

Callirhoe: God-like Beauty and the Making of a Celebrity

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‘You know I never tell a story the same way twice. Does that mean that I am lying?’

(Durrell 1961, 76)

A growing number of scholars has begun to appreciate and demonstrate 1) that Chariton is a more than competent writer who challenges the reader to integrate allusions to Homer, Sappho, Herodotus, Thucydides, tragedy/comedy, rhetorical texts, and others into his novel,¹ 2) that the quality of his Greek is reasonably good,² 3) that upon close analysis the structure of his plot is well planned,³ and 4) that he attempts to appeal to a wide range of readers.⁴ Though Chariton has been shown by his highly intertextual approach to be concerned with producing a novel which could whet the appetite of the erudite, he maintains a constant and high level of emotional but restrained erotic material,⁵ which will be resolved and then enrapture readers

¹ Laplace 1980; Hägg 1987; Fusillo 1988, 20; Bowie 1994, 2003; Hunter 1994; Manuwald 2000; Hirschberger 2001; Bierl 2002; Sanz Morales and Languna Mariscal 2003 believe that Chariton is so tuned in to the nuances of contemporary scholarship that he follows the consensus-thinking that the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus is erotic.

² Reeve 1971; Ruiz-Montero 1991; Hernandez Lara 1990, 1994; Hunter 1994; Reardon 2003.

³ Auger 1983; Nimis 2003; Reardon 2003; Zeitlin 2003.

⁴ Egger 1994; Hägg 1994; West 2003.

⁵ Schmeling 2003b, 429: ‘Since actions in the ancient novel are often guided by views derived from the emotional compass of the heroine ... or by opinions dependent on her intuition, ancient critics might have concluded that the genre was outside the parameters of serious and worthwhile literature.’

who have come to expect happy endings (8.1.4), so as to hold the interest of a variety and large number of readers.⁶

Chariton frequently displays Callirhoe as a woman enthralling both individuals (private level: one person is, according to Zeitlin 2003, 71, ‘enraptured by the beauty of corporeal images and caught in the aesthetic snare of that first and fatal gaze.’)⁷ as well as large crowds (public level: whole cities are turned into worshipping spectators because a woman of goddess-like beauty has an epiphany before them) of both men and women (primary/internal audience) wherever she appears, and by logical extension Chariton exposes an unstated hope that similarly large crowds of readers (secondary/external audience) might be enticed to read his novel. Because Chariton hopes to win a large external audience for his novel⁸ and also needs to explain plausibly how Callirhoe attracts such large internal crowds, he must make Callirhoe an exceedingly beautiful, appealing, and magnetic character. She is his vehicle for the road to popularity and must be surrounded by masses of people come to glimpse the beauty of a reportedly (and thus exaggerated) transcendental goddess. The metaphor turns into reality, Callirhoe becomes beauty itself as her name indicates (1.1.2 κάλλος and κατέργεον), and at 2.3.6 in a role-reversal a statue of Aphrodite changes into a representation (a visual metaphor/simile) of the novel’s heroine.⁹ Haynes 2003, 47 would expand on Zeitlin’s view on Callirhoe’s corporeality: ‘what the author has chosen to emphasise is not her corporeality, but the very impact of her beauty.’ And what Zeitlin sees as corporeality in Chariton, Rimell 2002 posits for realism in Petronius.

⁶ Eggers 1994, 32: ‘It follows that “popular” and “academic” readers were more or less the same people: the literate upper and middle classes of the Greek-speaking eastern Roman Empire’; 35: ‘My aim here is to trace another textual level that has been scorned, at least by academic readers, both ancient and modern. I shall call this frame “romantic”; its concerns are with emotion, sexuality, identification with the characters and the affective pleasure of reading.’

⁷ On the gaze in Chariton, Elsom 1992, 231 and Egger 1994, 37; on love at first sight, Maehler 1990 and Schmeling 2003a, xxiv.

⁸ It is not unlikely that Chariton identifies himself as a previously published novelist in the opening words of *Callirhoe*, and that this introduction of himself is done not merely to imitate Herodotus and Thucydides. It is probable that, if Chariton had written the novels *Chione* and *Metiochus and Parthenope*, the introduction of himself is a bit of blatant commercialism and advertising, advising the reading public that their favorite novelist had written another novel.

⁹ Statements of Callirhoe’s beauty: 1.1.1; 1.1.2; 1.14.8; 2.2.2 (Aphrodite); 2.3.7; 2.6.1/5.2.8/5.5.9 (Helen); 4.1.9; 5.3.9; 5.5.1; 3.2.14 (Aphrodite); 6.6.4.

Chariton's use of the metaphor/simile – Callirhoe's beauty is godlike ... it is the beauty of Aphrodite (1.1.2) – stands closer to the proper use of the words than to the figurative. Chariton is to be understood literally when he says that Callirhoe can be mistaken for Aphrodite (2.3.5–6; and like her she also wins a beauty contest, 5.3.9). Chariton does not go on to compare Callirhoe and Aphrodite in areas outside of beauty. But when Chariton puts Callirhoe in a metaphor/simile with Helen (such comparisons are more frequent than those with Aphrodite; Haynes 2003, 48 correctly sums up the case when she says that '... it is the Euripidean intertext which is ... consistently ... alluded to.'). a deity or semi-deity, his comparisons begin to move beyond the proper meaning of the words. Chariton compares not only the beauty of Callirhoe with that of Helen, but Helen's misfortunes are noted as similar to those of Callirhoe. These last comparisons can be said to carry beyond the proper uses of the words, because Helen is a deity capable of recovery from misfortunes, while the plot of Chariton's novel is built on a Callirhoe beaten down by misfortunes. Though the comparison of Callirhoe with Helen is irrational (like all good metaphors/similes), it possesses a certain power to delight the reader of fiction who revels in multiple meanings, paradoxes, and the opportunity to use his imagination.

It might be difficult for scholars of modern literature to see Callirhoe as a celebrity because, they reason, Chariton's novel, while possibly a popular work, cannot be part of mass-media literature, and hence Callirhoe cannot be a celebrity.

Chariton's book is a popular novel, if we use Hansen's (1998, xiv) definition of popular: 'Instead of defining popular writing in terms of ... quantity, we should approach it as a kind of literature.' Such a method avoids the sociological straitjacket imposed on popular literature by scholars like Harris (1989, 227–228) and Stephens (1994). Hawthorn (1997, 27–35), echoing the opinions of many teachers of modern literature, argues that the novel could have arisen only in the 18th century because of the convergence of four forces: rise of literacy, printing, a market economy, and the rise of individualism and secularism. Acknowledging the growing scholarship on, and evidence for the existence of, the ancient novel, Hawthorn defines the modern novel as the 'real novel' and the ancient novel as something radically 'different' – differences which he never explains. By misapplying a statement of Hansen (1998, xiii) I feel that I can set aside Hawthorn's list: 'The difficulty

with this list is the same as that with other classifications by consumer preference, namely, that it is a sociological, not a literary, artifact.’

In the opening of the last book of *Callirhoe* Chariton tells the reader what kind of book he has written: 8.1.4 ‘I think that this last book will prove the most enjoyable for my readers, as an antidote to the grim events in the preceding ones. No more piracy or slavery or trials or fighting or suicide or war or captivity in this one, but honest love and lawful marriage.’ Employing such an overview, Chariton would, I believe, be happy with Hansen’s (1998, xvii) approach to popular literature as a kind of literature and with including *Callirhoe* in it. The traits of popular literature amount to an aesthetic: ‘The popular aesthetic, as expressed in literature, manifests itself typically as writing that is easy to read, quickly and continually engaging, and replete with action and sensation.’

Callirhoe is a celebrity because Chariton has written her into that role: she is as beautiful as Aphrodite (beauty that is god-like, 1.1.2 θεῖον, a comparison which is by its very nature a metaphor/simile and as old as the description of Odysseus at *Iliad* 2.335), as newsworthy as Helen, and everyone seems to know about her beauty because of the combined efforts of Φήμη and Τύχη (Robiano 1984; Alperowitz 1992, 42; Ruiz-Montero 1994, 1033; Steen 1998, 205; Baier 1999, 103–107) to function as the totality of mass media. Chariton rightly describes Callirhoe as περιβόητος, ‘the celebrity’ (2.2.3). Since she had never left her parents’ house (1.1.5) before the public feast of Aphrodite (1.1.4), it is difficult to know how she becomes a θαυμαστόν τι χρῆμα ... καὶ ἄγαλμα τῆς ὅλης Σικελίας.¹⁰ Yet she is so famous for her Aphrodite-like beauty that suitors – potentates and princes – from everywhere pour into Syracuse to woo her.¹¹

¹⁰ It seems to be axiomatic that beauty cannot be concealed for long. Callirhoe is uncovered in her tomb (1.9.6); exposed in her bath (2.2.2); revealed less graphically but more stunningly in the temple of Aphrodite (2.3.6). At 5.3.8–9 Dionysius is somehow compelled by popular demand to display Callirhoe to the mob; Helen cannot remain in her quarters but is asked to show herself to the leaders, warriors and people (*Iliad* 3.139 ff.); Danaë is hidden, but her beauty is exposed to Zeus.

¹¹ As soon as the reader is informed that Callirhoe is besieged by suitors, he cannot avoid a comparison with Penelope and her horde of suitors. Callirhoe is immediately elevated to the celebrity status of Penelope simply by the context into which Chariton has written her. As Don Fowler (2000, 119) so aptly states about such methods, ‘What would it mean, for instance, for a Western not to be intertextual with *High Noon*? ... whether the features of past texts are repeated, varied, or denied they cannot be ignored ...’

We see something similar in the opening lines of Xenophon of Ephesus' *Ephesiaca*, where Anthia is just such a celebrity and elicits comparison with Artemis, and in the opening chapters of the *Historia Apollonii* where suitors flock to Antioch to plead for the hand of a woman who was known by reputation (for incest?) only. The *matrona Ephesi*, the unmerry then merry widow of Petronius' *Satyrica* 111–112, is also a celebrity, famous not for her beauty but for her *pudicitia*, so that women from surrounding countries travel to Ephesus just to see her and her *pudicitia*. It is difficult to know just what exactly pilgrims to Ephesus come to see and experience, since *pudicitia* unlike *forma* does not normally show on a woman. Or do they come to see Callirhoe, Anthia and the *matrona Ephesi*, as they would to see an holy man, someone endowed with special powers which might be transferred miraculously to the viewer? Do the suitors of Callirhoe come to Syracuse in the vague hope that somehow like Menelaus they might marry a goddess and enjoy the added benefits of the Elysian Fields, as Menelaus does? Do the plain women come to be blessed with inner and outer beauty, and the shameless to recover their virtue, like Hera who bathes each year at the spring called Kanathos near Nauplion to renew her virginity (Pausanias 2.38.2)? Could the spectator on seeing Helen of Troy or Callirhoe be endowed with that celebrity's power? Herodotus (6.60ff.) and Pausanias (3.7.7) tell us that Helen is presented with an ugly baby, later to become the mother of Demaratos king of Sparta, at her shrine at Therapne, and after having her head stroked by Helen, the mother of Demaratos grows up to be the most beautiful woman in Sparta. Could the beauty/power of Callirhoe like that of Helen be transferred to a spectator? Hägg (2002, 60) notes that the appearance of Callirhoe on board the ship which will take her to her wedding in Miletus (3.2.14) can be understood as an epiphany of Aphrodite and that as such, Callirhoe/Aphrodite can perform miracles: '... the goddess emerges from her shrine, is greeted with *proskynesis*, and demonstrates her divine status by a miracle, the instantaneous transfer to Miletus – this is one of her typical ἀρεταί.'

Since we are not told how Callirhoe becomes so well known wherever she travels, we are required to make certain assumptions. Chariton (1.1.2) seems to trust the reader's imagination and knowledge to understand the ways in which Φήμη spreads rumors: Φήμη δὲ ... πανταχοῦ διέτρεχε.

Though Callirhoe is as beautiful as Aphrodite and that beauty is tinged with appealing scandal, few would know about Callirhoe were it not for

Φήμη. As Nimis (2003, 261) notes, Φήμη appears from nowhere, runs (διέτρεχε) everywhere, is swift (ταχεία), and spreads the news (only that of interest to the actors in the novel), παράδοξα καὶ καινά, to everyone whether interested in this beautiful woman or not, with no regard for the consequences. The result of the actions of Φήμη, the story-spreader, is that distant audiences all assemble at the one place where Callirhoe appears (5.2.6–5.3). Φήμη in Chariton is as effective as the print media, radio, TV, and the internet, and to the consternation of Dionysius (3.2.7) makes a celebrity of Callirhoe.¹²

The report of Callirhoe's beauty causes crowds to gather: suitors at 1.1.16; general crowds at 2.3.9; she is described as a queen bee attracting a swarm at 2.3.10; crowds at Miletus greet her at 3.2.15–17; crowds climb to rooftops to see her at 3.2.17; crowds in Babylon at 5.3.9–10 kiss the wagon in which she rides; whole cities come to see her at 5.5.8.

Such descriptions of crowds gathering around a celebrity are similar to those of crowds at epiphanies of deities or at the public appearances of holymen: so Luke's (8.19) description of the scene around Jesus where the crowd is so dense that his family cannot approach him; later (12.1) people step on each other to see Jesus.¹³ The holymen or the divinely beautiful Callirhoe first becomes a spectacle, and then the spectacle a celebrity. At Luke 3.7 John the Baptist is mistaken for a deity, becomes a spectacle, and draws a large crowd. This celebrity status is attained by poor people who control no forms of ancient media, such as imperial coinage or inscriptions. The spectacle of the holymen and that of the female celebrity are familiar no less in life than in fiction.¹⁴

Apart from Φήμη who is a literary creature, we cannot speak of mass media in the ancient world (Roman imperial coinage and inscriptions come close), but there are media, else we cannot explain, e.g., the popularity of holy men and the celebrity of women like Helen.

Storytellers – workers in a small medium – are always on the lookout for new narratives, and the latest events occurring in Callirhoe's life are de-

¹² References to Φήμη in Chariton are frequent; I list only those of some importance: 1.1.2; 1.5.1; 2.3.8; 3.2.7; 3.3.2; 3.4.1; 4.6.7; 4.7.5; 5.2.6; 5.3.2; 6.8.3; 8.1.11. The description of Φήμη at 4.7.5 is particularly elucidative: προέτρεχε γὰρ τῆς γυναικὸς ἡ Φήμη, καταγγέλλουσα πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ὅτι Καλλιρόη παραγίνεται, τὸ περιβόητον ὄνομα, τὸ μέγα τῆς φύσεως κατόρθωμα.

¹³ Billault 2003, 118; Ascough 1996; Haynes 2003, 47.

¹⁴ Anderson 1994; Celik 1994; Kellum 1999.

signed by Chariton to appeal to a wide audience. Because the profession of storytelling is beneath the radar level of ancient critics, we can only speculate that a large number of literary and subliterary materials was circulated by them.¹⁵

If the recently discovered texts at Vindolanda are any example of the level of communication conducted by average people – wives of men in the officer class – then that level of correspondence is quite extraordinary. Claudia Severa’s birthday invitation to Sulpicia Lepidina (Bowman 1994, 127–128) is the kind of chatty letter, the subject of which could just as easily have been a report about a beautiful woman, who was stealing Claudia’s husband.

At almost the same level of communication, graffiti serve to make a celebrity of someone who is also seen by crowds. Celadus, a gladiator who fought at Pompeii, becomes a celebrity especially among young girls to whom he is known in a number of inscriptions as *Suspirium puellarum*, ‘the one all the young women sigh for’ (*CIL* 4.4289; *ILS* 5142 a–e). This might not pass for a mass medium, but it spreads the word in Pompeii.

The events of a celebrity’s life could also be seen in paintings, which in Roman hands found a narrative voice. Charite (Apuleius *Met.* 6.29) hopes to become a celebrity by having her story told in painting: ‘People will look at it, and it will be listened to along with other stories, and the novel tale of the young princess who escaped captivity on the back of an ass will be kept alive by the pens of learned men.’ Callirhoe expresses a similar sentiment at 5.5.3: διήγημα καὶ τῆς Ἀσίας καὶ τῆς Εὐρώπης γέγονα. All of which might go back to Helen at *Iliad* 6.357–358 where she wonders aloud to Hector whether the gods have set an evil destiny for her with Paris, so that they would become a theme for singers for generations to come.

The problematic status of Callirhoe’s child adds a touch of notoriety to the dark and interesting side of her as a celebrity (a nod by Chariton to Helen). Callirhoe wrestles with her conscience over her deception of Dionysius and his fatherhood of her child (Schwartz 1999), but celebrities are not judged by standards of good and bad. Or perhaps Chariton has a sense of humor – hitherto unsuspected – and these particular episodes refer to a somewhat more current event, namely the lifestyle of Julia, daughter of Augustus, who upon being told that in view of her affairs, she was fortunate

¹⁵ For the popularity of storytellers see Scobie 1979, and the refinement by West 2003 for Chariton.

that her children looked like her husband, replied (Macrobius *Sat.* 2.5.9): *numquam enim nisi navi plena tollo vectorem.*

Do ancient literary celebrities like Callirhoe and Helen have some historical basis and then become creatures of fiction instead of biography (Hunter 1994, 1057–1068, 1072), because the writers dealing with them are creative? Thus Flaubert’s creation of Emma Bovary out of Delphine Delamare. The current verbal portraits of Princess Diana are pure invention, as she marches ever closer to communication sainthood. Creative fiction is a powerful force, and the fact that these celebrities do nothing to achieve their status recedes over time from the reader’s mind. The creative narrative, however, shows such an attractive portrait that even if the portrait does not earn absolute belief, it wins absolute sympathy.

Once Callirhoe marries Chaereas, we note that the emphasis on her celebrity status changes to that of the *pudicitia* of the *matrona Ephesi*, which she jealously protects. But then her circumstances change, and to protect herself and unborn child she finds that she must abandon her *pudicitia* and reclaim her celebrity status in order to hold Dionysius, whom she actually courts through the servant Plangon (3.1). For a time it appears that in order to save herself, Callirhoe might have to sleep her way up the Persian ladder of aristocracy (Dionysius, Mithridates, Pharnaces, the Great King) and become like one of the often-bedded celebrities of today. But Chariton shows classical restraint and allows Callirhoe to halt on the first rung of that ladder.¹⁶

Chariton’s description of Callirhoe sheds no light on the exact nature of her beauty other than that it is more than human (1.1.2): ἦν γὰρ τὸ κάλλος οὐκ ἀνθρώπινον ἀλλὰ θεῖον.¹⁷ He, however, describes the impact which her

¹⁶ Hunter 1994, 1075 calls Chariton ‘notoriously decent.’

¹⁷ If we add to these lines the scene at 2.2.2 where the nude Callirhoe is described in the bath (even in the bath scene Chariton does not say what she is, but only what she is like; Chariton’s descriptions of Callirhoe are always implied metaphors), or at 2.3.6 where Dionysius sees Callirhoe in the temple of Aphrodite, the reader is told only that Callirhoe is beautiful and resembles Aphrodite. The reader is not given evidence upon which judgments about beauty can be made: quality of hair, color of eyes, length of hands, brightness of teeth. Hunter (1994, 1074) adduces Rohde (1914³, 165-166): ‘Rohde commented upon this lack of specificity in describing female beauty, which he saw as a peculiarly Greek phenomenon, and he connected it with the richness of Greek statuary, familiarity with which allowed the novelists a “shorthand” way of indicating physical perfection of their heroines ...’ The description at 2.2.2 of Callirhoe bathing, her skin said to be similar to polished marble (ὁ χρῶς γὰρ λευκός ἔστιλψεν εὐθὺς μαρμαρυγῇ τι

beauty has on others and the fame which arises from that impact. He makes a direct judgment about her beauty: it is a great boon and it attracts the best suitors. He feels no need at this time to debate whether Callirhoe's beauty is a desirable attribute for her happiness.¹⁸

Within the first few pages of the novel Callirhoe's beauty will catch the eye (Zeitlin 2003) of Chaereas, lead to a marriage which causes deadly envy among rejected suitors, awakens jealousy in her husband, and quickly thereafter results in her apparent death. Such beauty will captivate to distraction four aristocrats in the Persian Empire. Except for slaves and brigands, men incapable of appreciating divine beauty,¹⁹ every male who gazes on Callirhoe or even hears about her beauty is smitten. Her physical beauty will cause predictable (to the literate and wise) trouble as well as advantages. In fact, the efficient motif of *Callirhoe* might be described as the two warring faces of beauty: one brings incredible but brief joy, the other melodramatic sorrow. By 6.6.4 Callirhoe will describe her own beauty as treacherous and the cause of her misfortunes. Absolute beauty which leads to celebrity status has of course a downside which those who covet, but do not possess, beauty apparently cannot see. Helen of Troy is said to have recognized the evil side of her beauty: Euripides *Helen* 27–28, 'My beauty – if anything can be called beautiful which brings misery'; 304–305, 'The very beauty which makes other women happy has proved a terrible curse to me.'

Callirhoe's beauty makes her such a celebrity that throughout her many wanderings Chaereas is able to keep track of her simply by following the φήμη. Only for a brief period in the opening pages does Chariton allow the reader to think that an endowment like great beauty leads to enduring happi-

ὄμοιον ἀπολάμπων), is used by Hunter (1994, 1075) to compare her with the statue type made famous by Praxiteles' Aphrodite of Knidos, which represents the goddess just before her bath. Not only can a beautiful woman be compared with marble (i.e., a marble statue of a deity), she can wish for such a comparison to be a reality: if a beautiful woman is a marble statue, she never grows old, suffers wrinkles, gains weight, or loses her lover to a younger woman. In Young's *So Red the Rose* (1934, 65) the beautiful young woman bemoans the fact that she is *not* a statue: 'If I too were a marble goddess, I could go on forever.' When Haynes 2003, 47 defines Callirhoe as a '... spectacle for the ... masses,' she is also defining her as something to be viewed, i.e. a statue; and when she observes that Callirhoe is 'suitable material for private fantasy,' she is recasting Callirhoe as the memory of a famous statue. See also Schmeling 2003b, 440.

¹⁸ Some of the *sententiae* discussed by Morales 2000, 80, pass for direct judgments.

¹⁹ Hopwood 1998; Guez 2001 speculates why Theron and bandits in Chariton do not assault Callirhoe sexually, while in later novels, e.g. Xenophon of Ephesus, Anthia is forced to physical action to keep from being raped.

ness.²⁰ This opening sentiment is matched at the conclusion of the novel in a ring-like structure, in which the reader is led to believe that Callirhoe will live happily ever after because of the assistance of Aphrodite.²¹

A celebrity for my purposes is someone so famous for her beauty that she needs no introduction. Not only is she instantly recognized by everyone, she casts a kind of spell over those who see her and acts as a magnate to those who, learning that she is in the vicinity, go out of their way to see her. A celebrity is always the center of attention and usually the center of a crowd. Again, for my purposes, the first celebrity is female, she is the model for subsequent literary celebrities including Callirhoe, and her name is Helen: ‘Helen of Troy is no doubt the most famous woman in European history after the Virgin Mary.’²² Chariton indicates in many ways that he wants his reader to compare Callirhoe with Helen, and so he has Dionysius, whenever he thinks about Callirhoe, conjure up images of Helen, the troublemaker. At 5.2.8. Dionysius expresses the fear that in Asia he will find Paris-like men who will try to steal Callirhoe (the new Helen) away from him (evidence of guilt for his stealing her from Chaereas?).

Helen can possess divine beauty because she is a deity (semi-deity?), but such beauty can also be bestowed on a few selected mortals like the mother of Demaratos and Callirhoe. As Zeitlin (2003, 78) notes, there is a link in the two words divine beauty: ‘From the earliest times, the Greeks saw something divine in beauty.’²³ Beauty is thus the outward evidence of divinity. Comparison of a beautiful woman with a goddess has been popular since Homer, and it is usually used without additional description for a woman whose various features of splendor and brilliance resemble those of the statues of goddesses. There is a popular literary conceit that the appearance of a beautiful woman at an event is equal to an epiphany of a deity (Scott 1938; Yersnel 1987; Hägg 2002).

²⁰ Callirhoe complains that her περιβόητον κάλλος (1.14.8) has been given to her so that Theron can sell her at a high price.

²¹ Biraud 1996; Elsom 1992, 227, reads the end of the novel and Callirhoe’s prayer to Aphrodite as a plea that her beauty might not cause further separations from Chaereas.

²² Austin 1994, 23; Austin’s work focuses on Helen as having god-like beauty, then god-like immortality. What begins as a metaphor/simile ends in apotheosis: beauty=divinity. Callirhoe’s visual allure is compared with that of Helen at 5.5.9; 2.6.1; Laplace 1980; Bierl 2002. See also Müller 1976, 130; Marini 1993; Egger 1994; Zeitlin 2003.

²³ Further on this subject see Jax 1933.

In mythology Helen is the sister of Clytemnestra, but, unlike her aggressive sister, Helen appears somewhat passive: her choice of Menelaus for a husband can be seen as a cover for Agamemnon's choice of her as wife for Menelaus. We might compare this aspect of Helen with Callirhoe as a passive prize (1.1.14; 4.4.1; 6.2.7); Callirhoe refers to herself as baggage passed from one person to another (1.14.9): ὡς σκευδος παρεδόθη οὐκ οἶδα τίσι. Helen becomes the prize promised to Paris by Aphrodite, when he names her the fairest of the goddesses in a beauty contest.²⁴ Beauty contests are not unknown in the ancient world and appear quite early (*Alcaeus Frag.* G2. 27–35 L/P) and late, as Chariton stages a beauty contest in which Callirhoe wins out over Rhodogyne (5.3.4–10). Paris carries Helen back to Troy, an act which imaginative/creative storytellers, i.e. not epigraphers, credit as the cause of the Trojan War. After the war Helen returns to Sparta and assumes once again the role of Menelaus' dutiful wife.²⁵

After Hector (*Iliad* 3.86–94) observes that both the war raging before the walls of Troy and the future of Helen will be decided by a duel between the heroes/husbands of Helen, all dramatic action ceases until Helen appears on the scene at the top of the walls to be seen by all those who look out for celebrities, and to see her two husbands brawl over her, winner to take all. As she approaches the Trojan rulers, Priam and the Elders take time to express again amazement at Helen's beauty, and though many Trojans and Greeks have died because of that beauty, to a man the Elders (whose rational senses still yield to their erotic stirrings) acknowledge that they cannot really blame the Trojans and Greeks for fighting over 'such a woman' (3.141–160). The main spectacle is Helen herself atop the Skaian Gates looking down at the secondary spectacle of the duel – otherwise why put her high on the gates and the duel in the plain? As Hecuba says of Helen in Euripides' *Troades* 892: 'She seizes the eyes of men.' Callirhoe, ever the spectacle, is unsurpris-

²⁴ Another interpretation might be that Paris, having received the power to attract women by Aphrodite, is able to seduce Helen away from Menelaus.

²⁵ Schmeling 2003b, 435: 'The female protagonists in the Greek novel seem to follow a social code before the novel begins and to pick it up again at the end of the novel. In between the heroines find room to expand their roles: they travel, face all kinds of dangers, meet a wide variety of people, and lead as exciting a life during the course of the novel as their life is dull before and after it.' Seidel 1985, 50, points out something similar in Faulkner's *The Unvanquished* (1938) in which he takes the passive belle and places her in a setting of the Civil War: '... women ... reach their fullest potential only during the war; after it, they must again conform to social expectations.'

ingly described in similar terms as the magnet working on the crowd's eyes (4.1.10): ἐκεῖνη μόνη τοὺς ἀπάντων ἐδημαγώγησεν ὀφθαλμούς. Callirhoe is a δημαγωγός, not with bloodless words but with physical beauty: all eyes are on her as if drawn by a magnetic force, to be sure, the magnet of beauty. Thus Callirhoe is a latter-day Helen, and Chariton makes the parallels obvious: importance of Aphrodite (Biraud 1996), extraction of a beautiful wife, travel from Greece to Asia Minor and back, two husbands (first one Greek, second from Asia Minor), and war controlling their careers in Asia Minor.

The structure of the tension which surrounds the scandals of Helen and makes them readily comprehensible to everyone is the love triangle: Menelaus-Helen-Paris. Even the most humble reader/listener appreciates the inherent instability of a love triangle. Chariton adopts a similar structure, Chaereas-Callirhoe-Dionysius, but as the novel progresses he replaces the third person with ever more powerful rivals, in a crescendo to the Great King himself. Though there is an element of scandal involved in each of Callirhoe's love triangles, the impression which the reader takes away is that Callirhoe is so beautiful that even noblemen cannot resist, though they admit that they should. Austin (1994, 25) sums it up well: 'Beauty writes its own laws.' And the reader (as opposed to the primary audience in Asia Minor which follows Callirhoe everywhere) knows that Callirhoe has sex with Dionysius and Chaereas only.

While Helen is, or later is re-interpreted as, an immortal, Menelaus (*Odyssey* 4) and Paris can say that they married a goddess. When Dionysius first sees Callirhoe (2.3.6) in the shrine of Aphrodite, he interprets the spectacle as an epiphany of Aphrodite. The reader, however, sees that this is all metaphorical language and that Dionysius might be merely thanking Aphrodite for showing him a rare example of absolute beauty. While Helen's divine status might transport Menelaus to the home of the gods, Callirhoe's divine beauty will result at least for a short time in a heaven on earth for Dionysius.

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