mulvey unfolds psychoanalytically, within the phallogentric system in which woman is subject to the male gaze. In this scheme, the female signifies, in fantasy and in language, the radical lack of the phallus. As such, she provokes a castration anxiety in the male which can only be resolved in one of two ways. Either the woman can be punished, her guilt justified by her own 'castration,' or she can be fetishized, in which case she is transformed 'through overvaluation (fetishism) into a compensatory object.'⁵⁴ Thus Leukippe's apparent mutilation and Cleitophon's fascination with it may be read as a product and a manifestation of castration-anxiety. Of course, as Kaja Silverman notes, this formula depends upon a binary opposition of mascu-

⁵¹ Konstan 1994, 64.

⁵² Konstan cites a passage from Irigaray 1978, 50.

⁵³ Egger 1994 and Elsom 1992.

⁵⁴ Silverman (in a reiteration of Mulvey's argument) 1980, 1. See also, Mulvey 1989.

line/aggressive/sadistic and feminine/passive/masochistic, thus suggesting that the pleasure of the gaze for the male subject involves mastery.

While Egger's chief concern in her essay 'Looking at Chariton's Callirhoe' focuses upon establishing the possibility of a female readership of the novel, her approach includes an analysis of the genre's construction of gender. Establishing the voyeuristic mastery of Cleitophon's (and thus the audience's) gaze over the beautiful heroine, she argues that such mastery is an anxious response to the incredible power of Leukippe's beauty, a potential that she argues offers an equal opportunity for subversive female thoughts.⁵⁵

Likewise, Elsom, in 'Callirhoe: Displaying the Phallic Woman,' claims that the romances embody the structure of pornography by exposing the woman to the 'public gaze.' Yet Elsom, following Silverman, de Lauretis, and Gayle Rubin, also argues that the romances don't necessarily assume an 'ideology of gender.' Rather, 'Each text constructs its own, and by exposing the process by which gender is constructed offers a critical reader the choice of passive consent or active criticism.'⁵⁶ Nevertheless, Elsom concludes that the 'scopophilic' action of the hero, a response to castration-anxiety provoked by the woman, is inadvertently echoed by the reader, resulting in a narrative of 'exposure and revelation, which is inherently transgressive and violent.'⁵⁷ While Elsom's argument allows for a consideration of the relation of the construction of gender to culture or society, her conclusion is limited by opposing the genders of male and female into two distinct categories. This is the same trap that Konstan falls into, as he attempts to work out the scene in Achilles Tatius that troubles his argument for symmetry by turning (albeit briefly) to Irigaray's conception of the male gaze.

Yet Elsom helpfully indicates the role that culture plays in the construction of gender. For the gap between form and content indicated by Bakhtin's frame of adventure-time highlights the difference between the beginning and end of the narrative and the adventures that lie between, a difference identified by either being a part of society or, as the lovers travel through foreign lands, outside of it.

⁵⁵ Egger 1994.

⁵⁶ Elsom 1992, 213.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 218. In this conclusion Elsom follows closely de Lauretis' notion that gender construction is a violent but unavoidable consequence of language and culture. De Lauretis 1987, 38.

IIIc Mastering the Mysterious Body

While the mastery of the gaze of the voyeuristic hero over his heroine may seem to imply a gender-specific form of dominance (i.e., the domination of the male over the female), this authoritative gaze is repeated in form by the mastery of society over *both* the male and female characters as they are united as a couple in the conclusion of these novels. In addition, in a strange subversion of gender specificity, this fascinated, exploratory gaze resonates with several scenes describing exotic animals that the lovers encounter in their travels.⁵⁸ These factors problematize the gender polarity that emerges in the readings of Konstan, Egger, and Elsom.⁵⁹

Achilles Tatius' descriptions of both the hippopotamus and the crocodile, narrated by Cleitophon, echo closely the details of Herodotus' descriptions of these Egyptian creatures but with one important addition: an emphasis upon the mouth and belly. Thus, Cleitophon's description of the crocodile (4,19) notes, as Herodotus does (2,68), the creature's amphibious existence, its four feet and scaly skin, its length and enormity of body, and the size of its teeth. Following this, however, Cleitophon diverges from Herodotus' account (which describes how the sandpiper enters the crocodile's enormous mouth to clean it of leeches) to concentrate entirely on the mouth's gaping opening:

The head is directly joined to the line of the back: nature has robbed it of a neck; the head is more ferocious than the rest of the body, stretches endlessly along the jaws, and all of it opens. At other times, when the mouth is not gaping, it is only a head, but when it opens its jaws to prey, it becomes all mouth ... The span is incredible—a chasm as far back as

⁵⁸ Helen Morales' essay 'The Taming of the View: Natural Curiosities in Leukippe and Kleitophon,' has been helpful in noting the significance of these 'digressions,' particularly the description of the phoenix. Morales 1995.

⁵⁹ In addition, the fact that *both* Leukippe and Cleitophon (according to Cleitophon's narration) gaze with interest at the ekphrases of Andromeda and Prometheus (3,6–8) and Philomela, Prokne, and Tereus (5,3–5) undermines even further any categorical designation of gender on the gazer *or* the object of the gaze. In suggesting that the novels (and ekphrases) are read by both male and female, my argument resonates somewhat with B. Egger's conception of the audience of the novels, though I find unconvincing her speculative conclusion that the novels fostered fantasies of female empowerment for female readers. Egger 1994.

the shoulders, opening directly onto the stomach [καὶ ἀπόστασις ἐστὶ πολλή, καὶ μέγρι τῶν ὤμων τὸ χάσμα, καὶ εὐθὺς ἡ γαστήρ.]⁶⁰

In this digression from Herodotus' account, Achilles Tatius places a clear emphasis on the opening from the outside to the inside of this foreign animal,⁶¹ suggesting that with the eyes one might penetrate through the mouth into the inner, mysterious and hidden part of its being, the stomach (γαστήρ) which receives such emphasis in the descriptions and dreams of Leukippe's and Prometheus' violation.

The description of the hippopotamus (4,2) features a similar emphasis upon penetrating deep inside the mouth.⁶² As in the account of the crocodile, Achilles Tatius follows the details noted by Herodotus (2,71), comparing the animal to both the horse and the ox, noting its cloven hooves and its round blunt head. Yet, again, the description in the novel diverges from Herodotus' account when it reaches the subject of the hippo's mouth, which gapes open 'all the way back to the temples [γένυς εὐρεία, ὄση καὶ παρειά, μέγρι τῶν κροτάφων ἀνοίγει τὸ στόμα.]'⁶³ The great, gaping capacity of the hippo's mouth reminds the Egyptian general of another exotic animal, the elephant; he then quickly relates a tale of how he once saw a man easily put his head deep into the middle of an elephant's jaws. Once again, here the mouth becomes a source of penetration into the unknown inner regions of the beast.⁶⁴

The descriptions of the hippopotamus and the crocodile frame the episode in which Leukippe is driven mad by an overdose of aphrodisiac (as

⁶⁰ 4, 19, 5, translation modified.

⁶¹ The grammatical gender of these animals, ὁ κροκόδειλος, ὁ ἵππος ὁ ποτάμιος, and ὁ ἐλέφαντος, is perhaps worth noting here. While grammatical gender of animals is arbitrary, nevertheless the masculine gender of these animals' names casts their descriptions in masculine terms. As such, the language suggests the potential for the masculine to be subject to spectacle and penetration.

⁶² As Morales points out, examining the hippopotamus provides a pretext for the Egyptian general to examine more closely Leukippe, for whom he quickly forms an irresistible desire. Morales 1995, 48.

⁶³ 4, 2, 3.

⁶⁴ The emphasis upon the mouth as an opening for penetration in the descriptions of the crocodile, hippopotamus, and elephant resonates, too, with the ekphrasis of Andromeda. Here, according to Cleitophon, the (rather phallic, as I've noted previously) monster who threatens her has a similarly gaping mouth: 'The jaws were great and large, and gaped open from the intersection of the shoulders, straight to the stomach [ἀνέφικτο δὲ πᾶσα μέγρι τῆς τῶν ὤμων συμβολῆς, καὶ εὐθὺς ἡ γαστήρ.]' (3,7,7).

it is discovered later). So insane is she that she forgets all modesty and exposes her genitalia to all who are gathered around her as she writhes upon the ground (ἡ δὲ προσεπάλαιεν ἡμῖν, οὐδὲν φροντίζουσα κρύπτειν ὄσα γυνὴ μὴ ὀρᾶσθαι θέλει).⁶⁵ In this case, Leukippe's hidden mysteries become visible not through the mouth but via her genitalia; framed by the descriptions of the hippopotamus and crocodile, the female genitalia takes its place alongside the mouth as a potentially penetrable opening from the outer into the inner body.

Of course, such an emphasis upon locales of penetration is hardly surprising in an erotic narrative. Yet coupled with the scenes of bodily violation and mutilation that arise at other points in the lovers' adventures, the act of penetration from the outer to the inner body becomes pointedly emphasized. Adventure-time emerges as a chronotope of experimentation or play that centers around penetrating the body into its hidden, inner areas—the mysterious region wounded by *eros*.

The matter of adventure-time—which includes experiments in violation and penetration into the private, hidden body, apparent deaths, threats of torture, and endless sufferings of the wounding arrows of unfulfilled *eros*—becomes resolved and closed off with the reunion of the hero and heroine; for they are invariably ultimately reunited in a public ceremony that involves a trial or test that at least one of them must pass in order to remain together. As in the case of the test of Leukippe and Melite discussed above, these trials examine in a legal, official manner the fidelity of the two lovers for each other. Yet the tests, as their foundational myths make clear, are emphatically oriented toward the body, the faithfulness of the heroines demonstrated by means of their bodily integrity. As such, these trials appear to bring together the private lives of the individual lovers with their public position—their acceptance by society, culminating in the official sanction of marriage and the assumption of their designated gender roles.⁶⁶ Bakhtin notes of these trials: 'If, in the final analysis, we should ask what, more than anything else, defines the *unity of the human image* in a Greek romance, we would have to answer that this unity is characterized precisely by what is *rhetorical* and

⁶⁵ 4,9,2.

⁶⁶ Foucault notes the submission of the private to the public for the Stoics in this sense: '[Marriage] is one of those duties by which private existence acquires a value for all.' Foucault 1986, 155.

judicial in it.’⁶⁷ As Bakhtin indicates, the rhetorical nature of the judicial in these novels reflects the style of the Second Sophistic, during which most were written. The Second Sophistic (late 1st–2nd c. CE), as depicted by Philostratus, is characterized above all by the public performance of *ethos*—in other words, its emphasis on outward expression rather than content. For Bakhtin, the externality of rhetoric is reflected in the nature of the concluding trials in the novels: ‘These rhetorical, judicial and public moments, however, assume an external form that is not consistent with the internal and authentic content of an individual man. His internal content is absolutely private ...’⁶⁸ The ostensible aspect of the trials addresses the external, apparently unified aspect of the body; yet, at the same time, the bodily ordeals and threats of torture featured in the trials are directed toward the hidden, ‘absolutely private’ aspect within.⁶⁹ As we have seen, this elusive ‘inner’ aspect of human experience emerges in the novel by means of *eros*; the hidden, private individual appears in the body’s painful wounding by *eros*, which seems to penetrate the body mysteriously from somewhere outside of it. In its efforts to overcome the disruptive effects of *eros*, then, the attempt of the trial to legally authenticate the social position of the private individual resonates with the controlling gaze of the hero upon the wounded heroine.

In this sense, the final trial echoes the ritual involving the phoenix which Cleitophon describes at the end of Book Three, directly preceding Leukippe’s bout with madness. An expedition of the Egyptian army must be delayed because of the arrival of the phoenix, whose importance the general explains to Cleitophon. Once again, Achilles Tatius echoes Herodotus in his account of the phoenix (3,73),⁷⁰ recounting the process in which the dead phoenix is wrapped by his offspring in an egg-like ball of myrrh and carried to Heliopolis, where the myrrh-egg is presented to an Egyptian priest. Achilles Tatius’ narrative differs in two significant ways, however. Whereas Herodotus’ account designates the dying phoenix as father (τὸν πατέρα), thus suggesting the bird’s gender is male, the general’s description in Achilles’ narrative leaves the gender unspecified. In the novel, the offspring is ὁ παῖς,

⁶⁷ Bakhtin 1981, 109, his emphasis.

⁶⁸ Bakhtin 1981, 109.

⁶⁹ Thus, as Doody notes, ‘Chastity becomes a form of justice in a relationship, not an abstraction, and not a frigid purity’: Doody 1997, 80.

⁷⁰ As Morales indicates. Her discussion of the phoenix provides a thorough comparison of the two accounts, as well as citations for other ancient accounts of the mythical bird. Morales 1995, 43–48.

which can designate either a male or female child, and the dead parent is referred to merely as the corpse (τῷ νεκρῷ). This creates a gender ambiguity exacerbated by the reproductive nature of the treatment of the dead bird's body, formed as it is by the child into an egg-like package and delivered to the priest. In addition, the general adds a brief explanation (absent from Herodotus) of how the new phoenix must be authenticated as such once he arrives in Egypt: 'An Egyptian priest brings a book from the inmost tabernacle and examines the bird according to the picture. The phoenix knows that his authenticity is being questioned and exhibits the secret, forbidden parts of his body ... [ἔρχεται δὴ τις ἱερεὺς Αἰγύπτιος, βιβλίον ἐξ ἀδύτων φέρων, καὶ δοκιμάζει τὸν ὄρνιν ἐκ τῆς γραφῆς. ὁ δὲ οἶδεν ἀπιστούμενος καὶ τὰ ἀπόρρητα φαίνει τοῦ σώματος ...].'⁷¹ Only by examining the genitalia of the phoenix, the general implies, may the priest verify the bird's authenticity. As Morales indicates, the proximity of this story to Leukippe's madness and her own genital-exposure draws a clear connection between the two.

Yet, while Morales draws upon this relation to explore the bestialization of Leukippe, who becomes in her argument akin to the other beasts described in the novel as a wild thing in need of taming, I take this comparison in a different direction. The gender ambiguity inherent in Achilles Tatius' account of the phoenix, along with his emphasis upon genitalia as a place of verification of identity, places an unmistakable emphasis upon this point of penetration or opening as a place in which the gendered individual might be verified. Thus the repeated scenes of bodily penetration (by the sword or the eye) that comprise the matter of adventure-time emerge as an exploration of identity—an identity that, within the chronotope, remains ambiguous and undefined and that only assumes gendered social authenticity once the lovers undergo their public trials and are reaccepted into society. That the authentication of the phoenix takes place in a social ritual draws a further parallel between the test of the phoenix and the public trials that close the novel. Yet the ritual of viewing the phoenix' genitalia remains shrouded in ambiguity, as Achilles Tatius never clarifies exactly which sex's genitalia the priest seeks or sees.

With an eye toward the social, then, let us return now to the scene of Leukippe's disembowelment and Cleitophon's horrified fascination, our θεωρία now appropriately situated in the strange suspension of adventure-time. As we have seen, Cleitophon's apparent pleasure in the scene might

⁷¹ 3,25,6–7, translation modified.

easily be viewed as sadistic male domination. Yet the distinction demarcated by adventure-time—the framing events occurring in and approved by society and the adventures experienced outside of society—emphasizes the *lack* of familiar social constraints during the course of the lovers' adventures in foreign lands. In this space outside of culture, we see the relaxation of the gender roles enforced at the beginning and end of the novels. For even Leukippe, while she is usually constrained by her female modesty, loses any sense of shame in her episode of insanity. Indeed, the rebellion of the young lovers against their parents, in pursuit of their own happiness, indicates an important break with the mores of their own society—a break that is reiterated in their mutual exchange throughout their adventures of positions of weakness and strength, dominance and submission.⁷² As such, a consideration of Cleitophon's response to Leukippe's apparent mutilation merely in terms of a male dominating gaze imposes a falsely limiting assessment of his behavior in terms of the sort of gender expectations that are put into place at the end of the novel, when Cleitophon and Leukippe are established as a married couple in society. Yet the suspended space of adventure-time elides social constraints such as gender, disrupting the dichotomizing characterization of Cleitophon's behavior as only sadistic male pleasure.

In approaching alternative explanations for Cleitophon's voyeuristic behavior, theories of gazing and representation more recently posed by Kaja Silverman and Carol Clover introduce a helpful vocabulary. In her essay 'Masochism and Subjectivity,' Silverman proposes to break down the Freudian sexual dialectic described above (male/aggressive, female/passive) with a reconsideration of Freud's theory of repetition-compulsion expressed in his analysis of the child's game of *fort* and *da* played with a spool. Freud considers this game in terms of the economy of pleasure afforded to the child who plays it in response to his traumatic separation from his mother.⁷³ Silverman returns to this moment in order to argue that masochism is equally constitutive of subjectivity and pleasure. Her analysis notes Freud's linguistic shift between the 'compulsion to repeat' which he finds in the child's game, and the 'mastery' that he attributes to the child's actions. Obviously, compulsion and mastery are at odds. Therefore, Silverman concludes, 'The

⁷² One might argue that the abuse Leukippe suffers at the hands of Thersander and Sosthenes, which verges on attempted rape, seems distinctly reserved for the female gender. Yet the men's behavior actually goes no further than Melite's forceful pursuit of Cleitophon.

⁷³ Freud 1961, 12–17.

compulsion to repeat can only be understood in light of the fact that instinctual unpleasure is apprehended by the subject as cultural pleasure.⁷⁴ In other words, Silverman argues that the masochistic constitution of the subject is a response to inculturation, which, of course, involves the imposition of gender categories. The entry of the subject into the symbolic field—into culture or society—depends upon the successful repression of instincts or transgressive desires; thus instinctual unpleasure becomes cultural pleasure.

Carol Clover's work on horror films explores this articulation of masochism to inculturation in terms of the gaze, arguing that male viewers as well as female viewers identify with the female victims in horror movies. Clover, too, locates sexual difference as a cultural concept, suggesting that the gender of characters is codified by their actions; the actions of the characters do not emanate consequentially from their genders. Avoiding the binary opposition of the two genders, Clover conceives of gender relationally: 'It is a universe ... of slippage and fungibility, in which maleness and femaleness are always tentative and hence only apparent.'⁷⁵ Following the development of Freud's theories of masochism from 'A Child is Being Beaten' to 'The Economic Problem of Masochism,' she notes that though the place of masochism in the psychic economy shifts for Freud, it remains associated with the 'feminine' position, whether it is the fantasy of a girl or a boy. She thus notes that the term 'feminine masochism' refers to the masochistic perversion of men as well as women. The 'feminine masochism' model thus exposes the muddled experience of genders, the fact that it is not a clear dialectic or opposition, suggesting instead that the voyeuristic excitement of watching a female victim 'is precisely predicated on the undecidability or both-andness or one-sexness of the construction.'⁷⁶ In other words, the fascinated thrill of watching the female mutilated or attacked emanates from a masochistic identification of the gazing male with the victim; the pleasure produced from this exchange results from a masochistic desire that includes transgressing gender boundaries.

Silverman's and Clover's theories provide an alternative lexicon for considering the scenes of spectacular bodily violation in the Greek romances in terms of masochism and gender ambivalence, rather than simply male domination. In this sense, reading adventure-time as a period of suspension

⁷⁴ Silverman 1980, 3.

⁷⁵ Clover 1992, 14.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 217.

outside of their own society, Cleitophon's fascination with Leukippe's disembowelment expresses a masochistic fantasy as a part of his own process of becoming an acceptable subject *in* formal society. The gender ambiguity created by the parallels between Leukippe, Prometheus, and Marsyas (see above, section IIIa)—and Cleitophon's own references to himself as Niobe in this scene—thus reveal the lovers as in excess of the polarized dialectic of male and female. With *eros* causing the wound that marks the becoming-subject of both hero and heroine, the troubling effects of desires that conflict with the societal ideal for the incultured individual—or, in other words, the public citizen—assume a visible shape.

Bakhtin notes that the pivot of the novels is love. Social and political events, he asserts, gain meaning only in regard to their reflection on 'private life.' As a result, he reasons, 'the public and rhetorical unity of the human image is to be found in the contradiction between it and its purely private content.'⁷⁷ The image appears to be unified, in other words, by demarcating private, unacceptable desires from culturally acceptable behaviors. The external manifestation of the intact bodily figure *implies* a unity thus presented as a 'proof'; one is *persuaded* of a unified individual in society in the expected rhetorical, judicial setting of an official trial. Yet in Bakhtin's formulation the body—focus of the trial and embodiment of the human—remains hidden, folded into the contradiction between the public and the private individual. Interior experience cannot be successfully externalized.

Such a response to the body is perhaps necessary in the face of its disruptive potential. Peter Brown has noted of the body in the later Roman empire: 'In a world seemingly governed by iron constraints, the human body could stand out as a clearly marked locus of free choice.'⁷⁸ Indeed, the potential of the body to disrupt the univocal voice of lawful society appears unmistakably in the plot of these romances—the adventures, travels, and sufferings of their heroes and heroines provoked by Fortune (*Tyche*) and, most importantly, the uncontrollable urges of *eros*. In this sense, the prevalence of wounding—the psychic wound of *eros*, the physical wound caused by *eros*, the actual and threatened tortures presented as erotic—figures formally as a subversion of the social individual caused by *eros*, allowing the painful wound to appear as a symptom of the disruptive potential of the body. The body thus appears in the Greek romances as latently criminal, its erotic

⁷⁷ Bakhtin 1981, 110.

⁷⁸ Brown 1991, 85; quoted also in Doody 1997, 73.

transgressions and gender ambiguities implicit in the hero's and heroine's adventures in foreign lands, their private 'loop' of adventure-time lost and hidden from their own society.

Yet the physical body disappears within the concept of the enduring individual in Bakhtin's analysis of the chronotope of the novel, just as the waywardness of *eros*, its impulsive nature, is supposed to be contained by marriage. For Bakhtin, the public and rhetorical constraints of the trial depend upon homogenization and extreme abstraction of 'all that is concrete and merely local. The chronotope of the Greek romance is the most abstract of all novelistic chronotopes.'⁷⁹ Hence the rhetorical figure of the body veils its internal ambiguity, its private, 'hidden' meaning, the excess produced by the painful wounds of *eros*. Bakhtin's judicial idea of the individual, with its emphasis on socially constructed identity and the 'absolutely private' self present within, tends to downplay the corporeality of the body, the material, biological substratum of identity. However, the living flesh, wounded by *eros*, reveals a process of becoming or evolution that, ironically, reflects Bakhtin's own claims for the value of the novel. Bakhtin's analysis reflects the fact that the romances tend to conclude by erasing the transgressive body in the process of reincorporating the hero and heroine as socially acceptable or comprehensible individuals. Thus Bakhtin's adventure-time chronotope highlights the way that the genre effaces the experience of becoming induced by *eros*. Nevertheless, the transgressive and erotic body at the heart of the novel insistently continues to emerge, incomplete and excessive, prompting the desire for mastery in the process of judgment or criticism: in the fascinated gaze of the author, the narrator, and his audience.⁸⁰

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⁷⁹ Bakhtin 1981, 110.

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