Beauty as Fiction in *Leucippe and Clitophon*

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Scholarship on *Leucippe and Clitophon* has often focused on the ways in which it challenges the conventions and ideologies of the Greek romance novel.[1] It has been said, to cite only a few examples, to offer 'ingenious criticism, if not outright sabotage' of the genre;[2] to make a pastiche of it;[3] to parody the idea of chastity, so central to the ethos of the more conventional novels;[4] to focus on an anti-hero rather than a hero;[5] and to present a view of marriage that is 'relentlessly non-civic.'[6]

In this paper, I argue that Achilles Tatius' challenge to the ideals of the novel goes deeper than has been recognized, and suggest that he questions something very close to the foundation of the genre: the beauty of its protagonists. The hero and heroine of the Greek novel are always supposed to be exceptionally, even impossibly beautiful; indeed, it is this quality that makes them protagonists in the first place. As Sandrine Dubel puts it in her study of the representation of beauty in the novel, 'Héros et héroïne sont ainsi isolés dans une beauté superlative… qui les prédestine l'un à l'autre et constitue le ressort essentiel de l'intrigue romanesque.'[7] This astonishing beauty is generally presented as an *objective* quality. Of course, we know that beauty is in actuality subjective: whether or not one perceives another human as beauti-

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[1] In referring to 'the Greek romance novel,' 'the Greek novel,' 'the novel,' and 'the genre,' I mean specifically the subgenre of 'romance' or 'ideal novel' exemplified by the five canonical Greek novels. See Tilg 2010, 1-3 for a brief discussion of the basic elements of this genre. Stephens (1996) refers to novels and fragments of this type as 'ideal-romantic.'

[2] Anderson 1982, 23.

[3] Fusillo 1991, 97-108.

[4] Chew 2000. On parody, see also Durham 1938.

[5] Brethes 2001.

[6] Whitmarsh 2011, 254.

[7] Dubel 2001, 38.

ful depends on cultural norms, which determine both the way one sees and the way one fashions one's image. But the novel tends to obscure this dynamic, and offers beauty as an objective reality, a quality intrinsic to its protagonists.

We can see the apparent objectivity of beauty most clearly in the case of Chariton's heroine, Callirhoe, and I would like briefly to consider the presentation of her beauty before turning to look at Leucippe's. Chariton's more straightforwardly 'ideal' novel,[8] which appears to have been very popular in antiquity,[9] seems like just the sort of work that Achilles Tatius would have been keen to play with, parody, or even subvert,[10] so I think it will be productive to compare the ways in which beauty is developed in the two novels.

Callirhoe's beauty is objective[11] in the sense that it is not dependent on the character or expectations of those who look at her. When Dionysius sees her for the first time and mistakes her for Aphrodite (2,3,6), we might attribute this to his womanizing nature (we know that he is φιλογύναιον, 1,12,7). But this is surely not the case with his slaves (1,14,1) or Queen Statira (4,9,1), who all make the same mistake. Along the same lines, children—who might be assumed to have no particular interest—are moved by the sight of her (4,9,1). Even those who are predisposed to be skeptical of her

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[8] Hägg (2004, 248) cites Chariton's work as an example of 'the early, non-sophistic novel… the simpleminded, truly *ideal* type, with an emphasis on human relations and sentiment.' More recent scholarship has resisted such a sharp dichotomy between simple and sophistic, suggesting that this view does not do justice to the complexity of *Callirhoe* (see e.g. de Temmerman's (2009, 476) conclusion that 'this novel can hardly be labelled "ideal"'). This is true in many respects, but in terms of its treatment of beauty I think *Callirhoe* can still quite accurately be described as idealizing. Cf. König 2008, 134.

[9] See Schmeling 2005, 38-39 on *Callirhoe*'s status as a 'popular novel' and Tilg 2010, 79-82 for an analysis of some (possible) references to Chariton and his novel in antiquity. If Chariton was the author of other well-known novels (e.g. *Chione*, *Metiochus and Parthenope*) that exist now only in fragments, this would make him all the more likely as a target for Achilles. On this possibility, see e.g. Tilg 2010, ch. 3 and Schmeling 2005, 37n8.

[10] *Callirhoe* is almost certainly earlier than *Leucippe and Clitophon*: the former is typically placed around the middle of the first century CE (see Tilg 2010, 78-79 for a recent reassessment of the evidence), while the latter is generally assigned to the second half of the second (see e.g. Plepelits 1996, 388-390 and, on the papyrological evidence, Willis 1990). *Leucippe and Clitophon* was long thought a parody of Heliodorus (Durham 1938), but the papyri have proven this view untenable, and the parody (if there is such), seems more likely to be directed at earlier novels like Chariton's (see Chew 2000 for an example of such a reading).

[11] Zeitlin (2008, 101) describes her beauty using the same term, referring to its 'universal, even objective value.'

beauty are overwhelmed by her appearance. The Persians are all convinced that their Rhodogune will easily outshine Callirhoe in loveliness (5,3,6). Indeed, they have a vested interest in proving their own superiority over the Greeks; as the Persian women say, κινδυνεύει δὲ ἐφ' ἡμῶν ἡ δόξα τῶν Περσίδων γυναικῶν καταλυθῆναι ('now that we are involved, the reputation of Persian women is at risk,' 5,3,1).[12] But when they see Callirhoe for the first time, they immediately forget about Rhodogune, who herself acknowledges defeat (5,3,9). Callirhoe's beauty, these examples suggest, is *not* in the eye of the beholder: to slave and free, to Greek and barbarian, and to man, woman, and child, she is immediately and stupendously beautiful.

At first glance, *Leucippe and Clitophon* seems to present Leucippe in a very similar way, and scholars have generally taken it for granted that she possesses ideal beauty.[13] Like Callirhoe, she dazzles characters of various temperaments and nationalities, and she is often described as beautiful in the most emphatic terms. Nevertheless, as I will argue, the novel subtly undermines the very possibility of such incredible beauty by revealing the ways in which it is constructed, both by the narrator and by cultural forces within the novel.

The very fact that the narrative is told from a first-person perspective means that any statement about Leucippe's beauty is necessarily subjective, since it is not vouched for, as in the other novels, by an 'omniscient' narrator.[14] When we consider that the narrator of the majority of the novel is also Leucippe's lover, we have further grounds to doubt his impartiality in telling of her loveliness. We know, moreover, that Clitophon is capable of manipulating facts to his own advantage, as he admits when describing the account he told to Leucippe's father (8,5,2).[15] This scene, as John Morgan notes, should serve as a warning about Clitophon's story as a whole: '[it is] a *mise en abyme* of his procedures throughout the text, a broad hint that Kleitophon

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[12] Translations from *Callirhoe* are from Reardon 1989.

[13] Two studies of beauty in the ancient novel (Diaz 1984 and Dubel 2001) find *Leucippe and Clitophon* unexceptional in its representation of beauty. Cioffi (2014, 29) likewise finds that the novel confirms the heroine's 'divinely beautiful appearance.' However, Montiglio (2013, 85) suggests that the novel calls 'the incomparable beauty of the heroine' into question by means of its scenes of failed recognition.

[14] The effect of the first-person narrative on the novel has been much discussed. See e.g. Konstan 1994, 62-73; Whitmarsh 2003; and Marinčič 2007. The novel has even been seen to at least suggest the possibility that it is all an invention of the narrator's, a 'Phoenician lie' (on this, see Morales 2004, 54-56).

[15] Marinčič (2007, 195), however, argues that, by revealing his past hypocrisy, the narrator 'enhances his attractiveness as an authentic speaker.'

is nowhere a neutral or impartial narrator.'[16] Clitophon's narrative is not a straightforward account of 'what happened' to him, but an attempt to present and construct an image for himself. But, as Morgan has shown, this image is challenged, perhaps even ridiculed, by the novel's 'hidden author,'[17] who shows just how manipulative and self-obsessed Clitophon is.

Clitophon's presentation of Leucippe's beauty, I argue, should be seen as part of this process of self-construction, and thus as subject to the suspicion of distortion. Clitophon wants to come across as the hero of a novel,[18] but this role requires a second party. Thus he 'conscripts Leukippe willy-nilly into the role of romantic heroine,'[19] making her actions and responses seem to accord with that role, without regard to—or perhaps in spite of—her own wishes. I suggest that he does something very similar with her appearance, fashioning her into a stunning beauty to serve his own interests.[20] This is not to say that she should be understood as ugly or even plain; she may be an extremely lovely young woman, but Clitophon's narrative makes her into something of a wholly different order: an ideal beauty, along the lines of a Callirhoe. The hidden author reveals, however, that this simply is not the case, that the kind of beauty Clitophon describes is nothing more than a fiction, the product of his own imagination.

1. Literary Beauty

What I mean by the fictionality of Leucippe's beauty can be made clear by comparison with a specific episode from *Callirhoe*. In the first book of that novel, the villain Theron is trying to convince Leonas to buy the heroine, whom he has kidnapped. In describing her, though, he doesn't say a word about her physical appearance, since he knows it will speak for itself:

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[16] Morgan 2007, 110.

[17] Morgan 2007, 108, employing the term used by Conte (1996) in his well-known discussion of Petronius. Morgan finds in Achilles' novel two stories: an 'artificially literary' one offered by the narrator, and a 'realistic' one from the hidden author (119).

[18] Morgan 2007, 117: 'he consciously assimilates his life' to 'the canonical form of the Greek romance.'

[19] Morgan 2007, 117.

[20] Cf. Schmeling's (2005, 37) argument, according to which Chariton, a real-life novelist, 'must make Callirhoe an exceedingly beautiful, appealing, and magnetic character' in order to assure his own success and popularity.

ὁ Θήρων ἐπῄνει τὸν τρόπον μᾶλλον τῆς γυναικὸς ἢ τὸ κάλλος, εἰδὼς ὅτι
τὸ μὲν ἄδηλον συνηγορίας ἔχει χρείαν, ἡ δὲ ὄψις αὐτὴν συνίστησιν.
(1,13,3)

Theron kept lauding her character rather than her beauty; he knew that
whereas what cannot be seen needs recommendation, seeing is its own
advocate.

Her beauty is self-evident, so any words would be superfluous. This confi-
dence proves well-founded, considering the reaction of Leonas and the other
members of the household, who are amazed by her appearance, and think
they have seen a goddess (αἰφνίδιον κατεπλάγησαν, οἱ μὲν δοκοῦντες θεὰν
ἑωρακέναι, 1,14,1).

Quite a different scenario develops in a similar scene in *Leucippe and
Clitophon*. There, the villainous Sosthenes is likewise trying to convince his
master Thersander of the worth of Leucippe, the kidnapped woman he has
recently bought. But he does find it necessary to praise her beauty:

περὶ Λευκίππης λέγει πάνυ πιθανῶς πλασάμενος… Κόρην ἐωνησάμην,
ὦ δέσποτα, καλήν, ἀλλὰ χρῆμά τι κάλλους ἄπιστον. (6,3,4)

He spoke about Leucippe, fictionalizing very convincingly… 'I have
bought a beautiful girl, master, an incredibly beautiful thing.'[21]

He wants Thersander to be excited about the girl, so he talks her up, using
what I think should be understood as literary techniques. The participle that
describes him (πλασάμενος) is derived from the verb πλάσσω, whose prima-
ry meaning is to form or mold; it often suggests lying or deception, however,
especially in combination with the word λέγω.[22] Take for example Herodo-
tus 8,80, where Themistocles asks Aristides to address the Greeks, because
he fears he will be taken for a liar if he addresses them himself: ἢν γὰρ ἐγὼ
αὐτὰ λέγω, δόξω πλάσας λέγειν καὶ οὐ πείσω. To speak πλάσας in this case
means to invent, to tell something other than the truth in order to advance
one's own agenda. Sosthenes, I think, is doing the same thing, although he

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[21] The text of *Leucippe and Clitophon* is from Garnaud 1991; translations from Whitmarsh
2001, with occasional modifications, including here, on which see below.
[22] E.g. Plu. *Luc.* 9,6 (πεπλασμένα λέγειν); Aeschin. 2,20 (πρᾶγμα λέγων πεπλασμένον);
D.S. 9,30,1 (πεπλασμένως ἔλεγεν). For the more general meaning "fabricate, forge," see
LSJ, πλάσσω, V.

manages to do it persuasively (πιθανῶς), concealing his artifice in order to convince his master. Whitmarsh's translation of this sentence ('He told some altogether plausible-sounding lies about Leucippe'),[23] appropriately conveys the unreliability of Sosthenes' account, but I have preferred to translate the participle as 'fictionalizing.' This is because words derived from πλάσσω are also frequently used to convey a sense of what we call fiction.[24] Xenophanes famously denounced mythological tales as πλάσματα τῶν προτέρων (1.22), and similar language is used by later authors in similar contexts; Plutarch, for instance, uses the same word to refer to a story he deems less than reliable.[25] In rhetorical discussions, πλάσμα was used more specifically in reference to a category of stories separated from myths by their plausibility, tales full of 'made-up events which nevertheless could have happened.'[26] This, I think, fits the context of the scene under consideration very nicely. Leucippe is no doubt a pretty girl, though perhaps somewhat diminished in appearance by her enslavement, so Sosthenes is not exactly lying when he says she is beautiful. Rather, he is using language to elevate her, to make her seem not ordinarily but unbelievably beautiful (ἄπιστον).[27] What he says is neither simple description nor outright falsehood, but rather a sort of creative elaboration, plausible if fanciful: in short, it is a fiction.

Later that day, just before he is about to actually show Leucippe to Thersander, and thus when words would seem most unnecessary, Sosthenes redoubles his descriptive efforts:

> τοῦ δὲ Σωσθένους αὐτῷ μηνύσαντος τὰ περὶ τῆς Λευκίππης καὶ κατατραγῳδοῦντος αὐτῆς τὸ κάλλος, μεστὸς γενόμενος ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων ὡσεὶ κάλλους φαντάσματος, φύσει καλοῦ… (6,4,4)

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[23] Winkler (1989, 250) translates it similarly: 'he told a very persuasive lie about Leukippe.'

[24] Halliwell 2011, 11.

[25] Plu. *Thes.* 28: ἔοικε μύθῳ καὶ πλάσματι.

[26] Morgan 1993, 189. See esp. his quotation (178) of Julian (*Epistles* 89,301b), in which the novels themselves are called πλάσματα.

[27] Apparently unbelievable but in fact true things are constantly said to happen in the Greek novels. For instance, Callirhoe is at one point hesitant to tell her story lest it appear fabulous and unbelievable (διηγήματα ἄπιστα); but Dionysius assures her that nothing will seem unbelievable in light of her appearance (οὐδὲν γὰρ περὶ σεαυτῆς ἐρεῖς τηλικοῦτον, ἡλίκον ὁρῶμεν. πᾶν ἐστί σου σμικρότερον λαμπρὸν διήγημα, 2,5,9-10).

> When Sosthenes revealed what had happened with Leucippe, dramatical-
> ly embellishing her beauty, the words filled him with a kind of vision of
> beauty, a natural beauty…

We find the language of artifice even more clearly here; Sosthenes becomes
a sort of tragic poet (κατατραγῳδοῦντος) in his description of Leucippe,[28]
and I argue that this word suggests intentional exaggeration. It is not found
in previous Greek literature, but it does appear in a later scene within the
novel,[29] and its use there supports my interpretation. During the trial in book
8, the priest of Artemis explains how Thersander has misrepresented his
actions:

> ‘καὶ ἐπὶ τούτῳ πάνυ δεινῶς ἐσχετλίασε, τύραννον ἀποκαλῶν με καὶ ὅσα
> δὴ κατετραγῴδησέ μου. ἔστι δὲ οὐχ ὁ σώζων τοὺς συκοφαντηθέντας
> τύραννος…’ (8,9,7)

> ‘He levelled terrifying reproaches at me for this, with accusations of tyr-
> anny and all the other bluster straight from the stage which he used
> against me. But the tyrant is not the man who guards the victims of false
> prosecution…’

The verb κατετραγῴδησέ here is clearly not meant to suggest a passionate
expression of Thersander's true feelings,[30] but rather a deliberate attempt to
distort what the priest has done, to transform his protection of the suppliant
Leucippe into an act befitting a tyrant.[31] When the same word is used of
Sosthenes' description, then, I hold that he too is taking liberties with the
truth, making Leucippe's beauty seem grander and more dramatic than it
actually is, with the intention of arousing an emotional response in Ther-

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[28] Metaphors from and allusions to theater are frequent in *Leucippe and Clitophon*; on this,
see Morales 2004, 60-67.

[29] The simple form of the word (τραγῳδέω) is also found in the novel, and it may perhaps
be taken to represent a more sincere expression of emotion, as when it is used to describe
Melite's lamentation to Clitophon (5,25,4), though a certain amount of theatrical bluster
seems to be present in that scene. However, when Clitophon uses the same word to de-
scribe his own actions (8,1,5), it seems much less sincere, especially since it comes right
after an admission of his own dissimulation (προσεποιησάμην).

[30] Of course, Thersander might in his own mind have been telling the truth. This is not the
point, though; what matters is that the priest chooses this word to describe the process of
falsification.

[31] The priest is himself later accused of similar theatrics at 8,10,4.

sander. In this he proves successful, and Thersander is duly enthralled, made
to entertain visions of what seems to him a natural beauty (φύσει).

When Thersander finally does see Leucippe in the flesh, he is immedi-
ately smitten, and she seems to be illuminated by lightning (ὡς ἁρπαζομένης
ἀστραπῆς, 6,6,3). Like Callirhoe, she has a striking, even epiphanic effect on
Thersander, and the scene is in this respect much like many another instance
of novelistic love at first sight. The readers, however, see this effect in a very
different light. We know that Thersander has been prepared for this moment
by Sosthenes' careful descriptions.[32] He sees beauty in the downcast Leu-
cippe, then, because he has been told in the most emphatic terms that he *will*
see beauty in her. The lightning flash is thus revealed to be the product of his
own carefully conditioned expectations, not of some innate quality in Leu-
cippe. He does not realize this, of course, but Sosthenes is quick to take cred-
it for his master's sudden love. As he tells Leucippe:

> ‘Θέρσανδρος ἐρᾷ σου καὶ μαίνεται, ὥστε τάχα καὶ γυναῖκα ποιήσεταί σε.
> τὸ δὲ κατόρθωμα τοῦτο ἐμόν. ἐγὼ γάρ σου πρὸς αὐτὸν περὶ τοῦ κάλλους
> πολλὰ ἐτερατευσάμην, καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ φαντασίας ἐγέμισα.’
> (6,11,3-4)

> ‘Thersander has fallen for you, he is mad enough about you to make you
> his wife soon. This success is all down to me. I was the one who repeat-
> edly made your beauty seem prodigious and filled his soul with imagin-
> ing.’

Again, we see here an admission that his descriptions of her beauty were
hyperbolic. He uses the verb ἐτερατευσάμην, which is used elsewhere in the
novel to suggest exaggeration and deceit.[33] It is this literary embellishment
that gave Thersander fantasies (φαντασίας)[34] about Leucippe, and it is these
in turn that caused his 'sudden' infatuation with her. Without Sosthenes'
artistic descriptions of her, he may well have walked by her without noticing

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[32] On Thersander's manner of falling in love, and the way it connects him to Callisthenes
(discussed below), see Montiglio 2013, 73.

[33] The same word is used to describe Menelaus' specious incantation (3,18,3) and Ther-
sander's own literarily hyperbolic account of his shipwreck (6,13,2). I have modified
Whitmarsh's translation ('I was the one who repeatedly extolled your prodigious beau-
ty') to reflect this sense.

[34] On this term and its meanings, see section 3, below.

her beauty, just as Clitophon himself did shortly before, when he failed to recognize her in Melite's field (5,17,3).[35]

Another character in the novel, Callisthenes, falls in love with Leucippe in a remarkably similar way. He knows of her beauty only through hearsay, but nonetheless becomes obsessed with her (ἐξ ἀκοῆς ἐραστής, 2,13,1). He begins, like Thersander, to fantasize about her, and we find him 'picturing the girl's beauty to himself and envisaging the invisible' (ἀναπλάττων γὰρ ἑαυτῷ τῆς παιδὸς τὸ κάλλος καὶ φανταζόμενος τὰ ἀόρατα, 2,13,2). Like Thersander, he is enthralled by a beauty that he does not know by sight, only by imagination (note the word ἀναπλάττων here, which suggests that he is the author of his own fictions about her). When he eventually sees the girl, he too is struck by the sight of her (ἦν γὰρ ἑαλωκὼς ἐκ τῆς θέας, 2,16,2). Again, though, we as readers are allowed to see this rapturous vision very differently, for we know that the girl he is looking at is not Leucippe at all, but Calligone, Clitophon's half sister. This Calligone may be beautiful herself, as even Clitophon acknowledges at several points, referring to her as 'another beautiful girl' (παρθένον… ἄλλην καλήν, 2,5,2).[36] But for Callisthenes, as for Thersander, the physical characteristics of the woman, and even her identity, are beside the point. For they are not in love with Leucippe, but with a preconceived image of her.

The conception of beauty underlying these two scenes seems to me very different from the one in Chariton's novel. Where Callirhoe's beauty needs no introduction, and is beyond the power of words to describe,[37] Leucippe's depends on verbal construction. She strikes these men as beautiful only after she has been made to seem so by narratives and reports. Again, this does not

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[35] On this lack of recognition, see the following section.

[36] This suggests that Leucippe's beauty is not, as in Dubel's formulation (quoted at the beginning of this paper) isolating or superlative. Along these lines, we might note that Chariton and his characters *always* refer to Callirhoe's beauty in the superlative (eleven times!), while the positive degree is always used for Leucippe's (as for Melite's and Calligone's). The beautiful women in Achilles Tatius are all essentially on the same plane, though one may look more beautiful than the others at any given point, depending on the viewer's disposition.

[37] Consider for instance the role of rumor in *Callirhoe*. Rumors of the heroine's beauty constantly precede her (see Tilg 2010, 242-254 for an analysis of its functions), yet she always proves *more beautiful* than these rumors make her out to be (e.g. at 4,7,6, ἐδόκει δὲ τοῖς πᾶσι τῆς φήμης ἡ γυνὴ κρείττων). Rather than creating her beauty, or at least influencing perceptions of it, rumors can only poorly approximate its unspeakable reality. In the same way, when Leonas attempts to describe Callirhoe's beauty to Dionysius, he does not believe him (2,1,5), but when he eventually sees her in person, he too thinks she is a goddess (2,3,6).

mean that she is *not* beautiful. Perceptions of beauty, after all, are always influenced by cultural discourses. But where other novels hide the processes by which beauty is constructed, and make it seem independent and objective, Achilles develops events in his novel in such a way as to draw attention to these very processes. In this, I think, we can detect a certain metaliterary commentary on Achilles' part. Sosthenes's ability to conjure up fantastical images of beauty by means of clever storytelling makes him very like the ancient novelist. It also makes him like Clitophon himself, who narrates his own story about the beauty of Leucippe. Since there is no way Clitophon could have been party to the private conversations between Thersander and his bailiff, we might assume that he is simply making Sosthenes do what he himself would have done in the same situation,[38] i.e. take a few creative liberties to achieve the desired effect.

2. Painted Beauty

Callisthenes and Thersander, we have seen, both fall in love with Leucippe because of idealized accounts of her beauty, and both are made to seem gullible and foolish for doing so. But then, both are also presented by the narrator in a very negative light, and we might take them as examples of how not to fall in love.[39] Thus, the fact that they are taken in by fiction and rumor need not mean that Leucippe is not objectively, resplendently beautiful. For we know that she had a lightning-like effect on Clitophon himself when he first saw her (1,4,2), and he had not been prepared for that occasion by any literary conditioning. Leucippe simply appeared, and dazzled.

I argue, however, that Clitophon's perception of Leucippe's beauty is shown to be just as culturally determined as that of his rivals, and just as loosely connected to her physical person. Like them, he is in love with an image of beauty, only his image is constructed primarily by visual rather than verbal art. Clitophon, as we know from several scenes in the novel, is

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[38] Morgan (2007, 117) makes a similar point about the narrator's analysis of the motivations behind Thersander's tears: 'He is projecting on to his adversary the performative nature of his own amatory behaviour, and so unwittingly telling us more about himself than about Thersandros.' See also de Temmerman 2014, 180 on the same scene.

[39] Clitophon himself criticizes Callisthenes' lack of sophistication at 2,13,1. Morales (2004, 88-93) accordingly strongly differentiates him from Callisthenes. Montiglio (2013, 74-75) is right to point out, however, that these two characters are more similar than Clitophon would like to think, since Clitophon's own vision is later revealed as deeply flawed, when he must read that Leucippe is alive before he can recognize her.

the kind of person who spends a good deal of time looking at paintings,[40] and I suggest that his experiences with art—specifically the pictures of beautiful women that he often gazes at—shape the way he perceives the beauty of real women. This becomes clear in his narration of his first encounter with Leucippe. Immediately after she 'strikes' him with her beauty, he likens her to a painting: τοιαύτην εἶδον ἐγώ ποτε ἐπὶ ταύρῳ γεγραμμένην Σελήνην (She looked like a picture I had once seen of Selene on a bull, 1,4,3).[41] Significantly, this comparison comes *before* any description of the girl, before even any notice that she is beautiful. He finds her so strikingly attractive, I suggest, precisely *because* she looks like a painting.[42]

Clitophon's descriptions of Leucippe confirm the influence of art on his vision of her. The first of these comes immediately after the comparison with the Selene painting:

> ὄμμα γοργὸν ἐν ἡδονῇ· κόμη ξανθή, τὸ ξανθὸν οὖλον· ὀφρὺς μέλαινα, τὸ μέλαν ἄκρατον· λευκὴ παρειά, τὸ λευκὸν εἰς μέσον ἐφοινίσσετο καὶ ἐμιμεῖτο πορφύραν, οἵαν εἰς τὸν ἐλέφαντα Λυδίη βάπτει γυνή. τὸ στόμα ῥόδων ἄνθος ἦν, ὅταν ἄρχηται τὸ ῥόδον ἀνοίγειν τῶν φύλλων τὰ χείλη. (1,4,3)

> Her eyes were blissfully brilliant; her hair was blonde, curling blonde; her brows were black, unadulterated black; her cheeks were white, a white that grew crimson towards the middle and resembled the purple pigment used by a Lydian woman to dye ivory. Her mouth was like the bloom of a rose, when the rose begins to part the lips of its petals.

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[40] The many ecphrases of paintings in this novel have been discussed extensively in scholarship (see e.g. Bartsch 1989, Morales 2004, esp. 37-48 and 174-184; Reeves 2007; Zeitlin 2013). These studies have largely addressed the way that the paintings relate thematically to the events of the novel or their metapoetic functions. My analysis will focus more narrowly on the way the paintings literally work as objects *within* the narrative, namely by informing the narrator's perceptions and guiding his actions.

[41] On the difficulty surrounding the identity of the woman on the bull, see below, note 84.

[42] Closely comparable in phrasing and sense is Melite's comment at 6,1,3 upon seeing Clitophon wearing her clothes: ῾Ως εὐμορφότερος… παρὰ πολὺ γέγονας τῇ στολῇ· τοιοῦτον Ἀχιλλέα ποτὲ ἐθεασάμην ἐν γραφῇ᾽ ('How much more handsome you have become with this clothing! I once saw Achilles like this in a painting'). Reference to visual art literally changes the way Melite perceives reality.

This very particular detailing of specific features is more thorough than in any description of a woman from the other novels,[43] and it creates the impression that Clitophon is a very observant lover, paying the closest attention to the features of his beloved. But many of the details, on closer inspection, suggest that the point of reference here is art rather than reality. Each feature is described by color, and each color is then abstracted, made into an object in its own right. This fascination with the tones and combinations of colors suggests the eye of a connoisseur. Indeed, the specific combination of white and purple that Clitophon notices on her cheeks appears at two other points in the novel, both times in ekphrases of paintings of women.[44] Europa's clothing is comprised of the exact same colors (λευκὸς ὁ χιτών· ἡ χλαῖνα πορφυρᾶ, 1,1,10). Closer still is Andromeda, whose cheeks have a similar tint: ἀλλ᾽ οὔτε τῶν παρειῶν τὸ ὠχρὸν τέλεον ἀφοίνικτον ἦν, ἠρέμα δὲ τῷ ἐρεύθει βέβαπται (Yet her pallid cheeks were not altogether without color [lit. uncrimsoned], tinged as they were with a gentle blushing, 3,7,3).[45] In describing Leucippe, then, Clitophon is using the same language that he does when describing a woman in art. In fact, it is grammatically possible that this whole paragraph could refer to *Selene* rather than Leucippe, since the text does not refer to Leucippe again between the mention of the goddess and the description of the face (παρθένος ἐκφαίνεταί μοι καὶ καταστράπτει μου τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῷ προσώπῳ. τοιαύτην εἶδον ἐγώ ποτε ἐπὶ ταύρῳ γεγραμμένην Σελήνην· ὄμμα γοργὸν ἐν ἡδονῇ... 1,4,2-3). For Clitophon, the distinction between painted woman and flesh-and-blood woman is very fine indeed.

Clitophon's second description of Leucippe suggests several further ways in which his perception is informed by visual art:

τὸ γὰρ τοῦ σώματος κάλλος αὐτῆς πρὸς τὰ τοῦ λειμῶνος ἤριζεν ἄνθη. ναρκίσσου μὲν τὸ πρόσωπον ἔστιλβε χροιάν, ῥόδον δὲ ἀνέτελλεν ἐκ τῆς παρειᾶς, ἴον δὲ ἡ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἐμάρμαιρεν αὐγή. (1,19,1)

For the beauty of her form was vying with the flowers of the meadow: her face gleamed with the complexion of narcissus, the rose bloomed forth from her cheeks, violet was the radiance that shone from her eyes.

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[43] Dubel 2001, 44.

[44] It is also a topos in literature, on which see below.

[45] On blushing in Achilles Tatius, see Lateiner 1998, 175-176. He treats the blush only as an indicator of psychological states, not as an aesthetic object in itself.

This is ostensibly inspired by the natural wonders of the garden where Leucippe and Clitophon are standing. At the same time, though, it includes echoes of descriptions of visual art in the novel.[46] One is the detailed and technical account of the flowers in the meadow of the Europa painting at the beginning of the novel, which includes roses and narcissi (1,2,5).[47] More striking, again, are the parallels with the Andromeda painting. Like Leucippe, her beauty is compared to blossoms (ἀνθεῖ τὸ κάλλος); her eyes, too, are specifically likened to violets (τὸ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἄνθος… ἔοικε τοῖς ἄρτι μαραινομένοις ἴοις, 3,7,3). Clitophon seems to be looking at Leucippe and describing her in natural, even vegetal, terms, but these also prove to be terms of art.

Additionally, Clitophon's descriptions of Leucippe contain several literary resonances. His comparison of her cheeks to dyed ivory clearly recalls a famous simile from the *Iliad* (4,141-142) that describes blood from a wound staining Menelaus's thigh.[48] Furthermore, his announcement of the ways in which her beauty rivals that of plants is familiar from archaic and Hellenistic poetry, as Dubel points out.[49] On this account, Dubel has taken the two descriptions of Leucippe as mere reformulations of familiar topoi, and thus ultimately lacking in descriptive value.[50] But we must recall here that these are not the 'direct' words of the author, but are spoken by the first-person narrator, who is also the protagonist of the novel.[51] While Clitophon's descriptions may not be especially revelatory from a narrative standpoint, they do tell us a great deal about the way that he views beauty, namely that he perceives and articulates it by constant reference to art and literature. Leu-

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[46] Cf. also Clitophon's description of Melite (5,13,1-2), who also has a white complexion and rosy cheeks.

[47] On the many connections between this ecphrastic garden and the garden in which the present scene takes place, and the questions they pose about the relation between art and nature, fiction and reality, see Zeitlin 2013, 67-70.

[48] The same simile is used in the *Aeneid* (12,67-68) to describe the rosy cheeks of Lavinia. On the possibility that Achilles Tatius is influenced by Virgil, see Whitmarsh 2011, 90n101; Tilg (2010, 285-91) discusses several ways in which another novelist, Chariton, might have been exposed to Virgil.

[49] Dubel 2001, 46.

[50] Dubel 2001, 45-46. See also Morales (2004, 157), who likewise identifies the first description as 'a typical, formulaic description of a novelistic heroine.'

[51] On this point, I disagree strongly with Bartsch, who holds that the novel's ecphrases of artworks are '"independent" descriptive passages,' where 'the author seems to have forgotten that we are listening to a first-person account' (1989, 50). While I do think that a difference between author and narrator can be observed in this novel, the linguistic and thematic overlap between the narrator's ecphrases of art and his normal descriptions of 'reality' makes Bartsch's distinction seem implausible.

cippe is beautiful to him precisely because she conforms to a preconceived, culturally constructed notion of how a beautiful woman should look.

Again, though, we might think that Clitophon's artistic language need not rule out the possibility of Leucippe's being ideally beautiful in and of herself. After all, comparisons between women and works of art are a regular feature in ancient literature.[52] They can be found in the other novels, especially in *Callirhoe*, where the heroine's beauty is unquestionable.[53] Such comparisons become increasingly common and elaborate in the Second Sophistic. We need only think of Lucian's *Imagines*, where Lycinus has seen the beautiful Panthea, is struck by her as if by lightning (11), and professes himself unable to put the vision of her into words (οὐ κατὰ λόγων δύναμιν, καὶ μάλιστά γε τῶν ἐμῶν, ἐμφανίσαι θαυμασίαν οὕτως εἰκόνα, 3). Nevertheless, the rest of the dialogue does offer an extended description of this woman, in the form of a series of comparisons with works of art and literature. Lucian's use of artistic language in describing her beauty here does not point toward the artificiality of that beauty; it represents rather an attempt to describe the indescribable. At the same time, a description like this also furnishes the speaker with an opportunity to showcase his own sophistication. As Simon Goldhill has shown, an educated person (πεπαιδευμένος) is differentiated from an ordinary person (ἰδιώτης) precisely by his ability to respond intelligently, even rhetorically, to the sight of a beautiful object.[54] When considered against this background, it seems natural enough for Clitophon to describe the object of his affection in the terms furnished for him by his culture.[55] His tendency to compare her to works of art and literature may thus

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[52] See Morales 2004, 33-34.

[53] See Hunter 1994, 1073-1076 and Zeitlin 2003. Chariton's comparisons however, are dramatically different from Achilles'. Callirhoe is often connected to specifically *divine* statuary, just as she is often connected to, and mistaken for, Aphrodite herself. The statues to which she is compared make her beauty seem beyond normal human categories. At one point, the narrator even states explicitly that her loveliness is greater than anything represented in art: ὤφθη θέαμα κάλλιστον, οἷον οὔτε ζωγράφος ἔγραψεν οὔτε πλάστης ἔπλασεν οὔτε ποιητὴς ἱστόρησε μέχρι νῦν (3,8,6).

[54] Goldhill 2001, 161. His discussion there centers on Lucian's *de Domo*, though he later applies this principle to *Leucippe and Clitophon*.

[55] Though as Morgan (2007, 113) points out, his insistence on allusion may be thought to reflect poorly on him: 'The narrating Kleitophon reaches for his mythological dictionary and *Bluffers' Guide to Culture* at moments of extraordinary personal importance, when his emotions ought to be most directly involved.'

be thought to reflect more on him as a narrator than on the nature of her beauty.[56]

Later, though, we are given reason to suspect that Clitophon's artistic language is more than a metaphor or a rhetorical flourish, that art is not just something that he uses to *talk* about how he sees, but something that he uses *to see*. He does not merely happen upon works of art as appropriate comparanda for beauty such as Leucippe's; rather, it is her likeness to these works of art that makes her beautiful to him. This is, again, perfectly natural from a psychological standpoint (we need only think of the way contemporary ideals of beauty are informed by images from films or advertisements), but it is striking that Achilles allows us to see this process rather than presenting her beauty as an intrinsic quality. The extent to which Clitophon's perception of Leucippe's beauty depends on her similarity to painted beauties becomes clear, I think, when we consider his misrecognition of her later in the novel. In book 5, while he is convinced (for the second time) that she is dead, she appears to him as a laborer in Melite's fields. Here she looks dirty and shabby; the length of her hair, the color of her skin, and the quality of her garment have all changed since he last saw her (5,17,3). He claims— after the fact, of course—that she vaguely recalled Leucippe to him (τι ἐδόκει Λευκίππης ἔχειν, 5,17,7). Even if genuine,[57] this impression seems to have no effect on Clitophon, who does not attempt any communication with her; furthermore, when he reads her letter, he doubts its authenticity and does not connect it with the woman in the field (5,19,1-2). Thus the 'hero' of the novel looks directly at his beloved for a considerable length of time, and even hears her speak, but is unable to recognize her.

This failure of Clitophon's is remarkable, and sets him in sharp contrast with other novelistic heroes.[58] Silvia Montiglio has suggested that we should take this as a bit of fun on Achilles Tatius' part, as evidence that he is 'playfully challenging novelistic stereotypes' and presenting a hero who is 'funni-

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[56] Cf. Marinčič's (2007, 186) comment on Clitophon's ecphrases: 'If it is true that the sophistic describer of works of art is more concerned with his own image as a verbal virtuoso than with the picture he is describing, this is even more true of the orator who interprets a picture by his own story, which in turn resembles a gallery of art.'

[57] Montiglio (2013, 70) suggests that this comment may be 'a small, but positive, lie.'

[58] Chaereas at first fails to recognize Callirhoe at 8,1,9, but this is only momentary, and she quickly recognizes him by his voice. The two cases, as Montiglio (2013, 84) argues, are not very similar: 'Chaereas, however, is capable of guessing her [Callirhoe's] identity even when she is entirely covered, while Clitophon is misled by a haircut.' A case closer to this one occurs in Heliodorus, when Theagenes does not recognize Chariklea in her beggar disguise (7,7,6), but in this case too the confusion is short-lived. In both novels, but not here, speech immediately leads to recognition (on this see Montiglio 2013, 121).

ly dense.'[59] While this is perfectly true, and in keeping with the author's
general method, I suggest that we can read more into this unusual scene.
Clitophon's lack of recognition makes better logical sense if we realize that
he is in love with an image of beauty, not the real Leucippe. He projects this
image onto Leucippe, as when he first saw her and immediately made her
into a painting. But the Leucippe in the fields has little relation to this image;
she does not look at all like Selene, and so Clitophon cannot recognize her as
his beloved. Nor is this the only such error he makes; he had earlier mistaken
the beheaded body of a prostitute for Leucippe, and had even embraced and
kissed it without realizing his mistake (5,7). Despite his elaborate descrip-
tions, it seems that Clitophon doesn't really know what Leucippe looks like
at all. In this way, he is remarkably similar to Callisthenes, who mistook
Calligone for Leucippe. She may be a lovely girl, but it is not her physical
features, strictly speaking, that make them love her: the amazing beauty that
both fantasize about is an ideal, existing in their minds rather than in her
person.

    My interpretation of this scene further suggests that the construction of
beauty involves the participation of both viewer and viewed. Just as Clito-
phon's perceptions are determined by art, so is Leucippe's physical appear-
ance. Consider Menelaus' description of female beauty in the rhetorical de-
bate about the advantages of heterosexual and homosexual relations at the
end of book 2:

> 'γυναιξὶ μὲν γὰρ πάντα ἐπίπλαστα, καὶ τὰ ῥήματα καὶ τὰ σχήματα· κἂν
> εἶναι δόξῃ καλή, τῶν ἀλειμμάτων ἡ πολυπράγμων μηχανή. καὶ ἔστιν
> αὐτῆς τὸ κάλλος ἢ μύρων, ἢ τριχῶν βαφῆς, ἢ καὶ φιλημάτων.' (2,38,2)

> 'With women, all is artificial, be it pillow-speak or technique. Even if
> she looks beautiful, there is some multitalented dexterity with make-up
> behind it. Her beauty consists in perfumes, hair-dye, or even in kissing.'

The sentiments here are not, of course, the narrator's own, and are even po-
lemically opposed to his position. But Menelaus' remarks come at the very
end of the debate, which is never formally concluded, and are therefore not
directly answered.[60] Interestingly, Menelaus' language here recalls the narra-

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[59] Montiglio 2013, 66, 71.

[60] On this comment, see Diaz 1984, 259, who argues that Clitophon, and the novel, disagree
    with Menelaus' argumentation. Goldhill's (1995, 93) reading is much more complex:
    'Achilles Tatius in this way explores, as it were, the connections between the artifice of a

tor's own in several of the passages we have already considered. Women's beauty is said to be artificial (ἐπίπλαστα), and we can see here the root πλάσσω which we saw above in Sosthenes' account and Callisthenes' imaginings of Leucippe's beauty (λέγει… πλασάμενος, ἀναπλάττων). It is the result of dye (βαφῆς), like the color of Leucippe's/Selene's and Andromeda's cheeks (βάπτει, βέβαπται).

With this comment, the novel thus presents the possibility that the heroine's beauty might be created by her active cosmetic efforts. This possibility is never acknowledged by Clitophon, the narrator, and it is easy to write it off as a trope of homoerotic rhetoric, like the mythological exempla that Clinias cites in his excoriation of the female species (1,8).[61] But understanding Leucippe's beauty as the product of makeup and dye helps explain Clitophon's later failure to recognize her: her blonde locks are gone, the blush on her face replaced by soil, her garments changed to tattered rags. Clitophon does not see her as his beloved because she no longer resembles art, and this is because she can no longer make herself resemble art, to conform to his expectations.[62] Leucippe's superlative beauty is thus not an objective and persistent quality,[63] but something that both she and Clitophon have conspired, consciously or not, to create. By contrast, we might again think of Callirhoe, whose beauty does not depend on dress. Indeed, it makes even a slave's garment (χιτῶνά … δουλικόν) look stunning (κἀκεῖνο δὲ ἔπρεπεν αὐτῇ καὶ πολυτελὲς ἔδοξε καταλαμπόμενον ὑπὸ κάλλους, 2,2,4).[64] More striking still is a detail from *Parthenope*: the heroine of that novel seems to have deliberately cut her hair at one point to avoid attracting men's attention, though presumably without success.[65] The beauty of Achilles' heroine, by contrast, is remarkably fragile: it is contingent upon both the viewer's expectations and her own adornment. Thus she may be the paragon of loveliness one moment and an unremarkable slave the next.

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woman making up and the artifice of making up a story.' For readings of the lack of conclusion to the debate, see Klabunde (2001, 65) and Jones (2012, 237).

[61] On this, see Jones 2012, 222-223.

[62] Cf. Wyke's (1994, 138) explanation of the purpose of makeup in the ancient world: 'For women, time spent in front of the mirror is the preparation of a male-directed sexual identity on the surface of her adorned body.'

[63] See König 2008, 128-132 on the stability and instability of physical beauty in the Greek novels.

[64] See also 5,9,7 for a similar scene.

[65] Montiglio (2013, 84-85) points out this parallel; see Hägg 2004, 253, 255 for analysis of the relevant testimonia.

3. The Science of Beauty

In addition to these subtle reflections on the nature of beauty, *Leucippe and Clitophon* also addresses the subject much more directly, in a series of scientific sententiae about vision and its objects. In this section, I will analyze several of these sententiae and the understanding of beauty that they assume. I will argue that they represent another method the narrator uses to make Leucippe's beauty seem like an objective, even scientific reality, but that in this too he is thwarted by the hidden author.

Clitophon first formally discusses beauty in his explanation of what happened when he saw Leucippe on the day of her arrival in Sidon:

> ὡς δὲ εἶδον, εὐθὺς ἀπωλώλειν· κάλλος γὰρ ὀξύτερον τιτρώσκει βέλους καὶ διὰ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν καταρρεῖ· ὀφθαλμὸς γὰρ ὁδὸς ἐρωτικῷ τραύματι. (1,4,4)
>
> As soon as I saw, I was done for: beauty pricks sharper than darts, and floods down through the eyes to the soul (for the eye is the channel of the wounds of desire).

Beauty here is a *substance*, something that passes from the object viewed into the soul of the viewer.[66] It causes love in a physical way, as a weapon causes a wound. This view of beauty is repeated often and emphatically in the novel. Even the boorish Thersander takes it for granted, complaining to Leucippe when she looks away from him that her beauty is flowing into the ground (τί δέ σου τὸ κάλλος τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν εἰς γῆν καταρρεῖ; 6,6,4). Vision is so strongly physical, according to Clinias, that it is practically equivalent to copulation (ἡ δὲ τοῦ κάλλους ἀπορροή… ἔχει τινὰ μίξιν ἐν ἀποστάσει, 1,9,4).[67] Moreover, it leaves a permanent imprint on the viewer's mind:

> ἡ δὲ τῆς θέας ἡδονὴ διὰ τῶν ὀμμάτων εἰσρέουσα τοῖς στέρνοις ἐγκάθηται· ἕλκουσα δὲ τοῦ ἐρωμένου τὸ εἴδωλον ἀεί, ἐναπομάσσεται τῷ τῆς ψυχῆς κατόπτρῳ καὶ ἀναπλάττει τὴν μορφήν· ἡ δὲ τοῦ κάλλους

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[66] There are resonances here with Platonic discussions of vision, especially those in the *Phaedrus*. On this, see Morales 2004, 131-132. For more on Achilles' sources in these discussions, see note 76 below.

[67] Clinias' role as amatory teacher here is complex and paradoxical, as Jones (2012, 226-229) has discussed. But whatever we make of his role in the scene as a whole, his discussion of optics and the terms he uses are fully in keeping with the narrator's own (seemingly) authoritative voice in the other sententiae (see Morales 2004, 131).

ἀπορροὴ δι' ἀφανῶν ἀκτίνων ἐπὶ τὴν ἐρωτικὴν ἑλκομένη καρδίαν
ἐναποσφραγίζει κάτω τὴν σκιάν. (5,13,4)

The pleasure of the spectacle floods in through the eyes and settles in the
breast, ever drawing with it the image of the beloved. This pleasure is
impressed upon the soul's mirror, leaving its form there; then the beauty
floods out again, drawn towards the desirous heart by invisible beams,
and imprints the shadowy image deep down inside.

This passage reveals the influence of materialist theories of vision, according
to which the image (εἴδωλον) of the object seen creates an impression (called
a φαντασία) that the viewer retains even when the object is no longer physi-
cally present.[68] Clitophon uses this terminology when he remarks at one
point that he sees Leucippe constantly (πάντα Λευκίππην φαντάζομαι,
1,9,1). As Goldhill puts it, Clitophon here is 'not just uttering the well-
known lover's complaint of "I see her everywhere", but is expressing it in a
term which… evokes a theoretical perspective on the eye's work.'[69] To
Clitophon, even the lover's daydreams about his beloved can be explained in
scientific terms.

In all of these passages, beauty is presented as a physical reality, some-
thing that exists independently, and does not depend on the predisposition of
the viewer. Indeed, it is often described as exerting an irresistible physical
force. Consider, for instance, the way that Clitophon describes Leucippe's
effect on him:

ἐκπεπλήγμην τὸ κάλλος, ἔτρεμον τὴν καρδίαν, ἔβλεπον ἀναιδῶς,
ἠδούμην ἁλῶναι. τοὺς δὲ ὀφθαλμοὺς ἀφέλκειν μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς κόρης
ἐβιαζόμην· οἱ δὲ οὐκ ἤθελον, ἀλλ' ἀνθεῖλκον ἑαυτοὺς ἐκεῖ τῷ τοῦ
κάλλους ἑλκόμενοι πείσματι. (1,4,5)

I was awestruck by her beauty, I was terrified in my heart, I gazed with-
out shame, I felt ashamed at having been captivated so. I tried to force
myself to tug my eyes away from the girl, but they resisted, tugging
themselves back there again, as if towed by the lure of beauty.

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[68] Cf. also Clinias' language at 1,9,4 (e.g. εἴδωλα, ἀπομάττω).
[69] Goldhill 2001, 168.

The girl's beauty takes over Clitophon's eyes, dragging them towards it-self,[70] despite his attempts to resist.[71] Thersander is also physically caught by the lightning-like appearance of Leucippe (ὡς ἁρπαζομένης ἀστραπῆς… εἱστήκει τῇ θέᾳ δεδεμένος, 6,6,3). In light of these optical discussions, the simile of lightning, which links Leucippe's beauty to a powerful and unpre-dictable natural phenomenon, is remarkably appropriate: it physically flows into the eyes of these men, sears a lasting impression in their souls, and stops them dead in their tracks.

In the same scene, another seemingly metaphorical aspect of feminine beauty is also revealed to be rooted in science. The narrator offers a lengthy discourse on vision and beauty, and it contains an interesting detail about the effect of tears on the human eye:

> χεομένης δὲ τῆς τῶν δακρύων ἅλμης περὶ τὸν κύκλον, τὸ μὲν πιαίνεται, τὸ δὲ μέλαν πορφύρεται, καὶ ἔστιν ὅμοιον τὸ μὲν ἴῳ, τὸ δὲ ναρκίσσῳ. (6,7,2)

> When the salt water of tears floods around the eye, the outer part shines, while the black part turns deep crimson: the latter is like the violet, the former the narcissus.

We have already seen that Leucippe's eyes resemble violets (1,19,1) as do the painted Andromeda's (3,7,3). According to Clitophon's discussion here, it seems that these descriptions have a scientific basis, and are not simply florid language.

The novel's many sententiae on vision, then, consistently present beauty as something real and tangible, a force of nature. The theory of optics that underlies this understanding, moreover, 'is presented as an immutable, natu-ral law.'[72] Clitophon, the narrator, who offers almost all of these observa-tions in his own voice, firmly believes (or wants his audience to believe) that his reactions to Leucippe are the inevitable consequence of a physical force beyond his control. But this explanation, however often and adamantly voiced, is belied by his own experience. When he sees Leucippe in Melite's

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[70] Note that the verb ἕλκω (drag), which is repeated three times in this passage, also ap-pears twice in the passage above on the impressions left by sight. What happens to Clito-phon here is simply a large-scale version of the optical process that occurs anytime one looks on something beautiful.

[71] Morales (2004, 164-165) offers a careful discussion of the gender dynamics of this and the following passage.

[72] Morales 2004, 130.

field, he is blind to her; her eyes do not flash violet to him, for all their tears, and her beauty does not flood into his soul. But the very next day, her eyes blaze once again, and she shocks Thersander with her beauty. This is a discrepancy that cannot be accounted for by the science of optics.[73] Her beauty is not an objective quality with predictable results, but the product of culture, and thus dependent on factors external to her. It is only when she has been culturally rehabilitated, both by Sosthenes' storytelling and by new clothes and a bath (5,17,10), that she becomes beautiful once again.

All the narrator's scientific language, then, is inadequate to explain the way beauty actually functions in the novel. We can observe this even at the linguistic level. As we saw above, Clitophon used the word φαντάζομαι to describe his constant visions of Leucippe. In optical theory, this word denotes an impression left by εἴδωλα entering the eyes, and this impression is necessarily accurate, a reliable source of information about the external world.[74] Yet forms of this same word are also used to describe the visions which Callisthenes (φανταζόμενος, 2,13,2) and Thersander (φαντάσματος, 6,4,4, φαντασίας, 6,11,4) entertain about Leucippe, and these, we know, are necessarily inaccurate, since they have never seen her. In their case, φαντασία is not an accurate impression but a purely mental image, a visualization of 'an unreal and even ideal world.'[75] We might also note that the word ἀναπλάττει in Clitophon's discussion of the way beauty impresses itself on the soul's mirror (5,13,4) is the same word used to describe how Callisthenes created his visions of Leucippe's beauty (2,13,2). Clitophon may think that his image of Leucippe is accurate, even scientific, but it is just as much a fantasy as his rivals'.

But perhaps Clitophon should have known better than to attempt to use optical theories to explain his love and the reality of Leucippe's beauty. This is especially true when we consider the fact that the atomists, whose theories are central to the novel's *sententiae* on vision,[76] were notoriously hostile toward love, condemning it as 'intrinsically unsettling and destructive.'[77]

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[73] It is also discordant with the general Greek view, according to which, as Montiglio (2013, 72) notes, 'beautiful eyes could not remain undetected.'

[74] Watson 1988, 40: 'For Epicurus the phantasia is always *alēthēs*, which means it corresponds to the eidōla which form it.'

[75] Watson 1988, 58. As Watson outlines, this meaning is foreign to materialist optics, developing rather in the Roman period (ch. 4).

[76] Morales (2004, 132-135) convincingly identifies the atomists as Achilles' most important source, against Goldhill (2001, 168-169, 177-179) who links them more closely with Stoic theory.

[77] Brown 1987, 112.

Moreover, this condemnation seems to have been closely linked to their optical theory. Our evidence from the earlier atomists is scant on this matter,[78] but Lucretius puts his discourse on the perils of love and sex at the end of a book (4) that is primarily concerned with the physical processes involved in vision. In his analysis, as in Clitophon's, the flow of images (*simulacra*/εἴδωλα) from beautiful bodies is what causes the beginning of love (4,1032-1060). Like Clitophon, he also holds that these images remain when the object of love is absent (*nam si abest quod ames, praesto simulacra tamen sunt / illius*, 1061-1062). His metaphors are similar to the novelist's, too: love is presented as a wound caused by weapons (1052) and as something that binds the lover like a snare (e.g. *retibus*, 1147, *nodos*, 1148, *implicitus*, 1149). Where he differs dramatically is in his view that the passion aroused by the simulacra of the beautiful object is dangerous, not just a lure but a deadly trap. His prescription for getting out of this trap offers an important insight about the nature of the beautiful images that cause it: one can escape love, he says, simply by recognizing the flaws of one's beloved (*animi vitia omnia… aut quae corporis sunt eius quam praepetis ac vis*, 1151-1152). Men in love, as he explains at great length, blind themselves to the faults of the women they love, taking them as strengths (1155-1169). The simulacra of vision are themselves a scientific phenomenon, and thus accurate, but the lover misinterprets them, turning what is human and imperfect into an ideal.

Clitophon's use of atomist theories of vision to explain the way he fell in love, then, is a bad idea, for it reveals his folly in making too much out of the images that he receives, and not subjecting them to critical scrutiny. Thus, he comes across as a dabbler rather than an expert.[79] He seems to have missed a key point in his scientific training: that there is no such thing as ideal beauty.

Conclusion: Beauty and Pornography

Throughout the novel, Clitophon presents himself as a kind of hero, in love with a sublimely beautiful woman who is herself a novelistic heroine à la Callirhoe. But, though he goes to great lengths to emphasize the dazzling

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[78] Diogenes Laertius (10,27) does tell us, though, that Epicurus wrote a treatise Περὶ ἔρωτος. For a discussion of Epicurus' views on this matter see Brown 1987, 101-118.

[79] Cf. Morgan's (2007, 116-17) comments on Clitophon's several discussions of the physiology of tears; the discrepancies between these accounts lead Morgan to conclude that 'they are not the product of real thought or intelligence but vehicles of decorative and sophistic display' (117).

quality of her appearance, we are allowed to see, thanks to the hidden author, that the extraordinary beauty he describes is a construct with only the most tenuous relation to the real Leucippe. This construct is partially the product of cultural forces—art and cosmetics—that Clitophon may not even be aware of; but it is also the product of his own narratorial exaggerations, which resemble, and are reflected in, those of the duplicitous Sosthenes. The fact that Achilles draws attention to the ways in which beauty is constructed, I think, can be understood as a comment on the genre itself, which presents hyperbolically beautiful characters as a matter of course. Where the other novels ask their readers to suspend their disbelief and accept the surpassing loveliness of their protagonists, Achilles freely reveals that such beauty is fictional, the creation of an author.

In concluding, I would like to consider briefly how the understanding of beauty I have developed here may reflect on *Leucippe and Clitophon*'s notoriously problematic conclusion. At the end of the novel, the reader is left with no indication of the reunited couple's future bliss, no mention of the joys of their wedded life, not even a kiss. This is odd enough, but when we consider the opening frame, which seems to take place shortly after the conclusion,[80] things become stranger still. There, Clitophon is alone, and no hint is given about where Leucippe might be. Moreover, he seems to be in poor spirits for a newlywed, speaking of himself as having suffered from love (τοσαύτας ὕβρεις ἐξ ἔρωτος παθών, 1,2,1), without mentioning any happiness that may have resulted from such suffering. Though this brief comment is hardly conclusive,[81] there seems at least a hint that Clitophon is less than fully happy and satisfied at this point, despite the fact that he has reunited with and married his beloved.[82] Scholars have proposed many explanations, more or less convincing, for this unusual ending/beginning, which is further complicated by the fact that there is no return at the end to the frame or its narrator.[83] Whether or not Achilles designed it to foster debate and invite multiple interpretations, it has certainly done so.

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[80] Repath (2005, 260-262) makes a convincing case that the length of time separating the end of the novel and the framing narrative is relatively short.

[81] As Nakatani (2003, 75) notes, 'these words mean that Clitophon at some point in the past (but recently) suffered at the hands of Eros, not that he is suffering at the present time.'

[82] Whitmarsh (2011, 107) argues that this ending/beginning shows that marriage 'is neither the absolute end of the story nor the natural destiny of the human subject.' Jones (2012, 268) asks whether the novel's strange ending is meant 'to make us think that… he was simply unable, or unwilling, to fit into a traditional mould of masculinity.'

[83] Repath 2005 treats the ending at length. For a more recent interpretation, see Chew 2012.

While I do not presume to have answers to all of the difficult questions posed by this unusual aspect of the narrative, I think that my argument about beauty can help at least to make sense of Clitophon's position in the opening frame. The fact that he is without Leucippe and seemingly miserable, I hold, can be understood as the result of his character. For when we find him, he is doing something very characteristic: gazing at a picture of Europa, a lovely young woman on a bull. As we have seen, it was a picture of Selene in just such a situation that made him find Leucippe beautiful in the first place.[84] Now he has returned to look at a similarly erotic painting, and this, I argue, is no coincidence. Clitophon is still pursuing his image of idealized beauty, but Leucippe is no longer in the picture. We need not imagine that she has been kidnapped or killed yet again, or separated from her new husband by shipwreck or storm.[85] Perhaps she has simply proven less interesting to Clitophon than his imagination has led him to believe, less interesting, that is, than his painted beauties.

Leucippe and Clitophon has sometimes been described as pornographic.[86] It puts beautiful women, often in compromising positions, on display, while men look on with fascination. The Europa painting is a prime example of this tendency. The narrative lingers over the shape of her body at great length,[87] and Morales suggests that descriptions like this one are 'designed to solicit a voyeuristic engagement from the reader.'[88] But if the novel is pornographic, I think it is also acutely aware of the unreality of its pornography. The ideal beauty at the heart of the novel, like the beauty that Clitophon gazes at so rapturously in this painting, is revealed to be the product of art. Indeed, it is the eroticized picture of Europa that provides the inspiration for

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[84] My interpretation here assumes that the painting of Selene is distinct from that of Europa. Some (e.g. Bartsch 1989, 165) have attempted to assimilate the two pictures, making both Europa on the basis of an ill-attested variant and a desire to make thematic connections. Morales (2004, 38-48) takes the image as bivalent, its identification purposefully problematic ('it is and is not an image of Europa,' 48). On textual grounds, though, even this ambiguity seems suspect. As Morgan (2007, 113n31) puts it, 'Impressive interpretive edifices have been erected on very shaky grounds hereabouts. Kleitophon's use of the word ποτε makes it clear enough that he is *not* referring to the picture of Europe before which he met the primary narrator a few minutes ago.' Whitmarsh (2011, 80) makes a similar point. Others have accepted Selene as thematically relevant (Cioffi 2014, 28-29 and Cueva 2006, who provides extensive discussion and bibliography on this issue).

[85] Some catastrophe is hinted at by Repath 2005 and assumed by Chew 2012, 79 ('…he has lost his country, his home, and perhaps his love').

[86] Konstan 1994, 72; Elsom 1992, 216-217; cf. Morales 2004, 76 for a qualification.

[87] Haynes (2003, 157) notes that the anatomical detail here is unparalleled in the Greek novel.

[88] Morales 2004, 87.

Clitophon's own tale, which he admits is like a story (τὰ γὰρ ἐμὰ μύθοις ἔοικε, 1,2,2).[89] After looking at this painted woman, he proceeds to make Leucippe herself, his own flesh-and-blood bride, into an artistic object: the heroine of a novel.[90]

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[89] On this point see Morgan 2007, 111-112.

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