VIRGINITY AND REPRESENTATION IN THE GREEK NOVEL AND EARLY GREEK POETRY

By

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The question asked by this thesis is twofold: first, what is the relevance and purpose of the generic prominence of the motif of παρθενία in the Greek novels of the first centuries A.D., and secondly, what is the broader significance of female virginity in ancient Greek literature.

In order to answer this double question, the first part of the thesis examines in detail a number of literary texts from Early Greek Literature in which the theme of παρθενία is a central concern. Thus, a close reading of Homer’s Odyssey reveals the crucial role played by παρθενία in mapping imaginary spaces such as Scheria. A close reading of Sappho sheds light on the sense of continuation that exists between a girl’s premarital stage and her wedding and marriage, which will prompt a definition of Greek marriage as “the symbolic preservation of παρθενία.” In contrast, by focusing on unsuccessful, distorted weddings and marriages, Greek tragedy nonetheless upholds the necessity of a smooth, unbroken transition between virginity and the wedded state in order that a successful marriage be possible. The chapter on Aeschylus’ Suppliants focuses on the incomprehensibility of the concept of παρθενία from a non-Greek point of view, that of the pre-Greek daughters of Danaus and their suitors. The second half of the thesis moves forward five centuries and examines the generic relevance of παρθενία in the Greek novels. Most of these novels (including fragments) are interested in this theme, which appears to be associated with the double affiliation of the novels to fictional literature (generically in verse) and referential literature (generically in prose). Moreover, these novels stress the continuity between the premarital stage and marriage, as the discordant...
accounts of Lycaenion and the main narrator at the end of Longus’ novel about the effect of the wedding on the παρθένος imply. The final chapters devoted to Longus, Achilles Tatius, and Heliodorus highlight the complex connections between the virginity of the female protagonist, the descriptions of nature or created objects, the interest in the text as artifact and the auctorial distancing.
Acknowledgements

This thesis emerged from the many hours of fruitful conversations with my supervisor, Professor Hugh Mason. Without his tactful guidance and inspiring presence, this thesis would have not been written. I thank him for offering me his gentle support throughout the years, initiating me into a myriad of small and large aspects of our profession, and encouraging me to find my own voice in a foreign language.

The other members of my committee, Professor Roger Beck and Professor Jonathan Burgess, have provided me with insightful suggestions and advice at different stages of this project. Professor Beck encouraged me to maintain a balanced manner in the final version of this thesis, for which I am obliged. A special thank you goes to Professor Burgess for his constructive criticism on the chapter dedicated to Homer; he is the one who inspired me to look closer into spatial theory. I received invaluable advice from my external examiner, Professor John Morgan, whose expertise on the Ancient Novels I found both intimidating and comforting. Professor Martin Revermann has been a model of teaching for me many years before becoming the internal referee for this thesis. I appreciated his candid and perceptive suggestions, some of which I will certainly pursue at the postdoctoral stage of this project.

I would also like to thank other people in our discipline for reading parts of this manuscript and/or for generously offering suggestions over the years, some of them incorporated in this thesis: Professor Roger Fisher for his intriguing observations regarding the dolls of the Ancient Greek young girls; Professor Brad Inwood for discussing with me the relevance of aidos in Stoicism; Professor David Konstan for his astute observations on the Longus chapter; Professor Anastasia-Erasmia Peponi for illuminating the significance of the frisking lambs as a form of dance in the pastoral scenes in Longus; Professor Aara Suksi for reading and commenting on the Heliodorus chapter.

Countless ideas of this thesis were shaped into their present form thanks to my fellow graduate students at the University of Toronto; our conversations over the years, particularly when we disagreed, were the part of graduate school I treasured most. I can only mention here a few names: John Abad, Carol-Lynne D’Arcangelis, Emily Fletcher, Eirene Seiradaki, Simona Vucu, Jody Cundy, Miranda Robinson, Tim Perry.

I was fortunate to have my husband, Cristian Ciocani, beside me all the long years of this doctoral project, far away from home. For this and many other reasons, I will be forever grateful to him. My sisters, Ruxandra and Carmen, supported me from afar; my mother came several times to Toronto to recreate a semblance of my distant home.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my first professor of Classics, Mihai Nichita (1925-2006). I wish he could have read it and told me if I truly learned the skills he taught me.
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Introduction: Defining παρθενία

0.1 Introducing the topic and the selection of texts

This dissertation began as an inquiry into the nature of the relation between παρθενία and the creation of literature in the ancient Greek novels. In order to understand better the reasons why female virginity seemed so important in the proliferation of new adventures in the novels, I decided to take at face value the novels’ apparent lack of engagement with their contemporaries’ interest in παρθενία and look into previous pre-Christian possible models for παρθενία as generator of fiction. Since a detailed interpretation of the entire Greek literary corpus interested in παρθενία was not feasible for a dissertation, I made a selection of three major authors preceding the novels and interested in παρθενία: Homer, Sappho, and Aeschylus. All of them date from the very beginnings of Greek literature and are separated from the novels by at least five centuries. Moreover, they belong to three different genres: epic, lyric, and tragic. By looking at such apparently distinct literary codes and discourses, I wanted to see whether παρθενία is associated with literary creation across the board. I have chosen to look at Homer’s Odyssey as it has been recognized as an important model for the novels. The other two authors selected offer a valuable focalization of young women’s understanding of παρθενία: Sappho’s poems are exercises in longing for παρθενία, while imagined outsiders of Greek culture, as in the case of Aeschylus’ Danaids, struggle with grasping the concept. Certainly, a closer look into other tragic famous maidens, such as

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1 This thesis underscores the discussion of παρθενία as focalized from the woman’s perspective, even in the case of texts whose authors are males. Bal (1987: 71), when interpreting the story of the sacrifice of Jephthah’s daughter in Judges 11, makes the distinction between “two different conceptions of ‘virginity’ – a female and a male one: the one focalized by the subject of the state and one representative of the owner of the girl, the father.” It should be added that the second focalization is considerably less frequent in Greek literature than the first one – beginning with the maidens’ choruses (on this see Calame 1977) and ending with the novels.
Iphigenia or Antigone, who openly connect their παρθενία to the social values of the community, as well as other Classical and Hellenistic literary texts, would be highly relevant and useful for the argument of this thesis as well. I will refer to other important Greek texts about παρθενία throughout the thesis when appropriate, but the organization of the thesis surrounds the depiction of παρθενία in the three major genres of Early Greek poetry as contrasted to the much later novels. In the following introduction, I will present a number of essential facts regarding the meaning of παρθενία in Greek literature.

0.2 Women’s attachment to their παρθενία

Charicleia, the female protagonist of Heliodorus’ Aethiopica, sternly refuses marriage (ἀπηγόρευται αὐτῇ γάμος καὶ παρθενεύειν τὸν πάντα βίον διατείνεται 2.33.4) and instead venerates παρθενία (ἐκθειάζουσα παρθενίαν καὶ ἐγγὺς ἀθανάτον ἁπωφαίνουσα), which she calls “undisturbed, undefiled, uncorrupted” (ἄχραντον καὶ ἁκήρατον καὶ ἀδιάφθορον 2.33.5). The Aethiopica is nonetheless only the last extant novel of a roughly three-century-long series of so-called ἐρωτικὰ διηγήματα, whose persistent topic was, ironically (because of the supposed contrast between ἔρως and παρθενία, contained in declarations such as Charicleia’s), a young woman’s control over sexual access to her body. Despite most likely slightly preceding Christian writings on παρθενία, the insistence on the topic and the historical context has associated the genre of the novel with Christian writings on celibacy and (sometimes permanent) retaining of παρθενία, including for men. Ramelli (2007) explores possible connections between the Ancient Novels and the New Testament. According to Perkins (1995), Cooper (1996), Chew (2003), and Haynes (2002: 78-80), the preservation of virginity

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2 This is the subtitle of one of the early specimens of the genre, Chariton’s novel (first century A.D.). Tilg (2010) boldly argues that Chariton has invented the genre of the Greek romance, an argument to which I will return in chapter 4, the Introduction to the Greek Novels.
followed by marriage suits a civic Greek ideology of encouraging marriage during the Roman period, against the (presumably) socially inconvenient pledge of eternal virginity professed by Christian female martyrs such as Thecla and Perpetua. But the association of female virginity with literature, it must be said, is nothing new; even this relatively late Greek literary genre, the novel, came at the end of a long *mythological* and *literary* Greek tradition of young women professing deep attachment to their παρθενία.

Sappho’s poetry is permeated with this feeling of nostalgia for her own παρθενία and also affectionate attachment to other maidens’ παρθενία. In the *Homeric Hymns*, Athena, Artemis, and Hestia profess their devotion to life-long (that is, *eternal*) παρθενία. Not only are these virgin goddesses apparently unique in the context of the early first millennium B.C. Mediterranean and Middle-Eastern religions, but their very existence compelled all the other feminine divinities of the Greek Pantheon to position themselves, in their self-definition, in relation to the non-sexual nature of the three maiden-goddesses. Thus, Aphrodite employs the external appearance of παρθενία in order to make herself attractive and approachable to the mortal Anchises in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*. The hymn ironically opens with an invocation of the goddesses unsusceptible of being deceived by the main addressee of the hymn (τρισσὰς δ’οὐ δύναται πεπιθείν φρένας οὐδ’ ἀπατήσαι HH 5, 7 and 33). Furthermore, Hera renews her παρθενία every year bathing in a spring at Nauplion, and has an annual wedding ceremony to Zeus in her Samian Heraeum. According to Pindar (*Olymp*. 6.88), Hera was invoked as Ἡραν Παρθενίαν and actually Παρθενία is the old name of Samos, the island dedicated to Hera, says Aristotle (fr. 570), a fact repeatedly mentioned by the literary

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3 Pausanias 2.38.2: ἐνταῦθα τήν Ἡραν φασίν Ἀργεῖοι κατὰ ἐτος λουμένην παρθένον γίνεσθαι (“in that [spring] the Argives say that Hera, washing herself every year, becomes a virgin”).

4 Elderkin (1937).
tradition. Likewise, the motherly Demeter is unable to move forward once she finds out about her daughter’s violent loss of παρθενία, as though recalling and evoking her own, long gone, παρθενία. There is no Greek goddess in the Greek Pantheon whose myth does not celebrate either her present, or her past, παρθενία. To them we may add the long list of groups of maidenly (or on the verge of becoming sexual) deities: the Muses,6 the Moirai, the Graces, the Horai, the Gorgons, the Erinyes,7 or the profusely varied kinds of Nymphs.8

Given the wide-ranging, central, and crucial role played by παρθενία and παρθένοι in Greek religion, myth, and literature, it is rather baffling that we are actually at a loss to formulate what παρθενία is. The consensus so far has been that παρθενία is the status of the marriageable girl, which certainly implies sexual abstinence but without explicitly referring to it. Scholars working on early Greek poetry and maidens’ choruses (Calame 1977) or on the Greek early conflation of the nuptial and funerary rituals (Burkert 1972, Dowden 1989, Rehm 1994) emphasize the social meaning of παρθένος by consistently translating it as “maiden.”9 In Dowden’s (1989: 2) words, “although [a παρθένος] is expected not yet to have had sexual experience, parthenia does not directly refer to virginity or end with the rupture of the hymen… Although parthenia was perceived as adversely affected by premature sexual

5 Callimachus, Hymns 4. 48-49: νήσοιο διάβροχον δόθη μαστόν Παρθενίης (οὔσα γὰρ ἐπὶ Σάμος), “to the water-leaking breast of Parthenia (for it was not yet called Samos)”. Apollonius of Rhodes (1.187-188; 2.872) mentions, among the Argonauts, Ancaeus, a son of Poseidon, who had left his birth place, the island “Parthenia, seat of Hera.” Also Plinius NH 5, 135: Samon … Partheniam primum appellatam Aristoteles tradit, postea Dryussam, deinde Anthemassam. Strabo XIV p. 637 Σάμος… ἐκαλεῖτο δὲ Παρθενία πρότερον οἰκούντων Καρῶν, εἶτα Ἀνθέμοις. 6 Sextus Empiricus (Adv. math. 7.125) quotes fifth-century Empedocles (Fragm. 3.8): πολυμνήστη λευκώλενε παρθένοι Μοῦσα (“white-armed, maiden Muse, you who remember many things”). Also Bacchylides (Ep. 1, 2 and fr. 65 P.Oxy 2365) invokes the Muses as Διὸς παρθένοι, at once daughters and maidens of Zeus. 7 Zeitlin (1996: 97) discusses the “negative virginity” of the Erinyes. 8 The word νύμφα, “the veiled one,” related to the Latin nubere (see Chantraine ad loc.), is used in Greek to denote both the “nymph” and the “bride;” the wedding marks the fulfillment of παρθενία, fulfillment which remains embodied in the mythological figure of the nymph, suspended from change or becoming. On the roles and representations of nymphs in Greek myth and art, see Larson (2001). 9 Interestingly, the translators and scholars writing on the Greek novels prefer to translate παρθένος as “virgin” and παρθενία as “virginity,” for example, most recently, Whitmarsh (2011: 150-155). This increased focus on the rejection of sexuality displayed by the παρθένος in later Greek literature will be discussed in more detail in Part Two, on the Greek Novels (111-236, esp. 4.1, 111-114).
experience (to deflower is to *diapartheneuein*), the real issue was marriageability and the real contrast was between *parthenos* and *gyne*, the married woman. A *parthenos* is a maiden, not a virgin.”

Dowden supports this statement with Sissa’s point (Sissa 1987) that there is no physical description or marker of *παρθενία* in Greek language, not even in the Greek medical discourse. While Sissa (1987: 100-101) acknowledges a slippage between the concrete and social *παρθένος* (“maiden”), and its more abstract and sexual correspondent *παρθενία* (“virginity”), she considers it wrong to read *παρθενία* as only defining age: “La parthenia, loin de limiter sa pertinence à une période de la vie feminine, est liée à une attitude précise à l’égard de la sexualité…Attente du mariage, elle peut devenir refus de celui-ci: en tout cas, elle représente un écart que le contact du sexe masculin annule.”

The fact that *παρθενία* carries a “sexually celibate” meaning from its first occurrences in Greek cannot be disputed. While Sappho’s bride saying farewell to her own *παρθενία* in 114V might be interpreted as ambiguously merging the age of youth with the sexual inexperience, other occurrences leave no room for a non-sexual interpretation. Pindar describes Peleus subduing Thetis in terms of untying the bridle of her *παρθενία*: ἐρατὸν/ λὸι κεν χαλινὸν ὑφ’ ἠρωί παρθενίας (*Isthm. 8.44-45*); this metaphor for the first sexual intercourse resembles another common metaphor for the “loss” of *παρθενία*, the untying of the *girdle*.

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10 Calame (1977: 65) had affirmed the same thing, more than a decade before Dowden, underscoring the possibility of a distorted perspective on *παρθενία* caused by the Marian devotion in the Catholic Church (and certainly by the subsequent Protestant difficulty with the Catholic doctrine on the matter): “Ce terme [de vierges] que nous employons à côté de ceux de jeunes filles et d’adolescentes ne doit pas faire illusion: il recouvre en Grèce une conception de la virginité bien différente de celle imposée à notre culture par vingt siècles de piété mariale. Il signifie, en effet, ce statut particulier de la jeune femme qui, pubère, n’est pas encore mariée.”

11 Παρθενία, παρθενία, ποί με λίποιστο’ ἀπογή: Equally (and poetically) ambiguous is the one line preserved from poem 107 (ἥρ’ ἔτι παρθενίας ἐπιβάλλομαι). As will be shown in chapter 2, a woman’s age and her sexual inexperience are perceived to be on the same continuum in Sappho’s poetry.

12 *Od*. 11.245, *Hymns* 5, 164, *Plut. Lycur. 15.3, Mullier virtutes* 253d. In all these occurrences the act of untying the girdle is performed by the man, in anticipation of the sexual act; it is unclear whether the act of removing the veil (ἀνακαλυπτήρια or θεώρετρα / θεώρητρα in Late and Medieval Greek), to which the groom responded with gifts, was performed by the bride. Llewellyn-Jones (2003: 241-247) argues that the groom was removing the veil of the bride, against the Liddell-Scott lemma (*ad loc.*), but neither vase-paintings nor written sources are explicit about such a practice. The fact that the gifts and the act of unveiling the bride are described by
which can happen at birth if the father is divine/unknown, as is the case of Euadne. Euadne loosens down her girdle only to give birth to Iamus: ἀ δὲ φοινικόκροκον ζώναν καταθηκαμένα…τίκτε θεόφρονα κοῦρον (Olymp. 6.39). Plato in Cratylus 406b explains Artemis’ name by connecting it to an adjective meaning “physically intact” in Greek, τὸ ἀρτεμές, or to the phrase ἀρετῆς ἱστορα, “knowledgeable about virtue,” perhaps, speculates Plato, on account of the fact that she dislikes sexual intercourse between men and women (ὁς τὸν ἄροτον μισησάσης τὸν ἄνδρος ἐν γυναικί). In the words of third-century B.C. Aristocritus (fr. 2a), retold by Parthenius (26.2), Ajax’ brother Trambelus pursues a maiden, Apriate, who defends her παρθενία and fights back (ἀπεμάχετο περὶ τῆς παρθενίας), enraging her pursuer who will throw her into the sea. In a similar scene, Zeus pursues Nemesis, who changes her appearance in order to conserve her παρθενία (ἔπει αὐτή πᾶσαν ἰμειβε μορφήν, ἵνα τὴν παρθενίαν φυλάξῃ, Pseudo-Eratosthenes 1.25D). Which component of the παρθενία are all these young women attempting to preserve? Is it their youth, their femaleness, their unmarried status, or their physical condition of “not-having-had-a-sexual-experience-with-a-man” that is in jeopardy at the moment of first sexual intercourse or marriage?

One might assume that this coincidence of several different categories is specific to a traditional society, in which biology grows transparently and seamlessly into social forms. It is very likely indeed that all these conditions must have naturally overlapped in the “village”
atmosphere of the Greek *polis*, in which everybody knew everybody. Remarkably, despite the prominent role of the three eternally virginal goddesses, lifelong celibacy was not an ideal to be followed; only certain priestesses (particularly priestesses of the virgin goddesses) were expected to maintain ritual virginity for the duration of their temple service (Breton Connelly 2007: 39-43). The virgin goddesses (invoked as τάρθέναι αἰδοῖαι) represented rather condensed, immortalized aspects of the transitory period of girls’ integration of sexuality and sociality and understanding of marriage. It is a protracted and rich but nonetheless limited phase, acknowledged, endorsed, and sheltered by the myth of the “eternal” virginity of the goddesses.

0.3 What the end of παρθενία is not

But what is παρθενία if it has no physical, unmistakable description? We can narrow down a definition if we look at the ways of expressing “its end.” According to Sissa (1987: 101) παρθενία seems to be something which can be *taken* or *offered* as a gift. However, while “taking or offering one’s virginity” is a phrase that sounds familiar to us, such a formulation is strikingly *rare* in Greek.13 An anecdote recounted in one of Pseudo-Aeschines’ *Letters* (Epist. 10.6.7) mentions a man, Cimon by name, who finds himself accidentally witness to a Trojan girl’s ritual bath in the river Scamander. Cimon responds literally to the girl’s words addressing the divinity of the river (‘λαβέ μοι, Σκάμανδρε, τὴν παρθενίαν’) in the following way: ‘ἡδέως δέχομαι καὶ λαμβάνω Καλλιρόην, Σκάμανδρον ὃν, καὶ πολλ’ ἀγαθὰ ποιήσω σοι’; a few days later, Callirhoe recognizes him at a public procession and points him to her nurse: ‘ὁρᾷς, τίτθη, τὸν Σκάμανδρον, ὃ τὴν παρθενίαν ἔδωκα.’ We have to state first that despite a

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13 The motif of offering one’s virginity to God begins to appear in early Christianity (e.g. *A.P.* 8.140).
large number of myths that portray masculine sexual drive as rivers, there is no evidence of a ritual bath during which the maiden would offer her παρθενία to the river in Greek tradition.\textsuperscript{14} The story was meant to be humorous and its humour, originating in a misunderstanding, underscored the opposition between the symbolic utterance of the ritual words (τὸ ἔπος τοῦτο ὅσπερ ἱερὸν) and its concrete interpretation by both the seducer and, consequently, the παρθένος.\textsuperscript{15} Callirhoe is misled into thinking not only that a man is a god, but also that παρθενία is something that can be given or taken away through sexual intercourse. At the same time, her seducer converts the abstract and seemingly meaningless “giving away one’s παρθενία” into the concrete sexual act, called by the narrator ἀρπαγή, abduction (ταῦτα ἀμα λέγων καὶ ἀρπάσας τὴν παῖδα ἄφανῆς γίγνεται). Moreover, how could this be abduction if the girl has given her παρθενία freely? The underlying implication uncovers the Greeks’ recognition of the fact that no παρθένος is capable of full consent to sexual intercourse, or actively “offering the gift of her παρθενία,” since what she believes she offers does not coincide with what the man believes he receives. Παρθενία is a cognitive category, a παρθένος’ diffuse perception of herself, rather than a physical, tangible feature.

For this reason, ‘taking’ or ‘giving’ of παρθενία is not a common phrase in Greek. The only other extant occurrence of ‘taking’ it is found in Longus, and then in the mouth of another “tricked” woman: the novel’s narrator deftly makes fun at the “naivety” of Lycaenion, when she tells Daphnis the story of how a former lover took her παρθενία as a form of payment in exchange for ‘sexual education’ (πάλαι γάρ με ταῦτα ἀνὴρ ἄλλος ἐπαίδευσε μισθὸν τὴν παρθενίαν λαβών 3.19). Even this is not exactly “taking her parthenia” but “taking parthenia as

\textsuperscript{14} Pseudo-Aeschines relates this story however in the context of a local ritual: Νενόμισται δὲ ἐν τῇ Τρῳάδι γῆ τὰς γαμουμένας παρθένους ἐπὶ τὸν Σκάμανδρον ἔρχεσθαι, καὶ λουσάμενας αὐτοῦ τὸ ἔπος τοῦτο ὅσπερ ἱερὸν τι ἐπιλέγειν, «λαβέ μου, Σκάμανδρε, τὴν παρθενίαν».

\textsuperscript{15} A very similar anecdote, in which the virgin is defined by her extreme ignorance (παρθένον μωράν), is recounted in the first-century A.D. \textit{Life of Aesop} 131. Longus 3.25 plays on the same idea.
his price.” The context puns subtly on the formal marriage phrase λαμβάνειν γυναῖκα. Likewise, in Callimachus’ *Hymn to Artemis* ‘giving’ or ‘offering’ παρθενία means precisely the opposite; Artemis requests it from Zeus in a childish tone, at first appearance as though asking for a toy to play with, in order to maintain it: δός μοι παρθενιήν αἰώνιον, ἄππα, φυλάςσεαν (*Hymns* 3.6). On another note, an epigram in the *Anthologia Palatina* (5.79) portrays a lover who attempts to seduce a girl with the words: τῆς σῆς παρθενίης μετάδος. Παρθενία seems to be something that can at best be shared, but not given away.

0.4 What the end of παρθενία is

If παρθενία cannot be taken or offered, with the more startling consequence (to be discussed later) that it does not function as a commodity, which are the most common ways of ending παρθενία then?

While Greek uses a variety of ways to render its termination, we can gather all these possibilities under the umbrella of “separation.” Unloosening one’s girdle, λύειν, is a form of separating the girl from her clothing. Alcestis recalls her “untying of virginity” without mention of the girdle itself before going to die: ὄ λέκτρον, ἕνθα παρθένει ἐλως ἐγὼ/ κορεύματ’ ἐκ τοῦ ἀνδρός (Euripides *Alc.* 177-178); because the metaphor became so common, other actions involving the girdle (touch, remove) carry the same suggestion: μίτρης ἡψαὶ παρθενίης (Call., *Aet.* 75.45) or φεῦ φεῦ, καὶ τὰν μίτραν ἀπέσχισας, ἐς τί ἐλυθα; (*Oaristys*, 55).16 The prefix of διαπαρθενέων and διακορεύειν similarly underscores separation.

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Often this separation is not represented in terms of clothing but in terms of leaving one’s parents, particularly the father, or the house of childhood. Medea in Apollonius’ *Argonautica* 3.640 describes her agonizing choice in terms of either leaving for a foreigner in a foreign land or continuing to care for her παρθενία and her parents’ house (ἀμμὶ δὲ παρθενίῃ τε μέλοι καὶ δόμα τοκῆον). In an extreme example, recorded by Plutarch (Moralia, *De mul. virt.* 15 (251a-c)), a beautiful παρθένος is wanted as a casual mistress by Lucius, a mercenary of the despotc king of Elis; she refuses to have her παρθενία removed from her (τὴν παρθενίαν ἀφαιρεθέσαιν), even when her parents advise her to go, and clings to her father. Lucius tries to take her by force, but as she is unwilling, he tears off her clothes, whips, and finally kills the παρθένος, while she is still clinging to her father (ἀποσφάττει τὴν παρθένον, ὡς ἔτυχεν ἐν τοῖς κόλποι τοῦ πατρὸς ἔχουσα τὸ πρόσωπον).

More strongly, a maiden can become adulterated, estranged from her own nature, with the use of φθείρειν or διαφθείρειν (Plut. *Moralia Aet. Rom.* 96 (286F), Men., *Fragm.* 683.9, Eratosth. *Cat.* 1.25, Str. 5.3.2).¹⁷ Plutarch, in an anecdote about the seven hundred years of εὐταξία in Ceos (Moralia, *Virt. Mul.* 12 (249D)), makes the distinction between adultery (μοιχεία) and seduction (φθορά), the first applied to married women and the second to παρθένοι. Very much related to this idea of alteration and change is that the opposite of ending παρθενία is staying the same, or “preserving” παρθενία: φυλάσσειν (Call. *Dian.* 6, Eratosth., *Cat.* 1.25D), σῴζειν (Men., *Sic.* 370 ff.), διατηρεῖν (Eratost., *Cat.* 1.31).

The Suda lexicon (666) defines the word παρθένοι as ἄφθοροι.

¹⁷ Φθορά is also the Greek term used for miscarriage, abortion or infanticide, another form of termination of a former perceived unity, as though naturally following the destruction of παρθενία; see Hippocrates, *Mul.* 1-3, or Plutarch, *Apophthegmata Laconica* 242c (κρύφα τις διαπαρθευθεῖσα καὶ διαφθεύρασα τὸ βρέφος). The more technical or specific term used for miscarriage or abortion was ἄμβλωσις and its derivatives (Arist. *Pol.* 1335b, 7.14.10). Aristotle (*Pol.* 1335a, 7.14.4) uses διαφθεύραν to describe the women who die in childbirth. For Strabo (5.3.2) the birth of the twins reveals and, for this reason, identifies with the seduction/ corruption, φθορά, of Rhea Silvia: εἶτα φθοράν φωράσας, διδύμων αὐτῇ παῖδων γενόμενον, τὴν μὲν ἐξέλετο. The use of φθορά to mean “corruption” or “decay” becomes generalized to oppose παρθενία in Christian texts (e.g. *A.P.* 15.16).
Παρθενία is thus something which defines the female subject, and its dissolution seems to affect her intrinsic nature, and not her relation to her first lover. To put it in other words, it is not an act of dispossession but one of separating a previous tight connection. But what is this connection that παρθενία only maintains? The fact that often the παρθένος is defined negatively (ἄθικτος, ἄφθορος, ἀκήρατος, ἀλεκτρός etc.) speaks about the Greeks’ difficulty in expressing a definition of παρθενία positively.

The other crucial and counterintuitive character of the end of παρθενία is that it is not identical with the wedding or the marriage. I was not able to find a single mention of φθείρειν of παρθενία in the description of a wedding, and λύειν, when in a nuptial context (that is, referred to with the noun γάμος or its derived verb γαμεῖν), is oddly extremely rare: one instance shows up in the context of a later recollection of the dying bride (Eur. Alc. 177-181), another in Plutarch’s description of the extraordinary Spartan marital rites (Lyc. 15.3) and the others are in gods-mortals sexual relationships referred to as γάμοι (Aphrodite and Anchises in Hymns 5.164, Poseidon and Tyro in Od. 6. 245). On the contrary, verbs like διαφθείρειν or διαλύειν are used to refer to the condition of the daughter or son who has to remain unmarried and unmarriageable, to the seduction preceding (and preventing) marriage, or, in relatively

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18 Second-century A.D. Pollux defines the end of παρθενία as the removal of παρθενία from the παρθένος: τὸ δὲ τῆς παρθένου παρθενίαν ἀφέλεσθαι διακορεύσαι λέγουσιν (3.42).
19 Often scholars assume that the death-like ritual of the wedding is to be taken literally. In a poignant expression, ending a 1981 book on women in Greek myth, Lefkowitz (1981: 93) states: “As Persephone discovered when Hades carried her off to the Underworld, marriage is death.” For an opposite view, based on iconographical evidence from Athens, see Jenkins (1983).
20 The overlap between the two possible meanings (“to have sexual intercourse” or “to marry”) not only in the case of the verb, but also of the noun, is an ongoing difficulty and confusion which permeates both Greek texts and (even more so) modern scholarship. For instance, Liddell-Scott (ad loc.) defines λύειν κόλπην as the removal of the girdle by the husband after marriage and cites Od. 245 and Pi. I. 8. 45 as examples; both are nevertheless examples of unions between gods and mortals (Poseidon and Tyro, and respectively Thetis and Peleus), not the “real” Greek weddings, between mortals. The relation between the myth, the ritual and the Greek concept of marriage will be explored in more detail in this thesis; as for my use of terms I will try to give enough context each time I use γάμος and its derivatives to explain their particular meaning.
21 Euripides Alc. 316 (ἡμές ἐκ ἀκμῆς σοις διαφθαρμένη γάμος), Sophocles OT 1502 (χέρσους φθαρήσω κάγαμος ἤμας χρεών).
22 Aeschines’ Against Timarchus 182 tells the myth of a seduced daughter in the context of Solon’s laws regulating the proper conduct of women: ἀνήρ εἰς τῶν πολιτῶν, εὐρών τὴν ἐμαυτόθι πυγάταρα διεφθαρμένην, καὶ
later texts, the dissolution of the marriage union after the wedding. Because of this reason, and a number of other reasons to be discussed in the following chapters, we can infer that the pre-Christian Greeks conceptualized their monogamy as a *continuation*, a symbolic extension and preservation of παρθενία. It follows from this statement that Greek monogamy is difficult to elucidate if its preceding stage is not properly understood.

To continue our exploration of what παρθενία is, we must observe that, unsurprisingly, παρθενία is much less talked about than the παρθένοι themselves, a noticeably broader term. As remarked, a παρθένος is defined by age, marital status, gender, and asexual status *all at once*. However, while a παρθένος could never be described as an old or married woman, the asexual and the gendered elements of the concept could have been questioned. A derived adjective, παρθένιος, was used to refer to certain literary and mythical characters, children born to παρθένοι (such as Parthenopaeus by Atalanta, Asclepius by Coronis, or Ion by Creusa) and also more *historical* characters, the so-called Παρθενίαι: sons born to Spartan young women from indiscriminate sexual encounters with Spartan young soldiers during the Messenian war (Arist. Pol. 29 (1306b), Str. 6.3.2). The unknown father renders the sexual act analogously unknown and uncertain. As concerning the restriction of παρθενία to females,

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23 The first occurrences of the “dissolution” or “corruption” of marriage to mean divorce appear in the late fourth and third century B.C. (Astrampsychus Magus Oracula sections 15 and 98, Aristophanes Gramm. Fragm. 12, Dionysius of Halicarnassus 2.25), but become increasingly common in Alexandrian Judaism and then Christian texts (Josephus AJ 12.301, 15.259, 16.263, 16.265, 20.240; Clement 6.20, 9.29, 10.23; Philo De Abrahamo 98, NT Ev. Matt. 5:32, 19:9; Ev. Marc. 10:11, Ev. Luc. 12:26, 16:18, 1 Ep. Cor. 7:28). The dissolution of marriage is called λύσις or διάλυσις by Plutarch (Moralia, Quaest. Rom. 50 (276e), Sol. 20.7, Aem. 5.2, Sull. 35.2). Also see Achilles Tatius (8.10.12).

24 Aristotle, Fragm. 8.45.611 ὅτε δὲ Λακεδαιμόνιοι Μεσσηνίους ἐπολέμουν, γυναίκες ἀπόντων τούτων παιδάς τινὰς ἐγέννησαν, οὓς ἐν ἱππαρχίᾳ εἶχον οἱ πατέρες ὡς οὐκ ὄντας αὐτῶν καὶ παρθενίους ἐκάλουν. οἱ δ’ ἠγανάκτουν. Dio Chrysostomus (7.140-152) discusses the Spartan illegitimate children in the moralizing context of women’s deceitful use of myth to cover their lack of chastity. Pollux (3.21) identifies the son of a παρθένος with a νόθος, whose conception and birth happened secretly, “in the dark”: παρθενίας δ’ ὅτι τὰς τῆς δοκούσης εἶναι παρθένου, οὐ νόμοι συνοικήσας, ἐποίησατο, καὶ σκότιος ὃν ἐγέννησέ τις λαθὼν ἢ ἔτεκε τις λαθοῦσα.
Greek literature has a few male heroes who under extraordinary conditions become “maidenly.” For example, Hippolytus (already with a virginal name) calls himself παρθένος in Euripides’ *Hippolytus* 1006, while Clitophon, the main hero of Achilles Tatius’ novel, wonders (in disbelief) if he could call himself a παρθένος on account of his sexual abstinence; on the other hand, Callirhoe’s first lover, Chaereas, is called παρθένιος just by virtue of being his bride’s first lover (Chariton 6.1.4). The paradoxical nature of these statements springs from the fact that often a παρθένος is defined as antithetical to *men*, or having no experience of *men*: ἀπείρανδρος, ἀπειρος ἀνδρός (Men. Sic. 373), ἀνανδρος.²⁶

Apparently, these particularly vulnerable meanings of παρθένος, related to the specifically feminine gender and to the lack of sexual activity, are also those which made it stand apart from the otherwise synonymous age words κόρη and παῖς. While κόρη and κορεία are occasionally used to mean “virgin” and “virginity” particularly on account of the figure of Persephone/Core and her mysteries (Κόρεια), the fact that κόρη has a male equivalent, κοῦρος, made it closer to the gender neutral παῖς. The apparently corresponding male words for παρθένος are ἔφηβος and ἥθεος; while the former is an age word, indicating puberty and the appearance of sexual secondary characteristics, ἥθεος seems to have been the original male counterpart for παρθένος (Il. 22.127, Sapph. 20aV, Hdt. 3.48). Plato (*Laws* 877e) uses ἥθεος as opposed to the married man (γεγαμηκότα); regardless of the Greek ambivalence of the verb γαμεῖν, the context here is undoubtedly social, rather than sexual.

Furthermore, as has been observed, παρθένος is strongly associated with pre-marriage, anticipation of marriage – more so than all the other age terms defining adolescent girls (for

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²⁵ Again, the Christian use is particularly distinct. St. John Chrysostom (Περὶ παρθενίας) and St. Basil of Caesarea (Ωμυλία περὶ παρθενίας), writing in the fourth century A.D., freely expand παρθενία to men. For more on male παρθενία in Christianity and the novels, see Ramelli (2007).
²⁶ To highlight the contradictory nature of παρθένος when applied to men, the sexually experienced woman was also called ἱνδρωμένη or ἀνδρὶ μεμημένη (e.g. Pollux 2.18). Even more, Aeschylus (Prom. vinc. 898) had described παρθενία as ἀστεργάνορα.
which an unmarried status is also implied). In Sissa’s words (1987: 101), a παρθένος is both expecting and rejecting marriage. To reformulate, a παρθένος is not merely what she is, but has a certain disposition (shall we call it agency?) towards her not-yet-sexual status; this disposition can be mimicked (by a man, for instance) and in this way can move from biological to symbolic.

0.5 Παρθένια as intention and expression of intention

If we look back at the mythological models for παρθένια, the goddesses who escape Aphrodite are also actively pursuing other activities while rejecting Eros; to put it differently, their affirmed negation of Eros is equated with their particular spheres of activity: Athena weaves or wages war because she is not interested in Eros or as a displacement of her eroticism. The difficulty consists in the fact that παρθένοι are defined as intending to escape Eros, even when they might experience an unexplained, usually god-induced, desire for marriage (as in Nausicaa’s case). This intention can be directly expressed in language or quietly affirmed in other kind of activities, such as weaving, staying indoors when in a social community, or hunting in the wild outside society. Anscombe (1957: 5-9) distinguishes between the verbal expression of an intention (“a description of something future in which the speaker is some sort of agent”) and its internal, mind process, which can be fulfilled in action or can remain “a purely interior thing.” For instance, in the Homeric Hymn to Hermes, Hermes thinks about crafting the lyre, and crafts it right away, according to his plan; afterwards, he puts down the lyre, and, since he craves meat, conceives a plan to acquire it. The world of the mind, the abode of all wishes in their process to become intentions which in turn develop into actions.

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27 See, for example, Pollux 2.18: ἐρεῖς δὲ παρθένος ὥραία γάμου.
and visible reality, or, in other words, the very core of creativity and inventiveness is, in Greek, the φρένες (Hymns 4. 63, 66): καὶ τὰ μὲν οὖν ἦσε ὑπείρᾳ, τὰ δὲ φρέσιν ἄλλα μενοῦνα.

In the description of the three virgin goddesses which opens the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite, the rejection of Aphrodite is connected, in the case of Artemis and Athena, with their other likings: Athena prefers to the ἔργα of Aphrodite, a euphemism for sexual intercourse, the ἔργον of Ares, and the ἔργα of textile workmanship, which she teaches the young maidens inside the houses’ hallways: ἡ δὲ τε παρθενικὰς ἀπαλόχρους ἐν μεγάρουσιν/ ἀγλαὰ ἔργ’ ἐδίδαξεν ἐπὶ φρεσὶ θεῖσα ἐκάστη (Hymns 5. 14-15). The ἔργα which replace the sexual act are both actions and their creative results; these ἔργα stem naturally from this particular mindset of sexual renunciation. Similarly, Artemis’ rejection of Aphrodite is the pleasure (τῆι ἄδε) that she takes in “archery, hunting animals in the mountains, lyres, dances, piercing yells, shady groves and cities of righteous men.” (Hymns 5. 18-20). It is only Hestia, the last one, who touches her older brother’s head, and swears, in a verbal expression of intention, to retain eternal παρθενία (26-28 ὠμοσε δὲ μέγαν ὑρκον,... παρθένος ἔσσεσθαι πάντ’ ἡματα), after verbally rejecting Poseidon and Apollo (25 ἡ δὲ μαλ’ οὐκ ἔθελεν, ἀλλὰ στερεὸς ἀπέειπεν). The narrator of the Homeric Hymn is careful to add that the oath has been indeed fulfilled (26 ὃ δὴ τετελεσμένος ἐστίν). In an already mentioned passage of Callimachus’ Hymn to Artemis (3.6 and ff.), Artemis, as still a child sitting on her father’s knees, asks him to grant her eternal παρθενία and verbally states her wish of preserving παρθενία, while mentally creating her image of a future self, as dressed in a knee-long chiton, with quiver and arrows crafted by the Cyclopes, accompanied by sixty daughters of Oceanus for her choir, all nine-year old girls, not yet girdled (14 ἀμίτρους), and eleven nymphs, hunting in the mountains and only coming to the town to help women in childbirth. According to Euripides (Tr. 980), Athena too asks her father for παρθενία (παρθένειαν πατρός ἐξητήσατο φεύγουσα λέκτρα).
Thus, a goddess’ παρθενία overlaps with the (verbal or non-verbal) expression of intent to maintain this παρθενία, whereas Zeus is only the guarantor of the realization of a wish that he merely acquiesces and consents to, without calling for an explanation. The realization of this wish falls and depends on the assent of the male κύριος. The intent of the παρθένος to continue and not interrupt her παρθενία precedes and is not identical with Zeus’ nodding to it. Moreover, the emphasis on the necessity of Zeus to accept and fulfill the extraordinary sexual status of the three goddesses makes their desire to preserve παρθενία even more an act of the mind. In this sense, Zeus is indeed τέλειος, the one who knows the future and accomplishes it. However, the intention of a παρθένος desired by Zeus can run into conflict with Zeus’ own intention: in Apollonius’ Argonautica (2.945-948), the poet tells the myth of Sinope, a nymph chased by Zeus, the one whom no mortal παρθένος can resist. Sinope escapes Zeus by asking him to swear first that he would accomplish her wish/ intention (δωσέμεναι, ὅ κεν ἦστι μετὰ φρεσίν ἱλόσειν); hard-pressed by desire, he consents, but Sinope cunningly asks for παρθενία. The myth of Cassandra also illustrates this dichotomy between mind and action: because she does not express her true intention (naturally, of staying a παρθένος) to Apollo, her punishment is to predict while completely helpless, with no control over the actions and events.

Zeus’ generosity towards these special goddesses is underscored by the different treatment of Persephone, who (while not asking for eternal παρθενία) is abducted by Hades without her consent but with her father’s consent. The intentional character of a παρθένος’ attachment to her own παρθενία and her refusal of change is noticeable again in the distinctly Greek myths of abduction of maidens or nymphs: this motif is particularly common in early Greek vase-paintings in which young women, identified as παρθένοι (Sourvinou-Inwood 1991,

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28 Hera, as bride and wife, is also invoked as τέλεια, an attribute refused to any of the virgin goddesses.
Ferrari 2002), flee from their erotic pursuers, illustrating the typical reluctance of παρθένοι to relinquish their sexual status.

At the other end of Greek literature and myth, the Greek novels can be defined as literary explorations of this hard-to-understand desire of young maidens to retain, unchanged, their sexual status. The authors of these novels try hard to negate any external pressure for the heroines’ resolve: their settings are usually outside societal or parental influence, among robbers, brothels, and exotic non-Greek places. The questions with which the authors of the Greeks novels implicitly engage deal with the reasons for preserving παρθενία: Are these women simply not experiencing sexual desire? What do they need to change their mind? What is a man to do in this case? Or are they withholding sex to manipulate their partners into marriage? But why would they need marriage, disconnected as they are from civilized society and especially from their parents and birth family? What is marriage under these conditions then?

These unstated questions underlie the Greek concept of παρθενία. More than being just a description of a sexually intact body, παρθενία describes an attachment to this state and a willingness to not change it. As such, the concept covers an intention more than a biological reality, a mental attitude that matches the bodily state. This intention is rendered in the Greek texts sometimes with fairly strong language: a maiden can prefer, cherish, desire, esteem παρθενία, and in a recurrent motif she would rather commit suicide rather than renounce it.

Quite a few epigrams in Anthologia Palatina describe suicides of virgins (e.g. 7.491, 7.492, 7.493, 9.444). Plutarch (Moralia, De mul. virt. 15.251) recounts the stories of Micca and Megisto, in which several παρθένοι choose to commit suicide instead of being coerced into unmarried sexual intercourse and slavery. The great tragic heroines who hang themselves for various reasons are essentially rebelling against marriage/sexual intercourse, by closing
their bodies and avoiding bleeding (Loraux 1985, Sissa 1987, King 1993); or, to put it positively, they are staying loyal to their παρθενία. Parthenius 26 offers two versions of Apriate’s death, one in which Trambelus, maddened by her rejection, throws her off the Lesbian cliffs, and a second one in which Apriate herself prefers death to sexual intercourse. In another story recounted by Plutarch (Moralia, De mul. virt. 9, 249b-d), the παρθένοι of Miletus are overcome by an unexplainable desire for death (ἐκ δὴ τινος αἰτίας ἀδήλου... ἡξαίφνης ἐπιθυμία θανάτου), and they hang themselves in large numbers, eschewing the control of their family. The only way they could be persuaded to stop killing themselves was the threat to be undressed in public view after death. In this story, death by hanging and preservation of παρθενία are opposed to the unclothing, separation of clothes from the body, which is, as shown above, the end of παρθενία. To reformulate, death and the end of παρθενία are not the same thing. This statement on its own indicates a need to reread the death ritual associated with Greek marriage (Dowden 1989, Rehm 1994) according to a more complex paradigm. What the cessation of self-inflicted death reveals to us about the παρθένοι of Miletus is that they were inexplicably but irresistibly longing for παρθενία.

To return to a παρθένος’ relation to her own παρθενία, Plato’s Cratylus (406b) links Artemis’ name with the adjective τὸ ἄρτεμές, which Plato explains further through her (almost erotic) desire for παρθενία (διὰ τὴν τῆς παρθενίας ἐπιθυμίαν). Furthermore, a similar kind of yearning can be experienced by nostalgic older women, who are technically not παρθένοι anymore, but who sympathize with their younger selves or with παρθένοι with whom they identify (such as the emotions expressed in the New Sappho fragments). Sappho 114V, already quoted, is famously the abridged expression of such an inexplicable longing. In a more intense manner, Procne and Deianeira recall their days of youth in their father’s house in Sophocles’ Tereus (583) and Trachiniae (6-8). Procne’s line is remarkable: αἳ νέαι μὲν ἐν πατρός/
In another version of the myth of Tereus, Aeschylus (Suppl. 60-67) has Metis, Tereus’ wife, lament over her child’s death, while the author of A.P. 9.57 imagines Philomela hopelessly yearning for her lost παρθενία: ἥ τοι παρθενίας πόθος ἐκεῖ, τὰν τοι ἄπηρα/ Ὁρηκιος Τηρεῦς αἶνα βησάμενος; Even when the παρθενία is irretrievably gone, a woman still (and dismally) yearns for it.

As opposed to the nostalgic older women, the complicated and perplexing nature of this desire and intention, as professed by παρθένοι, is that, despite being an act of will, it is not a choice. While choice presupposes the knowledge of the two or more paths of action available, the παρθένος, as oblivious of both male sexuality and her own sexuality in relation to a male, is not in the position to make the choice of having sex or marrying. In between the two given options, to have sex or not to have sex, she can “choose” (or more correctly, she can actively will) the only option that is known to her: staying the same. For this reason, the παρθένος must be pursued, abducted or tricked by the deceiving appearance of her lover.29 Greek myth picks up on this mental and cognitive status of children, more generally, and young women, specifically sexually: that one cannot truly want what one does not know.

The advantages of defining παρθενία through intent and its limiting factors are numerous. First, we avoid the strictly biological description of virginity, which was both impossible to determine (e.g. Dio of Prusa 7.142) and, more importantly, was not a concern in the ancient Greek texts.30 By limiting παρθενία to sexual virginity, we run the risk of fetishizing the concept, as always happens with elements taken out of their natural context and

29 In the same way should be understood the traditional reluctance to marry of παρθένοι. Plutarch (Moralia, Quaest. Rom. 105, (289a)) speculates on why among the Romans the παρθένοι do not marry on public holidays, as opposed to older women and quotes Varro: πότερον, ὡς ὁ Βάρρων εἴρηκεν, ὅτι λυπούμεναι μὲν αἱ παρθένοι γαμοῦνται, χαίρομεν δ’αἱ γυναῖκες, ἐκρῆ δὲ δὲ τι μὴν ὑπομεῖνοντος ποιεῖν μὴ δὲ πρὸς ἄντοχην;
30 Llewellyn-Jones (2003: 236-240), following Hanson (1990), argues that the wedding veil represented symbolically the hymen, which, according to him, constituted an important element in identifying genuine virginity in common practice in the Ancient World. With Sissa (1987 and 1990), I consider the pre-Christian, Greek evidence regarding any cultural significance placed on the intact hymen insufficient.
imbued with more than their particular meaning is capable of containing. On the other hand, by completely extricating it from bodily virginity, we run the risk of alienating the concept completely; for a number of complex reasons, in Greek perception bodily virginity correlates with a particular cognitive and linguistic mode, best described by “myth” and “literature.” The fact that the Greeks did not fetishize παρθενία, by narrowing it down to what we call physical virginity, is something I hope will result from this thesis and depends on whether we can eventually substantiate the claim that in Greek literature παρθενία distillates a particular kind of mental processing and a creative endeavour.

Secondly, as we have already seen in the description of the virgin goddesses in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, looking at παρθενία as a (positive) expression of an intention opens up the range of behaviours underlying the concept. Instead of merely and negatively rejecting sexual advances (as expressed by negative terms such as ἄλεκτρος, or ἄνανδρος), παρθενία covers the larger repertoire of actions which directly or indirectly, purposefully or accidentally result in a girl’s *continuation* of her unmarried, not sexual, status. Among these rather positive attributes or actions, which will be explored in more detail in this thesis, are the particular relation of the παρθένοι to their garments, their display of αἰδώς, and the specific use of language, which underscores imagined representations of utopia and immortality, as expressions of liberty from the constraint of either a signifier or a referent.

0.6 Cognitive aspects of παρθενία

In a paradoxical way, παρθενία is marked by both ignorance and creativity. Sophocles’ Procne explains her joyful life spent at her father’s house on account of a lack of understanding: τερπνῶς γὰρ ἀεὶ παῖδας ἀνοίᾳ τρέφει (Tereus 583, 5 “for ignorance always nourishes children
in their joy”). Subsequently, the age of understanding brings estrangement from one’s paternal gods and from the parents through a selling act, which alienates women:

弇αν δ’ ἐς ἣβην ἐξικώμεθ’ ἐμφρονες, ὤθούμεθ’ ἐξω καὶ διεμπολώμεθα θεῶν πατρίπων τῶν τε φυσάντων ἀπό, αἱ μὲν ξένους πρὸς ἰδρας, αἱ δὲ βαρβάρους, αἱ δ’ εἰς ἀγηθὴ δόμαθ’, αἱ δ’ ἐπίρροθα. (Tereus 583, 6-10)

But when we arrive at maturity and begin to understand, we are pushed out and sold away from our paternal gods and from the ones who begot us, some to foreign husbands, some to barbarians, some to joyless homes, and some to homes full of fault-finding.

Once women lose this sense of connection, they become separate and, therefore, “nothing:”

νῦν δ’ οὐδέν εἰμι χορίς· ἄλλα πολλάκις ἐβλέψα ταύτῃ τὴν γυναικείαν φύσιν, ὡς οὐδέν ἔσμεν. (Tereus 583, 1-3)

And now, being apart, I am nothing; but many times I regarded the womanly nature in this way, that we are nothing.

For Procris, happiness consists in not experiencing foreignness. Sophocles repeats this assertion in fr. 584: πολλὰ σε ξηλῶ βίου/ μάλιστα δ’ εἰ γῆς μὴ πεπείρασαι ξένης (“I envy you for many parts of your life, but most of all if you have no experience of a foreign land”). Deianeira describes the παρθένος’ life in gardening terms: the παρθένος is like a tender plant, sheltered from rain or wind, and living a life free of trouble, amid pleasures (Trach. 147 ἡ δονᾶς ἀμοχθὸν ἐξάφει βίον, “[the young woman] uplifts her untroubled life amid pleasures”). This comparison recalls Hesiod’s depiction (Op. 518-424) of the delicate-skinned παρθένος31 not beaten by the violent winds which an old man has to endure (ἵς ἀνέμου

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31 Hesiod’s insistence on the delicate skin of the παρθένος in this passage should be read in contrast with the previously mentioned use of wool by sheep to keep the cold wind away (Op. 516-518). The παρθένος has the house instead of wool as protection. On the similarities between παρθένοι and sheep based on the presence or absence of wool, see below the chapter on Longus, 5.3 (149-150).
Βορέω... διὰ παρθενικῆς ἀπαλόχρους οὐ διώσοιν), who spends her time anointing her body and lying down in the innermost part of the house (δόμων ἐντόσθε... μυχή καταλέξεται ἔνδοθι οἶκου), abiding by her mother, in her ignorance of Aphrodite’s works (φίλη παρὰ μητέρι μίμνει/ οὐ πο ἔργ’ εἰδοίᾳ πολυχρῶσου Αφροδίτης). Although Sophocles does not explicitly call this age stage “ignorant,” he opposes it to the thoughts (φροντίδων) and knowledge (εἰσίδοιτο and σκοπῶν) of married women, γυναῖκες:

ἐς τοῦθ’ ἐως τις ἀντὶ παρθένου γυνὴ
κληθή λάβη τ’ ἐν νυκτὶ φροντίδων μέρος,
ήτοι πρὸς ἄνδρος ἢ τέκνων φοβουμένη.
τότ’ ἄν τις εἰσίδοιτο, τὴν αὐτοῦ σκοπῶν
πρᾶξέν, κακοίσιν οἷς ἐγὼ βαρύνομαι. (Trach. 148-152)

This happens until she is called a woman rather than a maiden and receives at night her share of worries, fearing whether for her husband or for her children. Only then could she see, looking at her own doing, what evils I am burdened with.

In one of Bacchylides’ versions of the myth (fr. 20A P. Oxy 1361), Deianeira is called “ignorant” (νήδα) just before crossing the river and encountering the centaur Nessus. Because the text is fragmentary, we cannot recover an object for νήδα, but in Dithyramb 16. 31-35 Bacchylides bemoans the veil that made her unable to see the future when she accepted the gift from Nessus: φθόνος εὐρυβίας νιν ἀπόλεσεν,/ δόμε στην τὸν/ ὀστερον ἐρχομένων./ ὧτ’ ἐπὶ [ποταμῶι] ῥοδότει Λυκόρμα/ δέξατο Νέσσου πάρα δαμόνιον τέρας (“wide-violent jealousy lost her, together with the dark veil covering the events to come, when from Nessus she received, at the rosy river Lycormas, the monstrous marvel”). Here the veil, κάλυμμα, is at the same time the bridal veil, as Deianeira is still a νύφα, in transition and before consummation, and the veil that covers and conceals the future.

The motif of the naïve παρθένος shows up, in a more humorous tone, in the anecdotes about easily deceived παρθένου (the already mentioned Aeschines, Epist. 10.6.7, and Vita Aesopi 131) or in Longus’ simple-minded Chloe, who might make a shepherd a man for an
apple or a rose (Longus 3.25). The question remains: how are we to reconcile this blissful (as in Sophocles) or not-so-blissful (as in *Vita Aesopi*) “sexual ignorance,” with the insistence, in Greek myth, on the intricate mental facilities of Athena or the Muses or even on the outstanding prophetic abilities associated with παρθένοι?

A way of answering this question will be to look into the *kind* of creativity παρθένοι, mortal or goddesses, exhibit. First, they spin, weave and shield their bodies completely in πέπλοι. These clothes seem to attach to their bodies, grow as an extension and an expression of them, not to be taken apart, in contrast to the future bride’s (however temporary) removal of the veil, and in contrast to the untying of the ζώνη referred to in non-nuptial settings. Moreover, these clothes underscore a continuum between making and being. As opposed to Aphrodite’s ἔργα, the ἀγλαὰ ἔργα (*Hymns* 5.11) of Athena have no τέλος, they continue to be generated so long as they stay in one’s mind. Athena is born covered in her aegis and impregnable armor; every year she requests a new robe for her Athenian cult. Hestia lives forever covered, hidden by the walls of the house, as opposed to or as a substitute for, marrying (καλὸν γέρας ἀντὶ γάμου/... μέσῳ οἴκῳ κατ’ ἄρ’ ἐξετο *Hymns* 5. 29-30). This intimate connection between clothes and their bodies is also an expression of the maidenly

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32 On the Pythia or Cassandra and how their παρθένια interacts with their prophetic capability, see Sissa (1987).
33 Τέλος is the natural completion of the sexual act, performed by the man (*Od*. 11.246 ἐτέλεσε θεὸς φιλοτήσια ἔργα about Poseidon), and socially the consummation of marriage. Of course, the model of Zeus as the one in charge of “accomplishing” future events which can only be guessed at by mortals is connected to this figure of the omnipotent Zeus (e.g. *Tereus* 590: πλὴν Διὸς οὐδείς τῶν μελλόντων/ ταμίας ὃ τὸ χρῆ τετελέσθαι).
34 Staying indoors can be compared to wearing garments as the descriptive (and normative) feature of girls and married women. For this reason, staying indoors and wearing womanly garments were equally shameful when performed by men. After the wedding’s unveiling, ἀνακαλυπτῆρια, the now γυνὴ goes back to wearing her veil, this time in a more loose connection to her body, as a symbolic salvation of her παρθένια; for this reason Hera has a similar ritual of dressing as bride again, every year, in Samos, and Andromache sheds her wedding veil at the news of Hector’s death, which she had worn since the day Hector had led her out of her father’s house (*Il*. 22.471-472). The understanding of Greek monogamy as symbolic preservation of παρθένια and of the perceived *continuity* between the two statuses will be discussed in more detail in the chapters on Sappho and Aeschylus. On the social reality of παρθένοι and married women living indoors, see Cohen 1989.
αἰδώς (αἰδοίη is an epithet mainly applied to παρθένοι, e.g. *Hymns* 5.21).³⁵ Clothes do not function as disguises, or merely concealments for the body: when taken off, they do not reveal, but break an organic unity between body and clothing. If they hide the body, this is an incidental result, and not their purpose and main function.³⁶

Secondly, in a symbolic system parallel to the creation of textiles, παρθένοι are associated with the creation of *new* and *non-referential* language. In this sense, the Muses, daughters of Zeus, are originators of poetry, as repeatedly underscored in Homer or the *Homerian Hymns*, when the Muse begins the *new*, never-heard-before song: ἥδωπεξίς κοὐραι Κρονίδεω Διός, ἱστορες ὀιδής (*Hymns* 32.2). According to Simonides, the Muses bore Hesiod and the Graces Homer.³⁷ Memory, wishes, dreams, hopes are all mental processes that involve mental visualization, which can be turned into semiotic systems by converting them to words, music, dance, or garments. Bacchylides invokes the Muse in *Dithyramb* 19 to weave a new song (Ўφαινε ... τι κανόν), as for the poet who receives the gifts of the Muses and of the Graces, innumerable paths of poetry stay open (πάρεστι μυρία κέλευθος/ ἀμβροσίων μελέων/ ὃς ἂν παρὰ Πιειρίδον λα/ χισε δόρα Μουσᾶ/ ἱοβλέφαροι τε κόραι/ φερεστέφανοι Χάριτες). In Creusa’s words to Ion, her weaving work as a παρθένος was imperfect (ⲟὐ τέλεον Eur. *Ion* 1419), but miraculously caused the recognition between her and her son many years later. The weaving work (*Ion* 1425 ἵστον παρθένευμα) is identified with what it has been used to cover, shelter, and conceal: the fatherless baby (*Ion* 1472 νόθον με παρθένευμι ἐτικτε σόν;). The first symbolic finite work bears such an intimate connection with its creator that the resulting

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³⁵ Αἰδώς can be defined as a παρθένος’ defense and evasion against simplifying sight, a kind of “shame” distinct from the external “shaming” language, as shown by Fisher (1992) and Cairns (1996). The two different kinds of shame might reflect the “female and the male conceptions of virginity” discussed by Bal (1987, see n. 1).

³⁶ In vase-paintings, since their earliest representation, παρθένοι (κόραι) are clothed, but their clothes are either intricately exquisite or often transparent to a degree, revealing the shape of the body underneath. More on see-through clothes in art and literature below, at 6.2 (esp. 187-191).

“work” is never truly independent and separate from its creator. The gap between empirical reality and the symbolic is based on the mental ability to believe that there are invisible, imperceptible stitches connecting φύσις and νόμος. It is this belief that supports Artemis’ ability to separate babies from their mothers safely, and guard them through the hard-to-comprehend-and-predict changes of growth.\(^{38}\) It is this belief again which makes the development from sexual immaturity to sexual maturity possible: a form of solidarity between adults and children that underlies Greek education.

In this sense, within the semiotic system, παρθενία is the act of belief in a hidden connection between the signifier and the signified or referent; in myth and poetry the signified and the referent are “very close,” in the sense that they are as non-referential as possible. This act of belief supports signification and communication, despite running against the “arbitrary” nature of the sign, or its dependence on social convention, νόμος.

If we define the symbol as the visible object that stands for something invisible\(^{39}\), the pre-symbolic is the mere belief that the two are somehow connected, and that, because a congruence between them can exist, true utterances and true expression of self are possible; without this belief, signification (either creation or understanding of symbols) is not possible. To put it simply, in order to understand something, one first needs to trust that understanding is possible at all.

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\(^{38}\) Nymphs or the two virgin goddesses Athena and Artemis are regularly presented as assisting children’s growth. The similar role of the non-virgin Demeter in the case of Demophon (Hymns 2, 213-291) is an exception that seems to endorse this pattern, as this episode takes place during her search for Persephone. When looking for her daughter, Demeter looks for her own παρθενία, represented by the encounter with the maidens at the fountain and her decision to raise Metaneira’s infant.

\(^{39}\) This definition includes language. Horace’s famous ut pictura poesis has a Greek source; in the testimonia of Simonides, collected by Campbell (1991:362), both poetry and the words themselves are “images” of reality: ὁ Σιμωνίδης τὴν μὲν ζωγραφίαν ποιήσαν σωματίζασθαι προσαγόρει, τὴν δὲ ποιήσαν ζωγραφίαν λαλοῦσαν (Plutarch, de glor. Ath. 3.346), κατὰ τὸν Σιμωνίδην ὁ λόγος τῶν πραγμάτων εἰκόνεσσιν. (Michael Psellus P.G. CXXII 821).
If παρθενία is inherent in any act of signification, and the symbolic is not opposed to the pre-symbolic, but is rather its necessary continuation, how are we to understand then the presumed ignorance of the παρθένοι? If we read the anecdotes in the Life of Aesop and in Aeschines’ Letters again, we might find that the jest comes at the expense of the man: in both cases, the παρθένοι fail to see the defloration as defloration. They interpret the sexual act as being whatever they are told to believe it is: either receiving νοῦς or offering παρθενία. In this sense, they fail to be seduced, in the same way that Simonides had failed to deceive the Thessalians, in Plutarch’s story, because they were too unlearned to be deceived.\(^{40}\)

Therefore, if παρθενία is the predisposition and openness to signification, the opposite of it would be the loss of hope in the possibility of uttering statements that can say anything at all about reality or communicate one’s mind. Persephone does not lose hope of returning to her mother for as long as she can still see the earth, the sky, the sea, and the light of the sun; in turn, the mountains and the sea can indeed echo her voice, which almost nobody of the mortals and immortals can hear:

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\text{όφρα μὲν οὖν γαῖαν τε καὶ οὐρανὸν ἀστερόεντα λέεσσε θεὰ καὶ πόντον ἁγάρρουν ἰχθυόεντα αὐγάς τ’ ἰδέλιον, ἐπὶ δ’ ἑλπετο μητέρα κεδνήν ὄψεσθαι καὶ φύλα θεῶν αἰειγενετάον, τόφρα οἱ ἐλπὶς ἔθελεν μέγαν νόον ἀχυμενής περ. ἤχησαν δ’ ὄρεον κορυφαί καὶ βένθα πόντου φωνήν ὑπ’ ἀθανάτη. τῆς δ’ ἐκλνε πότνια μήτηρ. (Hymns 2.33-39)}
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So long as the goddess could see the earth and the starry sky and the strong-flowing sea filled with fish and the rays of the sun, and still hoped to see her noble mother and the families of forever-living gods, so long hope comforted her great mind, although in distress. The peaks of the mountains and the deep of the sea echoed with her immortal voice; and her lady mother heard it.

Hope, located in Persephone’s mind, is brought forth in her voice, φωνὴ, which pierces the beautiful world that she is still able to see; this vehicle of hope reaches her mother

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\(^{40}\) De aud. poet. 1.29 (15C): ‘τί δὴ μόνον οὖκ ἐξαπατᾷς Θεσσαλώς;’ ἀμαθέστεροι γὰρ εἰσιν ἢ ἢς ὡς ὢς ἢ π’ ἐμοὶ ἐξαπατάθηκαί.’
Demeter, who will begin her journey of recovering this unrealized virginal hope. The same Ἐλπίς is what stays in Pandora’s πίθος: a similarly barely perceptible reality, hidden and suppressed, as opposed to the countless kinds of evils which roam freely, both in plain view and in the dark (Hesiod, Op. 94-105). Structurally, the jar as a “house” for Hope (Ἐλπίς ἐν ἀρρήκτοις δόμοισι ἐνδον ἐμμίνε... οὐδεὶς θύραξε ἔξεπτη, “Hope remained inside the unbroken walls… and did not fly away, out of its doors”) resembles the παρθένος sheltered deep inside the house described by Hesiod in his representation of the ravages of winter and cold weather (Op. 520-524). Because the jar was described as full of evils from the beginning, scholars often tend to give a neutral (if not negative) meaning to Ἐλπίς to fit its context; most recently, Most (2006: 95) translates it as “anticipation” and glosses it: “often translated ‘Hope’; but the Greek word can mean anticipation of bad as well as good things.” Contrariwise, in West’s opinion (1978: 169-172), unqualified Ἐλπίς naturally has the sense of (expectant) Hope; indeed, when Ἐλπίς is either deceiving or fruitless this fact is explicitly conveyed with epithets (Hes. Op. 500). In support of West’s view, I would add that ἐλπίς is often\footnote{Theognis (1.1135) defines ἐλπίς as the last good thing to remain after all the other have abandoned humans: ἐλπίς ἐν ἀνθρώποις μόνη θεός ἔσθη ἐνεστιν/ ἄλλοι δ’Οὐλίμποιν ἐκπολισότες ἔβαν.} associated with negative contexts and set in contrast to them. This trustworthy openness towards an unknown future can be meager\footnote{Aeschylus, fragm. 145.23 and 99.22: λεπτὴ γὰρ ἐλπίς, and in a comic context (Arist. Eq. 1244 λεπτή τις ἐλπίς).} and easy to overlook or take for granted, but it remains nonetheless indispensable in defining humanity.\footnote{Plato (Rep. 1.331A) quoting Pindar (fragm. 214): Ἐλπίς, ὧ μᾶλλον θνατῶν πολύστροφον γνώ-μαν κυβερνᾷ.} I would add to that that it is also indispensable for understanding the Greek notion of παρθένια, as it stands at its core. Female virginity is not a mere belief in a yet-invisible reality which is about to become real and palpable, but an active hope and verbalized desire (in prayers) to make the yet-not-here present, the invisible visible. Fisher (2013) assimilates the creation and dressing up of Pandora in Hesiod’s passage with the distinctly young females’ preoccupation with dolls, always representing mature women, in
Antiquity. If the doll is a girl’s image of her future self, and the surrendering of dolls to Artemis before achieving maturity acknowledges the girl’s growth into the woman represented by the doll, Pandora embodies the married virgin: she is both the expectation of full growth inherent in the παρθένος and the full realization of that expectation, a γυνὴ.

0.7 Παρθενία: virginity or maidenhood?

I hope that this introduction has offered enough support for the necessity of more scholarly work to achieve a better understanding of Greek παρθενία and that it has also defamiliarized the term sufficiently to make room for a somewhat alien concept. These things being said, after this introduction I will translate παρθένος by “maiden,” “girl,” “young woman” and “virgin,” and παρθενία by “maidenhood” and “virginity.” At first sight, choosing an English translation for a unique (not to mention pre-Christian) Greek concept may seem contradictory. Nonetheless, making παρθενία completely alien to us is an unnecessarily severe precaution, and does not lead to a better understanding of the concept, as opposed to using English terms and refining them through additional elucidations.

While both “maiden” and “virgin” overlap in the English dictionary (Merriam-Webster’s, 2003), in usage there is a clear emphasis on the social in the former term, and a parallel emphasis on the sexual/biological in the latter term. While reading παρθενία as either exclusively social or exclusively sexual is wrong because it projects on to them our own distinctions between the social and sexual spheres, moreover, such a partial reading fails to grasp the core meaning of the Greek concept: παρθενία is precisely the ability to “weave” a connecting bridge between the two categories of biological and social.
PART ONE: Virginity in Early Greek Poetry

1 Homer: Nausicaa on the shore of Scheria

1.1 Nausicaa’s παρθενία and the friendliness of the Phaeacians

The scholarly literature on the Phaeacian episode in the Odyssey has been largely divided on the ambiguous attitude of the Phaeacians towards the hero: this controversy can be read in its clearest terms in Rose (1969), who countered the assumption that Phaeacian hospitality is to be read as simply benign, and de Vries (1977) who, while agreeing with some of Rose’s main points, nonetheless considered Alcinous and his family rather “courteous” to their “distrustful” guest. More recent scholarship has translated this disagreement over the role of the Phaeacians into a radical antagonism concerning the direction of sexual violence in the Nausicaa episode: for Gutglueck (1988), this “detestable encounter” threatens Odysseus’ exposed and vulnerable masculinity, while at the other extreme, Karakantza (2003) claims it divulges an unstated but assumed cultural ideology of justified violence against women.

The scholarly consensus seems to be a feeling of disappointment about this episode in which expectations of a different outcome, Odysseus’ marriage to Nausicaa, are built up but

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44 Notable examples of this position are Segal (1962: 22) for whom Odysseus’ “return to the Phaeacians is thus a major step in the return to humanity, for different as their way of life is from Ithaca, it is still recognizably human” or, recently, Dougherty (2001: 126) who contrasts Odysseus’ experience of the Phaeacians with the Cyclopes: “the theme that dominates the poem’s contrast between the savage, primitive Cyclopes and their extremely genteel counterparts, the Phaeacians, is that of hospitality.” The controversy can be traced back to Antiquity: Dio Chrysostom (Or. 7.90) stresses the humanity of the Phaeacians against their detractors: περὶ τῶν Φαιάκων καὶ τῆς ἑκείνου ψυλληθρωσίας, εἰ τῷ δοκοῦσιν οὖν τῷ ἀγθόννας οὐδ’ ἀναξίως τοῦ πλούτου προσενεχθῆναι τῷ Ὀδυσσαῖ, μετ’ οίας μάλιστα διανοίας καὶ δι’ ἄς αἰτίας προντισμέναι ἀφθόνος καὶ μεγαλοπρεπῶς χαρίζοντα.

45 A similar view, albeit milder, is expressed by Gross (1976). Gross finds Rose’s article convincing and complements it, by considering the role played by Nausicaa’s feelings of attraction to Odysseus within this “inimical setting.” For Peek (2003) the Phaeacians show a specific case of unfriendliness: they are reluctant to give gifts and need to be coerced by Odysseus and Athena into the proper expression of ξενία, gift giving. In this sense, they are very much like the Suitors, whom Penelope shrewdly convinces to present their gifts (Peek 2003: 339).
are not fulfilled. Already in the Hellenistic period, Aristarchus attempted to athetize the insinuations of an imminent wedding at the court of the Phaeacians as incongruent with the development of the story.\textsuperscript{46} Woodhouse (1930) upheld the theory that the Homeric poem exploited (but failed to fully integrate) a common folk-tale motif – the stranger coming to the court of a king, passing a number of tests and ultimately winning the princess for a bride.\textsuperscript{47}

My position will be to reconcile the two views, by suggesting that Nausicaa’s virginity itself plays a strong role in the ambiguity of her depiction, the depiction of the Phaeacians, and of the Phaeacian landscape, but also in the particular persona adopted by Odysseus in this famous episode of the \textit{Odyssey}. In making this point, I am challenging the common belief that Nausicaa’s function stops at the gates of Scheria, as the mere benevolent guide of Odysseus.

Both Most’s 1989\textsuperscript{a} article on the structure and function of Odysseus’ \textit{Apoloquoi} and Ahl and Roisman’s 1997 analysis of the \textit{Odyssey} underscore the strikingly appropriate character of Odysseus’ \textit{Apoloquoi} to his immediate context, the court of a highly alluring and marriageable princess. For Most, Odysseus’ “portraits of Circe and Calypso are the most flattering way imaginable in which he can subtly compliment Nausicaa for her beauty, but, at the same time, firmly and irreversibly refuse her.” According to Ahl and Roisman, by simply choosing not to talk about his experience of the Trojan War, Odysseus is “generating an epic story which his hosts have the opportunity to bring to its fulfillment, thereby ensuring their importance as participants in his “epic” narrative.”\textsuperscript{48} Indeed, Odysseus’ \textit{Apoloquoi} seem to be a veiled \textit{description} about how the Phaeacians and their land \textit{look} from the outside. As a remote people with little opportunity to interact with others, the Phaeacians are lacking a good image of

\textsuperscript{46} Heubeck 1988: 339 (\textit{ad} 7.311-316) and 311 (\textit{ad} 6.263-288).
\textsuperscript{47} Woodhouse’s (1930: 60-64) suggestion of a possible interpolation was argued against by Lattimore (1969:101), but the idea of a Homeric creative reworking of an old folktale motif is supported by Gross (1976: 317) and Glenn (1998: 115). An ancient example of this motif is the Latin novel \textit{Apollonius King of Tyre}, where the foreigner Apollonius comes to the court of a king and teaches, woos and eventually marries the king’s daughter.
\textsuperscript{48} Ahl and Roisman (1996: 96).
themselves. What Odysseus actively and successfully offers the Phaeacians in his *Apologoi* is a view of themselves, a view which they lack and crave, as having been away from mixing with others for a long time. From this perspective, I argue that Odysseus at the very least *presents* (if not invents) his previous adventures in the light of his perception of Nausicaa and her island.49

For this reason, instead of interpreting the various female figures of Calypso, Circe, Nausicaa, or Arete as either negative or positive foils for Penelope, which is the standard way of discussing feminine figures in Homeric scholarship,50 I will look at all the non-Penelope women and feminine creatures as imagined, possible future versions of Nausicaa as she is perceived by Odysseus. From his point of view, Nausicaa is the *other*, who generates alienation and proliferation of otherness (in the many slightly similar, slightly dissimilar figures on Scheria and in Odysseus’ *Apologoi*), while Penelope is the *same*, who generates and protects identity. Thus, the virgin Nausicaa encompasses in her yet-to-be-known nature Calypso, Circe, and all the feminized monsters who try to swallow their male guests in their abysmal cavities: the Cyclops, Scylla and Charybdis, the Laestrygonians, the Lotus Eaters, the Sirens.51 Through this endless multiplication of self, Nausicaa creates stagnation, alienation, loss of self and thus forgetfulness for the visiting Odysseus. For this reason, in the *Odyssey* Nausicaa and all her incorporated images are childless and at the same time *somehow* immortal, detached from history and becoming. While both Nausicaa and Penelope are unaccompanied-by-men, seemingly sexually available women, for Nausicaa and her island,

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49 On a discussion of the “practical ends” of Odysseus’ *Apologoi*, see Most (1989a).
51 On the feminine character of even the Cyclops, the Laestrygonians, or the Lotus Eaters, see Schein (1996: 25). The common trait for all of them is their ability to ingest, consume and thus annihilate memory and history. In gender terms, the monstrous but feminine sexuality devours the male, whose aim is to avoid losing oneself in the female. On the blurred lines between maidenly and monstrous, see also Topper (2007) in the context of the ambivalent depiction of the Medusa in Greek art. Drawing her evidence from archaic vase-paintings, Topper (2007: 90-95) notices and discusses the recurrent theme of the sleeping maiden approached by an aggressive male in the myths of the Medusa, or Ariadne, but also Odysseus and the Cyclops.
natural and artificial boundaries abound, as we shall see, while suitors are desired and scarce. In contrast, Penelope lives on an unfortified island, but nonetheless is surrounded by plenty of unwanted suitors.\textsuperscript{52}

The following analysis will consider all these aspects that mark Nausicaa’s figure as producing an abundance of slightly distinct versions of femaleness, landscape and stories. The chapter is organized around the peculiar geographical description of Nausicaa’s island, on the one hand, and on the extraordinary character of the encounter between a virgin and a ξένος, on the other.

1.2 A virginal landscape?

Unlike any other island in the Odyssey, Scheria is described in contradictory terms, as fertile and lovely on the inside, but unwelcoming and hostile on the outside. In Zeus’ words to Hermes, Odysseus will arrive at a land with good soil (5.34 Σχερίην έρίβολον); later, the Homeric narrator tells us that Athena leaves the lovely Scheria (7.84 Σχερίην ἔρατεινήν) to return to the strong house of Erechtheus, in the wide-wayed city of Athens. However, Odysseus’ experience of the Phaeacian land at the end of Book 5 is harsh: his initial joy at seeing land after swimming for two nights and two days is shattered by the island’s inaccessibility and Odysseus is metaphorically represented as being kept outside the sea’s doors, opening to the land (5.410 ἔκβασις οὗ πη φαίνεθ’ ἄλος πολιοῖο θύραζε). This stark contrast between what the omniscient Zeus and the omniscient Homeric narrator know (that Scheria will prove to be a benevolent place) and what the character experiences first hand,

\textsuperscript{52} As Burgess (unpublished paper) suggests, Ithaca is ambiguously presented as temporarily vulnerable as island, but “developing” into a more stable, hegemonic island with economic relations to the mainland in Tiresias’ prophecy. Either way, Ithaca is not a fortified city.
within the narrative, exaggerates the frontier between inside and outside in the description of Scheria. In Odysseus’ words to Arete, his first impression of the future benign land is that it is an unpleasant place, ἀτερπέα χώρῳ (7.279), and he will choose to use the same phrase to describe the realm of the dead (11.94 ἀτερπέα χώρον). 53

Odysseus notices no harbours or roadsteads to hold ships on the Phaeacian shore, despite the Phaeacians’ renown as oar-lovers, but only cliffs and rocks thrusting into the sea:

Ο οὐ γὰρ ἔσαν λιμένες νηὸν ὁχοῖ, οὐδ’ ἐπωγαί, ἀλλ’ ἀκταί προβλήτες ἔσαν σπιλάδες τε πᾶγοι τε. (5.404-405)

For there were neither harbours to hold ships, nor roadsteads, but there were promontories jutting out, rocks and cliffs.

Odysseus’ initial reaction of joy at the sight of land (5.398 ἀσπαστὸν ...γαῖα καὶ ὑλη) will be mirrored in a later “reverse simile” which compares Penelope’s feelings when seeing her husband after a long absence with the joy a seafarer feels when seeing the land (23.233 ἀσπάσιος γῆ). 54 In contrast, the simile used to describe Odysseus’ emotions at the sight of land is that of sons seeing their ill father getting better against all expectations; the unsaid conclusion though is that hope will be followed by disappointment:

ὡς δ’ ὅτ’ ἄν ἀσπάσιος βίοτος παίδεσσι φανή πατρός, δ’ ἐν νοῦσῳ κεῖται κρατέρ’ ἄλγεα πᾶσχον, δηρόν τηκόμενος, στυγερός δ’ ἐὰν ἔχρας δαίμων, ἀσπάσιον δ’ ἄρα τὸν γε θεοὶ κακότητος ἔλυσαν, ὡς Ὅδυσῆ’ ἀσπαστὸν ἐείσατο γαῖα καὶ ὑλη. (5.394-398)

And just as welcome the life of a father appears to his children, when he lies sick, enduring harsh pains, wasting away for a long time, and a hateful spirit unceasingly

53 Odysseus uses the same epithet when he describes the “unpleasant” meal (10.124 ἀτερπέα δαίτα) of the Laestrygonians, that is, Odysseus’ own comrades, caught by spear as fish; the “unpleasantness” is obviously presented again from Odysseus’ perspective. The meeting with the Laestrygonians and the meeting with the souls of the dead share the same unfriendly character as the initial encounter, from the outside, with the Phaeacian land. Apparently Odysseus finds it convenient to describe his past adventures to Arete in terms analogous to his present situation in Scheria.

54 Foley (1978:7-8) discusses the simile together with other “reverse similes” to point to a pattern of inversed sexual roles, which suggests a temporary “loss of stability.” Also Zeitlin (1995:145).
assaults him, but the gods suddenly free him from evil to his joy, so the land and the woods seemed welcome to Odysseus.

The interesting element in the two similes, for the purposes of this chapter, is the direct comparison between a human (the returned Odysseus and, respectively, the recovering father) and land, as opposed to the sea. Although not explicitly stated, we can analogously read Scheria as similar or as an extension to Nausicaa’s virginal body.

As seen by Odysseus, sharp rocks and smooth cliffs (πάγοι ὄξεαις, λισσῆ πέτρη, 5.411-412) define the outside limits (ἐκτοσθον, 5.411) of Scheria, piercing and slippery at the same time: landing on the island of Scheria is synonymous with getting inside the island. When he tries to hold on to a rock, a strong wave pulls him back into the sea and the skin of his hands is stripped and left clinging on the rocks (5.428-435) and only the appearance of a fine stream, without rocks (λεῖος πετρῶν, 5.443) and sheltered from the wind, rescues Odysseus from his seemingly endless abrasive contact with the Phaeacian land.

The social behavior of the Phaeacians mirrors, but also caused, these unwelcoming geographic traits and the severe demarcation of defensive boundaries. A generation before Odysseus’ arrival, the Phaeacians had moved from their “up-land” territory, Hypereia, into Scheria in order to keep themselves away from any interaction with other humans: εἷσεν δὲ Σχερίῃ, ἕκας ἀνδρῶν ἀλφηστάων (6.8). In addition to the initial remoteness of their chosen location and its inherent geographic hostility, the Phaeacians founded their city by first erecting a surrounding wall: ἀγριὶ δὲ τεῖχος ἔλασε πόλει, καὶ ἐδείματο οἶκους (6.9). The fact that city walls in Archaic Greece are strongly associated with sieges55 implies that the

55 Ancient historians never used the term “siege” for conquest of unfortified cities (πόλεις ἀπείχοστοι) such as Elis or Sparta, as shown by Frederiksen (2011:30). Frederiksen (2011:35) also astutely notices how between the two cities depicted by Hephaestus on the shield of Achilles (Il.18.514 ff.), only “the unfortunate polis is being besieged and its teichos is mentioned.” In this context, when Odysseus describes himself with the epithet “the sacker of cities” (in 9.504 πτόλιπορθος), while in the heart of the Phaeacians’ city, he probably also hints at his getting through the walls of Scheria, while his listeners are thrilled by the description of an escape from the Cyclopes, which makes them relive their own flight from them. A rather late epigram from AP (5.294) explicitly
Phaeacians, despite having moved to a remote location, still expect to be besieged or are overly worried about their security. In Nausicaa’s description (6.262-264), beside a surrounding high tower wall, the city has two harbours on each side, and a narrow isthmus opens the access to the city from the countryside:

Λὔταρ ἐπὶν πόλιος ἐπιβήσομεν Ἦν περὶ πύργος ὑψηλῶς, καλὸς δὲ λιμὴν ἕκατερθε πόλιος, λεπτὴ δ’εἰσίθημη. (6.262-264)

But when we arrive at the city, around which there is a high wall, there will be beautiful harbours on both sides of the city, and a narrow isthmus.

The word used for the isthmus is εἰσίθημη, entrance; the Greek word ἰσθμός attested in fifth century Greek, is etymologized from εἰσίθημη (LS) and is a bodily metaphor, initially meaning “neck.” The diminutive ἰσθμιον has the generalized meaning of “thing attached to the neck” and it is used in the Odyssey as “necklace,” one of the fine gifts Penelope receives when she shows herself to the suitors in book 18 (300). But the neck is also the bodily location most highlighted in virgins, inviting violence or sealing against transgression: Iphigenia or Polyxena are sacrificed by having their throat cut open, while other virgins choose to kill themselves through hanging as shown by Loraux.56 The disloyal handmaidens are hanged at Ithaca, as a way of shaming them back into virginity.

Furthermore, Homer could have hardly paid more attention to another entrance, the one leading into the Phaeacian palace. The enclosure of the palace itself (7.86-87 χάλκεοι μὲν γὰρ

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56 Loraux (1985) discusses women’s deaths mostly in tragic discourse but I think the underlying imagery associating necks with a woman’s unassailed sexuality is likely to reflect older rituals and attitudes of Ancient Greeks. ἰσθμιον was also used metaphorically for the neck of a vase, and vases were commonly associated with women’s bodies. The Isthmus par excellence, the Isthmus of Corinth, was used both as a masculine and as a feminine noun. The act of wounding a man in the neck reversely implied a feminization of a man, in contexts openly or allusively erotic – the wounding of Hector by Achilles, the accidental killing of Hyacinth by Apollo, or the killing of the Danaids’ husbands.
τοῖχοι ἐλλέατ’ ἐνθα καὶ ἐνθα/ ἐς μυχὸν ἐς οὐδοῦ, “for bronze walls were stretching this way and that way from the threshold into the innermost chamber”) mirrors the larger enclosure of the city (6.9, and 7.44-45 τείχεα μακρὰ ὑψηλά, σκολόππεσιν ἄρηρτα, θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι, “the walls were long and high, adorned with palisades, a marvel to see”) and the even larger enclosure of the island, with its natural defenses. Even more, within the palace, adjacent to the walls, there is another unbroken circle of chairs (7.95-96 ἐν δὲ θρόνοι περὶ τοίχον ἐρηρέδατ’ ἐνθα καὶ ἐνθα./ ἐς μυχὸν ἐς οὐδοῦ διωμπερές, “inside, chairs were aligned along the wall this way and that way, continuously from the threshold into the innermost chamber”), and the ever-repeated boundary which conceals an always regressive inside is followed by the thin textile covers of the chairs, women’s work (7.96-97 ἐνθ’ ἐνὶ πέπλοι λεπτοὶ... ἔργα γυναικῶν). But Odysseus spends precisely fifty-four Homeric lines (between 7.81 and 7.135), before stepping on the bronze threshold: πολλὰ δὲ οἱ κῆρ/ ὀρμαῖν’ ἰσταμένῳ, πρὶν χάλκεον οὐδὸν ἰκέσθαι, “many things he thought about in his heart while standing there, before stepping on the bronze threshold” (7.82-83). Segal has discussed the importance of crossing thresholds in the Odyssey as connected to specific rites of transition, which also include bathing and receiving of guests.57 However, more than any other critical transitional point in the poem, the description of this threshold, under Odysseus’ rapt eyes, amounts to a poetic ecphrasis, as announced by the guard dog statues, crafted by Hephaestus himself and placed symmetrically on the inside and outside of the gates:

χρύσεωι δ’ ἐκάτερθε καὶ ἀργύρεοι κύνες ἦσαν,
οὕς Ἡφαίστος τεῦξεν ἰδιῒσι πραπίδεσσι.

On either side, there were gold and silver dogs, which Hephaestus fashioned with his knowledgeable mind.

The formula ἰδυίη σι πραπίδεσσι is unique for the *Odyssey*, while in the *Iliad* it is used in an almost identical context in the description of the shield of Achilles (18.380, 18.482, 20.12). Newton, Zeitlin and Holmberg have pointed out remarkable correspondences between Hephaestus and Odysseus throughout the *Odyssey*, but especially in its last part, both figures being endowed with μῆτις and τέχνη.\(^{58}\) Particularly striking is the common liminal and defensive character of both Achilles’ shield\(^{59}\) and the Phaeacian threshold. As in the case of the shield, the artistry repeats itself through overlapping layers revealing images of striking permanence and repetitiveness: the Phaeacians eat and drink an unending supply of food, golden statues of boys hold torches, while their women do their never ending chores: grinding corn, weaving webs at the loom, or spinning wool. The rotating movement of their hands (7.105 στρωφῶσιν), like the leaves on a lofty poplar tree (7.106 οἷά τε φύλλα μακεδνῆς αἰγείρων), resembles the description of the ever-rotating (18.544 στρέψαντες, 18.546 στρέψασκον) plough with the amazingly changing colour of the furrow on Achilles’ shield (*Iliad* 18, 541-549). On the other hand, poplar trees tend to mark liminal territories in the *Odyssey*: they are the trees of Athena’s sacred grove just outside the city of Scheria where Nausicæa advises Odysseus to wait (6.291-292). Odysseus alludes to them in his *Apologoi*, when he describes the islet opposed to the island of the Cyclopes, having poplar trees which surround the entrance to a cave placed on the shore of its welcoming harbour (9.141 ἔπὶ
κρατὸς λιμένος ῥέει ἀγλαῦν ὕδωρ, κρήνη ὕπο σπείους: περὶ δ᾽ἀγλεῖροι πεφύασιν, “at the head of the harbor shining water is flowing, a spring from beneath the cave, and poplars have grown around it.”) and in a still other description of a liminal territory, the land of the dead: 10.508-510 ἀλλ᾽ ὀπότ᾽ ἂν δὴ νηὶ δι᾽ Ὀκεανοῖο περήσῃς./ ἐνθ᾽ ἀκτή τε λάχεια καὶ ἀλσεα Περσεφονείης./ μακραὶ τ᾽ἀγλεῖροι καὶ ἰτέαι ὀλεσίκαρποι (“but when you cross the Ocean in your ship, there is a grassy promontory and the groves of Persephone, also tall poplars and willows that lose their fruit”). A few interesting things about this last passage: the promontory and the poplar trees play a similar role in emphasizing the defining borders of the other world (right after Odysseus and his companions have sailed off the Ocean); this island-like territory is explicitly attributed to Persephone, on the pattern woman/island – and perhaps aiming to maintain this parallel, Homer chooses to present the mythical Underworld as an Otherworld; Odysseus describes the entrance to the Otherworld analogously to his entrance into Alcinous’ palace; furthermore, the additional willow trees which also mark the access to the Otherworld recall the hand movement of the Phaeacian women, since the Greek ἰτέα, “willow,” was commonly associated with the verb ἰέναι and movement.

There is a sense in which the Phaeacian women’s seemingly iterative short-spanned movement, because encompassed in a visual representation, can evade time, in the same way Hephaestus’ dogs are ageless, because crafted (7.94 ἀθανάτους ὄντας καὶ ἀγήρως ἡματα πάντα). Their refusal of change corresponds to their function of preservation: the dogs guard the palace (7.93 δῶμα φυλασσόμενα), while the doors serve to close the concealed inside (7.88 πυκινὸν δόμον ἐντὸς ἐκρωγον).

From this perspective, what Odysseus sees through the doors and inside the palace, is correctly still a part of the ecphrasis and still a feature of the entrance: characters are eternally snapshot in their unceasingly repetitive actions. What we can see inside the palace, from the
doorstep, is both the *product* (7.96-97 ἐνθ’ἐνι πέπλοι λεπτοί... ἔργα γυναικῶν, “on them were soft robes... women’s handiwork”) and the *process* of women’s hidden creativity, a divine gift: πέρι γάρ σφησι δόκεν Ἀθήνη/ ἔργα τ’ἐπίστασθαι περικαλλέα καὶ φρένας ἐσθλάς (7.110-111, “for Athena gave them the knowledge to create most beautiful handiwork and good minds”). The women’s φρένες are thus situated at the core of the palace’s interior and their powerful function, of generating protective coverings, is reversely mimicked in the episode of the seduced Phoenician woman in Eumaeus’ story (15.420-421): πλυνούσῃ τις πρῶτα μίγη κοίλη παρὰ νη/ εὖν καὶ φιλότητι, τά τε φρένας ἦπεροπεώει/ θηλυτέρας γυναῖξι, καὶ ἤ εὐεργός ἔησιν (“first, as she was washing clothes, one of them lay with her in love by the hollow ship; for this beguiles the minds of women, even though one be skilled in handiwork”). In this latter case, the sexual act itself can lead astray a woman’s φρένες *despite* her being a good worker,60 or, to put it in other terms, a woman’s sexual self-control is directly linked to her ability to create guarding textiles. Thus, Penelope is rightly ἐχέφρων, retaining her φρένες, in the sense of the non-Homeric σώφρων, “chaste because keeping one’s mind intact.”61

Once Odysseus “sees,” at the deepest level inside the palace, women’s φρένας ἐσθλάς (7.110-111), his gaze returns outside, to the proximity of the doors; the already thick boundary between exterior and interior is extended into a four-acre walled garden:

έκτοσθεν δ’ αὐλῆς μέγας ὀρχατός ἄγχι θυράων

60 The epithet of the Phoenician woman repeats the previous statement about her: 15.418 καλῆ καὶ μεγάλη καὶ ἀγλαὰ ἔργα ἵδια. When describing her ominous dream to the beggar Odysseus, Penelope points out the pleasure she feels during work, as opposed to the worries which fill her idle nights: 19.512 ἡματα μὲν γὰρ τέρσουμ’ ὀδυρμένη, γούσσα/ ἐς τ’ ἑαμ᾽ ἔργ᾽ ὀρόσα καὶ ἀμφιπόλων ἐνὶ ὑκ. Women’s work thus carries a connotation of forgetfulness, which causes steadfastness, and immobility inside the house; when seduced, the Phoenician woman is suddenly reminded of her original home and desires to travel back home. As in Odysseus’ case, memory generates movement and forgetfulness immobility.

61 The self-reflective, almost introspective implication of φρήν is stressed in its other occurrences in the Phaeacian episode. Nausicaa confesses to her father that she is troubled in her φρήν by her vague feeling of compulsion to go wash the family’s laundry (6.65), while in the simile of Artemis (6.102-109), Leto is feeling joy in her φρήν. But also Odysseus’ monologue at the unexpected sight of the girls (6.119-126), differently than the similar distressed self-talk in Ithaca (13.200-216), is described in terms of talking deep in his φρήν (6.119 ὄμαινε κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμόν). Φρήν is also interesting for being represented as a *locus*, associated with inner depth.
Outside the yard, a large garden of four acres is next to the doors: a fence runs around it on both sides.

Because the garden of Scheria (7.112-132) is placed at the same level (ἀγχι) as the gates, outside the court of the palace, Odysseus is looking at it as a boundary in itself, still part of the ecphrasis of the threshold, but, in addition to that, fully surrounded by another protecting wall. The inside of the garden is marked by eternal fecundity or perpetual becoming: the fruit on the fruit trees never dies (7.117 οὐ ποτε καρπὸς ἀπόλλυται), but grows and ripens. The grapes of the vineyard, similarly and simultaneously, are blossoming, ripening and prepared to be turned into wine – the uninterrupted change itself apparently prevents corruption. The still unripe grapes, just having shed their flowers, evoke the imagery of virginity and virginity loss: πάροιθε δὲ τ’ὀμφακές εἰσιν/ ἄνθος ἄφιεσαι (“in front are the unripe grapes shedding their flowers”). Nonetheless their process of growing and being processed into a product to be consumed and enjoyed is not portrayed as loss, again by virtue of its unbroken iterative character: the visible presence of fruit does not evoke the disappearance of a not-anymore-visible flower, but on the contrary, the necessary temporal succession is all visually, evenly represented, rendering mind processes like recollection or anticipation futile.

The description of the garden (and at the same time, of the entrance to the palace) ends appropriately with its source: two springs bring forth a supply of water to the eternally

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62 The ὀμφακές, used in Homer to mean unripe grapes and by extension other unripe fruits, are later (AP 5.20, 12.205; Nonnus 48.365) used to mean young girls not yet ripe for marriage, or their breasts. Theophrastus mentions a gem used for seals with the name ὀμφας (De lap. 30). Aesop’s fable of the fox and the sour/unripe grapes (ὀμφακές) might be also read sexually as the predator who provisionally gives up on the desired girl, who is yet to grow.

63 That the garden is generally a representation of virginity (and Nausicaa’s in particular) is supported by other passages which explicitly associate gardens with women, as shown by Karakantza (2003:23); Archilochus’ Cologne epode, fragment SLG 478, lines 15-16, published by R. Merkelbach and M.L. West (1974:106) describes the seduction of the daughter of Lycambe in terms of holding to her grassy gardens (σχῆσω γάρ ἔς
abundant garden, on the one hand, and to the palace, on the other, by flowing underneath the threshold of the palace (7.130 ὑπ’ οὐλῆς οὐδόν). The end of the ecphrasis brings the reader back to its focalizer, Odysseus; he is still standing there and watching, but after he has watched everything, he nimbly leaps over the threshold, into the house:

ἔνθα στὰς θηείτο πολύτλας δίος Ὀδυσσεύς.
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ πάντα ἐώθ θηήσατο θυμῶ.
καρπαλίμως ὑπὲρ οὐδόν ἐβήσετο δόματος εἰςω. (7.133-135)

Having stopped there, the much-enduring godlike Odysseus was gazing. But when he had seen everything with his heart, he stepped quickly over the threshold, into the house.

Odysseus’ swift step over the threshold (καρπαλίμως) contrasts remarkably with its lengthy description; in the same way as the garden lacks real change because the temporal succession is overcome by the smooth, almost imperceptible distinctions between concurrently growing stages, so Odysseus smoothly, almost imperceptibly inserts himself into the palace.

The line is repeated almost identically in book 13.63, when Odysseus steps over the threshold again, just after uttering his farewell words to Arete: ὡς εἰπὼν ὑπὲρ οὐδόν ἐβήσετο δίος Ὀδυσσεύς (“thus speaking, godlike Odysseus stepped over the threshold”). If the first person he approaches once inside the palace of Scheria is Arete, Arete is also the last person he addresses before leaving it.

The prominence of this threshold, which limits Arete’s realm in both directions, makes us wonder about how the threshold that marks the entrance into Penelope’s palace is represented. First, there is no elaborate description of it; we are only told that it is made of stone (while Arete’s threshold is made of bronze). Secondly, Odysseus is never described as

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64 The motif of virginal water as source of life for the community also appears in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter (Hymns 2.99 ff.). In her angry wandering, Demeter stops at a maidens’ well (Παρθενίωι φρέατι, ὅθεν ύδρειοντο πολίτα, “the Maidenly well, where inhabitants of the city take their water from”), and meets four young girls who came to fetch water.
crossing it but rather as compulsively and aggressively standing or sitting *on* it. After his fights with Antinoos and Irus, he goes back to sit on the threshold:

\[\text{āψ \dò \gamma' \éπ' οὐδόν ιὼν κατ' \áρ ἔξετο (17.466 and 18.110)}\]

Back to the threshold, he went and sat down.

The threshold is the place where Odysseus prepares to string the bow during the contest (21.124), and from there he also kills the suitors (22.72 and 22.1-2):

\[\text{ἀὐτήρ ὁ γυμνώθη ρακέων πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς,} \\
\text{ἀλτο δ' ἐπὶ μέγαν οὐδόν ἔχων βίον ἣδὲ φαρέτρην. (22.1-2)}\]

But the much clever Odysseus took off his rags, and sprang on the great threshold holding the bow and the quiver. By sitting on it, Odysseus both renders immovable and appropriates an already crossed threshold. When caught in the ambush the suitors unsuccessfully attempt to remove Odysseus from the threshold (22.76 ἐὰς κὲ μιν οὐδόδρομος ἄπώκοσμον ἣδε θυράων, “if we shall force him from the threshold and the doors”). Penelope is however associated with *several* thresholds: overwhelmed by grief, she chooses to sit and cry on the threshold of her chamber instead of finding a chair (4.718). She also, in a remarkable gender-reversed position, crosses over the threshold to come to Odysseus in the recognition scene:

\[\text{ἡ δ' ἐπεὶ εἰσήλθεν καὶ ὑπέρβη λάινον οὐδόν… (23.88)}\]

When she entered and stepped over the stone threshold…

The force of this gender reversal is more fully expressed in Penelope’s crossing of the threshold to the storeroom where she has lovingly kept Odysseus’ bow. The bow itself, mark of Odysseus’ masculinity, is hidden inside the room filled with chests of good-smelling clothes, most likely Penelope’s work: ἔνθα δὲ χηλοῦ ἔστασαν, ἐν δ’άρα τῇσι θυώδεα εἴμιατ’
έκειτο (21.51-52). But the entrance to the room is described in an ecphrasis, parallel, albeit briefer, to the description of the entrance to Arete’s palace (21.42-51):

οὐδόν τε δρύινον προσεβῆσετο, τὸν ποτε τέκτων
ζέσσεν ἐπισταμένος καὶ ἐπὶ στάθμην ἱθονεν,
ἐν δὲ σταθμοὺς ἄρσε, θύρας δ’ ἐπέθηκε φαεινάς.

She stepped towards the wooden threshold that a skilled carpenter once leveled and made straight with a line, fitting the doorposts in and adding shining doors.

The threshold is wooden and clearly crafted: however, the emphasis falls, instead of merely describing the threshold itself, on Penelope’s movement and handling of the doors, which she opens with a key. The sound of the opening doors resembles the bellow of a bull in a meadow (21.48-49). Thus, Penelope awakens Odysseus’ latent masculinity, while Odysseus plays symbolically the role of the virgin, yet-to-be-revealed.

Furthermore, unlike Nausicaa’s/ Arete’s boundaries and thresholds, which tend to replicate one another concentrically, Penelope’s thresholds are thresholds of different rooms in the house, not circular; they do not generate an illusion of increasing depth, through repetitive layers, and centrality, but rather solidity and firmness.

On a final note, Poseidon responds to this extreme visibility, susceptible to description, of Scheria’s boundaries when he punishes the Phaeacians: the ancestor of the Phaeacians decides to conceal their city with a great mountain, but even this conclusive act remains hidden in possibility: μηδ’ ἡμῖν περίμηκες ὄρος πόλει ἀμφικαλύψῃ (13.183). This mountain, which marks and defines the outside limit of the Phaeacians, is placed at the end of the Phaeacians’ episode, which started with a reference to the wall Nausithous had built when they first came to Scheria: ἀμφὶ δὲ τεῖχος ἑλάσσε πόλει (6.9). The petrification of the ship and the imminent making of the mountain overlap and vaguely draw a contour around a Phaeacian “space.”
The physical margins and the narrative margins of the Phaeacians’ episode thus are overlaid, defining Scheria as an especially marked space. However, the limits are permeable in both directions: the kleos of Odysseus’ deeds at Troy had arrived in Scheria before Odysseus did; the episode of Calypso, with its particular topography, foreshadows the imagery of Scheria, and is also contained, as mirroring for Scheria, within Odysseus’ Apologoi. On the other end, Odysseus will preserve and entrust/impart to Ithaca both the memory of the lovely Scheria (8.461-462) that he will share with Penelope and the immense treasure with which the Phaeacians had gifted him. All these infiltrations into and out of Scheria are exclusively connected to Odysseus: Scheria exists only because Odysseus has been there.65

1.3 Talking with strangers

Notwithstanding Odysseus’ progressive infiltration into Scheria (and the expectation that the strangers would not stay, μένει 7.315, 8.33), the Phaeacian space itself can be described as a place of stagnation: we have already seen in the description of the gardens and of the interior of the palace how the enclosure shelters an unhistorical time, marked by repetitive and not outcome-oriented activities and a general lack of progression. In Alcinous’ words, the Phaeacians eternally delight in food, song, dance, change of clothes, warm baths and bed – all actions that carry an iterative, circular, and also security-inducing character:

\[\text{αἰεὶ δ’ ἧμῖν δαίς τε φύλη κιθαρίς τε χοροί τε} \\
\text{εἴματά τ’ ἐξημοιβά λοετρά τε θερμά καὶ εὖναί. (8.248-249)}\]

65 On another note, Odysseus’ infiltration into Phaeacia recalls in many features the siege of Troy. Already in Book 5 Zeus prophesies that Odysseus will leave Phaeacia behind as he left sacked Troy, but with more abundant spoils: 5.39 πόλλ’, ὅσ’ ἂν οὐδὲ ποτὲ Τροίης ἔξηρατ’ Ὅδυσσεὺς. Demodocus describes the destructive crafted horse as being surrounded by the accepting city of Troy (8.511-512 ἐπὴν πόλες ἀμφικαλώθη/ δωράττων μέγαν ἴππων), in similar terms to those with which Poseidon will describe the surrounding of Phaeacia with a mountain.
Dear are to us always our food, lyre, and dances, changing our clothes and warm baths and beds.

The arrival of Odysseus cannot change this essentially repetitive time by introducing something “new,” so Alcinous integrates Odysseus’ arrival in their usual pattern (7.315-325): they had helped other strangers find their home in the past, and in particular, he gives the example of Rhadamanthys, whom they had escorted on his way to Tityus.

On the contrary, Nausicaa does not seem to be aware of any dealings that her people had with other visitors:

Οὐκ ἔσθ’ οὐτος ἄνήρ διερός βροτός οὐδὲ γένηται,
ός κεν Φαιήκοις ἄνδρον ἐς γαῖαν ἰκηται
δημιοτῆτα φέρων· μάλα γάρ φίλοι ἀθανάτοισιν.
Οἰκέομεν δ’ ἀπάνευθε πολυκλύστω ἐνί πόντῳ,
ἔσχατοι, οὐδὲ τις ἀμμί βροτῶν ἕπιμίσγεται ἄλλος. (6.201-203)

There is and there will never be a man, who might come to the land of the Phaeacians bringing harm; for we are dear to the immortals. We live far in the sea with many waves, the farthest of men, and no other among the mortals mingles with us.

Differently from Alcinous, who sees Odysseus as another traveler asking for passage, Nausicaa further feels the need to construct a reason for Odysseus’ extraordinary presence in Scheria: it must have been planned by gods, who are always protective of the Phaeacians (6.240 οὐ πάντων ἄεκητι θεών... Φαιήκεσσ’ ὁδ’ ἄνήρ ἕπιμίσγεται ἀντιθέοισι, “not against the will of all gods this man mingles with the godlike Phaeacians”).

From Athena’s perspective, the Phaeacians have kept their distance from other men completely, and in her words, as focalized by the Phaeacians, the definition of the stranger is “the one who comes from elsewhere.”

Οὐ γάρ ξείνους οἶδε μάλ’ ἀνθρώπους ἄνεχονται,
οὐδ’ ἀγαπαζόμενοι φιλέοισ’ ὁδ’ θ’ ἄλλοθεν ἑλθη. (7.32-33)

For they do not suffer strangers, nor do they kindly show affection to the one who comes from another place.
Thus, escorting strangers away and living without and far away from guests or strangers coincide: both are defensive. Even more disconcertingly, Poseidon wants to isolate the Phaeacians in order to make them cease giving passage to men (13.151-152 ἀπολληξὼσι δὲ πομπῆς ἀνθρώπων), without implying that there were other escorted guests besides Odysseus, while Alcinous, when seeing the ship turned into stone, recalls a prophecy about a future punishment by Poseidon on account of their offer of escort to all men (13.174 and 8.566 οὐνεκα πομποὶ ἀπήμονες εἶμεν ἀπάντων). To sum up, Nausicaa has never seen other mortals visiting Scheria, Poseidon does not want to allow other men besides Odysseus escape through Scheria, and Alcinous defines as the characteristic feature of the Phaeacians the offering of “passage” (but not stay) to all men.

This apparent contradiction concerning Scheria’s visitors seems to stem from the Phaeacians’ difficulty of defining what a “stranger” is, marginal as they are (6.203 ἔσχατοι), and with no real contact with other people or places except through story-telling; the farthest place imaginable from their point of view is Euboea (7.320-321), but nonetheless they were able to sail there and back to Scheria in one day only (7.325-326), which implies they were not very interested in getting to know the Euboeans or other peoples during their journey.

What I would like to suggest in the following analysis is, on the one hand, that the Phaeacians exhibit a virginal ill-defined sense of self and of other, expressed and condensed in the figure of Nausicaa, and on the other hand, that Odysseus manages to successfully and safely progress through Scheria by offering the Phaeacians elaborate images of themselves, through a rich use of metalinguistic and non-referential communication, such as wish or memory language.66

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66 Adkins (1969) discusses the complexity of the Greek ἐοράσθαι, prayer, but also boast or self-affirmation: “it is the claim, and one’s psychological condition in making it” (Adkins 1969:33). The difficulty consists in its
If ξενία is the major theme of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is the ξενὸς par excellence, addressed as such by all his hosts, including Penelope, who oxymoronically calls him ξενὲ φιλὲ (19.350). But Nausicaa particularly addresses him as ξενὲ, in her three speeches to him (6.187-197, 6.254-315, 8.461-462), as though wishing to conflate in him all the imagined unlike-herself qualities of the unknown husband she expects to accept. Even Athena disguised as virginal girl affectionately calls him ξενὲ πάτερ (7.28), while pointing out at the same time the Phaeacians’ hostility to ξενοῖ.

But once she recognizes him, Penelope will unsurprisingly stop calling Odysseus a stranger, while Nausicaa pronounces her farewell words (8.461 χαίρε, ξεν’) right before Odysseus begins his *Apologeti*, which indicates that she is not present when he mentions his name for the first time. In a symmetrical way, their encounter does not change either Nausicaa’s virginal status or his status as foreigner – the two will remain the other for each other.

Strangers in particular are described as objects of suspicion for the Phaeacians, who – as we have seen in the first part of this chapter – own a territory defined by plentiful demarcations between outside and inside and are also, according to the definition given to the stranger by Athena (7.33 ὃς κ’ ἄλλοθεν ἐλθῇ), strangers themselves, in absolute terms. The origin of this conflicted relationship with the strangers goes back to their first settler, Nausithoos, who left the companionship of humans on account of the violent behavior of their previous neighbours, the Cyclopes: ἀγχοῦ Κυκλώπων, ἀνδρῶν ὑπερηνορεόντων/ οἳ σφεας σινέσκοντο, βῆμα δὲ φέρτεροι ἠσαν. (6.5-6, “[they lived] close to the Cyclopes, who were some excessively manly men, always plundering them, and greater in strength”). The flight itself intriguingly resonates with the common pattern of the mythical motif of the chased subjective character, which tries to impose one’s will over reality: nowhere than in such acts (prayers, wishes, prophecies, memories) is the divorce between language and reference steeper.
maiden; the neighbours are even called exceedingly manly men (6.5), a formulaic epithet otherwise repeatedly used in connection with Penelope’s suitors (2.324, 2.331, 4.769, 17.482, 17.581, 20.375, 21.361, 21.401), and their behavior is called βίη, the standard term in the Iliad for male aggression, as opposed to intelligence. According to the known pattern, maidens like Daphne or Persephone, by attempting to escape a man’s amorous pursuit, halt their normal development into women (or mothers) and are usually transformed into a perennial object, phenomenon, or ritual, attaining a sort of eternal virginity. The Phaeacians likewise by fleeing community with men, halt their historical becoming and are entrapped in a permanent juvenile dream of “what the other looks like and how they might look like in the eyes of the other.” Their flight and their skill as sailors determine their ethnic identity: they are able to stay who they are because they have the capacity (thanks to their nautical skill) to avoid outside influences, either by moving themselves or by exporting their guests. From this point of view, Odysseus empathetically engages with their yearning for safety when recounting his escape by ship from the Cyclopes, unskilled in seafaring as they are.

The stranger, unfamiliar character of the Phaeacians might also originate in their somewhat close connection to the gods. The Phaeacians are at the same time descendants of Poseidon and ἄνδρες who flee their neighbors Cyclopes, also ἄνδρες (6.5) and descendants of Poseidon. Nausithoos, the begetter of their race, although θεοειδής (6.7) “similar to gods,” and

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67 The “virginal” character of the Phaeacians as people is also illustrated by their refusal to answer Odysseus’ challenge to box or wrestle (8.199-249).
68 On the Homeric opposition between βίη and μῆτις see Nagy (1979:43-49).
69 In Alcinous’ words: οὐ γὰρ πυγμάχοι εἰμὲν ἀμόινοις οὐδὲ παλαισταί/ ἄλλα ποσὶ κρασπνός θέομεν καὶ νησιών ἄριστοι (8.246-247, “for we are not great boxers nor wrestlers, but we run fast on our feet and we are the best in our ships”). The correlation between running abilities and virginal avoidance of men also shows up in the myth of Atalanta.
70 The Cyclopes are unable to even visit their neighbouring island, blessed as it is with plenty of natural resources, on account of their ignorance of navigation: 9.125-129 οὐ γὰρ Κυκλώπεσσι νέες πάρα μιλτοπάρημοι, οὐδέ άνδρες νησιῶν ἐν τέκτονες, οἳ κε κάμουν· νῆσις ἐνσέλιµοισ, αἱ κεν τελέους ἐκεῖσ’ ἄστε’ ἐπ’ ἄνθρωπον ἱκνύμεναι, οἵ τε πολλὰ’ ἄνδρες ἐπ’ ἄλλης νησιῶν περῶσι τεθάλασσαν. (“For the Cyclopes do not have ships with red-chalked cheeks, nor men who can build ships among them, who would toil and make well-benchd ships that would reach their destination when they might travel to every city of men, in the manner that men usually cross the sea on ships to one another”).
son of Poseidon and of beautiful Periboea, a giant’s daughter, is now gone to Hades. Arete is looked upon by her people as a goddess (7.71). Additionally, their liminal location guarantees advantageous proximity to gods and safe remoteness from mortals, as in Nausicaa’s sense of the position of her people (6.201-203).

Because the “alien” character of the Phaeacians is so pronounced, being in contact with them confers a danger of “mixing with strangers.” Μίξεσθαι, both sexual and social intercourse, lurks at the very heart of the institution of ξενία, easily corruptible into mere promiscuous sexuality, when proper social boundaries are transgressed, as in Paris’ case. The verb, generally considered to be a euphemism for the sexual act, could actually be a metaphor for the social interaction, seen as an intimate exchange with a stranger. The negative connotations of the verb, never used for respected marital relations, seem to originate in its secrecy: the Phoenician pirate in Eumaeus’ story secretly sleeps with the woman (15.430 μίσγετο λάθρῃ) and the maids in Ithaca secretly “mix” with the suitors (22.445 μίσγοντό τε λάθρῃ). Melantho sleeps with Eurynomus behind her mistress Penelope’s back. The clandestine aspect of such a union is stressed by Nausicaa as well, when she imagines the possible gossip of Phaeacians men about her and approves the condemnation of a girl who chooses a union with men which is not in the open (ἀμφάδιον):

Καὶ δ’ ἄλλη νεμεσῶ, ἢ τις τοιαῦτα γε ῥέζοι,
ἤ τ’ ἀέκητι φίλων πατρὸς καὶ μητρὸς ἐόντων
ἀνδρᾶς μίσγηται πρὶν γ’ ἀμφάδιον γάμον ἐλθεῖν. (6.286-288)

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71 Ahl and Roisman (1996:51-52) perceptively point out how the meaning of this verb (visually representing in the Iliad the confusion of the battle) very much reflects its own ambiguous use: “What charges a dramatic situation are the multiple possibilities of its resolution imagined by participants and onlookers, not the single resolution finally achieved. And the language used must express that multiplicity in its own multivalence.” Even more, argue the same scholars, this opening to multiple possibilities emanates from Nausicaa rather than from Odysseus. Indeed, scholars since Eusthatius have seen the use of μίξεσθαι by a virgin as problematic precisely because of its purposeful ambivalence.
Otherwise, I also will reproach that woman who would do such things and against the will of her father and mother, while they are still alive, might mingle with men before openly joining them in marriage.

Cairns (1990) rightly argues for a sexual meaning of μίσγηται in line 288 (against Heubeck 1988 *ad loc.*) on the grounds that Nausicaa would not blame a behaviour for which she had been responsible: neutral non-sexual association with men. But the ambivalence of the verb is striking: because associated with invisibility, this is the most common verb for the sexual union of gods, either accompanied by εὐνή and φιλότητι or not. In the *Homerik Hymn to Hermes*, Zeus is portrayed as having intercourse with Maia at night, so that nobody, including Hera, could see them: ἔνθα Κρονίων νόμφῃ εὐπλοκάμῳ μισγέσκετο νυκτὸς ἁμόλγῳ... λάνθανε δ’ ἄθανάτους τε θεούς θνητούς τ’ ἀνθρώπους (*Hymns* 18.6-9, “there the son of Cronus was mingling with the beautiful-haired nymph in the dead of night… it escaped notice to both immortal gods and mortal men”). Odysseus famously describes Calypso to Arete as isolated, not visited (οὐδὲ μίσγεται) by either men or gods, until, of course, himself (7.247-248). But Nausicaa had already described her nation as not visited by any mortals (οὐδὲ τίς ἁμμί βροτῶν ἐπιμίσγεται ἁλλος), which makes Odysseus’ description particularly colored for Arete. In fact, Odysseus’ foretold interaction with the Phaeacians is defined by Poseidon and afterwards by the Homeric narrator as “mixing” with the Phaeacians, Odysseus’ only chance of escaping death in the sea (5.378 and 5.386). His mixing with the Phaeacians will remain as “invisible” as the historical existence of the Phaeacians. Their otherness breeds the possibility of contagion, and contagion, like pollution, obeys laws that cannot be seen or publicly revealed.

From this point of view, it is interesting that the Phaeacian princess’ first interaction with Odysseus gravitates around how Nausicaa *looks* or *is perceived*, and less on Odysseus’ rather unusual appearance. Odysseus’ first speech to Nausicaa (6.149-185), striking in its
references to visuality, can be read as an attempt to offer a description of Nausicaa, an attempt acknowledged as unsuccessful by Odysseus himself; the speech is organized around different levels of focalization on Nausicaa’s image: lines 149 to 152 portray Odysseus’ imagined identity of the princess not in term of “stranger/ foreigner/ unknown woman” but in terms of mortality/immortality. Odysseus seems uncertain (τις) about her divine or mortal origin, but he speculates (6.152 ἐίσκω) that she might be Artemis, based on her appearance (6.152 ἐίδος); if mortal, he imagines the emotions felt by her family while looking at her (6.157 λευσσόντων), an act in which he is also intensely engaged (6.160 ἔδων ὑφαλμοίν, “I saw with my eyes,” 6.161 σέβας μ’ ἔχει εἰσφόροντα, “awe overcomes me while I look at you,” 6.168 σε ἀγαμαί, “I marvel at you”). In the ensuing lines (152-157), Odysseus imagines her parents and brothers and their view of her, followed closely by the mental projection of an imagined future husband.72 Returning to his own focalizing of Nausicaa (160), Odysseus steps back again from the present situation to recall his perception of the young palm shoot in Delos, and only after he describes his condition as suppliant in need of covering and guiding between 170 and 179.

To sum up, Odysseus diverts her attention from his unusual appearance, and blurs, eludes and covers up the crudeness of their encounter (and his potentially aggressive gaze) by using richly imaginative terms. Mental imaginative constructs such as hypotheses, wishes or memories question the efficiency of sight in perceiving the real nature of what is seen. Odysseus explicitly presents his gaze as powerless, because unable to discern any clear boundaries: Nausicaa escapes definition not only as either mortal or immortal, but also as either man or woman. When he moves back from an actual description in need of an

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72 The husband is simply named κεῖνος (so similar to Sappho 31V!). Winkler (1996: 98-101) makes a convincing case of Sappho’s use of Nausicaa’s episode in poem 31V within the genre of traditional wedding praise of the groom known as makarismos. Brown (1978: 36-38) finds similitudes between Odysseus’ makarismos of the future groom and Alcman fr. 4. By using wedding language, Odysseus both portrays the subsequent Phaeacian episode as “wedding” while dissociating himself from the groom. The groom remains mere dream, non-referential language.
expounding simile, Odysseus brings up rather surprisingly the image of the delicate tree so strongly rooted in the ground of the now firm island of Delos: φοίνικος νέον ἕρνος ἀνερχόμενον... οὖ πω τοῖον ἀνήλθεν ἐκ δόρυ γάιῆς (6.163-167, “a fresh twig of palm, shooting out... never has such a shaft come out of the earth”). The simile itself foreshadows the garden and meadow imagery already seen in the description of the liminal gardens in Scheria, but instead of underlining its fecundity, it is likely that Odysseus stresses Nausicaa’s adolescence, a not-yet acquired maturity by pointing to the sapling’s unique isolation. The asexual character of the simile is appropriate after Odysseus expressed his admiration in front of a creature (masculine τοιοῦτον) that he cannot assimilate to a previous recollection of either a woman or man (6.160-161 οὖ γάρ πω τοιοῦτον ἐγὼ ἰδον...οὔτ’ ἄνδρ’ οὔτε γυναῖκα). This kind of wonder is not repeated for instance in his encounter with Athena in disguise as a virginal young woman, whom Odysseus addresses simply as τέκος and in which he does not focus at all on his interlocutor, but on his own condition of being an outsider, from a far-away land (7.24-25 ἐγὼ ξένος... τηλόθεν ἐξ ἀπίθης γαϊῆς). Odysseus’ simplicity in admitting his own strangeness in front of Athena is actually nowhere repeated in the Phaeacians’ episode.

By choosing to avoid mentioning the term ξένος, along with any references to himself as the other in his speech to Nausicaa and later to the Phaeacians, Odysseus disguises himself. Most (1989, 1989a) calls this intentionally humble behavior as the “stranger’s stratagem,” but in my view Odysseus chooses the strategy of a “virginal disguise,” in order to

73 Thetis also describes Achilles to Hephaestus as sapling tree, followed by the stage of “being sent to Troy never to return:” Iliad 18.435-441 ὁ δ’ ἀνέδραμεν ἔρνει ἵσος/ τὸν μὲν ἔτει θρέψασα φυτῶν ὡς γουνώ ἄλοχη/.../ τὸν δ’ οὐχ ὑποδέξαμαι αὐτῆς/ οὐκαδὲ νοστήρατα. The sapling simile points both to its promise of growth and its frailty and impending death. Demeter describes her lost daughter as a sweet sprig (Hy. 2.66 κούρην τὴν ἐπικροτοῦν, γλυκερὴν θάλος). Sappho 115 compares the groom to a slender tree branch, ὁρπαξ βράδινος. In Sparta there was a ritual of growth for both girls and boys called Korythalia (from κόρος and ἔθλειν) associated with Artemis Korythalia, the goddess of the flowering branches (Calame 1997: 169-174). On the other hand, the association between palm trees, altars and maidens or Artemis is documented in Attic iconography by Sourvinou-Inwood (1991: 99-143).

74 Odysseus calls himself a stranger, as focalized by his hosts, just before telling them his real name at the beginning of the Apologoi: ὑμῖν ξένος ἔω καὶ ἀκόπροθ δόματα ναίων./ εἶμ’ Ὀδυσσεύς Λαερτίαδης (9.18-19).
avoid the infamous role of “suitor.” If Athena chooses to conceal Odysseus in a thick mist\textsuperscript{75} when he enters their city, so that no one would ask him about his identity and reveal him a non-Phaeacian (7.16-17 μὴ τις Φαήκων μεγαθύμων ἀντιβολῆσαι/ κερτομέοι ἐπέσσι καὶ ἐξερέοιθ’ δτις εἶ, “lest some great-hearted Phaeacian, coming upon him, might mock him with words and try to find out who he is”), this ultimate disguise as “invisible” and as such “non-existent,” is preceded and foreshadowed by Odysseus’ modesty in his encounter with the girls at play.

Odysseus’ act of covering his genitals plays the same function as the speech he simultaneously performs. Similarly to not showing his naked body to the maids in the subsequent bath scene but also to his covering of his face with the cloak when Demodocus stirs dear memories in his heart, temporarily concealing one’s identity is an expression of αἰδώς: the typically virginal emotion of being aware of a possibly inadequate image of oneself in other people’s eyes \textit{for a limited interval of time}. The male hero, “sacker of cities” Odysseus shrewdly uses the stratagem of virginal αἰδώς in a context where asserting his masculinity would not bring him any closer to Ithaca.

The adoption of αἰδώς by a male hero returning from war (albeit πολύτροπος) conforms to Odysseus’ stance in the entire Phaeacian episode: his implicit, but not less clear choice \textit{not} to be a suitor. Glenn has convincingly shown the underlying erotic character of the simile of the lion in lines 130-136, directly connected to the theme of Odysseus’ nakedness.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{75} This mist is just another “clothing” in the series of women’s clothing meant to cover and give a (temporary or more permanent) social identity/faces to Odysseus; the identity assumed by Odysseus here would be “nobody.” On the rich theme of creating clothing and women in the \textit{Odyssey} see most recently Yamagata (2005) and Whallon (2000).

\textsuperscript{76} Glenn (1998:116) concludes: “At the very moment that the hero first meets the beautiful princess, this “formulaic” lion simile seems perfectly crafted to stress the opportunity and temptation for amorous aggression.” The lion simile (130-134) is framed and caused by the difficulty of Odysseus’ nakedness: 129 (ὁς ῥύσατο περὶ χροὶ μήδηεα φοιτός, “so that he might put [the branches] around his body and shield his male genitals”) and 136 (γυμνός περ ἐών, “although he was naked”). For a larger discussion of Greek male nudity in art and literature, see Bonfante (1989).
The maids flee in terror, and even Nausicaa needs Athena’s help to face this terrible appearance (6.137 σμερδαλέος φάνη) which becomes human and intelligible (6.187 οὔτ’ ἄφρονι φωτὶ ἑοικας, “nor do you seem like a man lacking understanding”) only after his speech. Yet, if Odysseus’ lack of clothing in this context implies a possible male aggression, at the other extreme is the abundance of clothes Nausicaa and the maids are handling. The maidens lift the clothes, carry them into the water, tread them, wash them, clean the stains, and spread them on the shore to dry. In contrast with the feminine occupation of weaving by the hearth, the washing of clothes necessitates leaving the safe space of the enclosed city, the only other laundry scene in the poem is the Phoenician woman who is seduced by pirates (15.420-421).

More importantly, clothing generates language: Odysseus speaks to the maidens in order to obtain covering for his nudity. Previously the beautifully dressed Nausicaa (6.49 εὔπεπλον) had also talked at large to Alcinous about the same clothes (6.57-65), but her speech about clothes to be washed was a mere avoidance of the theme of marriage, which she was feeling ashamed to mention but her father nevertheless understood: αἴδετο γὰρ θαλερὸν γάμον ἐξονομῆναι/ πατρὶ φίλῳ· ὁ δὲ πάντα νόει (6.66-67, “for she was ashamed to mention approaching marriage to her father: but he understood everything”). Virginal discourse is thus allusive and elusive and clothing functions as pretext or covering for the actual thoughts hidden in the maiden’s mind: τὰ δ’ ἐμὴ φρενὶ πάντα μέμηλεν (6.65, “all these things have been worrying me in my mind”).

77 In Odysseus’ Apologoi, the daughter of the Laestrygonians’ king is also outside the city walls, to fetch water. The daughter is a menacing figure, but the motif portrays the social reality of the maiden who must leave home in order to join the husband’s house. Odysseus seems to envisage her and her mother, through decomposition, as another frightening model for Nausicaa: the daughter is strong (ἰφθίμη) like Alcinous’ wife (12.452), and her mother, who is inside the city like Arete, is as tall as a mountain-peak (10.113). At 6.102-109, Nausicaa had been compared to Artemis hunting in the mountains as she was holding her head taller than all the other girls.
The gift exchange between Odysseus and Nausicaa follows the same symmetry between clothing and wishful, non-referential language:

ἀστυ δὲ μοι δεῖξον, δὸς δὲ ράκος ἀμφιβαλέσθαι, /.../
σοὶ δὲ θεοὶ τόσα δοίεν δῶσα φρεσὶ σήσι μενοινής (6.178-180)

Show me how to get to the city, give me a rag to cover myself/.../ to you, may the gods give you all the things that you desire in your mind.

What Odysseus offers Nausicaa in exchange for her guidance and clothing is an affirmation and endorsement of her (and the Phaeacians’) ever-wishful nature. As a non-referential linguistic construct, wishing postpones reality while indulging in imaginative processes; here and now is abandoned for an indefinite state of waiting and uncertainty.

Likewise, Odysseus’ farewell wishes to Arete in Book 13 ambiguously seem to foreshadow an impending doom of the Phaeacians, who seem to be stuck in this provisional, not-yet-fulfilled state. In a parallel to his initial wish for Nausicaa’s marriage, Odysseus wishes Arete well eternally until old age and death, which are merely natural to all humans:

χαῖρέ μοι, ὦ βασίλεια, διαμπερές, εἰς ὃ κε γῆρας
ἐλθῇ καὶ θάνατος, τά τ’ ἐπ’ ἀνθρώποισι πέλονται.
αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ νέομαι· σὺ δὲ τέρπεο τὸδ’ ἐνι οἶκῳ
παισί τε καὶ λαοῖσι καὶ Ἀλκινόῳ βασιλῆ. (13.59-62)

Fare well, queen, perpetually, until old age shall arrive and death, which always come upon men. I myself go home; but you have joy in this house, with your children and people and king Alcinous.

The “way” to the city that Odysseus requests besides clothing (6.178 ἀστυ δὲ μοι δεῖξον, δὸς δὲ ράκος) reflects in miniature the larger return passage the Phaeacians are to offer Odysseus. Moreover, Athena as the little girl shows Odysseus the way to Alcinous’ palace (ἐγὼ δ’ ὄδὸν ἡγεμονεύσω, 7.30), in the same way as Nausicaa previously led Odysseus to the

78 Odysseus underscores Arete’s assimilation with her house, children, people, and king Alcinous by addressing her with the appellative βασίλεια, ambiguously stressed, because of its position in the hexameter, as βασιλεία, “kingdom;” thus Odysseus predicts old age and death hovering over all Phaeacians.
city (ἐγὼ δ’ ὁδὸν ἣγεμονεύσω, 6.261). The two virginal guides show the way into the Phaeacians’ city and palace, but the city itself defines itself as The Way, the transitional place open to any and all geographical destinations. The representation of the woman’s body as a passageway in ancient medical writers is well documented, as shown by King. In an epithalamic poem (27V) Sappho describes the wedding night through the erotic imagery of the passageway to Olympus (ὁδὸς μέγαν εἰς Ὀλυμπον). For Alcinous, offering passage/ convoy (πομπῆ) is the Phaeacians’ job and function, which explains their skill in the use of ships and oars:

Πομπῆν δ’ ὀτρύνει, καὶ λίσσεται ἐμπεδὸν εἶναι.
Ἱμεῖς δ’, ὡς τὸ πάρος περὶ, ἐποτρυνώμεθα πομπῆν.
Οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲ τὶς ὄλλος, ὃτις κ’ ἐμὰ δῶμαθ’ ὕκηται,
ἐνθάδ’ ὀδυρόμενος δὴρόν μένει εἰνεκα πομπῆς. (8.30-33)

He urges a convoy, and he begs that it be certain. Let us then, as in previous times, hurry with a convoy. For nobody else, who may come to my house, stays for a long time here, lamenting for a convoy.

Alcinous’ confidence in their sailing skills overcomes reason: he promises Odysseus return home, in a one-day trip only, before he even knows where his guest’s destination is (7.318-324). But Alcinous also recalls a previous (in Rhadamanthys’ lifetime!) journey to Euboea, the farthest land from which the sailors also returned in a day. This exploit was most likely due to their astounding ships, which did not need helmsmen or rudders to aim in the right direction since they were endowed with the ability to read men’s νοήματα and φρένες: the Phaeacians’ ships were sailing at mind’s speed, as it were.

79 In Cameron (1989): 22. In Manuli’s words (1983), quoted by King, woman is “an uninterrupted vagina from nostrils to womb,” and in King’s formulation, “a hollow tube with a mouth (stoma) at each end.” Within the Eleusinian mysteries, the neophyte’s initiation is symbolized by running across a bridge during the ritual travel from Athens to Eleusis; the bridge is another representation of the narrow passageway connecting distant elements. In a scholion on Hesiod, Ὀμ. 389, Proclus cites the ritual words: παράθει, Κόρη, γέφυραν ὅσον στέκοι τρίπολον δή.
The geographical centrality of feminine φρένες in the palace of Scheria is thus corroborated by the adjacent relevance of the essentially Phaeacian ship-sailing function. The presence of the element ναυσι in Nausithoos name, Nausicaa’s name and the most frequent epithet of the Phaeacians (the Φαίηκες ναυσικλυτοί, 7.39) suggests “ship-oaring” as the marked, unifying characteristic of their race. The catalogue of the Phaeacian men (8. 110-119) contains a list of names that are all related to the sea and sailing skill. Nausicaa’s name is thus embedded in the most essential feature of the Phaeacians and, if Hinrichs’ hypothesis that the latter part of her name is connected to καίνυμαι, she is quite the most “shining,” visible part of their identity as sailors. But, as we have seen in the description of the entrance, women’s skill in creating textiles is equal only to men’s nautical skill. It is only when Alcinous admits the supernatural character of their fleet that we are allowed to understand the profound connection between the two preferred Phaeacian activities: they both elude sequential time and disregard distance.

In this outstretched subjective time, the most appropriate activity is play: Nausicaa and the girls throw a ball, which unwittingly crosses an invisible playground boundary and reaches the out-of-their-world Odysseus. The motif of the play as preceding and announcing abduction in Persephone’s case is reversed in the Odyssey by Odysseus playing along – not with the ball, but with the ludic skill of stepping out of time: if the first day in Scheria lasts two books, the second day (which is also the day of the return to Ithaca) is protracted for five more

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80 Hinrichs (1885).
81 In his discussion of ball playing in Anacreon 358 PMG and Homer, Pfeijffer (2000:166) remarks on the unwittingly erotic character of Nausicaa’s act of throwing a ball at Odysseus. Euripides (Ion 492 ff.) mentions a special place on the Acropolis where the arrhephoroi could play ball; see also Plut. Mor. 839c, which calls the place σφαιρίστρα. Calame (1997:42, 87-88, 131) points to similarities between Nausicaa and her companions’ ball game and choral performance.
books of entertainment and childish story time. Odysseus receives clothing and gives back stories.\textsuperscript{82}

To conclude, in order to avoid being trapped on Scheria, Odysseus uses a strategy of mirroring Nausicaa’s αἰδώς, marked by profuse creation of covering textiles or texts and indefinite delay. Moreover, by offering the Phaeacians a complex image of themselves as “others” in his Apologoi, he justifies their hospitality and ensures his escape from the realm of possibility.

\textsuperscript{82} Burgess (2012) discusses the motif of belatedness in the Phaeacian episode, as reflected in Odysseus’ embedded narratives.
2 Sappho: Longing for παρθενία

2.1 A maiden’s wedding: private and public

If Nausicaa is associated with the far-away community and territory of the Phaeacians, suspended in between claims of reality and fiction, the representation of παρθενία in Sappho’s poetry is strongly connected with the overwhelmingly central place played by the wedding event in her choral poems. A wedding is not a mere (unrealized) promise, as for Homer’s Nausicaa, or a feared and deferred reality as in tragedy, but an intensely joyful event which both acknowledges a maiden’s dreams within the acceptance of community and asks for celebration. In the following analysis, I will look at the principal images (or lack thereof) which appear in Sappho’s extant poetry to suggest a smooth, seemingly undisrupted transition from maiden to married.

According to the testimonium of Demetrius of Phaleron, Sappho’s poetry was completely concerned with bridal gardens, songs and erotics: νυμφαῖοι κῆποι, ύμέναιοι, ἔρωτες, ὅλη ἡ Σαπφοῦς πόησις (De Elocutione 132). All the three elements mentioned in Demetrius’ climax, ascending from concrete to general, should be read as modified by the adjective νυμφαῖοι; thus, for Demetrius the wedding event is at the core of Sappho’s poetry.

Νύμφα is repeatedly mentioned as the bride in Sappho’s epithalamia (30V, 103V and 103BV, 114V, 116V), and never with the sense of “divinity dwelling in the forests, springs, trees or

83 Another ancient testimonium, Himerius (Or. I.4), points to the same epithalamic matter: Σαπφοῖ καὶ ἄδειν πρὸς λόφαν καὶ πουξίν τὸν ἐπιθαλάμιον. Suda (107, 108) assigns her nine books of lyric poems. Philostratus (Vit. Apoll. 1.30) mentions that Sappho composed love-songs and hymns (τὰ μὲν ἀρωτικά, τὰ δ’ ὑμνοὺς) among her group of girls/disciples (παρθένους ὃς ὀμιλητρίας). Michael of Italy (= 194aV) refers to Sappho’s descriptions of bridegrooms and brides. For a complete list of testimonia see Voigt (1971: 155-174) and Campbell (1982: 2-51).
84 The other fragmentary poems which other appear to be carmina nuptialia (without the occurrence of the word νύμφα) are: 18V, 27V, 43V, 53V, 56V, 104aV (West 1997: 529), 110V, 111V, 112V, 113V, 115V, 117aV, 117bV, 121V, 141V, 161V. The epithalamic nature of 31V is disputed (Lardinois 1996: 167-169, Lanata 1996:
mountains.” She is contrasted to (and typically surrounded by) both maidens and married women. For example, in 30V, a διεγερτικόν song addressed to the groom, maidens celebrate the groom and the bride through the night and into the morning:

νύκτ[...].[
  πάρθενοι δ[πάννυχίσδοι[σ]αί[
  σάν ἄειδοιος[ι]ν φ[ιλότατα καὶ νύμφας ιοκόλπω.

At night … maidens, celebrating all night, sing of the love between you and the violet-bosomed bride.

In 44V, Andromache is not called a νύμφα but in the wedding procession both adult women and maidens ride chariots to the seashore to welcome Hector bringing Andromache from Thebe: γυναίκων τ’ ἁμα παρθενίκα[ν] τ.[…]σφύρων. Both groups of women sing separate hymns to the married couple (πάρ[θενοι/ άειδον μέλος ἄγν[ον and γόνακες δ’ ἐλέλυσδον ὅσαι προγενέστερα[ι], while accompanied by young men playing the flute and afterwards by all men with their loud shouts.

In 96V, Atthis’ former admirer is now in Sardis and surpasses all Lydian women in beauty. The reader can presume that the girl married and left; there is no mention of either πάρθενος, νύμφα, or γυνή, since through poetic memory the past maiden and the present

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22, also Lardinois 2001 who argues that both 16V and 31V were performed at wedding banquets). The description of Hector and Andromache’s wedding in 44V could have been performed as the narrative part of an epithalamion, in the same way 141V, which sings a wedding in Olympus (perhaps Hercules and Hebe’s or Peleus and Thetis’) might have been part of an epithalamion. On the Greek use of the terms “hymenaios” and “epithalamion” see Muth (1954), Contiades-Tsitsoni (1990), Calame (1997: 83-85).

85 The description of the sea are invoked in 5V, together with (conjectured) Cypris, in the prayer for the brother’s safe return, but as Νηρήιδες and not as νύμφαι. Similarly, spring nymphs are mentioned in the three-word fragment 103C Vb, partially restored by Campbell (1982: 200) as: ἕκλων ε[ι Κρανναδέ[ις δ[παθεν[κας, not with the word νύμφαι but with a name derived from their realm of influence and in association with maidens. For the relation between the two meanings of νύμφα, see Larson (1997), who distinguishes between “Artemis nymphs” (category which includes the brides) and “Hermetic (or cultic) nymphs.”

86 Song that is sung into the morning after the wedding by friends of the bride and groom (Lardinois 1996: 157-158). Fragment 43V, addressed probably to the maidens celebrating outside the bedchamber, also mentions the nearness of day succeeding the wedding night: ἀλλ’ ἄγιτ’, ὦ φίλαι, ἀγα γάρ ἀμέρα.
woman are opposed and identified (while the wedding is left unarticulated). Sappho likes to portray glimpses of the aftermath of a wedding, with its unsentimental nostalgia. If mortals retain a serene nostalgia, goddesses only are able to thoroughly evade time and becoming. Artemis, in 44A V, at the same time promises and asks Zeus to grant her eternal maidenhood:

...μέγαν ὄρκον ἀπώμοσε
κεφάλαν· ἄι πάρθενος ἔσσομαι
]. ὁν ὄρεων κορύφαιος ἔπι
]δὲ νεύσον ἐμαν χάριν·

She swore a great oath: By your head, I will be a maiden forever, on the mountain peaks; grant this, for my sake.

This last poem, initially assigned to Alcaeus, was most likely addressed to Leto (ἔτικε Κόω κ[όρα in the second line) and her two children conceived with Zeus; it uniquely depicts Artemis as a precocious infant, deciding right after birth to live up in the mountains and shun Eros (Ἐρος οὐδάμα πύλαται) apparently in contrast to her mother. If Artemis is only mentioned here in Sappho’s extant poetry, and not in prayer or direct appellation, but in the narrative of her divine family, Aphrodite (with her various appellatives) is often present in the surviving fragments, once accompanying the Nereids (5V), sometimes surrounding and beautifying the bride in epithalamia (112V, also perhaps 44V) and most often in intimate religious entreaties (1V, 2V, 5V, 12V, 22V, 33V, 86V, 133V, 134V). This overwhelming

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87 On the authorship of 44A see Page and Lobel (1952), Treu (1968), and Kirkwood (1974).
88 The only other two occurrences of Artemis in Sappho’s extant poetry are 84V, too fragmentary to speculate on its context, and 103V. This last poem is an epithalamion, and παῖδα Κρονίδα τάν ἰὸ[κολ]πα[ν shows up a line after the mention of the bride.
89 An intriguing fact, noticed and discussed by Larson (1997), is that Artemis, with the exception of Homer’s Nausicaa, is normally not accompanied by nymphs in Greek literature before the Hellenistic period. In lyric poetry, the nymphs are rather associated with Aphrodite, Eros, or Dionysus (Larson 1997: 249, n.3). Would that be because the underlying meaning of “maiden-to-be-married” was not compatible with Artemis? Later on, the maiden stopped in her development, eternally to be married, eternally in transition, would become associated with Artemis as the goddess of transition. If this interpretation is correct, Homer’s comparison of Nausicaa to Artemis highlights and foreshadows her failure to grow into a γυνή. Additionally, this late image of a chorus of nymphs or maidens surrounding Artemis might have fueled the two testimonia which refer to hymns to Artemis in the Sapphic corpus (Philostratus, Vita Apollonii 1.30 and Menander the Orator, Peri epid. 132).
stress on erotic desire suggests that virginal Artemis was not “a divine model to follow” for girls conflictingly taught that “virginity kept was glorious, while virginity lost in a wedding-bed was an even more splendid thing” as envisioned by Burnett (1983: 216-217). Virginity is not normative or prescribed anywhere in the Sapphic poems: instead, it is intensely described, and its main features, which I will discuss below, are meant to be carefully preserved through a non-violent wedding and beyond.

In fact, one of the significant differences between Sappho’s poetry and other surviving Partheneia (Alcman Fragments 1, 3; Pindar, Partheneion 2, and probably also 1)\(^{90}\) is Sappho’s particular interest in the portrayal of the transition from maiden to married woman to old woman. Despite strong similarities in tone with the genre of Partheneia, convincingly proposed by scholars (Calame 1997: 231-263; Hallett 1996: 139-142; Lardinois 1996: 159-172), Sappho’s poems eschew the strict definition of partheneion as “nothing but a poem sung by a chorus of adolescent girls for adolescent girls” (Calame 1997: 3) on account of the strong auctorial voice.\(^{91}\) According to all probabilities, Sappho was not a maiden when she composed her poetry, but rather an adult woman, who wrote and performed maiden songs. Her perspective is thus temporally more distant than Alcman or Pindar in their partheneia, which are clearly sung by girls about and to other girls. Sappho’s poetry is rather about the becoming of παρθενία, its transformation into married life and motherhood, and, backwards, about the mother’s and old woman’s celebration and recovery of παρθενία through memory and song.

The focus on the wedding as the connecting element between maidenhood and maturity sets

\(^{90}\) For Alcman’s Partheneia see Page 1951 and Calame 1997: 2-7. Pindar’s first Partheneion was sung by a male, and maiden-odes “were sung by girls to the accompaniment of the pipe and included dancing” (Race 1997: 321). Pindar composed three books of partheneia; Pindar’s second Partheneion belongs to a species of the genre, called daphnephorikon (Phot. Bibl. 321a34 and b23), apparently an ode sung during a festival in which boys wear branches of bay to the temple of Apollo at Thebes (Pausanias 9.10.4). This is a striking parallel to the maidens’ Spartan festival dedicated to Artemis Korythallia (Calame 1997: 169-174).

\(^{91}\) Stehle (1996: 146-149) points out Sappho’s departure from Alcman’s model with respect with the used imagery (filly, sprig, and sunlight similes for girls in Alcman, but not in Sappho). Skinner (1996: 186-187 and 190) argues for more openly competitive homoerotics in Alcman in comparison to Sappho’s greater interest in reciprocity.
Sappho apart; παρθενία is a life stage not supposed to be violently interrupted by adulthood, but conversely opening up to both the life of the married woman and mother and old age.

On the other hand, this very interest in the transitional moment from πάρθενος to γυνή and the difficult-to-grasp νύμφα justifies and upholds the eminently public character of Sappho’s poems. A number of scholars, including Calame (1976 and 1996), Lardinois (1996), Carson (1980), and Nagy (1996), have argued for the public character of Sappho’s poetry, well integrated within the genre of maidens’ choral performances and in dialogue with other lyric poets and Homer. On the other hand, Winkler (1996:89) reads Demetrius’ statement as indicating that Sappho’s poetry is “focused on women and sexuality,”92 and for this reason eminently private.93 But Winkler’s translation “gardens of nymphs” for νυμφαιοι κηποι, despite his subsequent elaborate and excellent discussion of the word νύμφη (1996:102-105), circumvents the crucial element of wedding, with its inherent double character, public and private, visible and invisible, communal and intimate, in Sappho’s poetry.

Once we agree, according to the preserved fragments and testimonia, that Sappho’s poetical main concern is weddings and not women, the tension between private and public moves from the literary code (monody versus choral performance) to the nature of the topic; the topic (Demetrius’ τὰ πράγματα) of Sappho’s poetry is maidens’ anticipation, anxiety and vicarious experience of their wedding – the public, visible and necessarily transparent signifier of an invisible, turned-into-signified sexual union. Homer’s Nausicaa also refers to the marital

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92 Winkler (1996:89). A first version of this paper was published in Foley (1981) and a second version as a chapter in his The Constraints of Desire (1990:162-187) with the title changed into “Double Consciousness in Sappho’s Lyrics”.

93 According to Winkler’s interpretation (Winkler 1996: 90 ff.), Sappho’s voice is a doubly gendered voice which manipulates, in order to subvert it, the male voice dominating the public sphere; her poetry would be, thus, necessarily private, in the three-fold sense of “composed in the person of a woman (whose consciousness was socially defined as outside the public world of men); second, shared only with women (that is, other “private” persons); and third, sung on informal occasions, what we would simply call poetry readings, rather than on specific ceremonial occasions such as sacrifice, festival, leave-taking, or initiation.” The third element of Winkler’s definition of “private” in Sappho’s poetry does not take into account precisely the wedding from the possible public ceremonies for which women could have composed and performed songs.
union as being open, public (ἀμφάδιον γάμον), as opposed to a girl’s secret “mixing” with men, without her parents’ consent (Od. 6.285-287). From this point of view, the uneasy act of bringing a girl’s sexuality into the open, through the institution of marriage, is concentrated in the challenge to describe and define the maiden and future bride. The following analysis will particularly consider Sappho’s use of description and imagery within the context of an expected wedding.

2.2 Flowers, garlands, and virginity

In 44A V, the ἄι πάρθενος Artemis is, as expected, associated with hunting up the mountains, in inaccessible places, with no mention of flowers or fruit surrounding her. The kind of maiden otherwise portrayed in Sappho’s poetry comes closer to the rich flowery imagery associated with Aphrodite. Maidenhood on the verge of sexual maturity and flowers is an association as old as perhaps the Homeric Hymn to Demeter (Hymns 2): when Persephone recounts to her mother the experience of being abducted she uses a catalogue to list her maiden companions (418-424) and next to it, another catalogue, strikingly parallel, to list the flowers (425-428) they were busy picking when the earth unexpectedly gaped open and Hades appeared. The metaphor underlying the motif is that maidens are flowers, to bloom, be picked up, and wither. Flowery imagery (particularly meadows and maidens culling flowers) to predict imminent defloration is standard language in tragedy. Archilochus chooses flowers both for the bodily virginity (ἄνθος δ’ἀπερρήηκε παρθενήμον) and the place of the loss of virginity:

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94 For a detailed summary of ancient sources which associate maidens with flowers, see Stehle Stigers (1977, esp. n. 7). For metaphors based on flowers or gardens, see Motte (1973).
95 Lefkowitz (1993: 25-30) discusses the picking of flowers in the context of gods abducting mortal women (Europa and Zeus, Creusa and Apollo, Persephone and Hades).
96 For tragedy, see Caldwell (1974: 59) on virginity and defloration, and Loraux (1987) on sacrifice and defloration.
Nausicaa and her maidens in the Odyssey do not pick up flowers before encountering Odysseus, but flowery imagery dominates the Phaeacian episode, since ἀνθος words show up nine times in books 6 to 12, mainly to describe fantastic landscape, out of a total of eleven times in the entire poem; this fact supports the argument made in the previous chapter that Nausicaa’s virginity is displaced on to other parts of the Phaeacian episode and particularly into Odysseus’ Apologoi. In the following section, I will look at the relation between flowers and maidens’ bodies in Sappho’s fragments.

The abundance of flowers mentioned by Sappho (ἀνθος and compounds nine times, βρόδον and compounds eleven times, ἰον and compounds five times, ύακινθος twice, λωτός twice, κρόκιος once or possibly twice) overwhelmingly occurs in the context of constructing mental images either to describe past maidenly experiences, through recollection, or to depict the epiphany of Aphrodite.

In 94V Sappho recalls past erotic exchanges of flowers turned into jewellery or clothes: πόλλοις γὰρ στεφάνοις ἰών/ καὶ βρόδοις κρόκιοι τ’ ὄμοι/ κα...[ ] πάρ ἐμοὶ περεθέκαο,/ καὶ πόλλαις ὑπαιθυμίδας/ πλέκ[ταις ἁμφ’ ἀ]πάλαι δέραι/ ἀνθέων ἐ[βαλες] πεποημέναις. Similarly, in 96V, the attempt to represent a former friend, now far away in Sardis, erupts in blossomy imagery: the rose-fingered moon covers the flowery fields where roses, delicate chervil, and flowery melilot bloom. Segal (1998) has pointed out how the moon and the Pleiades are often associated with maidens and their choruses, organized in circles which surround the most beautiful girl, who stands out from the group; fragment 34 similarly evokes...
the stars hiding away because of the beautiful shining moon (ἄστερες μὲν ὧμιφι κάλαν σελάνναν/ ἂψ ἀπυκρύπτοισι). But the added floral element in 96V renders the image even more peculiar, underscoring its distant fragility.

The question that needs to be raised is whether these flowers are, consistently with their associations in other Greek texts, foreshadowing the irreversible loss of παρθενία. In 105bV, the hyacinth poem, shepherds are heedlessly trampling over the flower, whose fragility is further underscored by its singular number, in contrast with the plural of the shepherds, the shepherds’ feet and of the mountains: οἱαν τὰν ὑάκινθον ἐν ὃρεσι ποίμενες ἄνδρες/ πόσι καταστείβοισι, χάμαι δὲ τε πόρφυρον/ ἄνθος. The usual heedlessness of the maiden who playfully, unaware of the consequences, culls flowers, is transferred by Sappho to the shepherds, who fail to notice their trampling of the hyacinth. In another unique occurrence, the one-line fragment 122V, Sappho looks at a girl who picks up flowers: ἄνθε’ ἀμέργοισαν παῖδ’ ἄγαν ἀπάλαν. The fragment is quoted by Athenaeus (12.554b) as similar to Persephone’s companions picking up flowers; for Athenaeus, the activity itself mirrors the maidens’ perception of themselves (φυσικὸν γὰρ δὴ τί τοῦ ὀιομένου ἐἶναι καλοὺς καὶ ὠραίους ἄνθολογεῖν); from such a perspective, the very fact that the girl is tender (ἀπάλαν) justifies her action of picking up flowers. Indeed, despite the scarcity of the surviving poems, epithets suggesting bodily delicacy and tenderness abound, often in the same context with flowers: ἀβρα (2V about Aphrodite pouring nectar in golden cups, after the flowery description of her grove, 44V about bride Andromache, 128V about the Graces, 100V about clothing), ἀπάλα (44V if the suggested compound ἀπαλόσφυρον is correct, about maidens’ ankles, 82V about a girl Gyrinno, 94V about a tender neck covered with flowery necklaces, 81V about the soft hands of a girl who binds together shoots of anise, 96V about flowers of chervil, 126V about a soft companion’s breast), βράδινος (44bV about Graces, 102V describing Aphrodite, 115V
about the groom as sapling) or μολθάκα (46V about cushions, 94V about beds). There is a mild contact between the body and its surrounding textiles or coverings, but the maidens too are conceived as both having and lacking material firmness, as though their tactilely perceivable materiality opens up and gets absorbed into non-materiality.

Moreover, if Persephone becomes fascinated by the most alluring flower of them all, the θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι narcissus, Sappho’s flowers are neither hierarchized (although girls are) nor, with the exception of the hyacinth in 105bV, used in the singular. The flowers are ubiquitous and many, often wreathed in garlands, and, rather than metaphors for virginity, they function as metonymies, actual bodily parts of maidens. The tight connection of the garlands is indicative of a maiden’s belief in a world fitting together, in which there is no clear demarcation between her body and the world surrounding it. Thus the wedding itself, by harmoniously joining private with public and adolescence with maturity, is not a tragic separation from one’s childhood, but another expression of παρθενία. On another note, the poetic act of singing about absences (one’s youth or one’s beloved) articulates the recovery of the virginal belief in yet-uncovered connections through imaginative processes such as memory, prayers or wishes. The land of the (virginal) muses, covered in roses, ensures immortality through memory:

Κατθάνοισা δὲ κείσῃ οὐδὲ ποτα μναμοσύνα σέθεν ἐσσετ’ οὐδὲ πόθα εἰς ὤστερον· οὐ γὰρ πεδέχῃς βρόδων τῶν ἐκ Πιερίας, ἀλλ’ ἀφάνης κάν Αἴδα δόμωι φοιτάσης πεδ’ ἀμαύρων νεκύων ἐκπεποταμένα. (55V)

But dead, you will lie and there will be no memory or longing for you into posterity: for you will have no share in the roses of Pieria, but invisible and in the house of Hades you will wander, flown away (from us), among blind corpses.

Not only is death a separation, but it is also unmistakably both a source of invisibility and forgetfulness. Poetry acts as a bridge that makes absence, death, invisibility, present and
visible. In her analysis of the particular kind of visuality displayed in Sappho’s poetry, Stehle (1996: 220) points out how, by avoiding the opposition gazer/gazed and the objectification of the beloved, “a woman’s beauty is deflected onto the landscape.”

I would contend that rather than “deflected” through similes or metaphors, the woman’s body takes up space, expands into its surroundings, while the visual joy stems from a recovery of an absence through imagination. Sappho seems to have a strong preference for metonymies: their contiguity suggests connection and interconnectedness, and renders the symbolic system illusory. Clothing and flowers for example are not disguises but extensions, increments of a girl’s body, making it difficult to assert where the body finishes and the adornments begin. In fr. 81V, the crowns of flowers and Dika’s locks are joined together through her delicate hands:

σὺ δὲ στεφάνοις, ὦ Δίκα, πέρθεσθ’ ἔρατοις φόβαισιν
ὁρπακας ἀνίτῳ συναέρραιοι ἀπάλαιοι χέρσιν:
εὐάνθεα γὰρ πέλεται καὶ Χάριτες μάκαραι
μᾶλλον προτερην, ἀστεφανώτοισι δ’ ἀπουστρέφονται. (81V)

Dika, you cover with garlands your lovely locks, gathering the sprigs of aneth with your soft hands: for the blessed Graces hold more dear the one adorned by flowers and turn away from those who are uncrowned.

Fr. 92V, which only preserves the line beginnings (πέπλον... κροκοεντα[... πέπλον
πορφυ[ρ.... χλαιναι περσ[... στέφανοι περ[), mentions clothes, textiles, and garlands all together. A sandal strip, beautiful Lydian work, hides a maiden’s feet in 39V (πόδας δὲ/ ποίκιλος μάσλης ἐκάλυπτε, Λύδι-ον κάλον ἔργον).

To continue with other associations between maidens and clothing, fragment 98V apparently describes the relationship between a mother (or older woman) and a daughter (or younger woman) in terms of the continuity between hair and the indispensable ribbons. By

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97 In another formulation, “a woman’s beauty is displaced onto the surroundings: song, scents, flowers, rich cloth, enclosed places all reflect the woman’s erotic attractiveness” (Stehle 1996: 220). On the “enclosed places,” traditionally associated with women, and their relative absence in Sappho’s extant poetry, see below.
recalling her own mother’s youth (ἀ γὰρ μ’ ἐγέννα[τ]/ σφᾶς ἐπ’ ἀλκίας μέγ[αν]) the mother reaches forth to the daughter; she looks at her hair in its process of becoming more yellow than a torch and imagines for her the matching headband. The going back and forth between memory and future desire encompasses the ever-moving, difficult-to-grasp present, which is nevertheless made concrete in the visibly more colourful hair: ἀλλὰ ξανθότεραις ἔχηι / ταῖς κόμαις δύδος. The fondness between mother and daughter, articulated through a shared understanding of longing, is depicted through a unique reference to wool weaving in Sappho fragment 102V:

γλύκηα μάτερ, οὕτω δύναμι κρέκην τὸν ίστον πόθῳ δόμεισα παιδὸς βραδίναν δὶ’ Ἀφροδίταν.

Sweet mother, I cannot strike my loom as I am overpowered with longing for a boy (girl?) because of slender Aphrodite.

As it does for Penelope in the Odyssey, longing interferes with handiwork; but instead of oblivion and solace from desire, weaving becomes impossible in a state of mental surrender to imagination. Longing creates disorder, and, if we read κρέκην τὸν ἱστον metaphorically for playing the lyre, the act of poetry too becomes hindered. Mother and daughter are connected through an invisible, delicate, shared performance of weaving and wishing.

The lack of clearly defined limits between an adolescent’s body and golden flowers is expressed again in 132V, another poem expressing an inter-generational flow of affection:

ἐστὶ μοι κάλα πάις χρυσόισιν ἀνθέμοισιν ἐμφέρην ἔχουσα μόρφαν Κλέις ἀγαπάτα, ἀντὶ ταῖς ἐγοινδὲ Λυδίαν παῖσαν οὐδ’ ἔράνναν...

I have a beautiful girl who has a shape resembling golden flowers; she is my beloved Kleis, instead of whom I would not want all Lydia, not even lovely…

The blond hair and the golden flowers are recurrent motifs in Sappho’s descriptions; furthermore, both a scholiast on Pindar and Pausanias (204V) comment on a lost passage by
Sappho which possibly acclaimed gold’s immortality, on account of its being indestructible: ὁ δὲ χρυσὸς ἀφθαρτος. Καὶ Ἡ Σαπφὼ ὅτι Διὸς παῖς ὁ χρυσός.

After marriage though, the previous tightly woven clothes and garlands conspicuously tend to change into song and poetical images which suggest a yearning for rebuilding, repairing the former connection. In fr. 96V, Atthis’ former lover, now in Sardis, is compared to the rose-fingered Moon, which pours light over sea and flowery fields, as though expanding her body in her attempt to reach the earth:

ά βροδοδάκτυλος σελάννα
πάντα περρέχοις ἁστρα· φάος δ’ ἐπί-
σχει θάλασσαν ἐπ’ ἀλμύραν
ἰσως καὶ πολυανθέμοις ἁρφύραις·

The rose-fingered moon, which surpasses all the stars; its light spreads over the salty sea and likewise over the flowery fields.

The Moon has rose fingers and pours light, while beautiful dew flows over the blooming roses (ἀ δ’ ἔρσα κάλα κέχυται), as though the roses mediate a continuous flow between Moon and Earth; likewise, the departed lover reaches beyond her body, beyond distance, and beyond the constraints of present time, through thinking and memory, to Atthis:

πόλλα δὲ ξαφοίταισ’ ἀγάνας ἐπι-
μνάσθεισ’ Ἀτθιδος ἰμέροι
λέπταν ποι φρένα κ[.]ρ ... βόρηται

Often wandering, and remembering Atthis with desire, she consumes (?) her delicate mind somewhere

Sappho prefers to describe body parts that yearn to connect – arms, fingers, feet, neck, for which she often uses compound epithets that attempt to unite disconnected elements. Moreover, often these compounds unite body parts and flowers to suggest their continuity; βροδοδάκτυλος σελάννα is an example; another is the rose-armed but also golden-armed and golden-sandaled Dawn in 58V (βροδόπαχυν Αὖων), 6V (πότνια... χρυσόπ[αχυς]), 103
in 30V the bride is violet-bosomed (νόμφας ιοκόλπω) and also violet-bosomed is Aphrodite in 103V (παιδα Κρονίδα τὰν ιόκολπον) and perhaps 21V (ἀεισον ἄμμι/ τὰν ιόκολπον): does the epithet imply that the breasts are covered in violets, or the robe covering them is violet (metonymy), or that they are soft and delicate as violets (metaphor)? The contiguity renders the metaphor material and concrete. A similar proximity between flowers and prolonged body parts shows up in 94V: the tender neck of the departed beloved is recalled as surrounded by wreaths of flowers (πόλλαις ὑπαθύμιδας/ πλέκταις ἄμφ’ ἀπάλαι δέραι/ ἀνθέων).

Other compounds are used to describe bodily extremities. The Dawn has golden sandals (χρυσοπέδιλος Αὔως 103V, 123V), and in 101V Aphrodite wears a headband called χερβόμακτρα (κόσμον λέγει κεφαλῆς τὰ χειρόμακτρα). The bride has beautiful feet (103V εὐπόδα). But the most important “extension” of the body, the voice, often appears in compounds: πάρθενον ἀδύφωνον (153V), λεπτοφών (24cV), ἀλιγύφωνος ὄρνις (30V). In the apple poem (105V), Sappho contrasts the apple and the harvesters by using compound words for both, in opposite positions in the line (beginning and end): γλυκύμαλον and μαλοδρόπηες. The use of compounds corroborates the (unfulfilled) yearning for union, as in fragment 52V where the lyric subject realizes she cannot touch the sky with her arms (ψαύην δ’ οὐ δοκίμωμ’ ὀράνω δυσπαχέα).

Perhaps the most famous Sapphic compound epithet is Aphrodite’s unique appellation as ποικιλόθρον’ in 1V. Its first part (ποικιλο-), as Burnett (1983: 249) reveals, traditionally signifies complexity and intricacy, specific either to crafted objects (particularly patterned embroidery, like the Sardian headband in Sappho 98V, but also the exquisite Lydian sandal in 39V or Andromache’s dowry in 44V) or to one’s mind (Odysseus, Zeus, and Hermes were all described as ποικιλομήτης in Il. 11.482, Od. 3.163; 13.293; Hymns 3.322; Hymns 18.155). The
meaning of the second part, though, has been disputed: it originates either in θρόνος, “chair,” or in θρόνα, a plural neuter unrelated to the former term and meaning either “flowers embroidered on a peplos” (θρόνα ποικίλα Il. 22.441), or in a later usage (e.g. Theoc. 2.59) “herbs used as drugs and charms.” In my view, the second translation coheres better with the pattern of descriptive compounds in Sappho’s poetry; as it joins together metonymically flowers, clothing, and intricacy (that is, keeping connections invisible) to describe Aphrodite’s body. I would not go as far as Neuberger-Donath (1969) who proposed reading instead of ποικιλόθρον ποικιλόφρον (used as an epithet for Zeus by Alcaeus 69V or as another epithet of Odysseus in Euripides’ Hecuba 131), but interpreting it as paronomasia seems plausible. Sappho not infrequently mentions φρήν with its inner connotations of erotic disarray preceded or followed by peacefulness in our fragments (3V, 43V, 47V, 48V, 96V, 103V, 120V). Perhaps poem 47V is the most complete to give us an understanding of the disorder Eros causes to the convolutedly orderly φρένες:

"Ερος δ’ ἐτίναξέ μοι
φρένας, ώς ἀνεμος κἀτ’ ὅρος δρύσιν ἐμπέτων.

Eros shook my insides, as a wind blowing into oaks down the mountain.

Motion and movement are another way to generate a complex, fluid description. When she describes what she thinks is the most beautiful thing in the world, in poem 16, whose logic has been the subject of a long debate, Sappho mentions her desire for Anactoria’s lovely walk and bright face.

τὰς κε βολλοίμαν ἑρατόν τε βάμα
καμάρυχμα λάμπρον ἵδην προσώπω

98 The first suggestion that its meaning was “with ornate flower decorations” was made in 1868 by G. Wustmann (RM 23). For a complete history of the debate see Burnett (1983: 250, note 53).
I wish I could see her lovely step and bright, colourful face rather than Lydian chariots and armed infantry.

If walk is a source of desire and ever changing contours, desire produces movement also in the one experiencing it: most beautiful Helen, in her desire for Paris, walks and sails to Troy (while the ships mentioned in line 2 are static). Most beautiful Helen’s stepping away (ἔβα) turns into most beautiful Anactoria’s ἔρατον βάμα. Walk is mentioned two other times by Sappho, both referring to girls/ women (19V and 44V, line 14), but other kinds of body movements abound: the verb στείχειν is used for the wedding procession (27V: στείχομεν γὰρ ἐς γάμον; 30V: στείχει σοις ὑμάλικας, this last one about the bridegroom).

Scholars have long noticed the peculiar type of motion evoked by Sappho, particularly when discussing the beloved’s successive fleeing and chasing in 1V. Very much like in a maidens’ chorus, the characters come closer to or further away from each other, in a repeated sequence. The dance is directly suggested in Fragment 58, within the “New Sappho” poems, also in the presence of horse imagery. In fr. 58, the now old knees are likened in their dancing youth with fawns (ἴσα νεβρίοισι). Although a popular simile in lyric poetry (Alcman 1.47), maidens are not directly compared to horses in our extant fragments from Sappho; but φόβα, horses’ mane (or bushes of flowers), is used several times for girls’ locks (81V, 98V, 103V).

Sappho’s insistence on portraying connections and proximity renders the margins between metonymy and metaphor, between contiguity and similarity undistinguishable; Sappho’s metaphor stems from metonymy and metonymy, through a childlike leap of faith, stems from the physical body or world, so that you cannot pinpoint the place where language and referent, culture and nature divorce.

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100 Will (1966).
101 On maidens and fillies, see Calame 1996.
2.3 Enclosed spaces and liberation

Despite sometimes being portrayed as “enclosed” or secluded by virtue of being a woman, Sappho rarely mentions interiors, such as houses or temples; *stathmoi*, chairs, walls, fenced gardens, or even the island do not occur in her extant poetry, and a loom only shows up once, and then as being ignored by an infatuated maiden (102V). Aphrodite is to leave her fatherly abode to aid distressed Sappho in poem 1V: πάτρος δὲ δόμον λίποισα/ χρύσιον ἤλθες.

And lack of knowledge of the Muses’ flowers sends a woman unseen, into the house of Hades: ἀφάνης κὰν Αἴδα δόμῳ φοιτάσης (55V). In both occurrences, the “house” is distant and imagined. A much-debated passage is fragment 150V, as it appears to shed light on the enclosed nature of the poetry practiced by Sappho:

οὐ γὰρ θέμις ἐν μοισοπόλοιν <δόμῳ>
θρήνον ἔμμεν’· οὖ κ’ ἂμμι πρέποι τάδε.

For it is not right to have mourning in the house of those who serve the Muses. That would not be proper for us.

The passage comes to us through Maximus of Tyre, who makes the claim that Sappho was addressing her daughter; δόμωι is an emendation for οἰκίᾳ, which is in the manuscript but does not fit the meter. According to Lardinois (1996: 155), this was probably the reason why scholars (such as Burnett 1983: 211) assume that in 150V Sappho talks about her own house.

With the exception of this last fragment, while enclosure images are generally avoided, when they do appear they are either imaginary or seem to explode from the inside. In *epithalamia*, songs surrounding the wedding chamber, we have some indirect suggestions of

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103 Lesbos is fleetingly mentioned in 17V with a deictic (τοῖς ἀπορμάθεν[τές]), the “Hymn to Hera” in the context of the myth of the Atridae who started their journey from Lesbos.
enclosure; the wedding room is metonymically suggested through its roof (111V) which needs to be raised in order that the groom may enter:

\[\text{ἵψοι δὴ τὸ μέλαθρον, ύμηναιν, άέρρετε, τέκτονες ἀνδρεῖς· ύμηναιν. Γάμβρος (εἰσ)έρχεται Ἰσος Ἄρεωι, ἀνδρος μεγάλω πόλυ μέσδων.}\]

Up high should go the roof – Hymenaeus! Raise it up, carpenters – Hymenaeus! The bridegroom enters, equal to Ares, much greater than a great man.

From a mostly lost epithalamion (117aV) we have two words only ξοάνων προθύρων, “polished doorway,” and the door-keeper with his gigantic feet (θυρώρῳ πόδες ἐπτορόγυιοι) in 110V, indirectly suggests the chamber’s doors. Besides these two occurrences, there are no doors or gates in the “preserved” Sapphic landscape.

But even with few physical boundaries there is an urgent sense of confinement, particularly connected with immanence or the constraints of time. The desire to escape from the overwhelming immediacy of present time may appear to go against contiguity or the closeness between signifier and referent discussed above. In the face of an imminent separation between the signifier and its referent (the lover’s body is displaced, for Sappho she remains only a name), there is no other way to repair the separation but through strengthening the signified, the meaning of the beloved, recomposed in memory and poetry. Moreover, in fragment 94V, the recollection implies the physical description of the girl in whose body the past and present coincide: flowers accompany and join together her every body part, from the head crowns (πόλλοις γὰρ στεφάνοις ἰων/ καὶ βρόδων), to the necklaces (πόλλαις ... πλέκταις ἀμφ’ ἀπάλαι δέραι/ ἄνθεων), and the blossom myrrh (μύρωι/ βρενθείωι).\textsuperscript{104} While Stehle

\textsuperscript{104} As Winkler observes (1996:107), this reminder is constructed in terms of “moving down along the <girl’s> body.”
(1996: 219-225) argues, mainly based on 31V and 16V, that Sappho’s poetry avoids direct visuality and the “straightforward gaze,” I would rather say that Sappho’s imagery is very much visual and appreciates visibility (and beauty) but needs “absence” and an “invisible” element to lean on. When proximity allows no room for “inventing connections”, Sappho’s lyric subject cannot handle the immediate nature of the present moment, in which everything is visible and in the open, first language and then the body itself appears to disintegrate (31V):

&omicron; γάρ ἐς σ’ ἅδω βρόχε’, ὃς μὲ φῶναι-
σ’ οὖδ’ ἐν ἔτ’ ἐἵκει,
ἀλλὰ κἂμ μὲν γλώσσα (μ’) ἔσε 

For when I briefly look at you, it is no longer possible for me to speak, but my tongue has snapped

Besides its desire to escape the limitations of the physical world, Sappho’s poetry displays a craving to push the boundaries of language. According to Demetrius (De Elocutione 161), she was famous for her comparatives used as impossible superlatives: 105 πολὺ πάκτιδος ἀδυμελεστέρα.../ χρύσω χρυσότερα (156V). In the epithalamion quoted above (111V), the groom is “greater than a great man.” In 167V an unknown object or person is deemed “far whiter than an egg” (ὡίω πόλυ λευκότερον), while the daughter’s hair, as we have seen, is more yellow than a torch. Indeed, when the lyric subject becomes greener than the grass in 31V, at the end of a prolonged climax of bodily disorders, the hyperbole challenges the very limits of life: χλωροτέρα δὲ ποίας/ ἐμμι, τεθνάκην δ’ ὀλίγω ’παθεύης/ φαίνομ’ ἐμ’ αὐτ[α. The expression of the desire for death, which appears in other two fragments (94V, 95V), is compared by Lanata (1996: 19) to Anacreon 411a (ἀπὸ μοι θανεῖν γένοιτ’· οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἄλλη/ λύσις ἐκ πόνων γένοιτ’ οὐδαμά τόνδε), but I think that in Sappho it uncovers a desire for

105 Cf. Demetrius (De Eloc. 127): τὸ δὲ χρύσω χρυσότερα τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ἐν ὑπερβολῇ λέγεται καὶ αὐτὸ καὶ ἄδυνάτως.
106 Other similar passages are mentioned in Page (1955: 83).
escape into imagination. For Sappho the wish to be dead reveals the wish to see the dewy lotus flowers of the Acheron (95V).

It seems that Sappho’s poetic creativity has the power to disintegrate physical boundaries and connect, through intimate, unseen liaisons, things that seem to be disconnected. This deep conviction of the rootedness of the physical world into an unseen realm simultaneously shapes Sappho’s erotic and religious experience. Losing this sense of connectedness is losing virginity: the hyacinth that is trampled on and separated from its root (105bV) becomes ungrounded and dies.

Both apples and flowers, particularly the motif of maidens picking flowers discussed above, are associated in Greek literature with the wedding: parting from maidenhood is parting from a deep (and not completely visible) connection. But in contrast to the rich use of μῆλα in first erotic encounters for girls in Greek literature, Sappho uniquely chooses to represent the apple in a traditionally less interesting moment, that is before being picked up, in that prolonged interval of still hanging on a tree. The apple that is forgotten on its branch (105aV) remains suspended in its virginity, in its becoming; there is no impending fall but the uninterrupted process of “reddening:”

Οἶνον τὸ γλυκύμαλον ἔρευθεται ἀκρωι ἐπ᾿ ἔσδωι, ἀκρόν ἐπ᾿ ἀκροτάτωι, λελάθοντο δὲ μαλοδρόπης· οὐ μάν ἐκλελάθοντ, ἄλλ’ οὐκ ἐδύναντ’ ἐπίκεσθαι

Like the sweet apple reddens at the top of the branch, at its highest tip, and the apple pickers missed it. No, they have not missed it, but they could not reach it.

107 For a complete list of literary occurrences of apples from Antiquity through the Middle Ages to Modernity, with relevant bibliography, see Littlewood (1972), who prefers to explain the choice of this fruit as a token of love because of the “fructifying significance of the pips,” rather than due to its likeness to a woman’s breast: “the apple is, after all, in our oldest sources connected rather with marriage, the especial occasion on which fertility is encouraged, than with flirtation” (Littlewood 1972: 35). For other connotations of the apple, also in the context of the bride’s body, see Winkler (1996: 104-105).
The sensorial closeness of the apple, both sweet and red, is annulled by the insurmountable distance. But as so often in Sappho, the unattainability so emphasized through polyptoton and the superlative of the adjective ἄκρος (might that be a Hebrew influence?) does not generate a similar mental distance or forgetfulness.

On the contrary, the physical immediacy and intimacy is harmful, especially because it seems to be accompanied by mental neglect; the shepherds heedlessly trample on the mountain hyacinth (105bV):

οἶαν τὰν ύακινθὸν ἐν ὤρεσι ποίμενες ἄνδρες
πόσσι καταστείβοισι, χάμαι δὲ τέ πόρφυρον ἄνθος...

Like the hyacinth in the mountains, which shepherd men crush with their feet, and the purple flower lies on the ground…

The too high position of the apple becomes the too low position of the hyacinth: virginity challenges the limits of the open space of the physical world. The hyacinth itself lies on the contradiction between its high, isolated location in the mountains and its nearness to earth. Once the plant’s ties to earth are severed, the flower separates and lies on the ground.

Leda’s discovery of her egg in 166V, hidden under the thickness of the hyacinth, underscores a similar relation of the visible to the invisible: the beautiful (hence very much visible) flower hides a slowly revealed egg, which hides in turn a future, not yet seen, but as we all know, most beautiful daughter, Helen. The child and the promise of the future are deeply hidden in the egg that Leda discovers and has no control over:

Φαῦσι δὴ ποτα Λήδαν ύακινθίνον
(...) ὠιον εὐρήν πεπυκάδενον. (166V)

They tell of Leda who once found a deep-hidden, hyacinthine egg.
The “concealment” is again not a disguise, as Sappho chooses to use the adjective “hyacinthine” instead of a noun phrase, “under/ in the hyacinth”; the relation between the egg and the hyacinth is so close that they overlap. Winkler (1996: 105) rightly underscores the particular use of the verb πυκάζω here (“not just any type of “hiding” but… covering an object with clothes, flower garlands, or hair”) and its connection with vegetation (πυκνός, “thick, dense,” is often used for flowers). The breaking of virginity lies in between the two verbs, placed one after another, an aorist and a perfect tense, the coming into being of something which is latent.

But although the imminence and anxiety of this dissolution is present so often in Sappho’s extant poems, the mere act of poetic memory, through its refusal of separation and its capacity to save, make absence present, repairs the broken virginity:

(νύμφη). παρθενία, παρθενία, ποτέ με λίποισ’ ἀποίχη;  
(παρθενία). οὐκέτι ἦξσω πρὸς σέ, οὐκέτι ἦξσω. (114V)

Maidenhood, maidenhood, where do you go, leaving me?  
Never again will I come to you, never again.

The apostrophe of maidenhood, as well as the repeated sequence οὐκέτι ἦξσω in her response makes παρθενία although departing still present, both in the bride’s mind and in the poet’s consciousness; Sappho’s longing for parthenia is an act of parthenia, that is connecting presence with absence:

 ἦτο ἐτι παρθενίας ἐπιβάλλομαι; (107V)

Do I still yearn for maidenhood?

Sappho’s longing for the absent lover in 96V echoes Sappho’s longing for the past sweet memories but also for her own lost youth/virginity. The poetic voice not only gives voice to the absent woman, expressing emotions in her stead through apostrophe as “ventriloquism,” as
Barbara Johnson defines it (quoted by Greene 1996: 236), but reaches back, in a poetic reparative mode, to her own youth. In poem 58V, now more complete thanks to the discovery of the *Oxy. Papyrus* 1787, known as the “New Sappho,” the distance between old age’s appearance and the lost appearance of youth is assimilated to the distance between the mortal Tithonos and the immortal Dawn. However, youth appears to be only hidden in the changed body, ready to be revealed and seen again through poetic recovery:

₂₄ Ποίκιλ’ ἀθύρματα

In 44V, sailing from Thebes, Hector brings Andromache to Troy, together with the wedding gifts from her father:

«... πόλλα δ’ ἐλίγματα χρύσια κάμματα
πορφύρα καταύτμενα, ποίκιλ’ ἀθύρματα,
ἀργύρα τ’ ἀνάρθημα ποτήρια κάλέφαις.»

Many golden torques and purple light clothes, various trinkets, and countless silver and ivory cups.

The bracelets look back to Andromache’s epithet ἐλικόπιδα in line 5, “with shining eyes or face.” This epithet shows up only once in Homer, *Iliad* 1.98, with reference to Chryseis in Calchas’ prophecy, also in a context of an exchange:

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οὐδ’ ὅ γε πρὶν Δαναοῖσιν ἀεικέα λοιγὸν ἀπώσει
πρὶν γ’ ἀπὸ πατρὶ φίλῳ δόμεναι ἐλικώπιδα κούρην
ἀπριάτην ἀνάποινον

Nor will he hold off the loathsome plague from the Danaans before they give back the
bright-eyed girl, unbought, unransomed, to her dear father.

In contrast to the lawless, godless, and obviously dowry-less abduction of Chryseis,
Andromache’s dowry guarantees the legitimacy of her union to Hector. The dowry itself is the
outward signifier of her status of bride; Andromache’s delicacy (ἄβραν) accentuates the
materiality and abundance of her dowry (χρύσια, πορφύρα, ἀργύρα, κάλεφαις, on the one
hand, and πόλλα, ποίκιλ’, ἀνάριθμα, on the other hand). This material consistency of the
dowry is to be taken as metonymic for the bride’s not yet fully manifest (and hence frail)
fecundity.

If the bracelets and cups are both pointing to the bride’s ability to create something
new, a new beginning, the trinkets, ἀθύρματα, are a special case.109 Commonly associated with
children, they are the kind of toys which more than anything else suggest coming of age: in
abduction scenes, they announce the inevitable act of violence which snatches the child into
adulthood.

When we transfer the idea to erotic pursuit scenes, the consent of the pursued becomes
a non-issue: because the pursued does not know what love is or does not know what lies
behind the attractive trinket, she cannot give real consent; adulthood comes in uninvited and
unexpectedly. Nausicaa’s ball brings in rather accidentally (or non-intentionally) Odysseus as
a possible husband, by simply falling outside the playground’s boundaries.

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109 Hesychius (A 1621 = 169A Voigt) glosses ἀθρήματα, a hapax legomenon, which could be a different reading
of ἀθύρματα in 44 line 9, as the gifts offered by the brides’ relatives in Lesbos: δώρα πεμπόμενα παρὰ τῶν
συγγενῶν ταῖς γαμουμέναις παρθένοις παρὰ Λεσβίοις. Sappho uses ἄθρήματα again in a fragment about
dreaming and sleep (63V).
Lefkowitz (1993) argues that differently than in the case of men seducing women, a maiden’s abduction by a god was not seen negatively by the Greeks because it was an act of “voluntary seduction,” and not rape (violence). Deacy (1997) partly disagrees with Lefkowitz’ position due to what she sees as obvious references to the lack of mutuality in the gods/maids encounters. I think Lefkowitz’s argument could have been better supported if she had taken into account the structural similarities between weddings and the gods’ encounters with maidens. First, we may wonder why in Greek myth gods (and particularly Zeus) only pursue virginal maidens, while goddesses do not seem to choose their lovers on account of their sexual (in)experience. The explanation lies not in what the gods desire but in how humans perceive them: from the perspective of a virginal maiden, her first man seems as extraordinary and powerful as Zeus (and hence the common simile between the groom and a god), while in men’s eyes any new woman is goddess-like. Lefkowitz (1993: 31) rightly explains Persephone’s reluctance to eat the seed in terms of the “change of ambience and status that makes females complain of the transition from girlhood to womanhood,” but does not go further from that to state that the maiden/god sexual encounter might be a model for the wedding event; if the abduction myths represent the first erotic experience, as focalized from the maiden’s perspective, the Greeks had no reason to view them negatively, while the matter of consent would lose its meaning: a maiden could not give full consent to something (a husband, a marriage, pregnancy, and children) about which she had no complete knowledge. Moreover, the abduction motif in myth corresponds to the most important part of the wedding, and the most frequently portrayed in vase-paintings, the procession, the transfer of the bride from one home to another (see Oakley and Sinos 1993), but also suggests the bride’s lack of control over the future events: even if she might consent to the attractiveness of the husband, she has no control over the children that she will bear and their future. Poem 31V, in
describing the groom as “similar to a god” might also play with this motif, the extreme power differential which renders the most helpless most fertile (that is, open to the unknown, over which the subject necessarily has no power or control).

More importantly, this violence inherent in becoming an adult follows (or coincides with) an act of separation between the child/bride and his/her toy. In the Homeric Hymns, Persephone picks up in admiration a narcissus which seems like a nice toy to her (Hymns 2.16); the ungrounded flower foretells Persephone’s own ungrounding. Hermes calls his tortoise, once separated from its “content” and transformed into a melodious lyre, a καλὸν ὢρατεινὸν ἄθυρμα (Hymns 4. 32, 40, 52). In the same way that Hermes’ persuasive speech to the tortoise to accept being sacrificed is meaningless for the tortoise, words which foretell to a child his/her coming of age are meaningless. The tortoise’s displacement from her house/shell into a foreign house mimics the bride’s removal from her childhood’s house into her husband’s. Ancient folk songs and children’s games recorded by Pollux in his Onomasticon (9. 122-125) associate the tortoise with the maiden (ἡ δὲ χελιχελώνη, παρθένων ἐστὶν ἡ παιδία): a girl pretends to be and is called a tortoise, in a fixed set of questions and answers.

As Levaniouk shows in her remarkable discussion of the role of toys in mysteries, the trinkets/toys are associated both with initiation and with deceit in the Orphic tradition: the baby Dionysus was lured away by the Titans from his guardians, the Couretes, with trinkets. The Phoenician woman in Od. 15.390-484 is seduced (that is, literally led astray together with the child Eumaeus) by Phoenician rapacious sailors carrying toys (τρῳκταὶ, μυρὶ ἄγοντες ἄθυρματα νη μελαίνῃ Od. 15.416). Thus, the mere mention of an ἄθυρμα seems to announce an impending form of grievous deceit. Deceit means using appearances for an unexpected outcome for the one deceived; the deceiver necessarily knows more than the one who is

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110 Levaniouk 2007.
deceived; the toy is usually attractive, but hiding a different meaning than expected. The child is ready to play with the toy imaginatively (pretend play) but not ready for a definite final single meaning involved in the trick of the deceiver. This intrinsic divorce, forceful separation within the once cohesive unit of a signifier and a signified is symbolized by the gasping chasm in the *Hymn to Demeter*, the violent splitting between the tortoise and its house/shell, or the dismemberment of Dionysus.

Against this background, Sappho’s poem stands out: by having the toy accompany the bride within the coherent unit bride/dowry, Andromache’s wedding has no underlying violence. Her dowry is an extension of her παρθενία and will remain with her after she is no longer a πάρθενος; the woman, married in a visible (that is, lacking deceit) wedding, is thus capable of retaining her childlike trust in an invisible “natural” connection between words and things. Moreover, the unidirectional act of violence expressed through abduction, although present in Sappho 44V in the form of the trip from Thebe to Troy, is nonetheless attenuated by the manifold movements of this epithalamion: Hector escorts his bride by sea, the messenger arrives at Troy to announce the arrival of the newly wed, while Priam’s children come to the shore to welcome and accompany them to Troy. The road (κάτ’ ὁδοίς), already heavy with sexual connotation, suggests that the “abduction” is accompanied, legitimized, made public step-by-step by the movement of the chariots and by the attuned music of the entire community, πάρθενοι, γυναικεῖς, ἄνδρες. The acceptance of the community, effectively expressed through music and words, dissolves the intrinsic violence of the transition to womanhood.
3 Aeschylus: The Danaids confront Greek monogamy

3.1 Virginity in Aeschylus’ Suppliants

In contrast to Sappho’s focus on the continuation between the premarital and marital stages by means of mental processes of imagination, wish or memory, tragedy as genre seems to be interested exclusively in failed marriages (Seaford 1987), and consequently, in severed-from-marriage, lost παρθενία. This chapter looks at Aeschylus’ Danaid trilogy in particular; this more generally tragic failure to turn physical παρθενία into symbolic, and thus, save it, is ostensibly presented by Aeschylus as a cultural conflict and a linguistic difficulty.

Amid persistent attempts to reconstruct the Danaid trilogy, three major themes of Aeschylus’ Suppliants have dominated its scholarship in the last century. The first question was whether the trilogy, set in Argos, the city of Hera, was meant to be an aetiological account of the emergence of the Greek institution of marriage. Secondly, the underlying motivation of the Danaids’ flight and of their subsequent supplication of Pelasgus has remained an object of debate: are the Danaids eschewing marriage with their cousins only or with all males, and what is the support for either of these possible readings? A third major theme, which

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111 The connection between the end of the trilogy and the establishment of the Thesmophoria was first put forward by Robertson (1924) on the basis of Herodotus 2.171 (αἱ Δαναοὶ θυγατέρες ἔσαν αἱ τὴν τελετὴν ταύτην ἔξεν Αἰγύπτου ἐξαγαγοῦσα καὶ διδάσασα τός Πελασγίτιδας γυναῖκας), and supported by Thomson (1966: 308). Detienne (1989: 37-49) focuses on the paradox of founding marriage and the initiatory rites of Thesmophoria on a myth of violence. See also Mitchell (2006: 209-210).

112 Murray (1958: 98-102) focuses on the textual difficulty posed by line 8 (αὐτογενεῖ ἰθήκανορίᾳ) and argues for a specific abhorrence of the Egyptians as suitors; a similar position is held by Thomson (1966: 289), followed by MacKinnon (1976), while Spier (1962), Ireland (1974, with a useful summary of the debate at 15-16), Caldwell (1974: 46-47) and more recently Turner (2001: 28-29) argue for a rejection of marriage at large. Garvie (1969: 212-224) prefers to explain the motivation of the Danais’ flight in terms of their particular character (“the reason then is to be sought within their own character, and the sympathy of the audience depends upon Aeschylus’ dramatic portrayal of that, not upon the acceptance of any sociological, religious, or political ideas”).
became somewhat more fashionable in the recent decade, is that of the Aeschylean portrayal of the contact between Greeks and non-Greeks in the immediate aftermath of the Persian wars and the related topic of supplication.

My following analysis will join these three different branches of interest in the scholarship on Aeschylus’ *Suppliants*. More precisely, I will look at the ways in which Aeschylus imagines how the Danaids, as non-Greeks (or not-yet-Greeks), would be portrayed as misunderstanding Greek institutions, in particular supplication and marriage. By constructing the figure of the Danaids as not only non-Greeks, but also as pre-Greeks, Aeschylus aims to first create in his Greek audience an alienated, strange image of their own institutions as unintelligible symbolic systems (presumably in the first two tragedies of the trilogy) and gradually to explain the underpinnings of those institutions and re-familiarize them (in the third tragedy, which apparently contained the Danaids’ conversion to marriage and consensual wedding to Argive men). The Danaids’ lack of grasp of the Greek symbolic system is most obvious in their representation of marriage and constitutes, as will be shown in this chapter, the cause for the uncertainty surrounding their motivation. But, more importantly for the purposes of this thesis, their confusion regarding marriage stems, it will be argued, from their essentially non-Greek understanding of virginity. If παρθενία is not yet

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113 Garvie (1969: 1-28) is still the best source on the generally accepted date of the production of the *Suppliants* (463 BC), which must carry an underlying significance in a play concerned with the relation between Greeks and non-Greeks. On the general topic of supplication with some references to the Danaids’ trilogy, see Gould (1973: 87, 89), and Naiden (2006: 124). On supplication in Aeschylus’ *Suppliants*, see Turner (2001). On the portrayal of barbarians and Greeks in the *Suppliants* and on the historical context of the Persian wars, see Mitchell (2006), who curiously does not mention Turner (2001) despite arriving at similar conclusions (that the play questions the polarity Greek versus barbarian).

114 On a detailed discussion of this hypothesis see Winnington-Ingram (1961: 143-150) who imagines a dramatic context for fragment 44 Radt, an ode to Eros and Aphrodite, invoked as cause for all the natural world (line 7 τῶν δ’ ἐγὼ παραιτοῦ). The argument for the Danaids’ second marriage, and the subsequent creation of the festival of Thesmophoria, is presented by Garvie (1969: 225-226). The connection between this ode and the motif of the union of heaven and earth in wedding songs is discussed by Seaford (1987:116-117), who brings new arguments to support a second marriage of the Danaids to Greeks at the end of the trilogy.
comprehended in its particularly Greek imaginative dimension, the symbolic preservation of παρθενία that is contained in the Greek marriage is also unintelligible.

3.2 What did Greeks understand by γάμος?

Even as late as fourth century B.C., Aristotle was aware that Greek had no precise term to denote the monogamous conjugal union: ἀνώνυμος ἢ γυναικός καὶ ἄνδρος σύζευξις (Pol. I 2.2., Bekker 1253b). Not only does comparative linguistics suggest that marriage as a monogamous stable union was not known as an institution in the Indo-European homeland, but Greek myth often portrays monogamous unions as a Greek innovation, as contrasted to and under constant attack from non-Greek outsiders. In the following section, I will show in which ways this seemingly struggling but crucial Greek conjugal union was represented as opposed to the polygynous marriage, commonly associated with non-Greek outsiders (particularly Persians during fifth century). The defining and binding element of a legitimate monogamous union was the wedding and its public contractual character, ἐγγύη, followed by the transfer of the bride, ἔκδοσις. According to Vernant (1973:56-57), this legitimate monogamous marriage, expressed through a set of the three necessary legal actions (ἐγγύη, ἔκδοσις, προίζ), originates in late sixth century Athens. Nonetheless, literature preserves the ambiguous terminology: wedding is often referred to as γάμος or rather γάμοι, also (and disconcertingly) used as a first

115 Pollux, in second century AD, defines the multifaceted meanings of γάμος in the following way: ὁ δὲ γάμος καλοῖτ' ἂν καὶ συνδυασμός, καὶ σύνοδος ἄνδρος καὶ γυναικός, καὶ συνοίκησις, καὶ σύνερξις, καὶ κοινωνία ἐπὶ παιδῶν σπορᾶ. καὶ γαμέτης μὲν ὁ γήμας καὶ ἀνὴρ καὶ νυμφίος καὶ ὁ συνοικὸς καὶ ὁ πρὸς γάμον ἠγμένος, ἢ δὲ νύφη γαμετὴ καὶ γυνὴ καὶ συνοικοῦσα καὶ γεγαμημένη, γῆμαι δ' ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς λέγεται, γήμασθαι δ' ἐπὶ τῆς γυναικός, οὐ γαμηθῆναι. (3.44-45)

116 For ways of rendering the meaning of marriage in different IE languages, see Benveniste (1969: 239-244 and 245-253). Despite a lack of terminology for husband, wife, and their union, there are IE words to denote the “in-laws,” clearly differentiated between the woman’s side and the man’s side. These facts, along with the symbolic meaning of the words denoting family members, complicate our representation of the family in the original IE society (see also Benveniste 1969: 209-215). Vernant (1974: 57-81) discusses various Greek phrases which serve to express the marital union. For the Greek wedding and its specific portrayal in tragedy, see Redfield (1982) and Seaford (1987). For the legal aspects of the conjugal terminology, see Schaps (1979).
sexual contact for a couple, with or without the sanction of the community. As often noted by scholars\(^1\) (and also discussed in the previous chapter on Sappho), the public nature of the ἐγγύη and its concretization into the visible dowry are understood as the unwritten contract and trust liaison between the spouses and also between their respective οἶκοι.\(^2\) There is no evidence to support a conventional verbal exchange between the spouses or vows of faithfulness and it is unclear to which extent this sanctioned relationship was meant to be lifelong. Nonetheless, the wedding constituted in every way a woman’s rite of passage and, I will argue, in its successful or ideal expression, the wedding and subsequent monogamous union constituted a symbolic preservation of a woman’s virginity. The dowry, as the unalienable extension of the bride, stood for her παρθενία, now under the protection of her husband.\(^3\) By weaving garments in preparation for the wedding, the maiden was slowly moving from literal virginity to symbolic virginity, insofar as the garments are the cultural artifacts most adjacent to bodies and the physical world and the dowry itself—a maiden’s representation of herself and her virginal status. In the same way that the bride symbolically retained her maidenhood, the groom symbolically retained his characteristically male sexual aggression, expressed in the abduction ritual and also in the symbolic death of the maiden. Furthermore, the wedding contained a third key symbolic element: as generic bride and groom, the woman and man symbolically and metonymically were supposed to marry the entire opposite gender. In the formal makarismos of the epithalamion (such as Sappho 116, χαῖρε, νόμῳα, χαῖρε, τίμω

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\(^{2}\) In Vernant’s words (1973: 53), “la proîx est le signe tangible de l’alliance entre les deux maisons. Au contraire il y a concubinage quand la femme s’installe de son propre chef, sans que son oîkos intervienne.” Even within a less rigid definition of terms, as suggested further by Vernant, in the proîx the virginal bride overlaps with the alliance based on trust between the two households. The inclination towards trust in invisible realities (dreams, wishes, memory), associated with maidens, is turned into social trust, the physical turns into symbolic.

\(^{3}\) This symbolic continuation of παρθενία within the Greek marital union explains the paradox often noted in the discussion of the dowry. In Lyons’ words (2003: 127), “like the dowry, women themselves are inalienable, in the sense that they are never completely lost to their lineage. This is another way of expressing the notion that women do not belong to the families into which they marry. Never to be fully possessed by their husbands, they are nonetheless conceptualized as possessions.” The symbolic nature of dowry is most easily grasped from the development of the word προῖξ, “dowry,” into προῖκα, “at no cost, freely.”
γάμβρε, πόλλα, or later, Theocritus 18. 49 χαίροις, ὁ νύμφας, χαίροις, εὐπένθερε γάμβρέ), the bride stands for the entire female gender and the groom stands for the entire male gender. A case could be made that the concurrent development of the Greek wedding ritual and of the Greek drama was not coincidental: both involve the convention between actors playing roles, concentrates of human life experience, and a participating audience, which validates, through its matching expression of emotions, the “truth” underlying the dramatic masks and conventions. By playing the roles of bride and groom, within a set sequence of ceremonial events and specific costumes, the couple dramatically enacts a union that is more than about a particular individual: it is a symbolic and unique form of compatibility between the two genders, otherwise in perpetual opposition. For this reason, the monogamous union does not happen at the exclusion of everybody else, but, on the contrary, at the symbolic inclusion of everybody else, a fact outwardly expressed by the necessarily public character of the wedding. Moreover, marriage, the nameless institution, was merely defined as a perpetuation of the wedding, γάμοι; or, to put it differently, the wedding was both

120 The festival of the Dionysia was opened by a procession (πομπῆ) led by a virgin carrying a basket of the fruits of sacrifice, probably beginning at the city’s principal gate and ending at the sanctuary and theatre of Dionysius Eleuthereus. According to a late source, Semos of Delos (3rd century BC), the rural Dionysia only consisted in a dramatized phallic procession and a sacrifice: while entering the portal of the orchestra a ritual choral hymn was sung, described as “new and virginal” (20.28 Σοὶ, Βάκχε, τάνδε μοῦσαν ἀγλαΐζομεν, ἁπλοῦν ρυθμὸν χέοντες αἰόλῳ μέλει, καινὰ, ἀπαρθένευτον, οὐ τι ταῖς πάροις/ κεχρημέναν ὁδαίας, ἀλλ’ ἀκήρατον/ κατάρχομεν τὸν ὕμνον) followed by obscene songs. Csapo and Slater (1995:103-138) interpret the ancient sources on the procession within the Rural and the City Dionysia. The structural similarities between the festival and the wedding celebration are mainly the procession (often with chariots), the maiden, the accompanying hymns sung by choruses, the entrance in the new house/theatre followed by the ἀνακαλυπτήρια of the bride or an “unveiling” of minds and meanings in tragedy. For the role played by silence and “unveiling of silence” through speech on stage, see Montiglio (2000: 158-192).

121 Oakley and Sinos (1993: 16-20) describe a groom’s fine ἱμάτιον and garland, as well as the bride’s probably purple dress, crown, sandals (which had a special name, according to Hesychius 720, νυμφίδες), and of course veil (κάλυμμα), mostly from representations in vase paintings. Seaford (1987: 124) discusses the bridal veil and the associated unveiling of the bride (ἀνακαλυπτήρια) in literary sources, particularly tragedy. The crucial character of the unveiling is highlighted by the acknowledged etymology of νύμφα, as “the veiled one.”

122 Thus, from a Greek perspective a violation of the monogamous union through adultery involved both a betrayal of the symbolic code and of the entire opposite gender, including the spouse and the paramour. Seaford (1987) refers to the successful marriage, which develops smoothly from a successful wedding, with the term εὐδαιμονία. In my interpretation, the “tragic wedding” is one that fails to make the transition from literal virginity to symbolic virginity, a failed act of signification.
understood as a synecdoche for marriage and a dramatic reenactment of an original erotic chase of the nubile woman, which by its very dramatic nature would make these impulses (of violent chase and fear-generated flight) both acknowledged and absent in real life. Through the repeated return to and recollection of a ‘savage’ pre-marriage state, the wedding ceremony reinvents the institution every time it is performed. The male chase and female apprehensive reluctance replay the fundamental mistrust which had existed between the genders and which could only be repaired through playing it out and so turned into symbol and convention.

The meaning of Greek monogamy is crucial particularly when misunderstood. From the Greek point of view, the non-Greeks were defined as people unable to relate to the Greek symbolic (or signifying) codes, particularly language (Il. 2.867 βαρβαροφώνων) or clothing (such as the Persian “trousers” on pottery, the unusual dresses of the Danaids as perceived by Pelasgus in Suppliants 235-236, or the contrasted clothes of Persians and Greeks in Persians 181-183). Consequently, the outsider is constantly expected to misunderstand or misuse the Greek wedding and, by extension, the Greek marriage.

In the following paragraph, I will look at several major Greek myths attested before or soon after Aeschylus’ Danaids and the representation of the outsider/ξένος, as the source of strife and battle during a wedding celebration. According to the seventh-century epic poem Cypria, as attested by a much later testimony, the Trojan war itself was caused by a wedding violation: Eris, who, in an immortal context, is an outsider, as not invited to the wedding of Thetis and Peleus, generates the competitive jealousy of the three goddesses. The marriage of Thetis and Peleus is set against the background of female competition, with its disastrous effects not only on the offspring resulting from the wedding, but also on other weddings,

124 In Persians 247 a man appears to be Persian because of his particular running style. The comment has puzzled critics who offered various explanations (see Sommerstein 2008 ad loc.); the cultural difference raises questions, debates, definitions, and sheds light on (their) relevant codes.
Menelaus’ in particular. In contrast, Telemachus, although likewise not invited to the wedding of Menelaus’ son and daughter in *Odyssey* 4, is not an intruder: like his father, he shows that he understands the code and respects the symbol contained in the γάμος union, even before being married himself. The other famous disruption of a nuptial setting was the wedding of Peirithous and Deidameia/ Hippodameia as recounted by Antinous to Odysseus in *Odyssey* 21.289-311, or represented on the west pediment of Zeus’ temple at Olympia (first half of the fifth century), on the sandals of Pheidias’ cult statue of Athena Parthenos and on the south metopes of the Parthenon (second half of fifth century); as uncivilized outsiders, the Centaurs disrespect the wedding of the Lapiths by interpreting literally the abduction of the bride. According to Sophocles’ *Trachiniae*, another centaur, Nessus, spoils two weddings at once when he passes his poisoned robe to Deianeira, first that of Heracles and Deianeira, and later the wedding of Heracles and Iole. Like the river-god Achelous, Deianeira’s first suitor who causes her, while still living in her father’s house, lingering distrust in marriage (νυμφείων ὄκνον/ ἄλγιστον ἐσχων, Trach. 7-8), the centaur Nessus approaches Deianeira during the particularly vulnerable abduction stage of her wedding to Heracles, while still a girl (παῖς ἔτ’ οὖσα, Trach. 557), that is before her first sexual union: *Trach*. 562-565 δς κάμε, τὸν πατρόφον ἡνίκα στόλον/ ξύν Ἱρακλεῖ τὸ πρῶτον εὖν εὐπόμην./ φέρων ἔπ’ ὀμοῖς, ἡνίκ’ ἡ μέσῳ πόρῳ./ ψαῦει ματαίαις χερσίν, “[Nessus], while carrying me too on his shoulders, at the time when I first followed Heracles as wife, after leaving my father’s house, in the middle of the stream touched me with foolish hands.” Furthermore, by passing a gift only apparently appropriate for a bride (a textile) since impregnated with his blood and possible semen (in

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125 Proclus, *Chrestomathia* 80. Proclus uses γάμοι to describe Thetis and Peleus’ wedding, but Helen and Alexander also celebrate γάμοι when they arrive at Troy. Helen is taken to a non-Greek land and subjected to a non-Greek marriage, not based on the trust between the two κύριοι or on the bride’s virginity.

126 For more archaic and early classical representations of the Centauromachy see Rehm (1994: 75-76) and duBois 1982.
Pseudo-Apollodorus’ interpretation of the passage [2.152]), 127 Nessus also perverts the traditional gift giving (which should be a representation of the bride) if not misunderstands it. 128 The dreaded gift will eventually reach Heracles as groom-to-be and unfittingly turn him into a maiden (Trach. 1071-1072 δοσίς ὡστε παρθένος/ βέβρυχα κλαίων, “me, who bellow, crying like a maiden”), about to unveil herself (Trach. 1078 δείξω γὰρ τάδ’ ἐκ καλυμμάτων, “for I will expose [to you] these [evils] from behind their veil”). Thus, the failure of safeguarding a maiden’s virginity during the dangerous and delicate transition of the wedding, during which the literal should be seamlessly turned into the symbolic, brings about the man’s destruction to the same extent as the woman’s.

To continue our imaginary survey of marriage and outsiders, the structural analogues of the Centaurs in Greek myth are, as duBois (1982) has shown, the Amazons, the female version of the Centaurs’ lack of and opposition to civilization. If we look closely, all myths about the Amazons represent their uncivilized ways mainly as failures to understand weddings or marriage: unable to trust males first, they can only be dominated through direct, physical confrontation. In Euripides’ Hippolytus, Theseus manages to defeat in battle the queen of the Amazons and obtain a son from her, but the son (usually named in relation to his mother, Hipp. 10, 306-309, 355, 581) continues his mother’s “savagery,” and displays the typical maidenly reluctance towards marriage and attachment to her own virginity (Hipp. 14 ἀναίνεται δὲ λέκτρα κοῦ ψαάει γάμων, “he rejects the conjugal bed and would not touch marriage,” Hipp. 1006 παρθένον ψυχὴν ἔχων, “[me] who keep a maidenly soul”). Consequently, he unwittingly destroys his father’s marriage to another “barbarized” woman, the Cretan Phaedra,

127 A similar interpretation is given by the second-century AD grammarian Cephalion (fragm. 8): ὅ δὲ Αχελόδος πρὸ τοῦ γάμου ἔφθειρε τὴν Δηιανείραν λάθρᾳ.
128 A fine analysis of the gift exchange in Greek tragedy and in Sophocles’ Trachiniae in particular can be found in Lyons (2003). Deianira, who, as gift, has been “contaminated” by the centaur, retains her “Greekness” when she speaks about her inability to share her husband with another wife (Trach. 545-546) or when she regrets her unintended murder (particularly Trach. 721-722).
descending from a family notorious for its women’s inability to sustain monogamy (*Hipp.* 337, 339).

Other major transgressions of conjugal unions in Greek myth are analogously constructed as failures to comprehend their symbolic character, even if the perpetrators are Greek. Clytemnestra’s betrayal is rooted, according to Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, in the factual death of Iphigenia, but a supplementary reason is given in Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Aulis* 1146-1208: Agamemnon had snatched Clytemnestra violently from her former husband Tantalus.\(^{129}\) Agamemnon’s symbolic disrespect for virginity (disruption of a wedding) more than the literal one (“murder” of a virgin), which Clytemnestra more openly offers as cause for her own murderous act, seemingly sets up the deployment of his ruin. The post-war counterpart of Iphigenia, Polyxena\(^{130}\) is contrariwise Hellenized, introduced into the Greek wedding symbolically constructed as death and thus redefined as παρθένος, a process that eludes Cassandra. As Debnar recently demonstrates, Cassandra’s virginity in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* is surrounded by uncertainty: “Aeschylus is evasive about the sexual status of Agamemnon’s war prize, and the tradition concerning Cassandra’s virginity is ambiguous, even contradictory.”\(^{131}\) Iole’s virginity is ambiguous as well: first Iole is presented as most likely virginal, through Deianeira’s eyes (*Trach.* 306-307 ἄνανδρος ἤ τεκνοῦσσα; πρός μὲν γὰρ φόσιν/ πάντων ἀπειρος τόνδε), then, once it has been revealed by the messenger that Heracles had waged war against Eurytus’ kingdom to obtain his daughter, Deianeira changes her mind about her sexual status: κόρην γὰρ, ὀἶμαι δ’ οὐκέτ’, ἄλλα’ ἐξευγμένην (*Trach.* 536-537).

\(^{129}\) On the strong connections between Clytemnestra’s forced marriage claim and Iphigenia’s imminent sacrifice in Euripides’ play see Gibert (2005).

\(^{130}\) Scodel (1996) compares the two virgin sacrifices as portrayed in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* and Euripides’ *Hecuba* in aesthetic terms; in my view their symmetrical surrender to Achilles as both groom and death underscores the successful Hellenization of the Trojans, who yield to the Greek symbolic codes; only for this reason Iphigenia and Polyxena become aesthetic objects. Polyxena (the “stranger” par excellence) is incorporated into Greek culture by receiving the symbolic sacrifice as marriage.

\(^{131}\) Debnar 2010: 130. Also see Wohl (1998: 114-117).
Finally, before dying, to Hyllus’ repugnance, Heracles asks his son to marry Iole,\(^\text{132}\) whom he calls παρθένος (Trach. 1219) and δάμαρ to be (Trach. 1224) despite the fact that he admits she has slept by his side, the first time this information is given (Trach. 1225-1226). Earlier in the play the messenger calls Iole, to Lichas’ “consternation,” δάμαρ (Trach. 428-429), and the chorus names her “the new bride” (ά νέορτος ἀδε νύμφα, Trach. 894). While Iole is Greek, she also becomes stuck in an undefinable sexual position once the procession of the monogamous union, that is the translation of literal into Greek, is fractured. When the symbolic code collapses, language too is weakened in its capacity to denote and communicate. Remarkably, Heracles fails to successfully accompany Iole home in the same way he has failed to fully protect Deianeira from Nessus during the “leading home” ritual. Because of this parallelism, we can assume that the consummation of the wedding has not happened yet, against Heracles’ claim at 1225-1227. Heracles’ last will could be read as a death wish, as he seeks to identify with his surviving son (as opposed to the “other” man) and be sexually fulfilled through him:

\[\text{μηδ’ ἄλλος ἀνδρόν τοῖς ἐμοῖς πλευρῶις ὀμοῦ}
\text{κλεθέσαν αὐτὴν ἀντὶ σοῦ λάβῃ ποτὲ,}
\text{ἄλλ’ αὐτός, ὦ παι, τοῦτο κήδεις σον λέχος.}
\]

May no other man ever take her, who has lain by my side, over you; but you, son, lead her to the marriage bed.\(^\text{133}\)

The clear distinction between παρθένος and γυνὴ seems to belong to Greeks only,\(^\text{134}\) or at least this is how the Greeks perceived it: perhaps counter-intuitively, a lifelong

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\(^{132}\) For an analysis of Iole as object of exchange between father and son see Wohl (1988: 3-29).

\(^{133}\) Another comparable use of approximation when talking about the consummation of marriage comes from a later source. Callimachus uses a similarly ambiguous phrase in his poem about Acontius’ love for Cydippe (Aetia 75). Every time Cydippe is about to have lawful sexual intercourse with the boy chosen by her parents to marry (not Acontius), she becomes sick, until, through an oracle from Apollo, her parents resolve to wed her to Acontius, who finally “touches her maidenly girdle” (Aet. 75.45 μήτης ἡγετο παρθένης). Nonetheless, the three previous failed attempts of marriage are described in the indicative mood, as though the consummation almost happened: Aet. 75.1, 16, 18 ἡδη καὶ κοιφὼ παρθένος εὐνύσατο... δεύτερον ἐστόρνυτο τὰ κλαίμε...τὸ τρίτον ἐμνήσατο γάμου κάτα, “and already the maiden was bedded with the boy… a second time they spread the couches… a third time they thought of marriage.”
monogamous union would only make sense in a context that makes a clear distinction between the two sexual statuses. Symbolic virginity can only be built up on literal virginity, and precisely because the literal meaning is always supposed to lurk underneath its symbolic accretion, the symbol remains under constant disavowal, reassessment, and rediscovery.

3.3 What do the Danaids understand by γάμος?

The first meaning (and constantly underlying the marital term) of γάμος is that of sexual union; according to Chantraine (1933: 209), the noun is secondarily created out of the verb γαμέω through inverse derivation. As it has been already argued, if γάμοι is used to describe the wedding in particular, as a single (first) sexual union which metonymically stands for the more durable marriage, technical Greek language prefers other terms to make the union unmistakably legitimate, such as names for the “lawful wife,” derived not from the verb but from other nouns, particularly the conjugal bed (ἄλοχος, ἄκοιτος, εὔνις), or the adjective κουρίδιος for both husband and wife.

Therefore, if Aeschylus’ Danaid trilogy was indeed an imagined account of the invention of monogamous marriage, we should first explore the Danaids’ projected understanding of the γάμος, the relationship between man and woman that they find difficult to accept.

To start with the most salient omission, as observed by Seaford (1987: 118), the extant play makes no reference to the Danaids’ mother, despite their insistent identification with and longing for their ancestress, the maternal figure Io, as perpetually captured in her virginity-to-

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134 The Greek deities that personify virginity, Athena, Hestia, and Artemis, have no direct correspondent in the religions of the surrounding peoples. The cult of Artemis clearly originates in Asia Minor, but with the essential attribute of πόρνη θηρῶν, goddess of wild animals or birth, and not that of virginity. See West (1997: 33-59) and the Introduction.
be-consummated; because they are fifty in number, as their cousins are, we might presume that they only share the biological father from a polygynous arrangement. The other family with fifty children in Greek myth is Priam’s family, which is the opposing model to the monogamous Greek unions: although Hecuba is the “first” wife in rank, there is no distinction of legitimacy between the fifty sons and daughters.

Secondly, as Seaford has convincingly shown (1987: 110-119), the Danaids’ fear of γάμοι resembles the resistance of the maiden in the Greek wedding ritual. According to Seaford (1987: 110), “the attitude of the Danaids resembles in several respects the attitude associated with the Greek bride or her female companions, but taken to an exotic extreme.” Zeitlin (1996: 125) expresses a similar position: “the history of these exotic virgins makes them a unique anomaly and yet also a typical, if extreme, example of feminine behavior and attitudes.” Exotic and extreme seem to be the key features describing the Danaids’ virginity. Nonetheless, what precisely does “extreme virginity” mean, in relation to the Greeks’ usual wedding rituals? Arguably, the Danaids’ virginity represents a state of womanhood before civilization and marriage, an original state. From this point of view, the reluctance of the bride within the Greek wedding is a mere vestige that was meant to maintain the memory of this savage state, overcome with each and every performance of a wedding ceremony. For the Danaids, as not-yet-sharing the Greek code, this symbolic system is impossible to comprehend: in this sense, their reluctance to marry is both non-Greek and somehow Greek in a literal form, or Pre-Greek.

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135 On the significance of the frequent references to Io in the Suppliants, see Murray (1958). For a psychoanalytic reading of the play and the Danaids’ conflicted relationship with their father see Caldwell (1970) and Caldwell (1974).

136 Seaford (1987: 118, n. 131): “It is interesting that no mention is made in the play of the Danaids’ mother(s); although they do claim kinship with the Argives through their ancestress Io, whom they call “mother” (15-18, 51, 144, 533, 539).”

137 The concept of illegitimate children only makes sense in the context of illegitimate “wives.” For a longer discussion on the distinction between νόθοι and γνήσιοι in the Homeric poems see Vernant (1973: 59-61).
I would add that the delicate moment of the transfer of a maiden’s bond from her birth family to her husband’s is particularly meaningless in this play, where the “birth family” is unclearly situated in either Egypt or Argos. If there is no initial bond (to one’s mother and father) to break and recover, the second bond, meant to be a displacement of the first, and as such recreate the birth family in the new house, cannot happen – or in Seaford’s words (1987: 110, 115, 119), the “incorporation” of the bride, leading to εὐδαιμονία, fails to be achieved. Once the distinction between the birth family and the husband’s family is erased (since both Aegyptus’ sons and subsequently the presumptive Argive grooms are related to the Danaids through Io, as the Danaids insist), the argument for the Danaids’ preference for exogamy instead of a (projected Athenian) endogamy cannot be supported.\footnote{Thomson (1966 third edition, first edition 1940) has interpreted the Danaids’ reluctance to marry as a rejection of the Athenian endogamous system in preference for an exogamous one. Mucurdi (1944) offers a sound critique of his arguments.}

Therefore, in a context within which the barbarian virgins play the literal reluctance to marry, which will be repeated ritually and symbolically as \textit{ab initio} by the future brides, what is the meaning of γάμος in a play concerned with the invention of marriage? After having looked at all the passages that refer to γάμος or other sexual unions in this tragedy, I believe that scholarship too readily and anachronistically translates γάμος as “marriage.”

So, what do the Danaids (and Danaus) understand by γάμος, the thing they so adamantly recoil from? For the Danaids γάμος is not an institution, recognized and acknowledged within a social system, closely associated with motherhood and child rearing, as they never use “technical” Greek terms like νόμῳ or ἀλοχος, but merely a chase unequivocally \textit{ended} by a dreaded sexual intercourse. Their persistent invocation of Io’s ambiguous sexual encounter underlines Io’s flight and an imagined, kind, almost imperceptible sexual intercourse with Zeus. In \textit{Suppl.} 36 the Danaids wish that their cousins perish before
ever mounting their beds (πρίν ποτε λέκτρον ἐπιβήναι), or again pray that they may escape the beds of men (151-152 εὖνὰς/ ἀνδρῶν, ἐ... ἐκφυγεῖν and 332 εὐναίων γάμῳν): their use of the “beds,” a Greek common metonymy for the conjugal institution, is disconcertingly concrete and narrow. Together with the first sexual intercourse, they fear their cousins’ “manly violence” (426 γνώθι δ’ ὑβρίν ἄνερον, 528 ἁλευσόν ἀνδρῶν ὑβρίν, 816-817 ὑβρεῖ... ἀρσενογενεῖ, 880-881 ὁ μέγας Πότμος ὑβρίζοντ’ ἀποτρέψει/- ἐν ἄητον ὑβρίν). Pelasgus himself picks up and acknowledges the association between the male gender and forcefulness at 487: ὑβριν ἀρσενος στόλου. Furthermore, the Danaids’ misunderstanding of the institution of marriage is conspicuous in their assimilation of marriage to slave-ownership at 335-338, 392-393, or in Danaus’ comparison of marriage, essentially defined as non-consensual, to an animal predator’s devouring of its victim, playing on the sound similarities between φαγών and γάμων (226-228):

| ὠρνιθὸς ὠρνὶς πῶς ἂν ἄγνευόι φαγὼν;  
| πῶς δ’ ἂν γαμὼν ἀκουσαν ἀκοντὸς πάρα ἄγνὸς γένοιτ’ ἂν; |

How could a bird stay pure while eating another bird? How could a man become a pure man while marrying/ having sex with an unwilling woman, taken from an unwilling father?

While the motif of the flight of the maiden and of the erotic chase must have seemed familiar to a Greek audience from myth, Aeschylus’ Suppliants remarkably changes the outcome of the chase: instead of erotic fulfilment, the Danaids (and Danaus) anticipate the digestive component that ends the chase. In his exhortation towards his daughters to preserve chastity

139 Compare, a century later, Aristotle’s statement that for the Greeks womanhood is different in nature from servitude, as opposed to the non-Greeks, for whom the female and the slave share the same rank: φύσει μὲν οὖν διώρισται τὸ θῆλυ καὶ τὸ δοῦλον... ἐν δὲ τοῖς βαρβάροις τὸ θῆλυ καὶ τὸ δοῦλον τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχει τάξιν, Pol. 1.1.5. (1252b).
also against the Argive men (991-1013), Danaus compares his daughters with delicate ripe fruit (καρπώματα στάξοντα) that both beasts and men are eager to consume:

τέρειν’ ὑπώρα δ’ εὐφύλακτος οὐδαμῶς;
θηρεῖς δὲ κηραίνουσι καὶ βροτοί, τί μήν; (998-999)

Tender fruit is not easy to guard at all; beast and men destroy it, don’t they?

The verb κηραίνει means to “destroy,” but recalls both the similarly sounding κεραίζειν (“to destroy” or “to devour,” for animals) and, as Sommerstein (2008: 420, n. 206) points out, ἀκήρατος, the “unmixed” virgin, underscoring the association between virginity’s loss, destruction, and consumption. The erotic apple is literally consumed, in again a failed interpretation of a common Greek metaphor. When they can see the crowd of the Egyptians approaching, the chorus decries their raven-like impure intentions, ready to steal the meat from the altars: 751-752 δυσάγνοις φρεσίν, κόρακες ὥστε, βω-/ μὲν ἀλέγοντες οὐδέν (“in their impure minds, like ravens, leaving aside nothing from the altars”).

Io herself, instead of merely picking the flowers in a meadow, a motif which otherwise marks, in Greek myth, a maiden’s sexual maturation, is rather presented, in this play only, as eating them: 44 ἀνθονομόσας βοός and 539-540 ματέρος ἀνθονόμους... / λειμῶνα βοῦχιλον (“of the flower-eating mother.../ [in] the meadow, fodder for cattle”). In the same meadow (called ἄλσος at 508, for its use see Sommerstein 1995-1996: 30-31), Io’s descendants and imitators fear birds of prey (πτερωτῶν ἄρπαγαίς), more hostile than serpents, and during their confrontation they describe their violent cousins as spiders (886) or vipers (896) slowly drawing closer and closer, apparently ready to consume their victims. At 351 the chorus compares itself to a heifer chased by a wolf: λυκοδίωκτον ὡς δάμαλιν; while devouring images are not present here, they are implicit in the reference to the wolf, while the heifer, δάμαλις, encompasses in a paronomasia both the desired model of their ancestress and the
feared domination. Even more confusing is the fact that the Danaids, while fearing sexual intercourse as both causing death and physical ingestion, claim they would not regret becoming prey for dogs or dinner for birds *once they are dead*, since death is freedom, according to the common tragic motif:

Κυσίν δ’ ἐπειθ’ ἐλωρά κἀπισχορίας
ὸννσι δείπνον οὐκ ἀναίνομαι πέλειν·
ό γάρ θανόν ἐλευθεροῖ
tαι φιλαιάκτων κακῶν. (800-804)

Then, I do not refuse to become prey for dogs and dinner for the native birds; for he who has died is freed of lamentable evils.

All of a sudden not even the act of being ingested horrifies anymore: becoming a prey is to be abhorred only if it coincides with sexual intercourse, as τελευτά, the limit not-to-be crossed, or if the attackers are real animals, and not men acting as predacious animals. Death is fine if it happens before or outside the sexual union: ἐλθέτω μόρος, πρὸ κοι-/ τας γαμηλίου τυχῶν (804-805). To sum it up, the Danaids do not fear violence or death but sex.

In congruence with this ingestion metaphor for the marital union, Danaus’ and his daughters’ objection against marrying the sons of Aegyptus consists in the disputed accusation of incest and undisputed fear of rape, which, like food-ingestion, suggest a dreaded, intrusive proximity. The cousins are most often defined as “males” and the categorically irreconcilable nature of the genders is particularly stressed throughout the play, as shown by Zeitlin (1994, 1996). The pursuers play into this role when they attempt to abduct the maidens from the meadow of Io, unequivocally against their will (862-863, θέλεος ἀθέλεος/ βία βιάται πολλά). Their threat to tear off the maidens’ garments recalls the preying imagery (904 λακίς χτόνος ἔργον). The Egyptians’ and the herald’s broken Greek (837-838 οὐκόν οὐκόν τύλμοι τύλμοι καὶ στιγμίοι,/ πολυαίμων φόνιος ἀποκοπά κρατός;) reveals a degree of violence hardly compatible with the marital union, when they threaten them with beheading, ripping their
clothes and dragging them by their hair. Nonetheless their attempt to abduct the Danaids (836-910) is perceived and presented in the adjacent *marriage* and *surrender* terms by the Danaids themselves, when they call out at 904: ἵω... δάμναμαι (“hélas, I am being conquered,” close enough to δάμωρ, one of the Greek words for wife).

The restriction of marriage to its physical sexuality is, of course, part of the Danaids’ “barbarian” character. In stark contrast, the “fully” Greek virgins Iphigenia, Antigone or Electra avoid marriage not because of its abhorrent sexuality but for family and social reasons. For example, Sophocles’ Antigone, fully aware that by burying her brother she is losing all hope for marriage, describes her loss in these terms:

"ἄλεκτρον, ἀνυμέναιον, οὔτε τοῦ γάμου
μέρος λαχούσαν οὔτε παιδείου τροφής,
ἀλλ’ ὀδ’ ἐρημος πρὸς φίλων ἢ δύσμορος
ζῶος’ εἰς θανόντων ἔρχομαι κατασκαφάς· (Antigone 917-920)

Unwed, without a bridal song, bereft of both the lot of marriage and of motherhood, the unfortunate me, in this way widowed of close ones, am going alive to the graves of those who have died.

The no longer attainable sexual union, wedding, and future children are presented altogether, as a single unity. In contrast, Aeschylus strikingly employs γάμος, not only in the *Suppliants*, but sporadically also in his other extant plays, as the sexual union only, isolated from its social understanding. In *Agamemnon*, Cassandra decries Paris’ abduction of Helen as γάμοι γάμοι Πάριδος ὀλέθριοι (1156), since, as we have already shown, Paris’ sexual union to Helen could have been described as non-Greek marriage. Hera is the wife of Zeus in *Suppliants* 165, γαμετᾶς Διός, but Zeus’ anticipated union with Thetis is also called γάμοι by Prometheus in *Prometheus* 947 and the chorus of maidens in *Prometheus* swears to resist becoming the γαμετή of a god, the meaning of which is spelled out as “to share the bed of a god:”
μήποτε μήποτε μ’, ὦ
Μοῖραι..., λεγέων Διὸς εὐ-
νάτειραν ἵδοισθε πέλουσαν,
μήτε πλαθεῖν γαμέτας τινὶ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ. (Prometheus 894-897)

Never, never, Fates, may you see me sharing the bed with Zeus, and may I be
approached by no bridegroom that comes from heaven.

If for the Danaids (and by extension for their suitors) marriage signifies simply the first
sexual union, the metaphor of chasing and consuming the prey is the most appropriate to
express the γάμος as not τέλος, mere fulfillment, but τελευτά, final end beyond which there is
nothing to imagine, just death."

Seaford (1987: 121, esp. n. 159) notices the simultaneously joyous and tragic character
of the wedding songs during the wedding procession. Moreover, it is a common occurrence in
Greek, that “the word τελευτά, like τέλος, is associated with the completion inherent in
marriage as well as the completion inherent in death” (Seaford 1987: 122). Moreover,
marrige (1032 τέλος Κυθερείας) is perceived as the unavoidable end result for most women,
and also the predicted aim of this trilogy, towards which the action, comprising the maidens’
resistance and their male pursuers’ insistence, unfolds. The inherently tragic character of the
wedding, with its irreversible loss of youth/childlessness, is a recurrent theme in end-driven
Greek tragedy. Nevertheless, for the Danaids, consummation is consumption, and the
metaphor of the end is literally the end.

The secondary chorus in Suppl. 1034-1051, whose identity is debated, sings a hymn
of praise to Aphrodite and the futility of resisting Zeus’ inscrutable plans, among which plans
the chorus mentions γάμοι: μετὰ πολλάν δὲ γάμων ἄδε τελευτά/ προτεράν πέλου γυναικῶν

140 Marriage is a fulfillment of wishes or prayers, a realization of mere mental constructs. Clytemnestra invokes
Zeus, the god of fulfillment (and the great seducer who both unceasingly marries and escapes marriage), to fulfill
her wishes: Agam. 973 Ζεὺς Ζεύ τέλειε, τὰς ἐμὰς εὐχὰς τέλει.
141 The exodus, contradicting the anti-γάμος position of the Danaids, has been ascribed to the Argive soldiers,
Argive women, or Hypermestra, the only Danaid who will accept marriage with her cousin Lynceus. On a
thorough discussion of the exodus, see McCall (1976).
(“may the end of γάμοι be ours, as it was the end of many women who lived before us.”).

Γάμος is inescapable, like fate, and incomprehensible, as it stems from a divine will:

οδ' τι τοι μόρσιμον ἔστιν, τὸ γένοιτ' ἂν –
Δίως οὐ παρβατός ἔστιν
μεγάλα φρήν ἀπέρατος – (Suppl. 1047-1049)

Whatever it is fated, it will come to pass. The great, impenetrable mind of Zeus cannot be overstepped.

In his prophetic account of Io’s descendants’ rejection of their suitors, Prometheus expounds on this discordancy between marriage and chase:

... οἶ δ' ἐποτημένοι φρένας,
κύρκοι πελειόν ὦ μακράν λελειμένοι,
ἡξουσι θηρεύσοντες ὦ θερασίμους
γάμους (Prometheus 856-859)

... [Their suitors] impassioned in their hearts, hawks rushing on doves not from afar, will come chasing for a marriage that is not to be chased.

The last line, joining γάμοι and the bodily destruction assumed in the predatory chase, as strong as it appears (and reminiscent of Suppl. 798-799 διάκτορος γάμου), merely reflects the repetition, across generations, of Io’s unexpected bodily change (διαφθορὰν μορφῆς, Prometheus 643-644) and subsequent painful, seemingly endless chase by the gadfly. Io’s παρθενία, marked by erotic dreams, is to be ended through the γάμος with Zeus, which is supposed to happen in the deep meadow of Lerna (similarly to Amymone’s union with Poseidon much later):

... «ὦ μέγ'] εὔδαμον κόρη,
τι παρθενεύη δαρόν, ἔξον σοι γάμου
τυχεῖν μεγίστου;» (Prometheus 647-649)

... “Much blessed maiden, why do you delay your maidenhood so long, when you could enjoy the highest γάμος?”
If the figure of the masculine aggressor that Io experiences directly during her extended πόνοι is split between Argus, the gadfly, and Zeus, the Danaids miss the concomitant touch and release of Zeus, while under the diligent scrutiny of their Argus-like father and chased by the violent and unrelenting Egyptians, who seemingly are birds of prey in a covert allusion to the eagle of Zeus (212). It is as though the Danaids, because of their ancestry, cannot conceive of a suitor both aggressor and rescuer, merely because that would imply continuation, survival after the wedding-death. Nothing could be farther from the celebration of the cosmic marriage in the fragment 44 Radt, considered to come from to the last play of the trilogy, the Danaids, and perhaps preceding the nuptial murder (Sommerstein 2008: 40):

ερᾷ μὲν ἁγνὸς οὐρανὸς τρῶσαι χθόνα, ἔρως δὲ γαϊάν λαμβάνει γάμου τυχεῖν. ὅμβρος δ’ ἀπ’ εὐνάεντος οὐρανοῦ πεσὼν ἐκεῖσε γαϊάν· ἢ δὲ τίκτεται βροαῖς μῆλων τε βοσκὰς καὶ βίον Δημήτριον δένδρων τ’ ὀπώραν· ἡ δὲ τίκτεται βροτοῖς τε βοσκὰς καὶ βίον Δημήτριον δένδρων τ’ ὀπώραν· ἡ δὲ τίκτεται βροτοῖς τε βοσκὰς καὶ βίον Δημήτριον δένδρων τ’ ὀπώραν· ἡ δὲ τίκτεται βροτοῖς. The holy heaven desires to wound the ground, and desire takes hold of the earth to come into union with the heaven; rain, falling from the penetrating heaven, makes the earth conceive. She gives birth to the fodder of apples for the mortals, the life-giving cereals and the ripe fruit of trees; everything comes to its fulfilment from moisturizing sexual union: thus, I am partly their cause.

The union of heaven and earth was likely a trope for weddings, but the imagery of Aphrodite and Eros as maker and cause of the vegetation, transcends the mere sexual union into the lavish diversity, eternally reproducing itself, of the natural world. This image is the exact opposite of the stifling confines of the universe as previously represented by the Danaids. If desire infuses everything, the women who reject it are doubly alien – not just alien to the Greeks, but alien to the universe they reluctantly inhabit. Interestingly, seven centuries later,

Zeitlin (1996: 155) points out how in the parallel pattern Io’s flight/ The Danaids’ flight, both Zeus and Danaus correspond to the figure of Argus, as “watchers” over the maidens’ fertility.
Longus will play with a similar imagery of Eros as the maker of a universe with set boundaries that he himself (but also the pastoral heroes of the novel) choose to comfortably inhabit: τὰ ἄνθη πάντα Ἑρωτὸς ἔργα, τὰ φυτὰ πάντα τοῦτο ποιήματα (2.3-7).

To conclude, Aeschylus’ Danaids plays with a number of clear references to the Athenian wedding ritual: the displacement of the maidens from their original home, their flight and aversion to step into the unknown, their clinginess to their father, the use of the motif of ritual consumption of fruits and even the use of the sea-sailing as representation of the common nautical imagery associated with weddings are all indicative of a “prehistory” of weddings and Greek monogamy.

Marriage, the civilized sexual union, which converts physical virginity into symbolic virginity, is yet to be comprehended by the barbarian, Greek-to-be, Egyptians, for whom symbolic language does not derive, but is divorced, from the natural world.

3.4 The virginity of the Danaids

The unstoppable, inevitable progression towards τέλος feels like an excruciating constraint. If Io found the end to her πόνοι in Zeus’s liberating touch, the Danaids look for freedom in their flight and identify themselves with eternal exiles. If Danaus requests from them to abstain from sexual union not only with their cousins, but also with the Argive men, the imagery of liberation and freedom only belongs to the maidens. They call themselves exiles and broken from communal ties, ἄφιλοι τᾶσδε φυγᾶς (74), while Danaus stresses that they should act their role of newcomers (ἐπήλυδες 195) or needy strangers (χρεῖος εἶ, ἡξένη, φυγάς) as opposed to the Argive natives who are ἐξενοῖ (195). Anticipating the stigma of having been rejected from

143 Seaford (1987: 119, 124-125) discusses the similarities between the sail and the bridal veil in Agamemnon 685-762 (ἐκ τῶν... προκαλομάτων ἐπλευσεν, 690-691 which Seaford translates as [Helen] “sailed from out of the veil”), in Suppl. 1045 and in Sophocles’ OT 420-423.
their communities is a recurrent theme; the Danaids and their father insist they are willing exiles, exiles who chose to reject their wrongful communities but are nevertheless untainted by blood, τάσδ’ ἀναμάκτους φυγάς (196, alluding back to 6).

Thus, bodily transformation and denial of humanity are the outcomes of this deeply desired liberation from sex and sexuality. In their search for a perfect hiding place, the Danaids wish to turn into black smoke or dust, invisible, imperceptible, flying without wings (779-782). The desire for complete self-concealment is a mask for the desire for death, death as a liberating solution from wedlock (ἀμφυγάς τίν’ ἐτι πόρον/ τέμνω γάμων λυτῆρα; Suppl. 806-807). Not surprisingly, this freedom comes from Zeus, when he listens to the maidens’ prayers: καὶ δίκα δίκαν ἐπεσ-/ θαί ἕξν εὐχαῖς ἐμαῖς, λυτηρίοις/ μαχαναῖς θεοῦ πάρα (1071-1073). These lines also end the tragedy, ironically not with a real λύσις, but with a wish and promise of a liberating end. In a twist reminiscent of the abduction of Persephone, Zeus is strongly associated with Hades, whose place ensures the continuation of their exile and search for ξενία: τὸν πολυξενῶτατον/ Ζήνα τὸν κεκμεκότων/ ιξόμεσθα σὺν κλάδοις (156-158). Ironically, not long after, Danaus, while talking about the Egyptian suitors, indirectly responds to his daughters’ longing for escape through the “other Zeus” (Zeὺς ἄλλος 231) by stressing the impossibility of escape from one’s criminal sins in Hades: οὐδὲ μὴ ’ν Ἀιδοῦ θανῶν/ φύγῃ ματαίον αἰτίας πράξας τάδε (228-229).

The Danaids’ self-imposed, willing condition of exiles (αὐτογενῆ φυξανορίαν 8) is repeatedly invoked throughout the play. The first appearance and self-characterization of the maidens surrounds the central idea of exile, which is meant to support their request for asylum. The choice to begin the trilogy with the Danaids arriving in Argos portrays them as both dislocated from their fatherly homes and deprived of a new home, the home of the husband, suspended in a difficult to define state. If Io dreamt in her virginal, enclosed room about γάμοι
and her father was finally obliged by the oracles to let her go outside the city, among
domesticated cattle, the Danaids rarely invoke their virginal state, which they define negatively
as untamed, unsubdued: ἄγαμον ἄδαματον ἐκφυγεῖν 143 and 153, or like another daughter of
Zeus, Artemis, ἄδμητα 149. They themselves actually never refer to their status as παρθένοι,
which is only brought up by the Greek Pelasgus at 480 (σὺ μὲν, πάτερ γεραιὲ τῶν ἐκ τοὺς παρθένουν)
and by Danaus, in his request of chastity, when describing the dangers usually faced by
beautiful maidens (καὶ παρθένων χλιδαῖσιν εὐμόρφοις ἐπὶ πᾶς τις παρελθὼν ὀμμάτως
θελκτήριον/ τὸξευμ’ ἔπεμψεν, ἰμέρου νικόμενος 1004-1005). The Danaids never call
themselves κόραι either: their perception of themselves is that of their undifferentiated female
gender, called τὸν θηλυγενῆ στόλον or, more often and more interestingly, γυναῖκες, also used
for Io herself. It is as though the Greek opposition between παρθένος and γυνή does not exist
yet, in the same way that marriage as a social institution does not exist for non-Greeks. The
only existing and striking opposition is that between the two genders, whose stressed
antagonism is discussed by Zeitlin (1996: 140) in the context of the profusion of binary
elements in this play: “the race of women, the genos gunaikôn, is inalterably and starkly
opposed to the race of males, the genos arsenôn (cf. 29, 393, 487, 818, 951), as both the
Egyptians and Danaids would have it.” This dichotomy can only be imagined as a zero sum
game, one has to be the winner and the other the victim, one will die and the other will
survive: no other possibility is available or even imaginable. The absence of παρθένος
language in this play and its replacement with taming metaphors (ἀδμητα 149, 153 ἄδαματον)
is a striking fact, which so far has been ignored by scholarship. In my view, it is the Danaids’
lack of understanding or acceptance of the social expression of παρθενία that leads to the
uncertainty whether they reject their specific suitors or males in general; the Danaids perceive
their not-yet-sexual state only as the prey still escaping its predator, particularly in their (and
their suitors’) isolation from their community. In a sense, Aeschylus not only ties the institution of marriage to the Greek polis and denies it to the non-Greek, but also affirms that marriage can only exist within a community to legitimize such a union and, thus, make it non-violent. For this reason, the Greek goddess who seems closest to the Danaids is the outsider Artemis, not Athena or Hestia or even Aphrodite, who belong to the city. Artemis is invoked at 144-153 as the divinity the Danaids identify with, as the sexually untamed daughter of Zeus (Διὸς κόρα... ἀδμήτος).

At the opposite end from the idealized Artemis, who eternally evades sexuality, is the figure of Io, the epitome for the Danaids’ fear of bodily change resulting from sexual submission, as expressed in one of their preferred interjections of dread: ἰὼ ἰὼ, ἰὼ δυσάγκριτοι πόνοι (125) or 162.

Like the not-yet-understood marital symbolic system, the clothes of the Danaids are exceptional, because they seem to offer an indication of a different symbolic system, in contradiction to the displayed suppliant olive branches (234-245). According to Pelasgus, the garments are evidently non-Greek, and he does not seem able to differentiate maidens from adult women:

ποδαπὸν ὃμιλον τόνδ’ ἀνελληνόστολον
πέπλοσι βαρβάροις κάμπτεκνόμασιν
χλίοντα προσφωνοῦμεν: οὐ γὰρ Ἀργολίς
ἐσθῆς γυναῖκών οὐά’ ἀρ’ Ἑλλάδος τόπων. (Suppl. 234-237)

Where is this band that we are addressing coming from, reveling in their non-Greek robes and thick Barbarian garments? For they are not the clothes of Argive women, nor are they from other Greek places.

But despite the fact the branches seem to be so obviously and uniquely Greek (μόνον τόδ’ Ἑλλάς χθόν 243), they perfidiously seem to hide something else than they would be expected to mean. When they are first mentioned, the Danaids refer to them as suppliant
branches, adorned with woven wool, to be held in hands: σὺν τοῖσδ’ ἱκετῶν ἐγχειριδίοις, ἐριστέπτοις κλάδοισιν (21-22).

The identification between supplication and murder (suggested by the ἐγχειριδία, later in the trilogy used for criminal daggers) is facilitated by the intermediary textile (the wool), which, like other textiles and texts, signals the possibility of deception. Later, the same branches will be turned into potential nooses: σὺν κλάδοις/ ἄρτάναις θανόσαι 158-159; but the πέπλοι and girdles will also be transformed into potential nooses 457-465. The suppliant branches and the clothes are essentially the same, intrinsic methods of murder, because they both function as denying their symbolic status. Interestingly, the locus of violence in the tragedy lies precisely in the garments: the Danaids lament their sailing into the unknown through tearing up their Sidonian veil (Suppl. 120-121 = Suppl. 131-132 πολλάκι δ’ ἐμπίνω ξὸν λακίδι λινοσινεὶ/ Σιδονίᾳ καλύπτρᾳ); the women fear being dragged away from the statues of gods by their headbands and robes (ἀπὸ βρετέων βία δίκας ἁγομέναν/ ἵππων ἀμετόκων/ πολυμίτων πέπλων τ’ ἐπιλαβᾶς ἐμὸν 430-432), like horses. Nonetheless, when the unwanted suitors appear, they seem to confuse clothes with bodies, particularly hair: they threaten to tear their hair and chop their heads (836-837, 864-865, 884, 909).

If supplication and clothing so easily can change their conventional meanings, once used by the non-Greeks, it makes sense that the Danaids need extensive instruction to learn how to play the suppliants’ part: Danaus’ advice before meeting Pelasgus (176-203) is all focused on non-verbal intonation meant to communicate neediness. The language of the Danaids is not spontaneous, but deeply controlled and memorized: they are expected to inscribe their father’s words as writing on mental tablets. The metaphor of the tablets, also used for Deianeira when she secretly preserved Nessus’ words deep inside her mind, is
suggestive of alienation: a distinct message is incorporated into a maiden’s mind, which will use it as her own and consequently cause fraud and destruction.

To conclude, in an analysis of Aeschylus’ *Suppliants* we need to take into account which sort of techniques a Greek tragedian would have used to represent non-Greekness: while exotic costumes would have been the first available feature, easily recognizable to the audience, the non-Greeks could not have used a non-Greek language in a Greek tragedy intended for a Greek audience. This fact would entail the need for other, more creative and subtler, means of generating the impression that the “barbarians” on stage do not speak or understand Greek language. In my opinion, if we want to pinpoint those “barbarian” features, we should look at the key symbolic codes, or widely recognized institutions, such as guest-friendship, supplication, or, in our particular discussion, marriage and παρθενία, and at their intentional (projected) distortion.

Thus, Aeschylus’ tragedy, more than any other Greek text interested in παρθενία, illustrates the divergence between mere physical sexual inexperience and παρθενία: while παρθενία opens up, lends itself to symbols and marriage, and endlessly reproduces itself, the physical virginity of the Danaids suffers from claustrophobic confinement and is unable to reach beyond literality into active creation and interpretation of signs.
PART TWO Virginity in the Greek Novel

4 Introduction to the Greek Novels

4.1 What makes an ancient novel a novel?

The most heated question among the scholars working on the ancient novelists (perhaps to a greater degree than any other ancient literary genre), is concerned with what makes an ancient novel a novel and what are the determining factors in the appearance of this genre. We consider a number of texts to belong in this category mainly by reasons of content or subject-matter; for the “father” of the scholarship on the ancient novel, Erwin Rohde, love and travel are the unifying themes of the genre (Rohde 1914). More recently, S. Tilg (2010) has reopened the debate with a strong claim about the conscious invention of the genre of the love novel through Chariton’s authorship of Callirhoe, in many ways the model for all the subsequent “ideal” Greek novels.

These novels, written over a period of only two or three centuries, come after a long tradition of a largely respected separation between fictional and non-fictional (claiming “realism”) discourses: the mark of the fictional literary discourse (chronologically preceding the referential one) was the use of verse, either in epic, lyric or dramatic modes. By using prose, that is every-day speech, genres such as historiography, philosophy, or natural science noticeably set themselves apart from fictional, mythical discourse. This formal antagonism between prose and verse stands at the core of the new genre of the novel: their authors choose prose to express a fictional content. For this reason, a critical characteristic of the novels is
their problematization of *representation*. The question these novels repeatedly ask is: what is the relation between the crafted text and the real world?

Some novels choose an apparent historical content (Chariton), others are intently focused on descriptions that combine real elements with fictional ones. More importantly, the heavy intertextuality of the novels with various previous *literary* genres, as also within the genre itself, upholds their strong ahistorical character. Tilg (2011) argues that while the first love novels inclined towards historicity, the later love novels departed from this model. In an interesting analysis of the self-described terminology for the novel, such as μῦθος, πλάσμα, ἱστορία, διήγημα, Tilg shows that often what we take for realism (Petronius or Achilles Tatius) is actually called a *fabula* or μῦθος. On the contrary, what we take as the most ideal and idyllic of the novels, Longus’ Daphnis and Chloe, is described by its narrator, from outside the narrative framework, as ἱστορία.

The solution offered by this thesis is an inquiry into the nature of the most common, overarching theme of the novels, beside their concern with representation: the female protagonist’s unyielding attachment to her παρθενία. As has been shown in the preceding chapters, παρθενία was traditionally a literary topic most concerned with the relation between mind and the created objects, or the relation between a desire to escape the natural confines of the surrounding world and the realization and liberation of this desire in symbolic artifacts.

Much work has been done in the area of the sexuality of the ancient novels. However, most of it projects modern assumptions about female virginity onto these texts, which, although being contemporary to other Christian writings with a similar interest in

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144 Zeitlin (1990: 424) speculates that “Chloe… does not know what virginity is and, in any case, if she did, would be very happy to lose it to Daphnis.” While Chloe is definitely unaware of her sexual status, it is very untypical of Greek maidens to want to lose their virginity. Achilles Tatius, probably on the model of Chloe, makes his Leucippe similarly unaware of the significance of her παρθενία and ready to have sex with Clitophon, until her mother’s extreme reaction to the possible seduction convinces her to reject Clitophon as sexual partner until marriage.

παρθενία, are nonetheless explicitly not interested in Christianity. Bowersock (1994) claims that the novels display subtle parodic references to Christianity (like allusions to resurrection in the frequent apparent deaths). Nonetheless, the aspiration for prolonged virginity is not mocked in the Greek love novels, and the question remains: how can we explain a similar interest in the topic of παρθενία in texts professedly not Christian? If Tilg’s argument, that Chariton’s Callirhoe is the first novel, is correct, its definite interest in the nature of παρθενία precedes Christian texts on the topic by at least two centuries. While many scholars have pointed out the intertwining between “sexuality and textuality” (Morales 2008: 40, König 2008), the process through which the genre of the novel is defined by its focus on παρθενία has remained elusive. While scholars are paying more attention to avoid projecting modern understandings of sexuality into the novels, however, they tend to dismiss παρθενία as queer fetishism or entirely a social construct, tyrannical in its narrow teleology (Goldhill 1995: 1-45, Morales 2008: 43). Once the concern with παρθενία is thus misunderstood, the novels are read against the grain: non-parthenoi characters like Melite or Arsace are read as heroically subversive, resisting social pressures (Schmeling 2003: 439), while Callirhoe, Leucippe, Chloe or Charicleia suffer from a “lack of emphasis on accomplishments, personality, intelligence” (Schmeling 2003: 439). But such an approach only circumvents the core questions surrounding the subject matter of these texts and imposes on them modern assumptions about sexuality.146

Most misunderstandings surrounding the reading of παρθενία in the novels are related to the lack of acknowledgement of the fact that in Greek culture παρθενία is preserved, and even “rescued” from inescapable decay and death, through the wedding and subsequent

146 An example of such self-contradicting rhetoric is Morales (2008: 40-42, 53), who understandably criticizes the censorship of the sexually explicit passage of the female-ass intercourse in Apuleius 10.20-22 on account of, in Winkler’s terms (1985: 193), the critics’ desire to try to impose a “moral pattern” on the ancient text; however, a page later, Morales proceeds with expressing her strong intent, following in the footsteps of other scholars, to criticize “the subordination of women” and to point to a “history of (women’s) oppression” and “(men’s) pleasure.” Such inconsistency appears to be at the root of the negative light shed upon παρθενία; in a convoluted way, reading the Greek novel becomes a sophisticated exercise in resisting its dubious “ideology.”
marriage. For example, Winkler (1990) famously reads Chloe’s marital union to Daphnis through the narrow prism of Lycaenion’s view of sexuality and against what the novel itself proclaims (that the protagonists’ after-wedding life is a seamless continuation of their premarital joyful pastoral life). Similarly, Morales (2008: 53) reads the physical sufferings of the heroines as erotically charged, against the explicit fact that the novels repeatedly claim that the only truly degrading assault is the sexual one (e.g. Achilles Tatius 8.5.5). If there is no distinction between extramarital sex and conjugal sex, the stories of the novels do not make much sense: why would the authors want their female characters to remain chaste if conjugal sex is identically degrading as non-conjugal sex?

Therefore, my overarching argument in the second part of this dissertation will be that παρθενία is not merely the subject matter but also the mode of the novels. In their attempt to situate their literary creation against reality, the authors mirror the παρθενία of the female protagonists, in order to sustain, prolong, and give life to the narrative. As Morales (2008: 53-54) rightly observes, the “novels invite an active interrogation of virginity and chastity,” but the novels exist only in virtue of the reiterated positive response that παρθενία survives questioning and assault. Perhaps the ancient novel as genre is elusive in its purpose and limits precisely because it sets to mirror παρθενία, an equally indefinable concept.

4.2 The fragmentary novels

At first view, the most conspicuous difference between the plot of New Comedy (a genre that otherwise resembles the novels in a focus on marriage and courtship) and that of the novels that follow is distancing, a literary artifice particularly favored by the novelists. While in

147 “The heroines never are actually raped, but their narratives repeatedly take pleasure in the fantasy of their defilement at the same time as they exhibit them as paragons of chastity. The fantasy of the virgin/whore is a potent one in these novels.”
Comedy the irresistible infatuations, rapes, and marriages which solve the violence of the first sexual encounter all happen in the familiar locales of the small Greek city, the novels are set both in considerably older periods of Greek history and in Non-Greek, exotic milieux.

Among the novels that survive today, some complete, some in papyrus fragments, some only in testimonia, there is an ongoing narrative motif of far-away (in space and time) travel, as well as a concern, on the part of the protagonists, with maintaining sexual chastity while yearning for marriage. These two main motifs, I contend, are not unrelated and they are crucial in defining the genre. The separation from society is necessary to explore the real reasons for maintaining παρθενία, an intent that, as we have seen, is at the core of παρθενία itself: thus, the novels can be defined as narrative inquiries into παρθενία. The novelists who play with the reverse of one or both of these two themes (Longus, Lollianus, Lucian, and the Latin Petronius and Apuleius) nevertheless explore the same kind of questions, as will be upheld in this brief chapter. I will proceed by looking first at how the theme of παρθενία was present even in the fragmentary novels from which we have enough supporting evidence, and will continue with the novels of Chariton, Xenophon of Ephesus, and Lucian.

Ninus, a first century AD novel whose action is set in the Assyrian campaigns against Babylonia, Armenia, and Media of the sixth century BC, was the story of the love between the Assyrian warrior Ninus and his future wife Semiramis. Columns A.I, A.II, and A.III mention Ninus’ ardent desire for marriage, his regret over not having been able to preserve his chastity due to the impulses of his age (A.II 25-27 εἰ μὲν οὐκ ἡμοθανόμην Ἀφρο-/δίτης μακάριος ἂν ἦν τῆς στερρότητος), as well as the postponement (ἀναβο[λήν]) of the desired marriage to

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148 The standard edition for the Greek Novels preserved only as fragments is Stephens and Winkler (1995).
150 For this reason the female virginity as reduced to a social construct, as envisaged by Haynes (2002: 74-75) seems hardly tenable. To attribute to a number of different literary authors spread over three centuries and various locales of the Greek and Roman world a shared politically invested interest in social reform is an affirmation for which I think no sufficient support has been given.
Semiramis on account of her age. The theme of “male virginity” is a major one in the novels and will be discussed in more detail below, in the chapter on Achilles Tatius. Fragment A.IV seems to refer to Semiramis who, as παρθέν[ος ἐντὸς τῆς γυναικῶντιδο[ος ζῶσα], finds herself unable to express fluently her emotions to Ninus’ mother but instead shows them; Ninus’ mother assures her though that her non-verbal language is more efficient to communicate than any word (ἀπαν[τος, ἔφη,] μοι λόγου κάλλιον ἢ [σώπη] διαλέγεται).

Metiochus and Parthenope, similarly set in sixth-century Samos and probably written in the first century A.D., is reconstituted from two small papyri, its eleventh-century Persian reworking and a Christian martyr version. One of the papyri mentions Anaximenes’ speech on the powers of Eros. As the name of the heroine suggests, her virginity played an important role, picked up by the Persian tradition, in which “the lover and the virgin” becomes the generic mark of the rich genre of the romantic story. Because of its early date and the survival for ten centuries until its Persian version, Hägg and Utas (2003: 3) think “that it may have influenced numerous narrative works in Graeco-Roman and Christian literature (later novels, apocryphal acts of apostles, hagiography) as well as original compositions in Coptic, Syriac, Arabic and other Oriental languages (The Thousand and One Nights, etc.).” Moreover, according to Maehler 1976, as cited by Hägg and Utas (2003: 8), the name of the heroine, while apparently frequent on the island of Samos (Pausanias 7.4.1), where the plot of the novel begins, looks back to a passage in Herodotus 3.124: there the otherwise unnamed daughter of the tyrant Polycrates swears to stay unmarried if her father returns safe from a mission. In an article on a Christian martyr narrative only preserved in Arabic, and known as the Martyrdom

151 See below, 6.4 (199-201).
152 In the Odyssey 6.57-67, Nausicaa also avoids using the word “marriage” (ἀἴδετο γάρ θαλερόν γάμον ἐξουσίον) in order to communicate her desire for marriage, which Alcinous grasps (ὁ δὲ πάντα νόει) although the message is by no means explicit.
of St Bartanuba, Hägg (1984) hypothesizes that this story with a female martyr who prefers to be decapitated rather than give up her virginity is based on the novel Parthenope and Metiochus and that St. Bartanuba’s name itself is an Arabic alteration of the Greek Parthenope. Unsuri’s eleven-century Vamiq and ’Adhra (The Ardent Lover and the Virgin) is a narrative in which the heroine’s virginity is the major topic, despite the difficulty surrounding the complete reconstruction of the plot also in the Persian tradition.\(^{154}\)

The extant fragments of Iamblichus’ Babyloniac, as well as Photius’ summary, outline a plot, which begins with the happy wedding between Rhodanes and Sinonis. But the powerful king of Babylon desires the newly wed Sinonis himself; this causes the couple to runaway, followed by a long series of tribulations, separations and misfortunes. However, the novel ends happily with Rhodanes recovering his wife and becoming the king of the Babylonians. The event that acts as the catalyzer of the plot is Sinonis’ refusal to betray her marriage to Sinonis for the king of Babylon. The leit-motif of Sinonis’ determination comes to a high point when she attempts to commit suicide if her marriage to Rhodanes is threatened, in fragment 61. Sinonis’ words equate marriage with liberty, and she is ready to suffer death for them (fragment 78a10 θανάτου καταφρονήσας ἀνθρωπος δεσπότην οὐκ ἔχει) recalling Leucippe’s passionate defence of her παρθενία/ ἔλευθερία (Achilles Tatius 6.22.4) or the theme of slavery associated with sexual incontinence in Xenophon’s Ephesiaca.

Calligone’s setting is in the area of the Sea of Azov, among the Sauromatians, a Scythian people. The title is also the name of the female protagonist, who calls herself a Greek, and not an Amazon, despite carrying the spirit of one, and also invoking Artemis: εἰμὶ [μ]ὲν γὰρ Αμαζώνον οὐ[δὲ] Θεμιστώ, ἀλλὰ Ἐλληνίς [καὶ] Καλλιγόνη, οὐδεμίας [δὲ] Αμαζόνων τὸν θυμὸν ή[σ]θενεστέρα. The same papyrus portrays her in a love-frenzy, crying

\(^{154}\) In this sense, see Utas’ (1984-1986) article, suggestively entitled “Did ’Adhra remain a virgin?”
and ripping her clothes over the day when she had seen Eraseinos for the first time, and willing to stab herself, perhaps on account of hearing about Eraseinos’ death. It is worth mentioning that a subnarrative in Achilles Tatius’ novel features a Calligone and her marriage to Callisthenes.

Scholars conjectured some sort of relation between Antheia and Xenophon’s *Ephesiaca*. In the meager three columns preserved, there is mention of Antheia, “trafficked” by Lysandrus (αὐτὴν ὑπὸ ἄλλης παρέδωκεν), Artemis, a concealment of a drug, and something ἄπιστον and παράδοξον. Both Calligone and Antheia include sufficient details to suggest a major role played by the heroine’s virginity and its related themes, such as resistance to robbers, suicide as a form of self-sacrifice, or Artemis as a model for the female protagonist.

A copy of Chione (“Snow White”) was found in the same codex with Chariton’s *Callirrhoe*. The few lines preserved mention a future husband, a marriage about which everybody in the city speaks ({oὐθεὶς ἄλλο οὐδὲν ἐλάλει ἤ περὶ τοῦ γάμου}, previous suitors of the maiden Chione (τὴν Χιόνην ἐμελλόν μνηστεύεσθαι, ...αἰτεῖν τὴν κόρην), and Chione’s words to presumably her future spouse looking for a way to save themselves. Two other fragments which have been indecisively ascribed to Chione mention a maidenly girdle, a marriage, and a speech to her master of a woman who calls herself happy. All these features, albeit fragmentarily preserved, point to the major theme of παρθενία and its marital continuation in the extant novels.

The remarkable fragments of the *Phoenicica* attributed to a second-century A.D. Lollianus have more in common with the grotesque adventures of Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* or the Greek *Onos* with which it has been associated. For our purposes, the human sacrifice mentioned in *P. Oxy. 1368*, column II and *P. Colon. inv. 3328 B.1 recto*, if indeed related,

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while recalling both Achilles Tatius’ sacrifice of a supposed Leucippe by the βουκόλοι, describes a boy (τὸν παῖδα) whose heart is taken out, cooked and eaten by drunken men; P. Oxy. 1368, column II mentions the words spoken by the ghost of a boy lying dead under a plane tree together with his beautiful girl (κείμαι δὴ ύπο τῇ πλατανίστῳ ἐκείνῳ καὶ μετ’ ἐμοῦ κόρη καλῆ, ἄμφω ἀνηρημένοι). Κείμαι is ambiguous here, as the verb is often used for sexual intercourse, particularly in the context of a tree shade and with a beautiful girl; many epigrams in the A.P. play on this pun as well (e.g. 7.185 κείμαι παρθενικὴ τῇ δὲ παρὰ ψαμάθῳ or 7.488 ὡραίου κεκλιμένα πρὸ γάμου). The solidarity of the man who, against the archetypal Greek narrative of the sacrifice of the maiden, is sacrificed (or just killed if P. Oxy. 1368 Col. II is from a different part of the story) besides her, is seemingly the object of the fun. Fragment P. Colon. inv. 3328 A.2 should bear a similar interpretation: a male speaker narrates how he lost his virginity (καὶ τότε πρῶτον ἐπειράθην συνοισίας... διακορήσεως) to a female Persis, whose status is unclear. Persis apparently tries to take her jewellery off and give it as a gift to the male narrator, who refuses it but accepts instead an offer of two thousand drachmas, before the sexual intercourse. The context is indeed bewildering: why would a hesitating man be offered money in exchange for his “virginity”? The mention of Persis’ mother, who was not supposed to see her, a few lines after the sexual intercourse recalls Achilles Tatius 2.23.4-6, in which the mother successfully prevents the deflowering of Leucippe. Apparently, the novel’s humour consists in mocking the excessive worth assigned to παρθενία in the “regular” novels, in which – as it needs to be reemphasized – the deflowering of the heroine never happens.

157 The mother traditionally takes the part of her virgin daughter and she is the one who gives her daughter to the groom during the wedding ceremony. The model of Demeter and Kore is best preserved in Heliodorus’ Aethiopica. The disconnect between Chloe and Nape (Daphnis and Chloe 3.25) in which the foster mother protects her daughter’s virginity as a valuable commodity, is explained by the lack of blood relations between them.
Petronius’ *Satyricon* and Lucian’s *True Histories* stem from the same tradition. A comparable scene is to be found in Daphnis’ instruction by Lycaenion in *Daphnis and Chloe* 3.20: Lycaenion mentions there as well a form of payment given in exchange for her virginity. Apparently the negation of παρθενία is also a source of story-telling, and calling into question its non-material nature belongs to the same discourse and inquiry into the grounds of virginity as the novels which more prominently attempt to describe it in affirmative terms.

Given the fact that the loss of virginity, intrinsically represented by the abduction of the bride during the wedding, is associated with removal of clothing, the numerous references to nakedness or exposure are an outstanding feature of the *Phoenicia*: the “secluded” chamber ([οίκ]ημα ἀποκεκρυμμένον), in which the defloration occurs, is ironically populated by female servants, the slave Glauceîtes who brings in the money and counts it, and afterwards Persis’ mother too enters it. One of the βουκόλοι who performs the sacrifice of the boy is naked, wearing only a loin-cloth (γυμνὸς περὶ[ομα περὶ ἐαντοῖ] ἐχον φοινικοῦ[ν], and on *P. Colon. inv.* 3328 B.1. verso there is a communal sexual intercourse in full view of another character followed right after by the stripping of corpses, which is done so scrupulously that not even the ταινία covering the breasts of a dead maiden is left behind (μ[η]δὲ τὴν ταινίαν ἐν

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158 *Satyricon* 25: inquit Quartilla… “Iunonem meam iratam habeam, si umquam me meninerim virginem fuisses.”

159 Lucian’ *True Histories* has almost no female characters within the main narrative, if we exclude the literary references to Calypso and Helen. At the beginning of the heroes’ adventures (1.8), one can find vine women and, at the other end of the novel (2.46), the pretended women. The vine women at 1.8 are compared to Daphne in the process of metamorphosis, half girl half laurel tree; the erotic interaction between the male travellers and the vine women recalls the usual tropes of παρθενία: when the men try to pick up their fruit, they do not let go and scream in pain, while some men become completely mixed with them and start growing tendrils. The inhabitants of the Moon reproduce themselves through male to male intercourse and have never heard of the word “woman”: 1.22 τὸ μῆ ἐκ γυναικῶν γεννᾶσθαι αὐτοῖς, ἀλλ’ ἀπὸ τῶν ἔρυθρων- γάμοις γὰρ τοῖς ἀργεῖς ἐρώτεται καὶ οὐδὲ ὄνομα γυναικὸς ὀλος ἱσασθαι, μέχρι μὲν ὅν πέντε καὶ ἐκκοι ἐτῶν γαμεῖται ἐκαστος, ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦτον γαμεῖ αὐτός- κύουσι δὲ οὐκ ἐν τῇ νησίδι, ἀλλ’ ἐν ταῖς γαστροκινημιαῖς.

160 The colour hints at the title of the novel (in its turn allusive to Iamblichus’ *Babyloniaca*, and the many other novels associated with Phoenicians and Phoenician cities), but also at the presumed colour of the bride’s wedding dress (Oakley and Sinos 1993: 16). Achilles Tatius describes Calligone’s wedding dress at 2.11 as πορφυραν and uses the occasion to digress on the discovery of the παρθένα by the Tyrians and its later use for Aphrodite’s robe. Phrynichus (fr. 13n) uses the colour to describe blushing cheeks (λάμπει δ’ ἐπὶ πορφυράς παρθήματι φῶς ἔρωτος), while Simonides (fr. 585) uses it for a maiden’s lips (πορφυρόν ἀπὸ στόματος/ ἱετά φοινίκαν παρθένος). Erinna (Fr. Ib 34 Diehls) chooses instead φοινίκεος to render “blushing” (φοινίκεος αἰδός). On the vicinity between expressions of dark red and violet in Greek poetry, see Irwin (1974: 201).
Additionally, in the lines preceding the collective sex scene, there is a simile to the battle of Centaurs with the Lapiths, as well as a reference to a girdle (ζώνην), and in the lines following the stripping of the corpses the perpetrators put these clothes on. The cross-dressing, also employed by Achilles Tatius (6.1-2 ἔλαφον ἀντὶ παρθένου) and in the fragmentary prosimetric novel Iolaos, pushes further the alienation of the clothes from their body, but also mocks the “solidarity” shown by the behaviour of the male protagonist of the novels to the heroine’s conduct, and hence his feminization. The exposure theme, which points to the non-existence of παρθένεια, is a common feature of the “virginity denying” novels, the Onos, True Histories, Satyricon and Metamorphoses.

Despite the fragmentary nature of these novels and their different creative developments, a clear main theme emerges: a girl, with the sympathy and solidarity of the man who is pursuing her, defends her physical sexual integrity among extraordinary circumstances, under which no one would be expected to do it. The novels that mock this theme, Phoinicica, the Onos, Lucian’s True Histories, and the Roman novels of Apuleius and Petronius, only confirm and reinforce that the theme of the “preserved virginity against all odds” was central to the genre. In my view, this is the focus of all the ancient novels, and not the amorous/romantic element as usually claimed, for instance by Konstan (1994: 14): “a unique conception of eros or passionate love as a uniform and reciprocal emotion conditions the fundamental structure of the ancient Greek novels.” While eros is certainly present in a wide variety of forms, such a focus on the erotic is problematic because on the one hand it renders the non-erotic elements of the novels superfluous, or empty literary tropes, and on the other hand it “idealizes” the perfect love companionship of the protagonists, leaving outside its creation or its supporting elements.
4.3 Chariton: The ever-expanding παρθενία

The plot of the first recorded and complete novel apparently plays down the virginity of its heroine, Callirhoe. Callirhoe’s virginity covers only the first chapter of the first book, and she even takes a second husband in the middle of the novel. At the same time, the novel apparently still focuses on her character (on the title Τὰ περὶ Καλλιρόην διηγήματα see Goold 1995: 3-4), and on her adventures following a happy wedding marred by the jealousy of the suitors and eventually of the groom. However, the concerns raised by the first sexual intercourse and the heroine’s attachment to her pre-wedding status remain the critical theme of the novel. The last paragraph of the novel (8.8.16) restores the right order of things by returning to its beginning: this beginning is condensed in Callirhoe’s prayer to Aphrodite, in which she expresses her gratitude for being back in Syracuse, the place of her παρθενία and first love, and her wish not to be separated again from her husband:

Χάρις σοι, Ἀφροδίτη. πάλιν γὰρ μοι Χαίρεαν ἐν Συρακούσαις ἔδειξας, διὸ καὶ παρθένος εἶδον αὐτὸν σοῦ θελοὺσης... δέομαι σοι, μηκέτι με Χαίρεον διαζεύξῃς, ἀλλὰ καὶ βίον μακάριον καὶ θάνατον κοινὸν κατάνευσον ἡμῖν.

Thank you, Aphrodite; for you showed me Chaereas in Syracuse again, in the same place where I saw him as maiden when you wanted it… I pray you, never again take me apart from Chaereas, but allow us both a joyous life and death together.

Like Helen, and unlike Deianeira or Clytemnestra, Callirhoe will return to her first husband; the reason for that is that the wedding was not interrupted in its most vulnerable stage, during the transition or procession, and before its consummation but after it. The comparison with Helen, while not direct, is justified by the comparison between hers and Thetis’ wedding (1.1.16). The vulnerability of the transition before consummation (best proven by the birth of a child) is invoked by Chaereas himself at 1.3.1 when he is upset because he cannot take his bride (still a κόρη, until her first pregnancy) with him when
travelling to see his injured father: οὗ γὰρ οἶόν τε ἐν ἢξαγείν ἡδὴ τὴν κόρην. The fulfilled character of the wedding will be later confirmed by the pregnancy: Callirhoe’s pregnancy makes her faithful not only to her virginity, as the pattern went, but to the infant who became part of her virginity, and, by inclusion, to the father of the child. On the other hand, the second husband marries her believing she is a παρθένος, a detail which she omits to correct (2.5.10) in order to keep the baby sheltered from her second husband’s possible jealousy.

The theme of male jealousy, more emphasized in this novel than in all the others, is adjusted and determined by the equally prominent theme of Callirhoe’s exceptional beauty, again as in the myth of Helen.¹⁶¹ When the rejected suitors, led by Φθόνος (1.2.1), envy Chaereas after the wedding, they first plan to kill the groom (τὸν γάμον θάνατον τῷ νυμφίῳ ποιήσωμεν), but then they direct their anger to the dissolution of the marriage instead, by transferring on to Chaereas (1.2.5 ζηλοτυπίαν τὸν γάμον) their feelings of inadequacy and anger. The plan is appropriately called “dissolving the marriage” (ἐπαγγέλλομαι διάλυσιν τὸν γάμον 1.2.5) as the remaining alternative to “dissolving Callirhoe’s virginity,” the lack of success of this plan, like the eternal virginity professed by other heroines, is ultimately the theme of the novel. At their first attempt, the suitors’ stratagem fails: when seeing the proofs of courtship right at the door of his house, Chaereas suspects Callirhoe of infidelity, while Callirhoe reacts to his anger by suspecting that Chaereas’ former ερασταί are jealous of his marriage (1.3.6), and does not consider the possibility that she could have been the cause for jealousy. Her proud and modest attitude, which becomes a theme of the novel and is explained as originating in her paternity, is soon contrasted to her servant’s disposition to self-admiration and vulnerability to being seduced: γυνὴ δὲ εὐάλωτὸν ἔστιν, ὅταν ἐρασθῇ δοκῇ (1.4.2).¹⁶² The

¹⁶¹ For the “beauty effect” and its role in Chariton’s novel see Schmeling (2005: 36-49).
¹⁶² Therein lies the explanation of Callirhoe’s tendency to be self-deprecatory (1.14.9, 6.5.9): vanity would make her vulnerable to the “appearance” of male desire (rather than, as Haynes [2002: 77] puts it, because “the female
reference to Menander (*Naucerus* fr. 290 k-t) is entirely appropriate, as what follows is a staging worthy of New Comedy: with the use of an actor pretending to be in love (ὑποκριτὴν ἔρωτος), and another one playing the persuasive speaker (τοῦ δράματος ὑποκριτὴν ἔτερον 1.4.2), the δημιουργός, skilled at maneuvering the audience’s emotions, sets his stage (συνέτατε τὴν σκηνήν 1.4.9). Chaereas, blinded by jealousy and believing that the man visiting the maid was actually there for Callirhoe, famously hits her with his foot in her diaphragm, rendering her unconscious (1.4.12). Cambyses had similarly struck to death his sister and wife, after marrying her against the law (Hdt. 3.32). But the motive of a displaced and *unintended* male violence against the bride around the moment of the wedding might have resonated with the motif of the sacrificed maiden/bride. The unnecessary sacrifice requires reparation and the *reinvention* of an institution that is no longer to be taken for granted. On the other hand, the “false death,” and hence immortality of the bride underscores her still extant παρθενία, which becomes defined for the rest of the novel as her symbolic faithfulness to her first husband and lover.

Consequently, Callirhoe constantly recalls Chaereas, when she is willing to protect his baby, not in open speech, but in her *mind* and dreams. Dionysius finds out from Callirhoe herself, when she speaks in her sleep, that she has been previously married. Similarly to her pregnancy, her faithfulness to her first lover shows, despite her willingness to hide it. Chaereas is incorporated in her παρθενία, when Callirhoe addresses him in her explanation given to Dionysius after mentioning Chaereas’ name in her dream: δυστυχὴς ἄνθρωπος, ἐμὸς ἀνήρ ἐκ παρθενίας (3.7.5). The use of παρθενία in this last passage stresses the connecting role played

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163 For a more extensive discussion of the role played by New Comedy in Chariton’s novel see Mason (2002).
164 Chaereas has previously (1.4.7) expressed his intention to commit suicide instead: ἐμαυτὸν ἀνέλω. Καλλιρόης γὰρ καὶ ἄδικούσης φιέσομαι.
by Chaereas in her transition from childhood to maturity: he was her man since the time she was a παρθένος. Her yearning for her first lover coincides with her desire to die, a common motif of the maiden who prefers death to living without her maidenhood. Her dilemma in choosing between the two men is presented as two opposite options by the people of Babylon:

μή παρῆς τὸν παρθένιον· ἠλοῦ τὸν πρῶτον φιλήσαντα, τὸν πολίτην, ἵνα καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἰδης· εἰ δὲ μή, ζῆσεις ἐπὶ ξένης ὡς φυγάς. (6.1.4)

Do not overlook your maiden love: choose the man who loved you first, your fellow citizen, so that you can also see your father. If not, you will live as an exile on foreign land.

The first lover is, unsurprisingly after we have seen the continuity that exists between virginity and marriage/first sexual intercourse, the “virginal” one, but also Callirhoe’s only chance to regain her status of a free Greek woman in her birth city and as the daughter of her father. Returning to him is presented as a symbolic act, not as a biological necessity. On the other hand, the advice to stay with Dionysius is argued as follows:

τὸν εὐεργέτην ἠλοῦ, τὸν σώσαντα, μή τὸν ἀποκτείναντα· τί δὲ ἄν πάλιν ὧργισθῇ Χαιρέας; πάλιν τάφος; μή προδὸς τὸν υἱόν· τίμησον τὸν πατέρα τοῦ τέκνου. (6.1.5)

Choose the one who did you good, the one who saved you, not the one who killed you! What if Chaereas becomes angry again? You want a tomb again? Do not betray your son! Honour the father of your child.

Dionysius has behaved better than Chaereas in every way, and Callirhoe should choose him to escape another death, and preserve herself biologically, together with her son. In a sense, choosing παρθενία is the only possible choice, because doing otherwise would involve a disrespect for one’s memory (μὴ παρῆς). On the other hand, when Callirhoe is presented as having to choose between two fathers, her own, and her son’s, the ironical implication is that this choice (アルバム) is deceptive; because the crowd does not know who the real father of her
son is, the statement is self-contradictory; by choosing Dionysius, Callirhoe would betray her son’s father and hence both her son and herself. From a juridical point of view, as Schwartz (1999) has shown, Callirhoe’s child unquestionably belongs to his social (and not biological) father. But the continuum established between Callirhoe, Chaereas and their child acts as an invisible bond: Callirhoe had previously envisaged her unborn, invisible baby as a concrete remembrance of her lost union (2.9.4 ὑπόμνημα τοῦ γάμου) to her first, “virginal” lover, as well as a sum of unfulfilled-yet possibilities, travels (2.9.5 πλεύση), searches (ζητήσεις), and stories (τὰ τῆς μητρὸς διηγήματα). By refusing to abandon the insubstantial mental spheres of παρθενία, memories, dreams, wishes and prophecies, Callirhoe allows the story to continue.

To conclude, Callirhoe’s act of symbolic (and not physical) faithfulness to her “first man,” effectively describes the symbolic (and not physical) preservation of παρθενία in the Greek marriage. The image of the husband is split into two through a process of decomposition: the husband metaphorically kills and assists, in wonder, in his bride’s return to life.

4.4 Xenophon: The invisible παρθενία

Similarly to Chariton’s novel, Xenophon’s Anthia and Habrocomes concentrates on the narrative ensuing the wedding of the couple. Literally, Anthia’s virginity should end at 1.9.9 with her first sexual intercourse with her husband. However, as in all the other weddings of παρθένοι, sexual intercourse is not described as removal or loosening of virginity, but only as delight in the Aphrodite’s works (τὰ πρῶτα τῶν Ἀφροδίτης ἀπήλλασον). In contrast, Manto,

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165 The “abortion” word used by Chariton at 2.8.7 is ἔκτρωσις, “wounding.” In Heliodorus’ Aethiopica 1.18.5 the robber Thyamis interprets his dream that he would murder Charicleia as an euphemism for the “wounding of virginity, which is not mortal” (τὰς παρθενίους τρώσεις, ώρ’ ὄν όυκ ἀποθανεῖσθαι τὴν Χαρίκλειαν). Furthermore, the following word used for the planned abortion at Callirhoe 2.9.2 is φθείρειν, a verb which otherwise frequently denotes the loss of virginity (see Introduction 0.4, 9-14).
Apsyrtus’ marriageable (but Barbarian) daughter, accuses Habrocomes of attempting to “make her virginity invisible” (2.5.7 ὁ γὰρ σῶφρον Ἀβροκόμης ἐπείρασε μὲν παρθενίαν τὴν ἐμὴν ἀφανίσαι). Manto’s use of the verb ἀφανίζεσθαι in the context of bodily virginity is unique, and particularly striking because, as we have seen,166 παρθενία is consistently denied a bodily mark, and is thus “invisible”. Apsyrtus reacts by punishing Habrocomes harshly for insulting his masters and willing to deflower a virgin (2.6.1 διαφθείραι παρθένον) in order to prove Manto’s virginity to her future groom: 2.6.4 τῷ νυμφίῳ τῆς θυγατρὸς ἐνδεικνύμενος ὅτι σῶφρονα παρθένον ἄξεται. The futility of such proof will soon be revealed in Manto’s doomed marriage: the bride will dispose of her “dowry” (consisting in three girl slaves, including Anthia) at 2.9.2., and thus separate herself symbolically from her παρθενία, a separation expressed in the letter to her father as the trope of the alienated daughter: 2.12.1. ἔδωκας με ἀνδρὶ ἐν ξένῃ. The socially visible character of Manto’s virginity and of her marital union disintegrates under her repudiation of her dowry, the concentrated extension and mark of παρθενία as still preserved in marriage: when this happens the daughter seems to realize her sudden foreignness and departure from her father.167

In contrast, the theme of the invisibility, and therefore abstractness, of virginity is at the core of Xenophon’s novel. Like Penelope and Odysseus, Anthia and Habrocomes preserve each other’s image in their mind, for as long as they cannot see one another. At the beginning of their love, they are, according to the trope of love-sickness, sleepless: they stay awake not being able to stop themselves from contemplating the image of the other as retained in their mind (1.5.1 ἐκάτερος... ἔχουν δὲ πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν τὰς ὅψεις τὰς ἐαυτῶν, τὰς εἰκόνας ἐπὶ τῆς

166 See above, Introduction (1-28).
167 Plutarch describes in Moralia, Advice to the bride and groom 23 (141c), the highly abstract and symbolic nature of the dowry, ideally to be found completely within the woman, together with her nobility, magic charms, and virginal girdle: ἀμαχὸν οὖν τι γίγνεται πράγμα γαμετή γυνὴ καὶ νόμιμος, ἂν ἐν αὐτῇ πάντα θεμένη, καὶ προίκα καὶ γένος καὶ φάρμακα καὶ τὸν κεπτὸν αὐτῶν. In this context it is interesting that Anthia is the dowry (of Manto).
ψυχῆς ἁλλήλων ἀναπλάττοντες.) The result of this fruitless imaginative effort is despondency: their eyes become lethargic (1.5.2 τὸ βλέμμα ἂθυμον). When Habrocomes is imprisoned by Manto’s father, his main cause of suicidal depression lies in not being able to see Anthia (2.7.1 δεινὴ δὲ αὐτὸν ἄθυμία καταλαμβάνει καὶ μᾶλλον ἐπεὶ Ἀνθίαν οὐχ ἔωρα). His only meager hope (2.8.2 μικρὰ εὐελπὶς ἢν) comes from a dream, in which he sees himself changed into a horse, in search for his mare: only when they find one another, will he turn back into human.

The helplessness of not seeing is alleviated by the evanescent seeing of utterly non-referential images. On the other hand, the “horses” play the role of disguises, concealing the temporary invisibility of the lovers.

For her part, Anthia preserves Habrocomes’ image in her mind unerringly, particularly in the critical moments of her wanderings; on her wedding day to Perilaus, which she was able to postpone, but not end, she thinks of her husband night and day (3.5.2 ἀεὶ πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν εἶχεν Άβροκόμην. ἐνενοεῖτο δὲ ἀμα πολλά, τὸν ἔρωτα, τοὺς ὅρκους, τὴν πατρίδα, τοὺς πατέρας, τὴν ἁμάκην, τὸν γάμον.), and when she understands that the marriage is unavoidable she decides to tear her hair in mourning and drink poison instead of forgetting Habrocomes (3.5.3 ἀμνημονῶ). By choosing death she makes Habrocomes her only man even if he may be dead (3.6.3); to put it in other words, even though by becoming a widow she would be able to marry again, Anthia remains loyal to the immaterial memory of Habrocomes.

In response to finding about Anthia’s “death” from poisoning, Habrocomes laments that her tomb lacks a body so that he may find rest in suicide. Habrocomes interprets the disappearance of her body as being the object of the necrophilic desire of some pirate (3.10.2 ληστὴς ἐρωτικὸς... καὶ νεκράς ἐπιθυμήσῃ σου). The utter invisibility of her body makes him both decide to stay alive and seek for it and painfully persevere in imagining it (3.10.4 ἔννοια Ἀνθίας, τοῦ θανάτου, τοῦ τάφου, τῆς ἀπωλείας). But unable to handle (ὑκέτι καρτερῶν) this
futile act of imagination, and led by a sad hope (3.10.5 ὀδήγησε δὲ αὐτὸν εἰς ταῦτα ἐλπὶς δυστυχής), he slips quietly (λαθών) from Hippothous’ band to search for Anthia’s real (if dead) body.

Moreover, in the end, when the two lovers finally reunite at the temple of Isis, Anthia tells Habrocomes that she is the same as she was when they separated three books before:

 ámbας ἁμαρτεῖν οὐδείς. (5.14.4)

But I have come to you the same as I was when I first travelled to Syria from Tyre, and nobody convinced me to go astray.

This lack of change, together with their will to believe, makes the recognition scene possible: 5.13.3 ὡς δὲ εἶδον ἄλληλους εὐθὺς ἀνεγνώρισαν· τοῦτο γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἐβούλοντο αἵ ψυχαί. Without the underlying wish, strengthened by the separation, the recognition would not have been possible.  

At first sight it would seem that the story of the (truly Spartan) couple of Aegialeus and Thelxinoe at the beginning of book 5 stands as a model for the persistent love of the protagonists, which despises social proof and visibility and leans completely on the steadfastness of the mind instead. Despite their high lineage, Aegialeus and Thelxinoe fall in love and have sexual intercourse secretly (5.1.5 ἄλληλοις συνῆμεν λανθάνοντες), defy their parents’ plans for marriage and hence all social pressures, elope at night (νύκτωρ ἐξελθεῖν), and their love endures until (and after) death. Aegialeus is able to see in his dead and old Thelxinoe the girl he once met at the nocturnal festival in Sparta: 5.1.10 τὴν Θελξινόην γυναῖκα πρεσβύτιν μὲν ἡδή, καλὴν δὲ φαινόμενην ἐπὶ Αἰγιαλεῖ κόρην. This extraordinary

168 The stress on sameness replicates the end of Chariton’s novel, when Callirhoe thanks Aphrodite for allowing her to be again in Syracuse, the place of her maidenhood (8.8.15). Achilles Tatius 8.5.6 invokes the same motif in Clitophon’s account of Leucippe’s successfully preserved maidenhood: καὶ ἐμείνε, πάτερ, τοιαύτη μέχρι τῆς παρούσης ἡμέρας, οἷας αὕτην ἔξεπεμψας, ἀπὸ Βυζαντίου (“and she remained, father, until the present day the same as she was when you sent her away from Byzantium”). Of course, the opposite example is Thelxinoe at 5.1.11, discussed below.
ability to see things that nobody else can is emphasized once more in Aegialeus’ remarkable act of imagination:

αὕτη με παραμυθεῖται βλεπομένη· οὐ γὰρ οἷα νῦν ὁρᾶται σοι τοιαύτη φαίνεται ἐμοὶ
ἄλλα ἔννοι, τέκνον, οἷα μὲν ἴν ἐν Λακεδαίμονι, οἷα δὲ ἐν τῇ φυγῇ. τὰς πανυχίδας
ἔννοι, τὰς συνθήκας ἔννοι. (5.1.11)

Seeing her comforts me; for to me she does not look the same as you see her now. But I think of her, son, the way she was in Sparta when we eloped. I think about the night festival, I think about our vows.

While the ability to handle invisible realities is part of the description of παρθενία, this story is (quite clearly) extreme in that sense. whereas Manto and her father Apsyrtus are foolishly concerned with the visibility of virginity (and hence of the impending marriage) in order to conform to social expectations, Aegialeus and his beloved have no regard for “propriety” at all. There is no visible ceremony surrounding Thelxinoe’s first sexual intercourse, and her name alludes to her fantastical, imaginary status in Aegialeus’ mind (5.1.11 ἔννοι). For unstated reasons they are not interested in a wedding, or in ever returning to their home city, which condemns them to death. Their love is thus “unreal,” entirely concealed and lacking a signifier. The oaths of secret love cannot be kept either: they had sworn to hold to one another again and again even until death (5.1.5 ὠμόσαμεν ἄλληλοις πολλάκις ἢξειν καὶ μέχρι θανάτου). But Aegialeus has taken that oath a bit further than that. The emphasis on the signified has only fossilized it and rendered it meaningless. The dissolution of the bond between signifier and signified is represented in their unequivocal

169 Interestingly, it reverses and plays on Habrocomes’ earlier phrase: 2.1.4 φανοῦμαι νεκρὸς σώφρων.

170 Henderson’s translation (2009: 325 “again and again we pledged to remain together even unto death”) connects the adverb πολλάκις to the verb ὠμόσαμεν. While Xenophon perhaps also hinted at the motif of the countless oaths of secretive lovers, I suggest we read it as modifying the verb ἢξειν, used here as a synonym for συνέσεσθαι: “we pledged that we shall have sex together many times even unto death.” Both the word order would support this reading, and the humour of the passage. Πολλάκις would certainly describe the frequency of sexual intercourse after Thelxinoe’s death: 5.1.9-11 ἢξειν καὶ σύνεςμι... ἢξειν ἢξειν καὶ συγκατάκειμαι καὶ συνευωχοῦμαι. There is a similar use of ἢξειν in Plutarch (Moralia, Amat. narr. 1, 772C), in an anecdote about a disrupted wedding, in which the rejected suitor and the groom both hold to the maiden until she is torn apart.
departure from their home city, in Thelxinoe’s hair cutting and rejection of female dress exactly on her supposed wedding night, followed by an irrevocable death sentence, in an interesting reversal of Anthia’s hair tearing and “false death” before her unwanted wedding to Perilaus.

The story of Thelxinoe seems to portray the motif of the “death of the maiden.” Because the intent of having sex has been already consummated at the night festival (5.1.5 ἀπηλαύσαμεν ὃν ἔνεκα συνήλθομεν), their following encounters are tied by oaths, and not intent, and Aegialeus’ ability to still desire her consists in his skill of embalming corpses (5.1.10 τὸ δὲ σῶμα αὐτῆς ἐτέθατο ταφὴ Αἰγυπτίᾳ. ἦν γὰρ καὶ τούτων ἐμπεῖρος ὁ γέρων) or imagine ad infinitum the one instance of virginity loss.

Such a reading of Aegialeus and Thelxinoe’s story seems to run against the general serious tone of the novel, as well as Habrocomes’ reaction to the story (5.1.12). Habrocomes interrupts his speaker to lament over his lost Anthia (5.1.12 ἔτι λέγοντος τοῦ Αἰγιαλέως ἀνωδύρετο ὁ Ἅβροκόμης... λέγων), in the same way Hippothous had interrupted his tale to lament over his lost Hyperanthes (3.3.2 ἔτι λέγοντος αὐτοῦ συνανεθρήσεν ὁ Ἱππόθοος λέγων...). The exchange of stories conventionally requires an expression of an internal narratee’s sympathy towards a different kind of eros from his own. While the focus of the love novels is the παρθένος turned into a properly married woman, this focus neither sanctions nor explicitly condemns other kinds of eros portrayed in the narratives, unless such an erotic propensity threatens the chastity of one of the protagonists. Habrocomes’ reaction to Aegialeus (καὶ νῦν ἄληθῶς μεμάθηκα ὅτι ἔρως ἄληθινὸς ὃρον ἡλικίας οὐκ ἔχει) can be read as a polite (and not necessarily insincere) nicety. The emphasis on truthfulness (ἄληθῶς/ ἄληθινὸς) is suspicious: ἄληθῶς is used two other times in the novel in deceiving contexts (3.7.3, 5.7.5); ἔρως on the other hand is only mentioned in the novel for the initial meeting of Anthia and
Habrocomes. Furthermore, the Greek romances do not attempt to define “true” love in terms of intensity of feelings, but in terms of a compulsory attachment to and desire for παρθενία.

To conclude, the story of Aegialeus belongs to a rather less frequent example of ridiculing the prominence of the signified instead of the (biological and social) signifier of virginity. While the more common object of derision is the pretended maiden or chaste wife (Manto in Xenophon, the widow of Ephesus in Petronius), the story of Aegialeus and Thelxinoe mocks the meaning of παρθενία, when separated from its social acknowledgement.

Another central concern of Xenophon’s novel is the congruence or lack of congruence between internal/ real and external/ apparent slavery, which can be distinguished based on sexual behaviour. The heroes repeatedly complain about their misfortune of being sold away and enduring slavery, but this kind of slavery pointedly refuses sexual slavery. Habrocomes is scared that he would have to submit sexually to the robber Corymbus (2.1.3 ὑποθῶ), and then to the maiden mistress Manto (2.4.4 δοῦλος μὲν εἰμί, ἀλλὰ συνθήκας οἶδα τηρεῖν. ἕχουσιν ἐξουσίαν μου τοῦ σώματος, τὴν ψυχὴν δὲ ἐλευθέραν ἕχω). Manto accentuates in her love letter to Habrocomes her paradoxical status: a mistress, but unable to exert self-control: 2.5.1 «Αβροκόμη τῷ καλῷ δέσποινα ἢ σή χαίρειν. Μαντῶ ἐρῆ σοι μηκέτι φέρειν δυναμένη». The limits between free citizens and slaves are thus permeable in both ways. Chariton’s Challirhoe also expresses her hope that her son, despite being born in slavery, would grow up to be free and noble:

τί δ’ ἂν εὐτυχέστερος ἐμοὶ; ... πόσους ἀκούσωμεν θεῶν παῖδας καὶ βασιλέων ἐν δούλεια γεννηθέντας ὕστερον ἄπολαβόντας τὸ τῶν πατέρων ἥξιομα, τὸν Ζῆθον καὶ τὸν Ἀμφίονα καὶ Κῦρον; (2.9.5)

What if he will be happier than I am? We hear of so many children of gods and kings who were born in servitude but later recovered the prestige of their fathers, like Zethus and Amphion or Cyrus!
But, in contrast to the unidirectional slave/master relation demanded by the numerous suitors of both Habrocomes and Anthia, Xenophon makes explicit their commitment in symbolically serving one another. After behaving like an unchallenged master, entitled to his dominant role, Habrocomes unexpectedly learns that Anthia’s visible beauty and Eros’ unseen power, previously despised, are superior to him: 1.4.1 νενίκημαι καὶ παρθένῳ δουλεύειν ἀναγκάζομαι, καὶ φαίνεται τις ἡδὴ καλλίων ἐμοὶ καὶ θεόν Ἐρωτα καλῶ and, in his monologue and prayer to Eros that follows, he calls himself defeated, and Eros the master of the universe, τὸν πάντων δεσπότην (1.4.5). In her turn, at the end of her countless episodes of slavery, from which she emerged intact, Anthia calls Habrocomes her master: 5.14.2 τῆς ἐμῆς ψυχῆς Ἀβροκόμη δέσποτα.

Certainly the motif of becoming slave to desire, to which even the king of Persia has to submit, and hence admitting one’s own lack of perfection, is an old trope in Greek literature and philosophy. What appears to be striking in Xenophon’s (and other novelists’) treatment of the theme is the relative symmetrical submission to Eros and to one another of the two protagonists. This is what Konstan (1994: 58-59) considers to be the extraordinary feature of the novels, a fidelity and a passion which is “mutual, between equals, and uncoerced.” While this seems to be noticeable indeed, I would further specify the nature of this “equality” as the male character being coopted into παρθενία, and its excessive reliance on sameness and identity in the middle and despite an increasing level of slightly dissimilar (and highly tempting) plots, suitors, circumstances. Because the female simply remains who she is through retaining her παρθενία, the male is unequally challenged to mimic his beloved’s παρθενία. While he may not be always (and equally) successful, his empathy and solidarity sustains the heroine’s commitment to herself and enables the creation of the narrative.
Before we continue with a more detailed analysis of the novels of Achilles Tatius, Longus, and Heliodorus, it should be stated that the aberrations of παρθενία, together with its “correct” description are to be encountered in all the novels. Not one of the extant Greek and Roman novels is entirely satirical or entirely serious: the “ideal” is defined by the “parody,” and the novels conceived the two aspects as continuous, as the two necessary sides of the debate related to the nature (and intrinsic motivation) of παρθενία.
5 Longus: Defining Chloe

5.1 Introduction

To a larger extent than all the other Greek novels, Longus’ novel explores the uncomfortable feeling surrounding the process of loss of virginity. The theme nevertheless is rarely and only obliquely referred to in explicit terms: Chloe is far from singing praises to virginity or actively defending it as Leucippe or Charicleia do. The abstract παρθενία is mentioned only four times and only in the third book: Lycaenion at 3.19.2 mentions it as the price she paid for the sexual education received long ago from another man (μισθὸν τήν παρθενίαν λαβών) and in a similar tone, soon after, at 3.25.2, Chloe’s mother, Nape, worries that Chloe might lose her virginity (and her chance of a good marriage) in exchange for apples or roses:

η τάχα μικρὸν ύστερον νέμουσα τήν παρθενίαν ἀπόλεσει καὶ ἄνδρα ποιήσεται τίνα τῶν ποιμένων ἐπί μήλοις ἢ ῥόδοις.

She might soon lose her virginity and make a man of one of the shepherds for apples or roses.

Both Lycaenion and Nape describe virginity as a commodity, differently and subjectively assessed: for Lycaenion, virginity is the currency traded for becoming a woman, while for Chloe’s mother, virginity loss (or making a man from a shepherd) is worth more than mere apples or roses. The bucolic tradition of apples as erotic gifts is richly present in Longus’ text: Dorcon offers them to Chloe (1.15.3), the two protagonists playfully throw apples at one another (1.24.3), Philetas lets Eros pick up the apples in exchange for a kiss (2.4.4), and Gnathon uses them to win over Daphnis (4.10.3). Very characteristically for Longus’ appreciation for subjective assessments, Chloe is compared to apples and roses, much before
Nape’s derogatory comment on Chloe’s simplicity: Chloe’s breath while asleep is, in Daphnis’ words, sweeter than apples or pears (1.25.2 ὀὖδὲ τὰ μῆλα τοιοῦτον ὀὖδὲ αἰ ὄχναι), and her white and rose complexion is like an apple for Daphnis (1.24.3 ὃ δὲ [ἐκκασεν] μῆλῳ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτῆς ὅτι λευκὸν καὶ ἐνερευθές ἦν). Additionally, Daphnis’ picking the apple hanging from the highest branch to give Chloe at 3.33 anticipates their wedding night, and both Philetas’ and Lamon’s gardens – functioning as displacements for Chloe’s soon-to-be-lost virginity – have apple trees inside.

In the same third book, Daphnis mentions virginity twice (3.23.2 and 3.23.3) in his account of the myth of Echo. Echo values virginity (φιλοῦσα τὴν παρθενίαν) very much as Leucippe and Charicleia do, by actively and consciously shunning masculinity in all its forms (ἄρρενας ἔφευγε πάντας): in contrast to Lycaenion and Nape, Daphnis, through Echo, presents virginity in the strong sense, as an absolute, untradeable condition, which contests and evades masculine desire. Daphnis’ cautionary tale seems to project and imagine Chloe’s rejection of him.\footnote{On the relation between the heroines of the included narratives and Chloe, see especially Hunter (1983: 52-57).}

In all these four occurrences, virginity refers directly or implicitly to Chloe. But Chloe remarkably never talks about her own virginal state, nor does she seem conscious of it. The more frequent παρθένος (nineteen occurrences) turns up in direct speech (seventeen times), and mostly in Daphnis’ speeches (but also Pan’s, Dorcon’s, and Lamon’s). Also, παρθένος is used in two similar scenes, when the narrator presents Dryas’ opinion about Chloe being of greater value than her suitors, at 1.19.3 with reference to Dorcon, and at 3.25.3 about other suitors. All the references to Chloe’s status as maiden are thus mediated through a character.

Moreover, although both Daphnis and Chloe occasionally experience the feeling of shame, the emotion is neither explained nor referred to with the abstract word αἰδός. At
1.31.2, Chloe omits to tell Daphnis about Dorcon’s kiss because she feels ashamed by it (μόνον αἰδεσθεῖσα τὸ φίλημα οὐκ εἶπεν). Daphnis does not feel ashamed anymore to watch Chloe’s body when she is asleep, at 1.25.1: πᾶσαν αὐτὴν ἔβλεπεν ἀπλήστως, οἷα μηδὲν αἰδούμενος. When Dionysophanes comes to visit the estate, Chloe hides in the woods in embarrassment: 4.14.1 Χλόη μὲν οὖν εἰς τὴν ὕλην ἔφυγεν, ὄχλον τοσοῦτον αἰδεσθεῖσα καὶ φοβηθεῖσα. Chloe again feels shame when Daphnis avoids having her undress at 3.24.3, and she does not ask about his reason: ὥστε ἐθαύμαζεν μὲν ἡ Χλόη, τὴν δὲ αἰτίαν ἴδεῖτο πυθέσθαι.

Besides these four occurrences of the verb αἰδεῖσθαι, we can guess that Chloe especially feels shame on other occasions, such as when she secretly touches her skin to compare it to Daphnis’ at 1.13.2. (λαθοῦσα ἑαυτῆς ἥψατο πολλάκις) or when she feels overwhelmed by the bodily symptoms of her love-sickness that she does not know by name at 1.13.5 (Ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἔπασχεν οὐκ ἴδει, apparently a pun on the similarity between ἴδειτο/ ἴδε). Not surprisingly, in all these passages the emotion of shame, even when experienced by Daphnis, is caused by Chloe’s body, and is conveyed by silence, hiding, ignorance.

The conspicuous absence of the abstract words αἰδώς and σωφροσύνη – pervasive in all the other novels – as well as the relative delay of the occurrence of παρθενία in the text (introduced by Lycaenion, at 3.19), suggests that the narrative, at least partially and perhaps more in the first two books, is focalized through Chloe’s perspective. Chloe’s lack of understanding of her virginal condition is tracked closely, as her exposure as an infant and her subsequent maturation unfold. Her incognito status, very much like Charicleia’s, adds to her difficult relation with herself and to her lack of a socially and sexually recognized identity. Daphnis’ persistence in virginity, however, is mostly secondary to Chloe’s: until he is taught

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172 The motif of the abandoned and recovered child is derived from the tradition of New Comedy. Within the genre of the novel, Heliodorus too has his main heroine, Charicleia, exposed as a baby and subsequently searching at once for her family and sexual identity.
about his sexual difference by Lycaenion, he mirrors Chloe’s attitude towards her own misperceived body.

5.2 From (social) marginality to (narrative) focalization

The urban/pastoral opposition, a common feature of bucolic literature, is commonly viewed in terms of centre and periphery: the socially marginal becomes, by means of poetry, symbolically central. Scholars have repeatedly pointed out the dichotomies, intricately intertwined, at work in Longus’ text: nature and art, childhood and adulthood, innocence and sophistication, country and city, mythos and logos, feminine and masculine. Instead of looking at these oppositions from a static centre/periphery perspective, I find focalization a more dynamic and productive way of reading Longus. The narratological lens is especially suited to this text because Longus’ most striking originality consists in his technique of shifting viewpoints, or imagining the perspective of the other. In Genette’s terms, Longus’ narrator often yields the floor to the characters, who become the subjects of the presentation, and often the novel switches from external focalization (the narrator’s point of view) to internal focalization (Chloe’s, for instance, point of view). The narrator’s drive to respond in writing to a painting illustrates the fact that the narrated (object of the narrating) is understood as an approximation of the focalized (object of the focalizing). I will be using the

175 In Longus’ novel, whose plot is restricted to the territory of an island, the ἄνευς is conspicuously a literary construct, often associated with pleasure. The author envisages himself as a ἄνευς but wishes to preserve his self-restraint in relating the experiences of others, and the travelling Methymneans derive pleasure from their status of ἓν ἀνευκηνικῇ τέρψει. The delight one has in experiencing the other has its dangers, and Daphnis learns to grow into his new identity, of Dionysophanes’ son, by cautiously accepting the new, “foreign” prosperity: 4.26.3 τοῦ σύνθεσες ἄνευκοσίους εὑδαιμονίας τερπνότερόν ἐστιν. Contrariwise, his brother Astylus experiences the countryside from the relaxed position of the wealthy city young man: 4.11.1 ὁ αὐτὸς πλούσιος νεανίσκος καὶ τρυφῶν ἅπι καὶ ἠφιμένος εἰς τὸν ἄγρον εἰς ἀπόλαυσιν ἀνευκήνης.
terms “focalizer” and “focalized” in this technical sense (symmetrical to the “narrator” and the “narrated”), theorized by Bal in her essay “Narration and focalization.”

Likewise, the very fact that Longus mediates between the pictorial and the novelistic mode and translates (ἀντιγράψαι) a painted story into a narrated one problematizes perspective: how could a writer render the intensely subjective and incomplete view of the one who sees? Each of the four paragraphs of the prologue is built on verbs of seeing: in the first paragraph the narrator sees (εἶδον) a beautiful sight (θέαμα), a drawing of an image (εἰκόνος), a history of love (ἱστορίαν, a way of looking at love?); in the second paragraph the narrator mentions that other people used to come and look at the image (τῆς εἰκόνος θεαταί). In the third paragraph, the narrator looks again and wonders (ἰδόντα καὶ θαυμάσαντα), and in the last paragraph gnomically proclaims that Love (and by extension art) lies at the encounter of the seen beauty with the seeing eyes (κάλλος... καὶ ὀφθαλμοί). This double opposition, that between art and written text and that between the subject and the object of seeing, seemingly central in Longus’ prologue, is also the cornerstone of narratology as literary discipline.

Genette’s breakthrough in literary theory consisted in his refining of the distinctions between narrative stances, and, most importantly, in defining the roles of the external and the internal focalization; while the external focalization presents the characters, events, places from the point of view of narrator, in a pictorial mode, the internal focalization means that the

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178 Pr2 describes the painting in different terms than the novel will: γυναικὲς ἐπ᾽ αὐτῆς τίκτουσαι καὶ ἄλλαι σαραγάνοις κομιδόσαντα, παιδία ἐκκείμενα, ποιμνία τρέφοντα, ποιμένες ἀναποῦμενοι, νέοι συντηέμενοι, ληστῶν καταδρομῆ, πολεμίων ἐμβολή, πολλὰ ἄλλα καὶ πάντα ἔρωτικά. This catalogue-like list seems to be what the narrator (or the visitors) randomly sees, without the leading and structuring focus of an ἐξηγητής, someone who already knows the meaning of the images and sets them in their proper context. See Zeitlin (1990: 430-431) and Morgan (2004: 149).
179 The Herodotean color of the coinage ἱστορίαν ἔρωτος is amplified by the expressed intention of the novel (Pr3), to immortalize, by appealing to the memory of its readers, the deeds of love (ἔργα ἔρωτος, 1.15.1, 1.15.4, 3.14.5, 3.17.2). Herodotus’ report of his investigations is similarly meant to prevent the great deeds (ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστὰ) from falling into oblivion (μήτε ἀκλέα γένηται). Longus’ ἔργα ἔρωτος, the deeds of love, a unique and rather paradoxical phrase used in its literal meaning in Philetas’ speech (2.7.3 ἔργα Ἐρωτος = ποιήμα τα Ἐρωτος, that is the garden and its plants), underlines Longus’ artistic interest in the process of “making,” discussed in this chapter in relation to πόνος, bodily work.
characters, events, places are presented from a particular, less privileged character. While generally agreeing with Genette’s typology, Bal draws a further distinction between the narrator and the focalizer, on the one hand, and the focalizer and the focalized, on the other. The last two terms reflect Longus’ division between the subject and the object of seeing; it might seem that Longus refers to sight in the strong, Platonic sense of the superior perception, while narrative focalization presents both the perceptible focalized (perceived by sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste) and the imperceptible focalized (internal, psychological material). Longus’ reiterated interest, nevertheless, in how people are perceived by others (especially within the dichotomies city dwellers/peasants, women/men) expands the field of vision to its proximate, broader sense of “point of view,” “considering something from a certain angle,” or perspective. For this reason, I will use Bal’s terminology to illustrate the shifts of perspective within Longus’ narrative, in both the visual and the psychological sense.

The major case of such a shift in focalization is present at the end of the prologue, just before the narrative begins to unravel. Although the abstract word σωφροσύνη and its derivatives are outstandingly absent in Longus’ love story, the narrator programmatically expresses his wish to maintain sexual restraint while writing about other people’s life experiences, in the last paragraph of the prologue:

ʼΗμῖν δὲ ὁ θεός παράσχει σωφρονοῦσι τὰ τῶν ἄλλων γράφειν.

May the God grant us to write about other people’s stories while maintaining chastity.

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181 The programmatic character of the passage is underlined by the invocation of an unnamed god (ὁ θεός), in the tradition of epic poetry, most likely the unavoidable god mentioned a sentence before – Eros. Invoking Eros for σωφροσύνη is not surprising, as invoking Aphrodite for sexual restraint would be. Eros is defined in the novel, especially in Philetas’ speech (2.4.7), as a nourishing, organizing, Platonic primordial god, who is also in control of his sexual appetite. Chalk (1960) discusses Eros and his (narrative) controlling power as the true subject of the novel, more than the characters’ names used in the assigned title.
But, as the reader will find out when reading the story, the generic τὰ τῶν ἁλλῶν might mean precisely preserving chastity – either unwittingly by both protagonists at the beginning, or purposefully by Daphnis, in the latter part of the narrative. Therefore, the author/narrator (as the one who writes, γράφει, the story) attempts to mirror Chloe’s (and Daphnis’) chastity, and sexually identify with the objects of his story-telling. Internal focalization thus functions as one of the premises of Longus’ story-telling. The narrator gives up his privileged position (of praeceptor amoris) in order to accept the convention of a restricted position: if the others (objects of the story, focalized characters) are virgin, he has to imitate their virginal state. By failing to follow his sexual urge (although he knows how to), the narrator/focalizer does not violate the convention of fiction and begins imitating the objects of his narrative, the focalized, and seeing through their eyes. Through this transfer of power from the focalizer to the focalized, Longus’ novel frees itself from its author’s subjectivity.

The restriction of view presupposed by focalization is immediately underlined at the beginning of the narrative, in the description of the (again beautiful) city of Mytilene (1.1.1): Νομίσεις οὐ πόλιν ὄραν ἁλλὰ νῆσον. If you look at the city from the sea and notice the two channels on the sides, without being able to see if the city is connected to Lesbos through an isthmus or not, you will think the city is an island. When the view is restricted one has the impulse to supply the missing elements with imagined ones: in this case, and, as we shall see, very often in others, the imagined coincides with reality (the city is an island, at the time of Longus’ writing). On the other hand, in order to underscore the same kind of restricted view (of someone who has never been outside Lesbos), Lesbos is never called an island throughout

182 For Zeitlin (1990: 431-432), “the power of what he is about to relate is such that he asks not to succumb to the spell of overmastering desire in reanimating the desires of others”. Other readings in Hunter (1983: 40) and Pandiri (1985: 118). Goldhill (1995: 7-45) focuses on the readers’ σωφροσύνη and their engagement with a narrative of desire – resisting the temptation to interpret the frequent double entendre sexually. In my view, the readers are not expected to maintain chastity – they are educated, consoled or reminded about their own loves (Pr3). The difficulty at stake here is that faced by the author – to keep himself away from the story he relates.
the four books of *Daphnis and Chloe*. To understand Longus’ innovation better, we should read in parallel the first lines of Menander’s prologue to *Dyscolus*:\(^{183}\)

\[\text{Tēς Αττικῆς νομίζετ’ εἶναι τὸν τόπον Φυλήν, ... (Men. Dyscolus 1-2)}\]

Think that this place is Phyle, in Attica…

Both authors use νομίζειν to mark the entrance to fiction: Menander’s audience is expected to look at the stage and imagine they are in Attica, in a place called Phyle. By contrast, Longus’ implied reader (unable to see on his own what is played on the stage) will imagine himself looking at a place (Lesbos’ Mytilene) from a restricted point of view.

The frustration of an insufficiently revealing perspective is offered as a model of reading for the novel again, at the very beginning of the story, in the two parallel accounts of the unexpected discovery of the exposed babies: Lamon notices the repeated absence (1.2.2 ἀφανῆς ἐγίνετο πολλάκις) of one of his goats and tracks her, only to come upon a surprising sight (1.2.2 ὁρᾷ... καὶ θαυμάσας... ἐὑρίσκει) – very much like the hunter/narrator in the prologue. Dryas is likewise frustrated by the frequent “appearance of a disappearance” (1.5.1 δόξαν πολλάκις ἀπωλείας) of one of his ewes: by following her tracks with the intention of punishing her, he comes upon a scene that he had not expected at all (1.5.2 ἐπιστάς δὲ οὐδὲν ἐὶδεν ὃν ἥλπισεν). Both men are drawn to what they perceive as an upsetting absence only to be forced to change their initial perception once they finally see what has been hidden from their view: unlike a painting, the narrative depicts a dynamic, changing relationship between the seer and the object seen. The result of this fluctuating re-positioning of the focalizer and the focalized is knowledge (ἐὑρίσκει, ἐπιστάς ... ἐἰδεν, where ἐπιστάς ambiguously describes a

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\(^{183}\) The prologue of *Dyscolus* bears significant similarities to the plot of *Daphnis and Chloe*; more on New Comedy in the novel in Zeitlin (1990: 427-428).
certain positioning of one’s body, meant to provide, in an *epistemological* sense, a better view).

Νομίζειν and other verbs which suggest (imperceptible) focalization, like δοκεῖν, οἴσθαι, εἰκάζειν, but also ἐλπίζειν or ζητεῖν, abound throughout the novel. The single time that the narrator’s voice is heard within the narrative is at 1.32.3, when he imagines (οἴμαι) the emotions felt by the voiceless flocks without their shepherdess and goatherd. The frequent ὡς and ὡςπέρ, “as though,” accomplish the same narrative function, of re-placing the reader and the narrator in a restricted point of view. Sharing the narrative focus contagiously contaminates all characters and becomes in itself a form of art, an *imitation*:\(^{184}\) Lamon and Myrtle imitate a she-goat (who in turn is presented as imitating humanity, i.e. looking at the human baby from a human point of view: 1.3.1 αἰγός φιλανθρωπίαν μιμήσεται) and pretend in agreement that the unknown infant is their own child (1.3.2 δόξαν ὡς ἕκακείνη... τὸ παιδίον αὐτῶν ἐπονομάζουσι); then, imagining what other people might say (change of focalization) they name the baby Daphnis, a pastoral name: ὡς δ’ ἄν καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ παιδίου ποιμενικὸν δοκοῖ, Δάφνιν αὐτῶν ἐγνωσαν καλεῖν.\(^{185}\) The baby himself nurses on a pretended human mother’s breast: τὸ δὲ ὡςπέρ ἐκ μητρώας θηλῆς τὴν ἐπιρροήν ἐλκον τοῦ γάλακτος. Who is actually pretending in this unusual nursing circumstance? Is the goat pretending to be a mother, or is the infant pretending to be a kid? Or is ὡςπέρ ἐκ μητρώας θηλῆς merely focalizing Lamon’s understanding of the scene?

All these pretenses are conspicuously and deliberately *somehow* true, or at least possibly true, because outside of the possibility of verification. Dryas considers (*νομίσας*) the baby Chloe’s discovery divine, and imitates the ewe’s imitation of humans:

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\(^{184}\) More on imitation in Zeitlin (1990), esp. 436-444.

\(^{185}\) We might think that the two are worried about the opinion of other villagers, but the focalization they imagine are the conventions of pastoral poetry.
Thinking the discovery a godsend and learning from the sheep to feel pity and love the little child...

As the statement about the ewe shows, this borrowing of another’s focus, with the result in imitation, can be viewed, in psychological terms, as empathy, a skill that humans learn. When Daphnis and Chloe still regard the first sexual predator of the novel, Dorcon, as a friend (1.15.3 φίλος νομίζων), despite his use of gifts to seduce Chloe, they lack empathy for Dorcon because they lack the experience that Dorcon has. On the other hand, Dorcon, sexually more knowledgeable about Daphnis and Chloe than they themselves are, is not able to empathize with them because he cannot imagine himself without that knowledge. The distance between reality and restricted-point-of-view fiction is suggested again in 1.21.5, when the pretended-wolf Dorcon, although caught with his mask off, is not discovered to be a not-friend:

And, because of their lack of experience in amorous darings, they thought that the wolf-skin disguise was a pastoral game and were not upset...

As in the case of Dorcon, it becomes increasingly difficult for the narrator (and reader?) to share Daphnis and Chloe’s limited focus; the two young shepherds seem to become helpless focalized objects of another’s focalization when Dorcon (significantly called so from the seeing verb δέρκομαι) sees Chloe’s exposed breasts and becomes erotically inclined towards her. Nevertheless, Daphnis and Chloe’s projection of reality which we are invited to share (that Dorcon is a friend) will turn him, although inadvertently, into a harmless friend, who will facilitate Daphnis’ falling in love and even save Daphnis’ life later on. Σωφροσύνη may seem threatened for a moment but regains its governing role quickly and famously
integrates all the dissenting voices (Dorcon’s family, Lycaenion, Lampis) into the final wedding scene.

The contagiousness of emotions and focalization strengthens the harmonized “microcosm” of the protagonists’ pastoral life: in the same way that sheep and goats imitate humans, and humans imitate animals’ humanity, Daphnis and Chloe frolic like lambs in the spring, attempt to follow the animals’ example in mating, and, in a beautiful passage (1.23.2), the whole world imitates their burning erotic and artistic desire, as Eros and erotic song overlap:

Εἴκασεν ἄν τις καὶ τοὺς ποταμοὺς ἄδειν ἰδρύμα ῥέοντας καὶ τοὺς ἀνέμους σῳρίτειν ταῖς πίτουσι ἐμπνεόντας καὶ τὰ μῆλα ἔρωντα πίπτειν χαμαι καὶ τὸν ἡλιον φιλόκαλον ὄντα πάντας ἀποδύειν.

One could have imagined that the rivers sang quietly in their flow, that the winds were playing the pipes when blowing over the pine trees, that the apples, being in love, were falling to the ground and the sun, being a lover of beauty, made all men undress themselves.

The anthropomorphizing and eroticization of the natural world, a result of appealing to one’s imagination, unexpectedly brings about the “real-like” heaviness and solidity of the falling apples – as though the fullness of being in the natural world can be captured only through this intermediate construct of perception and imagination (εἴκασεν) that the reader (τις) is invited to share.

5.3 The problematic description of Chloe

As the ultimate focalized of the novel, the myth of the “author” Eros (2.27.2 παρθένον ἔξ ᾗς Ἕρως μοῦθον ποιῆσαι θέλει), but also a speaking actor of the fabula, Chloe exhibits obvious

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186 Chloe’s agency and speech decline from the beginning of the novel towards the end at the same time with her growing into an adult woman.
difficulties in focalizing herself; she has the most restricted point of view in the novel and seems to perceive less than anybody else. For this reason she does not know that she has no sexual experience and does not defend herself against possible sexual assaults (but she is careful about other kinds of aggressiveness, as she is aware that being a girl makes her vulnerable to male aggression, when she drives her flock slowly at 1.28.2 or runs to hide in the forest at Dionysophanes’ arrival). At the same time, we have seen that Longus wants the narrator to be empathically immersed into this virginal state, and experience Chloe’s essential subjectivity and problematic perception of herself from within. An example among many is Dorcon’s infatuation when seeing Chloe’s exposed breasts (1.15.1): the narrator’s omission of the causal link between the two events mirrors Chloe’s ignorance of her own sexual body, while Dorcon’s sharp but unacknowledged perception signals its intrusive character.

Chloe’s silenced virginity suffers a long series of displacements; because she is unable to perceive herself and because Daphnis imitates her restricted point of view, Chloe is best (and only) described by similes. The eroticized grove, gardens, pit, and island itself can also be considered displacements, as they concentrate symbolically the delights and fears of Chloe’s depth, while avoiding talking about it. Although displacements are very close to metaphors as concentrates of meaning, displacements usually consist in a deliberate suppression and dislocation of a meaning. In his study of the metaphors in *Daphnis and Chloe*, Bowie does not even consider the two gardens (Philetas’ and Lamon’s) as metaphors for Chloe’s sexuality, 

187 There is no mention of breasts (or sexual parts of the female body for that matter) anywhere in the novel. The term μαζός, which turns up in the other novels, when speaking about Charicleia for example (3.4.3), is referred to indirectly by κόλπος, clothing fold, or ταινία, chest band. Hunter (1996: 376) reads κόλπος in the cicada and the swallow scene (2.7.7), as well as at 3.43.3 as “lap,” or “a euphemism for the vagina.” In the bucolic poem *Ouristys* 49-50, in a scene similar to the one in which Daphnis extracts the cicada lost in Chloe’s clothing and probably alluded to by Longus, a maiden complains about her would-be lover touching her breasts (Τί δ’ ἐνόπλην ἄγα Μαζός;), whereas her lover (named Daphnis) refers to her breasts, by displacement, as μᾶλα τάδε χρογόντα. By consistently avoiding the word μαζός, Longus engages in a purposeful ambiguity about Chloe’s body.
although their erotic character has been long acknowledged. These displacements do not only belong to the narrator’s voice, but to Chloe herself, who first weaves her locust-trap, ἀκριδοθήραν, a displacement for her closed sexuality, at 1.9.2. Later on, following a poetic tradition in bucolic poetry, Chloe wishes that she were an object or animal employed by Daphnis:

εἰθε αὐτοῦ σύριγξ ἔγενόμην ἵν’ ἐμπνεύῃ μοι, εἰθε αἰξ ἵν’ ὑπ’ ἐκείνου νέμωμαι. (1.14.3)

If only I could become his pipe so that he may blow into me, if only I could become a she-goat so that I may be grazed by him!

Chloe understands her highly erotic wish, metaphorically present in the imagery of the syrinx, but also in the ambiguous ὑπό, in a literal sense: her wish is to evade her ontological status. In an interesting similarity to Phassa, Syrinx and Echo, Chloe, chased by her own inner unsatisfied desire, wants to escape humanity and turn her hard-to-define body into an easier-to-understand reality for Daphnis.

Although we can see descriptions of Daphnis, first through Chloe’s eyes (1.12.6-1.13.2), then in his own self-praise during his contest with Dorcon (1.15.3-4), Chloe is only later and rather vaguely described, when Daphnis falls in love with her. If Daphnis’ physical


189 Manuscript F gives an alternate reading here, ἀκριδοθήκην, locust-cage. Morgan (2004) prefers the first reading because of its obvious literary allusion to Theocritus 1.52-55: αὐτάρ ὑπ’ ἀνθρώπου καλάν πλέκει ἀκριδοθήραν/ σχοίνῳ ἐφαρμόσδων· μέλεται δὲ οἱ οὔτε τι πῆρα/ οὔτε φώτων τοσσίων ὅσον περὶ πλέγματι γαθεῖ. The intertextuality with Theocritus is discussed by Hunter (1983, Ch. 3; 1996: 373, 383-384), Bowie (1985), and Cresci (1999: 229-230). As a further argument for this reading, Chloe alludes to this locust-trap once again in her monologue at 1.14.4., when she mentions that she had worked hard (καμοῦσα) to chase the locust down (ἐθήρασα).

190 The men at the wine-vintage court Chloe and similarly express their wish to become sheep and be pastured by her (2.2.2 ἤρχοντα γενέσθαι ποιμνα καὶ υπ’ ἐκείνου νέμεσθαι), while Gnathon wishes to become a she-goat in order to listen to Daphnis’ pipes and be pastured by him (4.16.3: ἡδέως δ’ ἄν αἰξ γενόμενοι πόνον ἐσθίεσθαι καὶ φύλλα τῆς Δαφνίδος ἀκόουσιν σύριγγος καὶ υπ’ ἐκείνου νεμόμενος). The public, ritualized erotic behavior of the men celebrating Dionysus’ feast, as well as the prepared character of Gnathon’s speech to Astylus (4.13.1), and his use of the optative are in direct antithesis with the spontaneous inward-turned speech of Chloe – who truly questions and wishes to evade her human status. In mythology changing one’s form in order to be accepted by the beloved is a pattern restricted to men. By comparison, Theocritus’ first Idyll (87-88) mentions as a stereotype the goatherd who weeps that he was not born a billy-goat when he sees his goats mating: ὃπολός, ὅκκ’ ἐσπορῇ τὰς μικρὰς οία βιότοντα/ τάκεται ὀφθαλμός ὅτι οὐ τράγος ἀντός ἔγεντο. His silliness (but not his explicit eroticism) matches Chloe’s.
features, revealed during the bath, lead to Chloe’s love, Daphnis falls in love only with her kiss, and only subsequently notices her beautiful face, as though he had been blind before (1.17.3):

Τότε πρώτον καὶ τὴν κόμην αὐτῆς ἐθαύμασεν ὅτι ξανθὴ καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ὅτι μεγάλοι καθάπερ βοῶς καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ὅτι λευκότερον ἀληθῶς καὶ τοῦ τῶν αἰγῶν γάλακτος.

Then for the first time he marvelled at her hair, how blonde it was, and at her eyes, how large they were – as a cow’s eyes – and at her face, how truly was it whiter even than the milk of goats.

Subsequently, during his love-sickness monologue, Daphnis only recalls Chloe’s lips, at 1.18.1, which he compares to roses: χείλη μὲν ρόδων ἀπαλώτερα καὶ στόμα κηρίον γλυκύτερον, τὸ δὲ φύλημα κέντρου μελίτης πικρότερον. And during her midday sleep, he again admires her eyes and the breath coming out of her mouth, far superior in sweetness to apples or pears (1.25.1: οἷοι καθεύδουσιν ὀφθαλμοί, οἶον δὲ ἀποπνεῖ τὸ στόμα· οὐδὲ τὰ μῆλα τοιοῦτον ὀὔδὲ αἱ ὀξαὶ, “what eyes are asleep here, and what breath comes out of her mouth: neither the apples nor the pears are like this”).

The two major characteristics of these descriptions of Chloe are first, Daphnis’ limited focus on Chloe’s face and, more specifically, parts of her face, and secondly, his constant need of similes to approximate a form that tends to escape the objectivity of vision. In contrast, Chloe takes a careful look at Daphnis’ entire body in search for possible scratches and after seeing him naked for the first time on the occasion of the bath, she repeatedly wonders at his manifest beauty, with no need for similes:

菏 δὲ ἢ μὲν κόμη μέλαινα καὶ πολλή, τὸ δὲ σῶμα ἐπίκαυστον ἠλίῳ· εἶκασεν ἃν τις αὐτὸ χρώξεσθαι τῇ σκιᾷ τῆς κόμης. Ἐδόκει δὲ τῇ Χλόῃ θεωμένη καλὸς ὁ Δάρνις ... καὶ τὰ νότα δὲ ἀπολουούσης ἢ σάρξ ὑπέπιπτε μάλθακη... (1.13.2)
His hair was black and thick, and his body tanned by the sun: someone could have thought that it was coloured by the shadow of his hair. Daphnis seemed beautiful to Chloe… and as she washed his back, the soft flesh was sinking in…

While Chloe’s body is only once mentioned in the text (1.32.1), this initial portrait of Daphnis intensely focalized by Chloe (ἐδόκει δὲ τῇ Χλόῃ θεωμένη...τότε πρῶτον αὐτῇ καλὸς ἐδόκει) emphasizes his body (σῶμα, at 1.12.5, 1.12.6, 1.13.1, 1.13.2) and its inherent beauty, derived (so she thinks, τὸ λουτρόν ἐνόμιζε τοῦ κάλλους αἰτιων) from the bath: by cleaning the mud away, the bath let shine, under Chloe’s eyes, the beautiful shape of his masculine body. But a similar bath does nothing to Chloe, whose beauty is not enhanced by emphasizing the contours of her body (1.14.3, ἐγὼ δὲ μάτην ἀπελουσάμην and 1.32.1, οὐδὲν λουτρόν ἐς κάλλος δεόμενον191). In fact, by looking at Daphnis, Chloe attempts in vain to find an image of herself, by frustratingly self-touching: λαθοῦσα ἐαυτῆς ἦσαμα πολλάκις (1.13.2); she even tries his clothes on, probably hoping to become as beautifully defined as him (1.24.2: ἦ δὲ τὴν ἐσθήτα αὐτοῦ λουουμένου καὶ γυμνωθέντος ἐνεδύετο). Moreover, when they try to have sexual intercourse in the manner of the sheep and goats, for Chloe the main difference between her and the nannies/ewes is their woolliness which she lacks, even when fully dressed: Σὺ δὲ μὲ ἀξιοὶς συγκατακλιθήναι καὶ ταῦτα γυμνήν; Καίτοιγε ἐκείναι πόσον ἐνδεδυμένης ἐμοῦ λασιωτέραι. (3.14.4 “You ask me to lie down with you, and naked at that? But those nannies are so much woollier than me, even when I am dressed.”). Apparently, Chloe thinks that it is mainly her lack of wool, besides the unusual position (lying down instead of standing up), which prevents them from realizing the “deed” animals do to cure their chasing.192 At the same

190 In this last passage, Daphnis is not impressed by Chloe’s naked body in itself, but by the act of her undressing: οὐ μὴν ὁ Δάφνις χαίρειν ἔπειθε τὴν ψωχήν, ἰδὼν τὴν Χλόῃν γυμνήν καὶ τὸ πρῶτον λανθάνον κάλλος ἐκκαλωμένον.
191 Epstein (2002: 31) reads this passage as an example of Chloe’s increased awareness of their humanity as opposed to the animal world: “Chloe has a fuller understanding that they differ from the flocks in essential ways. Her observation of pasture animals leads her to underscore these differences and to attempt to dissuade Daphnis from believing they can replicate the animals’ happiness so easily.” It is characteristic of Longus’ strategy that the same sentence can be interpreted in opposing ways: can the presence of wool, the only observation that Chloe
time, she openly enjoys dressing up as though seeking physical boundaries (1.23.3); within the
dichotomy “skin” versus “clothes”, as bodily confines, clothes offer the temporary comfort and
safety of objective limits. Although impressed by Daphnis’ nakedness, she does not
understand how her own unselfconscious nakedness might affect Daphnis (at 3.24.3, after he
had had his first sexual experience of a female body): <Δάφνις> πολλὰ γυμνοῦσθαι τὴν Χλόην
οὐκ ἐπέτρεπεν, ὡστε ἐθαυμαζέ μὲν ἡ Χλόη, τὴν δὲ αἰτίαν ἡδεῖτο πυνθάνεσθαι. Furthermore,
Chloe’s blurred delineations are outrageously emphasized by the seven-metre-long breast-band
she unfolds in order to use it as a rope to rescue Daphnis, fallen into the pit (1.11), but her
clothing seems to be inconsistently less tight on her body when a cicada, and afterwards a
swallow mistakenly find themselves into her bosom at 1.25-26, or when Daphnis puts an apple
in there at 3.34.3.

Chloe’s failure to grasp of her own nature prevents her from empathizing with the men
who desire her: in narrative terms, her inability to see herself makes her unaware and
uninterested in the way other characters focalize her, and consequently prevents her from
sharing their perspective, even when the focalizer and narrator yield the floor to her. Although
Chloe becomes more visible socially towards the end of the novel, when she receives finer,
city clothes, essentially her perception of herself remains unchanged until the very end of the
novel. Winkler (1990), Zeitlin (1990), Morgan (1994), and Goldhill (1996) have held an
engaging discussion of the understatement regarding Chloe’s act of learning, in the very last
sentence of the novel. In Longus’ words, on her wedding night, Chloe learned (ἔμαθε)193 that
all the happenings previously experienced in the woods were mere pastoral games (4.40.3
makes, be considered one of the “essential ways” in which flocks differ from humans? Or is Chloe even more
ignorant than Daphnis, by not acknowledging the similar act of reproduction in humans and animals?
193 Chloe learns about the previous παίγνια (4.40.3) for the first time on her wedding night. The emphasis on time
in this last sentence (τότε Χλόη πρῶτον) refuses to end the fabula, which opens up to the promised future; the
rejection of closure is very much a characteristic of the genre. On another note, I would add that the sense of
fulfillment derived from this last sentence supports the central role of Chloe’s perception in Longus’ novel.
ποιμένων παίγνια). Whether we interpret the term poetically (Philitas is known to have composed a collection of poems with the title Παίγνια)\(^{194}\), or sexually as foreplay, or socially (acceptance of a woman’s “serious” role announced by Lycaenion’s threat about violent deflowering), the use of the term “pastoral play” underlines the idea of disguise (recalling Dorcon’s sexual assault, inversely judged by the yet “unlearned” protagonists as mere pastoral play). I would suggest that what Chloe did not know before and learned from Daphnis’ act, performed on her (ἔδρασε τι), was her own body, hidden throughout the novel in metaphors, displacements, sexual imagery. Chloe can only become aware of her own virginity when losing it – and the author, who has built up a literary universe to mirror Chloe’s enclosure, reveals his artifice in the very last word of his text: παίγνια.

Among the major displacements for Chloe’s body which, as we have shown, because it lacks proper margins, needs constant echoing and mirroring, are the gardens and the island of Lesbos; through synecdoche, the virgin apples are contained by the lush gardens, which are embedded in the island in the same way as the mythoi of Phassa, Echo and Syrinx are embedded in Chloe’s myth, the fabula authored by Eros.

The three “gardens” of the story, selected out of the many gardens of the Mytilenean shore (2.12.2), are named differently: the narrator of the prologue is hunting in a grove of the Nymphs (ἐν ὁλσει Νυμφῶν), a beautiful grove, with trees, flowers, and a spring (1.Pr.1). Philetas’ cultivated garden at 2.3.2-5, is, by contrast, a κῆπος, with flowers, vines, fruit trees, birds, and three springs. Finally, Lamon’s impressive garden at the beginning of the fourth book (4.2-3) is a παράδεισος, abundant in a variety of fruit trees and vines, but also uncultivated trees, vine-imitating ivy and flowers. In the Methymnean episode, Longus distinguishes and intertwines the natural and the cultivated gardens by using a chiasmus

\(^{194}\) For a detailed discussion of childhood within Hellenistic poetics, see Ambühl (2007).
(2.12.2 παράδεισοι τε καὶ ἄλσος, τὰ μὲν φύσεως ἔργα, τὰ δὲ ἄνθρωπων τέχνη) without stating a preference for one over the other (πάντα ἐνηβήσα τις καλά); the same kind of distinction is emphasized both in Philetas’ and Lamon’s gardens, in which men’s work and nature’s work are harmoniously interwoven. The progression from the simple ἄλσος to the sophistication of the kingly παράδεισος stems from an increasing stress on the boundaries: while the initial grove is an open space, whose lack of explicit margins becomes disturbing at the moment when the painting is described (where is this painting hanging from?), Philetas’ κῆπος would be an ἄλσος if it didn’t have a wall: ἀν περιέλῃ τις τὴν αἰμασθάν ἄλσος ὀρᾶν οἰήσεται (2.3.5).

Moreover, birds come to it because it is sheltered (συνηρεφές) and shady (κατάσκιος). The boundaries of the παράδεισος (from the Persian pairi-daēza, a walled enclosure195) are even more clearly demarcated: Dionysus’ temple at the centre is surrounded by flowers, a circle of fruit trees and a circle of wild trees, as though to protect the fruit ones (ἐνδον ἦν τὰ καρποφόρα φυτὰ καθάπερ φρουρούμενα). All around the circle of wild trees there is a slim wall (λεπτῆς αἰμαστὰς περιεῖ διαφύλακτος), and overhead the entwined branches and foliage form a shelter.

The degree of confinement of the garden space increases with the level of τέχνη, artistic control, required to sustain its beauty, as well as with the possibility of a more violent transgression: in the ἄλσος the hunter/narrator is a benign visitor, in the κῆπος Eros is first believed to be an intruder by Philetas but soon proves to be its legitimate owner, while in the παράδεισος Lampis is an open violator of Lamon’s garden, in lack of the desired Chloë. On the other hand, the most natural garden (the grove) and the most sophisticated garden share an absent author: while Philetas and Eros compete for the authorship of the κῆπος, Lamon is merely tending Dionysophanes’ παράδεισος, whose process of creation is not visible anymore.

195 Chantraine (1968) IV: 857.
The confusing description of the initial grove of the Nymphs has opened the discussion over the identification of this grove with the cave of the Nymphs. The presence of the painting, which will be rendered in words by the narrator and dedicated as an offering (ἀνάθημα) to the Nymphs, strikingly anticipates the end of the novel with Daphnis and Chloe adorning the Nymphs’ cave with images dedicated to the Nymphs. Is the initial grove the same as the cave mentioned in 4.39.2, the cave where the baby Chloe was found (1.5.2) and where Daphnis has his bath (1.13.1)? Several details seem to match: the locus amoenus is rich in vegetation (the grove has flowers and trees, the cave soft grass) and has a spring in it. The only difference though is the relatively open space of the grove in contrast to the enclosure of the cave, a feminine inside safely apt to protect an infant and later on Daphnis’ naked body (Νυμφῶν ἄντρον ἦν, πέτρα μεγάλη, τὰ ἐνδοθέν κοίλη, τὰ ἔξωθεν περιφερής, 1.4.1). The interiority of the cave reflects the narrated space, as opposed to the narrating frame of the ἄλσος.

Besides the gardens, Lesbos itself shares with Chloe the same unclearly defined margins. As argued by Mason, Longus must have had direct knowledge of the island, which makes his choice to present it as isolated, existing independently from the rest of the world noteworthy for his literary intent. It is hard to envision the outside world from within Longus’ narrative: the nearby mainland, longingly mentioned for instance in Sappho’s LP 96/D 98, and any other islands, are utterly absent from the story. Even the pirates, although sailing on Carian ships and pretending to be barbarians, and threateningly announced as ληστῶν καταδρομή in the prologue are probably not really outsiders: they come either from Pyrrha, a small Lesbian town, non-extant in the second century, or from Tyre, depending on the

196 Hunter (1983: 42-43) and Mason (1995: 264-265) argue that the Nymphs’ cave is (although unstated) part of the initial Nymphs’ grove.
197 Mason (1979, 1995).
manuscript reading (F has Πύρριοι, V Τύριοι); because they act their role of βάρβαροι, Reeve (1986: 14) and Morgan (2004) choose the first reading. The hostile Methymneans (πολεμίων ἐμβολή in the prologue) are also islanders and the conflict between the two Lesbian cities has remarkably insignificant consequences, precisely because the Methymnean aggressors realize it is not wise to attack one’s neighbors (3.1.3). When the villagers on Dionysophanes’ estate chase the Methymneans out of their borders (2.17.3 τῶν ὀρων αὐτοὺς ἔξηλασαν ἐς ἄλλους ἀγροὺς), the ὄροι unclearly demarcate the villagers’ property, and not the Mytilenean territory as opposed to the Methymnean; given that Longus plays on the historical conflict between the two cities,198 his minimization of the geographical borders between the two hostile cities is striking. Because the demarcations are vague, the “outside” is almost impossible to imagine, and the boundaries, meant to create identity and claims of ownership, are turned into a horizon, elusively moving back every time one tries to transgress it.

5.4 From beautiful bodies to beautiful art

The aestheticism emphasized by the prologue, which identifies a locus amoenus with artistic beauty, has attracted plenty of scholarly discussion. Zeitlin (1990:419) contends that Longus responds to a long tradition (starting with Homer), that “unites erotic and aesthetic concerns about the seductive nature and emotional effects of the beautiful (to kalon) upon the beholder.”

Given the meta-literary significance of beauty in Longus, and also in the other novels, it is a salient fact that Chloe very rarely receives this epithet. Daphnis is defined since his first appearance in the story, as a beautiful baby: 1.1.3. παιδίον ἀραν μέγα καὶ καλὸν. Chloe, instead, is just called τὸ παιδίον and, more specifically, θῆλυ τοῦτο τὸ παιδίον (1.5.2-3).

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198 On the strained relations between Methymna and Mytilene, see Mason (1993, 1995a).
Daphnis is the one most often called beautiful throughout the novel: focalized by Chloe (1.13.2., 1.13.4., 1.14.2, 1.14.3), by the pirates (1.28.2), by Myrtale (3.26.4.), by Dryas (32.1), by Gnathon (4.12.4, 4.16.2), by Dionysophanes (4.13.2, 4.20.2), by Cleariste (4.15.4), by Astylos (4.19.1), by Lamon (4.19.5), and ultimately by all the household, happy to have a handsome fellow slave (4.19.3 καλὸν ὁμόδουλον ἕξωσιν). Chloe, unlike the typical romance heroines, is either assimilated to Daphnis’ beauty (1.7.1 κάλλος ἑνεφαίνετο κρείττον ἀγροκίας) or the very few accounts of her beauty are contradictory: Daphnis calls her beautiful for the first time in his self-praise speech at 1.16.5, but he does it in order to illustrate that being nursed by a sheep or goat doesn’t prevent developing beauty, as in his own case. Furthermore, he is not yet in love with her – and several sentences later he realizes that he had been blind before with regards to Chloe’s appearance (1.17.3: ὡσπερ τὸτε πρῶτον ὀφθαλμοῦς κτησάμενος, τὸν δὲ πρότερον χρόνον πεπηρώμενος). The second (and last) time Chloe is described as beautiful is only at the end of the third book, when Lamon postpones Dryas’ offer to marry Chloe to Daphnis: he politely but insincerely points out that everything is fine with Chloe (3.31.3 περισπούδαστος δὲ καὶ Χλόη, καλὴ καὶ ὕραία κόρη καὶ πάντα ἀγαθή), while he secretly believes she does not make a good match for Daphnis’ high status (3.30.5 τὸ μὲν ἄλληθες οὐδ’ ὃς ἔξηγορευσεν, ὅτι κρείττον ἐστὶ τοιοῦτοσ γάμου).

The first time Daphnis sees Chloe’s naked body after Dorcon’s death and Daphnis’ escape from the pirates, Chloe washes Daphnis as in the previous bath scenes, and then proceeds to wash her own body while Daphnis is watching (1.32.1 αὐτῇ τὸτε πρῶτον Δάφνιδος ὁρῶντος ἐλούσατο τὸ σῶμα); Daphnis’ focalization is kept to a minimum (the verb for seeing has no object). As mentioned before, the bath itself adds no beauty to Chloe’s already white and clean body. As she is washing herself, Daphnis, having been just formerly
washed by her, is now suddenly able to perceive Chloe better – by identifying with her, as the object of her bath.

In contrast to the theme of the self-sufficient beauty of her body, Chloe receives beauty when she receives proper clothes, has her hair braided and her face washed at 4.32.1, but then she becomes unrecognizable, even to Daphnis:

So it was possible to learn what beauty is when adornment is added to it. For Chloe, dressed up, with braided plaits and washed face appeared so much prettier to everybody that even Daphnis hardly recognised her.

Beauty, κάλλος, is gnomically said to be revealed by κόσμος (parallel but contradictory to the sententia in 1.32.1, on the bath that adds nothing to beauty) and only obliquely refers to Chloe. When she subsequently arrives in Mytilene for the recognition scene she is instantly seen (together with Daphnis) as having an unsurpassable beauty by the crowd, a clearly untrustworthy focalizer (4.33.4). And later, at 4.36.1, Dionysophanes presents Chloe to Megacles as beautifully arrayed, καλῶς κεκοσμένην.

How are we then to interpret Longus’ hesitance in describing Chloe, as well as his obvious avoidance of portraying Chloe as beautiful? In contrast, all three heroines of the embedded mythoi are insistently called beautiful: Phassa (1.27.2), Syrinx (2.34.1, 2.34.3), Echo (3.23.1). A first answer I think is, as already suggested, Chloe’s lack of perception of her own body and the narrator’s self-imposed imitation of Chloe’s restricted vision, a limitation he shares with Daphnis and other focalizers. Secondly, the dangers implied by beauty are depicted in the three mythoi; recognized beauty confines and turns the focalized into a use-

199 The motif of the misrecognition between lovers turns up in every single Greek novel, usually when the heroine loses her social status. Longus, ironically, makes Chloe unrecognizable when her status changes to a superior position.
object, deprived of an intrinsic worth and autonomous existence: Syrinx and Echo become chase-objects and only save themselves by escaping womanhood and humanity, Phassa enters a poetic (but also aesthetic?) contest with a beautiful shepherd, and can only maintain her freedom by losing.

The prospect of losing one’s freedom and self that lurks in the passivity of beauty comes to the surface in Gnathon’s aesthetic treatment of Daphnis, about to become a handsome fellow-slave, as we have seen above, but most famously, in two of Chloe’s displacements, the apple and Lamon’s garden, following one another and both aggressively called beautiful (3.33.4 ἐν μήλον... μέγα καὶ καλὸν μήλον, 3.34.2 τὸῦ τὸ μήλον ἔφυσαν ὃραι καλαὶ καὶ φυτὸν καλὸν ἐθέρεψε..., 4.1.2. τὸν παράδεισην ἐθεράπευεν ὡς ὁφθείη καλὸς. 4.2.1. ὁ παράδεισος πάγκαλὸν τι χρῆμα). Both are, because of their endless possibility of being focalized/looked at, endangered: the apple might fall on the ground to be stepped on while lying there, looked at and admired (3.34.2 κεῖμενον, βλέπομενον, ἐπαινούμενον); when Lampis uproots, breaks and tramples on Lamon’s flowers, the few flowers which have escaped violence still show (ἔλαμπε, hinting at their violator’s name) their beauty while fallen on the ground (4.8.1 τῶν δὲ εἶ τι διέφυγε τὴν ὑβριν ὑπῆνθει καὶ ἔλαμπε καὶ ἦν ἔτι καλὸν καὶ κεῖμενον). The vulnerability of beauty is corroborated by the other uses of the verb κεῖσθαι: the beautiful baby Daphnis is lying on the ground when discovered and the she-goat carefully stands astride him so that she might not tread on him with her hoofs, while the not-beautiful Chloe is described as just hungrily sucking in the symmetrical account; both babies are exposed (παιδία ἐκκεῖμενα) in the beautiful painting of the prologue. Dorcon wants to be seen as beautiful by Chloe and endangers himself twice: at 1.21.3 he does not want to look ridiculous in Chloe’s eyes, so he lies quietly in his bush while dogs bite on him, and at 1.29.1, beaten by the pirates, he is focalized by Chloe again as lying helplessly on the ground.
Gnathon, on the other hand, will be thrown to the ground and left lying there by Daphnis in response to his sexual advances (and explicit admiration for Daphnis’ beauty), at 4.12.3.

The ambivalent eroticization of κείσθαι is at its clearest in the way Daphnis and Chloe interpret Philetas’ advice “to lie naked on the ground.” (κείσθαι γυμνοὺς χαμαί, 2.8.5, 2.10.1, 3.14.5). This is the part of Philetas’ advice that they get wrong: Philetas originally told them, at 2.7.7, to recline together, συγκατακλήνεται γυμνοῖς σώμασί. The shared process of reclining of the bodies is consistently misunderstood in its result, the act of lying on the ground, even when they accidentally fall together at 2.11.2:

When Daphnis pulled Chloe more forcefully, she somehow lay on his side and, following their kiss, he also lay with her, and, recognizing the image of their dreams, they lay down for a long time as bound to one another.

Their common misleading dream (at 2.10.1, γυμνοί μετ’ ἀλλήλων ἐκείντο) prevents them from turning this accident into the “true” deed (2.11.3 ἵσως ἀν τί καὶ τῶν ἄληθῶν ἔφραξαν). In a similar pattern, Lycaenion converts her reclining with Daphnis (κατακλίνεσθαι χαμαί, κατεκλίθη, κατακλίσεως in only three lines at 3.18.4, conspicuously lacking the prefix συγ-) into the apprehensive projection of an imaginary Chloe lying helpless on the ground: Χλόη... αἴματι κείσεται πολλῷ (3.19.2).

The dangers of lying passively under someone else’s sight are thus evident reasons for the narrator and Daphnis to avoid calling Chloe “beautiful.”

Furthermore, to return to the prologue, insistently marked by the lure of the visual, the story itself, seen as a concrete object (βίβλους and ἀνάθημα), is not meant to be beautiful either:
I completed through hard labour four books, at the same time an offering to Eros, the Nymphs and Pan, and a pleasurable possession for all humankind…

In contrast, the painting that the narrator comes upon unexpectedly is θέαμα κάλλιστον ὁν εἴδων, in a landscape beautiful as well (καλὸν μὲν καὶ τὸ ἄλσος). But what makes the painting really beautiful is its charm, which attracts countless visitors (ἄλλα’ ἦ γραφὴ τερπνοτέρα,... ὡστε πόλλοι... ἔσαν). This charm, artistically obtained, is what the occasional hunter wants to emulate in his creation, a writing destined to be of use to all humankind: κτῆμα τερπνόν.²⁰⁰

It might be that the author is too modest to call his own work beautiful. The allusion to Thucydides underscores the programmatic significance of the surprising epithet τερπνόν. Zeitlin (1990) quite rightly points out the meaning of the work-of-art carried over into the beginning of the narrative, in the description of the country estate of the wealthy man:

ἀγρὸς ἦν ἀνδρὸς εὐδαίμονος, κτῆμα κάλλιστον· ὄρη θηροτρόφα... (1.1.2)

The land belonged to a fortunate man, a most beautiful possession: mountains filled with wild animals…

The narrator, however, distances himself from Dionysophanes and his own work-of-art from Dionysophanes’ land. The narrative distance is corroborated by the literal distance (two hundred stades) between the city of Mytilene and the estate. Dionysophanes’ possession (κτήμα) by its very beauty, lushness, and separate character attracts violating hunters. On the contrary, the charming not-beautiful use-object that is the story is actively affecting its “users,” turned into passive, afflicted receivers in need of solace and guidance:

²⁰⁰ The reason why the literary work is not called καλὸν might be related to the author’s modesty, but he nevertheless could have said that he intended to write a story “as beautiful” as the painting he was emulating. Or could it be simply because a narrative could never be considered beautiful in a visual sense? Hunter (1983: 41-47) connects the painting/ narrative parallel to Plato’s Republic 10.
This [book] will both heal the one who is sick and will cheer the one who is grieving, will bring memories to the one who has loved, and will teach the one who has not loved.

A similar overcoming of καλός by τερπνός is suggested in a remarkably parallel passage, Lycaenion’s instruction of Daphnis (3.15-20). The mature woman, one of the sexually unrestrained alter-egos of the narrator, entices Daphnis away from Chloe in order to find a most beautiful (τὸν κάλλιστον) gander, now captured by an eagle (ἀετὸς ἠρπασε) and lost in the woods. But what she gives Daphnis instead is a taste of the charms (τερπνῶν) he was long looking for: ἐν πείρᾳ γενέσθαι ζητομένων τερπνῶν. At the end of the lesson, Lycaenion leaves, pretending to still be looking for her gander: ὡς έτι ζητοῦσα τὸν χήνα. The beautiful animal is not only a prey in danger of being captured and consumed, but altogether an illusion; not even the eagle is satisfied: he cannot carry the beautiful burden and has to leave it in the woods. Lycaenion unveils her “narratorial” persona and intentions through the charms she offers.

5.5 Shepherding: Labour and escaping labour through imagination

Longus plays with the apparent pun νομίζειν/νέμειν/νόμη/εὐνομία throughout the novel, perhaps most evidently at 2.39.6, when Chloe, as a naïve shepherdess, believes in Daphnis’ love oath when he swears on his flock of goats:

Ἡ δὲ ἡξαίρε καὶ ἐπίστευεν ὡς κόρη καὶ νέμουσα καὶ νομίζουσα τὰς αἵγας καὶ τὰ πρόβατα ποιμένων καὶ αἰτόλων ἰδίους θεούς.

She was glad and she believed him, like a shepherding girl who thought that the goats and the sheep are the personal gods of shepherds and goatherds.
Book 1 had symmetrically ended with a similar act of νομίζειν, when Daphnis, as a young ignorant rustic believed that his love sickness was caused by the pirates: ἐνόμιζε τὴν ψυχὴν ἐτι παρὰ τοῖς θησαυρὶς μένειν, οἷα νέος καὶ ἄγροικος καὶ ἐτι ἄγνοιὸν τὸ Ἐρωτὸς ληστήριον. (1.32.4, “he thought his soul remained with the pirates, as he was young and rustic and yet an ignorant of the piracy of Eros.”)

This act of either willingly or naively choosing to believe something is associated with shepherding early on: the goatherd Lamon, while doing his job (νέμων αἴπολος), gets into the uncommon situation in which he and his wife Myrtale consider (νομίσουσι) that an unknown child is their own. Dryas is also a shepherd at work (ποιμήν... νέμων) when he finds Chloe: he will soon consider (νομίσας) his discovery divine and, together with his wife Nape, decide to consider the foundling as their own daughter (θυγάτριον νομίζειν). Soon after the symmetrical accounts of the discovery of the two infants, Dryas and Lamon simultaneously have a dream of Eros in the Nymphs’ cave, who asks them to teach the preadolescents to tend the flock:

Τὰς Νύμφας ἐδόκουν ἐκείνας ... τὸν Δάφνιν καὶ τὴν Χλόην παραδίδοναι παιδίῳ μάλα σοβαρῷ καὶ καλῷ,... τὸ δὲ ἐφαψάμενον ἀμφότερον ἐνὶ βέλει κελεύσαι λοιπὸν νέμαται τὸν μὲν τὸ αἴπολιον, τὴν δὲ τὸ ποίμνιον. (1.7.2)

It seemed to them that those Nymphs were giving their Daphnis and Chloe to a very proud and beautiful child... and after he touched them both with one arrow, he ordered them from then on to graze the flocks, Daphnis the goats and Chloe the sheep.

As at this moment in the story the two (still shepherding) fathers share Chloe’s perspective, Eros’ name is not mentioned (1.8.2 τὸ γὰρ ὄνομα λέγειν ὁὐκ εἶχον; cf. Chloe’s ignorance at 1.13.5. οὔδὲ ἄλλον λέγοντος ἀκούσασα τὸ ἔρωτος ὄνομα and at 1.15.1, ἐπιζητοῦσα τὸ ἔρωτος ὄνομα); he is carefully described though with an emphasis on his childlike and hybrid nature.
The dismay with which the foster parents receive the dream underscores the extraordinary and poetical significance that shepherding takes in Longus’ novel; νέμειν does not come naturally to these supposed children of herdsmen, but through an act of displacement, which makes Daphnis and Chloe seem as though they are real shepherds. Eros himself, later revealed by Pan as the hidden author of Chloe’s myth, (but also of Philetas’ garden) pastures the two children: νῦν δὲ Δάφνιν ποιμαίνω καὶ Χλόην. (2.5.4)

This realm of as if is an act of imagination, a stepping out into the unknown, a fabrication of reality that is in scarce supply. Shepherding is at the same time self-sufficient and self-nurturing, as there is a cycle of feeding which reinforces the idea that the flock is an extension of the shepherds’ identity: the babies are being nursed by the animals, which in turn are later on supervised during their feeding. When Chloe is abducted by the Methymneans together with the flocks, being whipped like a goat or sheep (2.20.3 ὀσπὸς αἶγα ἀπὸ πρόβατον), the separation from Chloe and the flock disrupts Daphnis’ sense of self: ἔχω γὰρ νέμειν ἐτί οὐδέν (2.22.3, “for now I have nothing to graze”). At 2.29.1, only Chloe’s and Daphnis’ flocks leave the Methymneans’ ship to follow Chloe, whereas the other cattle stay in the hold of the ship, unaffected by Pan’s music. Neglecting one’s flock is again a sign of a traumatic event, typically caused by the selfless experience of eros; at the same time, the children frequently mimic their flocks’ behavior and Eros calls himself a shepherd for Daphnis and Chloe, who are regarded as flock (2.5).

The theme of “being young and rustic and ignorant” is perhaps the most common account given of shepherding: 1.32.4 ὁδα νέος καὶ ἀγροικὸς καὶ ἔτι ἄννοδὴν τὸ Ἐρωτος ληστήριον, 3.18.1 ἂτε ἀγροικὸς καὶ αἰτόλος καὶ ἔρων καὶ νέος, 1.13.5 νέα κόρη καὶ ἐν ἀγροικίᾳ τεθραμμένη καὶ οὐδὲ ἄλλου λέγοντος ἀκούσασα τὸ ἔρωτος ὄνομα. Shepherding,
youth, and ignorance (about love matters) go together, since Philetas claims that once he married and got old, he stopped being a shepherd (2.3).

That shepherding is a cultural construct becomes obvious: Daphnis and Chloe do not experience shepherding as a chore, but as freedom. There is a slippage in between how their parents react to Eros’ request to teach the children to graze the flocks and the children’s open joy (1.8.3 οἱ δὲ μάλα χαίροντες). Daphnis and Chloe are, in a sense, more shepherds than the real shepherds are; they transform their experience of shepherding, through their ignorant focalization, into a high office (ὡς ἀρχὴν μεγάλην παρέλαμβανον).

Their characteristic way of representing reality ‘as if’ is epitomized in their “reading” of Philetas’ story: they listen to it as though it was a mythos, not a logos. In this statement, mythos is defined by its delight, which refuses further interpretation, and by its overt departure from reality. Their choice to understand Philetas in a certain way and exclude other meanings is in itself an act of νομίζειν, and a voluntary act of letting out information, not reaching for the full understanding of a story. I would think that the corresponding responsive action in the face of μῦθος is νομίζειν, choosing to enter a restricted view.

This theme of liberation from a constraining reality overlaps with the creative process, often represented in terms of confinement and/or escape. First, Chloe’s creation of her locust-cage, already discussed above as a displacement for her sexuality, is significant because although she toils away to build it (1.9.2 πονουμένη), to the extent that she becomes oblivious to her sheep, the cage is just a plaything (ἄθυρμα). Chloe’s absorption in her work is imitated by the narrator, who experiences a similar creative labour (ἐξεπονησάμην), but tries to resist being attracted into it (as proved by the use of the aorist and of the prefix). Chloe’s creative toiling and chasing (1.9.2 ἀκριδοθήραν ἐπλεκε καὶ περὶ τοῦτο πονουμένη... “she was weaving a locust-cage and, while working hard at it, she neglected her sheep”), plays with the two
defining activities of the narrator in the prologue, who is hunting (θηρόν) and toiling (ἐξεπονησάμην) to write down his story.

Πόνος is the hard work which involves one’s body, and is often associated with women, labour and childbirth.\(^{201}\) In Zeitlin’s words, “ponos for women in childbirth matches men’s ponos in agriculture.”\(^{202}\) Aeschylus’ Danaids (Suppl. 100), express their desire to avoid labour, when they invoke Zeus as πᾶν ἄπονον δαμονίων (“the one free of labour among all divinities”), but they also fantasize about a conjugal union with minimal physical contact, like that their ancestors Io and Zeus had when they produced their son, Epaphus, through touch only.\(^{203}\)

The emphasis of the author’s presence in the creative act of πόνος is illustrated by Callimachus’ Epigram 6, in which a poem speaks and identifies itself as πόνος:

Τοῦ Σαμίου πόνος εἰμὶ δόμῳ ποτὲ θείον ἀοιδὸν Δεξαμένου, κλείω ὶΕὐρυτόν ὤσε ἐπαθέν Καὶ ξανθὴν Ἰόλειαν, Ομήρειον δὲ καλεῖμαι Γράμμα· Κρεωφύλῳ, Ζεῦ φίλε, τοῦτο μέγα.

I am the work of the Samian who once received in his house the divine bard, and I sing about Eurytus’ sufferings and about blonde Ioleia, but I am called a writing of Homer: dear Zeus, this large poem belongs to Creophylus.

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\(^{201}\) Aristotle uses the word most often with reference to women’s physical pain, mainly childbirth, in GA 775a, HA 584a, 586b ff., Probl. 870b; in De aud. 803b, Aristotle finds the cause for the high-pitched voice (λεπταὶ φωναί) of children, women, and eunuchs in their corresponding νόσος, πόνος, ἄτροφία. Another common usage of πόνος is that of physical exercise (Pol. 1335b, EN 1096a, Probl. 882a). The usual consequence of toil is a loss of power, a weakening of the body (Probl. 882a: ἄλογος γὰρ ἐν τοῖς γυμνασίοις καὶ πόνοις μᾶλλα λεπτόνεται ἡ γαστήρ, Div.Arist. 62.6: ἡ δὲ ἁθένεια εἰς πόνοις). Πόνος is also described as the cause of ageing: De long. et brev. vitae 466b ξηραῖνει γὰρ ὁ πόνος, τὸ δὲ γήρας ξηρὸν ἐστὶν, “for hard work withers and old age is dry.” Moreover, the result of the creative πόνος is soft and weak: the membrane of the egg, usually hardened after being laid, will remain soft if the process of laying was labourious: GA 752a τὸ ὄστρακον ... ἔτι μαλακὸν (πόνον γὰρ ἂν παρείχῃ τυχόμενον), “the egg shell is still soft (for it has probably been painfully laid).”

\(^{202}\) Zeitlin (1996): 152.

\(^{203}\) The theme of preserving virginity in order to avoid the pain of childbirth (referred to with the more common Greek term for birth labour, ὀδίνες) turns up again in the Hellenistic poem Oaristys (29 ὀδίνειν τρομέω).
Callimachus opposes πόνος, the process of creative elaboration that produces the literary work and authenticates its authorship, to γράμμα, the outcome of this process, erroneously attributed to Homer – a writing divorced from its author.

In Longus’ novel, however, if Chloe’s toil stresses both the creative process and the creator’s enmeshment with her creation, the writer’s literary toil emphasizes completion and freeing from labour (ἐξ); in the same manner, Philetas’ garden is a finished handiwork:

κἡπός ἐστὶ μοι τὸν ἐμὸν χειρὸν, δὲν ἐξ οὐ νέμειν διὰ γῆρας ἐπαυσάμην ἐξεπονησάμην

This is my hand-made garden, which I completed through hard work since I ceased to shepherd because of old age.

The literary underpinnings of the passage have been rightfully recognized by scholarship: they connect Longus’ novel to the Hellenistic tradition and the enigmatic figure of Philitas. However, Philetas’ claim of authorship over his garden is challenged by the transgression of Eros; the winged little boy enters the enclosed garden and proclaims himself the embellisher and nutritive source of the garden: διὰ τοῦτο καλὰ καὶ τὰ ἄνθη καὶ τὰ φυτὰ τοῖς ἐμοῖς λουτροῖς ἀρδόμενα. (2.5.5). Philetas, in turn, acknowledges Eros’ auctorial role in relation to the garden, seen as a finished product:

Τὰ ἄνθη πάντα Ἑρωτος ἔργα, τὰ φυτὰ πάντα τοῦτο ποιήματα… (2.7.3)

The flowers were all the works of Eros, the plants were all his makings.

While Philetas is more concerned with the processes of making and labouring, Eros defies him by asserting that it would not be a labour for him to kiss Philetas (ἐμοὶ μὲν, ὦ Φιλητᾶ, φιλήσαι σε πόνος οὐδείς, “it would be no hard work for me, Philetas, to kiss you”), although he

204 Spanoudakis (2002: 64-66) contends that Longus’ familiarity with Philitas originates in Theocritus’ reworking of themes and motives previously used by the poet of Cos in Theocritus 7. On Theocritus 7 and Longus, see Bowie (1985).
chooses not to. Thus, Eros’ effortless and elusive nature is set against Philetas’ toil and physical weariness (καμὼν οὖν ὡς γέρων). His kind of creativity is marked by the absence of πόνος.

But to return to the prevalent contrast between the “real” herdsmen of the novel, and their counterparts, whose “reality” seems to lack “real” support, the contrast is visible again in the refusal or embracing of πόνος. During winter time both land workers and the herdsmen enjoy their leisure time, eat more, sleep more, and feel liberated from their chores (3.4.1); Daphnis and Chloe – not so much. Their shepherding labour is so essentially tied to their erotic experiencing and self-growth that they paradoxically experience lack of labour as deadly confinement, in which they only preserve the memory of past pleasures and the hope of the coming spring (3.4.2 τὴν ἦρινὴν ὡραν ἀνέμενον, a pun on the lack of νέμειν). Their inside activities are felt as confining by both of them, but more in particular by Chloe, who is supposed to conform to the social expectations of a soon-to-be-married girl and learn to comb the wool and spin the spindle; Longus does not call these women’s chores πόνοι, but insists on Chloe’s increased limitations because of them (3.4.5 ἦ μὲν Χλόη δεινὸς ἀπορος ἦν καὶ ὡμήχανος). Nonetheless, the chores related to shepherding are positively seen in 3.33.1, when Daphnis, openly assuming his new status of future husband, helps Chloe with her work: ἐκοινώνει τοῦ πόνου. But what is she toiling with? Interestingly, Chloe’s chore that Daphnis only shares is to squeeze the milk into pails, put the cheeses in frames to set, and thirdly, put the lambs and kids to their ewes and dams to suckle. Milking the sheep and the goats and pressing the milk into cheese are also mentioned as Chloe’s lengthy and rather unpleasant occupation at 1.23 (ἐπὶ πολὺν μὲν χρόνον κάματον205), without the third action performed with Daphnis. Squeezing the milk into pails and putting the cheeses into frames, like the locust-

205 κάματον is Reeve’s addition to the text; three isolated manuscripts from Leiden have πόνον in the marginalia, while the rest of the manuscripts lack an object for εἶχεν (Reeve 1986: XVIII, 13).
cage Chloe is busy making, are forms of constraining reality, while the third, in one of the many tricola that Longus loves, opens up the human impulse for outcome-oriented activities to the prospect of unending, repetitive performances of production. In the light of the creative πόνος, what is the outcome of Chloe’s labour? Her hands’ work tends to impose limits on nature’s work, but these limits are overcome by the sheep’s and goats’ reproduction – a process not completely controlled by the performer of πόνος.

To return to the idea of bodily exhaustion, physical weariness can frustratingly occur without an end product. Longus contrasts the creative power underlying πόνος with the sterile fatigue apparent in verbs like κάμνειν. The unsatisfying chase of Eros leaves Philetas tired out (2.4.3 καμών). Moreover, this verb, which could take an object (and κάμνειν is used with a creative meaning in Homer), is only used intransitively by Longus, and usually in the context of erotic pursuit. Besides Philetas’ unlucky chase of Eros, Syrinx is worn out while fleeing away from Pan and hides in the reeds (2.34.2 φεύγουσα κάμνουσα ἐς δόνακας κρύπτεται, “fleeing [and] getting tired she hides in the reeds”), and Chloe imitates her tiring flight (2.37.2). At the end of her monologue on her unknown sickness at 1.13.6-1.14.4, Chloe remarks on the uselessness of her previous toil of chasing the pleasantly singing locust:

‘τίς τὴν λάλον ἀκρίδα θεραπεύσει, ἢν πολλὰ καμωδὰ εὕρασα ἰνα με κατακοιμίζῃ φθεγγομένη πρὸ τοῦ ἄντρου; νῦν... ἢ δὲ μάτην λαλεῖ.’

“Who will take care of the garrulous locust, which I chased down after much effort in order to have her accompany me with her singing in front of the cave; now… she speaks in vain.”

The futility of κάμνειν is pointed out when Daphnis is about to drown in the sea following the pirates’ shipwreck (1.30); he is fortunately lightly dressed, but his inexperience with swimming in deep water leaves him struggling unsuccessfully (ἐκαμνείν). Only the providential (and fantastic) intervention of the swimming cows will allow him to make it to the
shore unharmed - ἄλυπως καὶ ἀπόνος (1.30.5). During the raid of the Methymneans, the soldiers are worn out by marching and decide to plunder the nearby Mytilenean villages (2.25). A similar negative meaning is attached to κάμνειν by the Nymphs, when they appear to Daphnis in the cave and urge him to cease useless grief (2.23.4 κάμνε δὲ μηδέν), but to rise up and go to the worried Lamon and Myrtale. All the occurrences of κάμνειν and κάματος have in common with πόνος the physical exhaustion, but differently stress an unproductive, closed off relation with one’s body. At the beginning of their love, before learning about the cure for erotic distress from Philetas, Daphnis’ and Chloe’s temporary relief from their ἐρωτικὴς λύπης is paradoxically the bodily weariness itself – φάρμακον τὸν κάματον ἔσχον (1.22.3, “their cure was their weariness”). Running after the frightened sheep and goats can lead to physical tiring and brings about short relief from the other kind of distress, from which, however, there seems to be no escape. In the same vein, later on, Daphnis (3.14.3) observes the shared, peaceful pleasure that pasturing goats enjoy after their tiring mating and envisages a freedom from the draining erotic pursuit:

«ὅρας ὡς μετὰ τοῦτο τὸ ἔργον οὐτε ἐκεῖνα φεύγουσιν ἐτι αὐτῶς οὐτε ἐκεῖνοι κάμνουσι διώκοντες ἀλλ’ ὡσπερ κοινῆς λοιπὸν ἀπολαύσαντες ἡδονῆς συννέμονται;»

“But don’t you see how after this deed neither the nannies and ewes flee anymore from them, nor the billies and rams tire themselves chasing but they pasture together for the rest of the time as though having experienced a shared pleasure?”

But the difficulty inherent in making the leap from κάμνειν to ἀπόλαυσις (pleasure as relief from futile desire) is only made manifest by the ensuing failed attempt to make love to Chloe (3.14.5). Attaining the object of desire is problematic despite the physical proximity.
5.6 Author, distancing, and text-as-work-of-art

As observed, Eros is both the maker of Philetas’ garden (2.7.3 τὰ φυτὰ πάντα τοῦτον ποιήματα, “the plants were all his makings”) and, in Pan’s words, the maker of the myth of Chloe: 2.27.2 παρθένον ἔξης Ἔρως μοῦθον ποιῆσαι θέλει (“the virgin out of whom Eros wants to make a myth”). Eros’ effortless creativity seems to be the envisioned model for the writer himself, who looks for ways to wipe off any traces of the hard work involved in the creation process (ἐξεπονησάμην). But πόνος is both the hard work and the extreme use of one’s identity in the act of creation: making the creating act seem effortless equally requires an effacement of the author’s identity.

Longus’ interest in controlling distance through artistic skill is conspicuous in the repeated trope of the herdsman who controls the flock, no matter how far, through his panpipes (Dorcon, Phassa and his competitor, Daphnis at Cleariste’s request) or in the recurrent centripetal movement of the novel: everything comes to the island, and not away from it; even the unanchored ship of the Methymneans is pushed back to the shore by a stormy wind (3.27).

More than any other novel, Daphnis and Chloe attempts to describe the geographical setting in detail, to the point of offering identifiable distances on the island. As Mason shows, the claimed travelling distance between Mytilene and Dionysophanes’ estate, of two hundred stades or thirty-seven kilometres (1.1.2), is geographically possible.206 The distance between Lamon’s and Dryas’ farms (3.5.5), of ten stades (or two kilometres) – although long for neighboring farms – is again plausible: the narrator’s point is to emphasize the winter time separation between Daphnis and Chloe. Hippassus, the Mytilenean commander, sets the camp at the same “safe” distance (ten stades) outside Methymna after travelling for one hundred

206 Mason (1979).
stades from Mytilene (3.2.2-4). Ten stades again is the farthest the Methymneans can take away Chloe, before Pan intervenes (2.25.1). Other numbers however appear to be exaggerated: the pit dug by the villagers at 1.11.2 in order to trap the wolf is one ὀργυία (almost two metres) wide and four ὀργυιαί (approx. seven metres) deep. The amplitude of the Mytilenean forces enlisted against the Methymneans at the beginning of book 3 seems overstated – three thousand infantry and five hundred horsemen, in direct contrast with the relative isolation and focus on the individual in the countryside life. The conflict, described in good historical style and apparently promising a longer narrative, ceases abruptly and ironically after the first two chapters (3.3.1 Ὅ μὲν δὴ Μηθυμναίων καὶ Μιτυληναίων πόλεμος ἀδόκητον λαβὼν ἄρχην καὶ τέλος οὔτω διελύθη, “The war between the Methymneans and the Mytileneans ended in the same unexpected way as it had begun”) and and the narrative shifts back to the pastoral life in winter time, assimilated to a state of war because of the imposed separation.

Nevertheless, as we have already seen, the closeness and immediacy of the desired object does not make it more accessible. But this ineffectual proximity expresses precisely the conflicted relation between the author and his work of art: at the same time an expression of Longus’ subjectivity, his novel represents an act of parting from its author. The artistic achievement of an independent creation, existing in its own right, comes at the cost of a continual separation, movement away from its creator, who struggles between the erotic desire awakened by the story (πόθος) and his auctorial self-imposed role of letting go of the impulse to chase the object of desire (σωφρονεῖν). The embodiments of this conflicted auctorial stance are the sexual predators of the novel: Dorcon, Lycaenion, Gnathon. Disguised alter-egos of the lustful narrator, they all explain the use of ἥμιν, the plural first-person pronoun in the prologue – the multiple identity of the author, who can intervene into the story and help with its progression towards sexual fulfillment and happy ending. Admittedly, the protagonists’
resistance to defilement removes these intruders from the story, but not before they give a hint about their auctorial intentions. Dorcon and Lycaenion are both concerned to be remembered, rescued from their “death,” by Chloe, and respectively, Daphnis. Dorcon’s artistic skill resides in his ability to control and dissolve distance: he can make his cattle follow the sound of his pipes, even from far away (1.29.2 ἐπαιδεύσα τὰς βοῦς ἥχῳ σύριγγος ἀκολουθεῖν καὶ διώκειν τὸ μέλος αὐτῆς κἂν νέμωνται ποι μακράν, “I taught the cows to listen to the sound of the panpipes and follow their tune, even when they pasture far away”). Lycaenion’s power over Daphnis consists in her ability to play a role (μιμησαμένη τὴν τεταραγμένην) meant to take him away from Chloe – spatially, but also emotionally: 3.17.1 ἢ δὲ ἡγεῖτο ὡς μακροτάτω τῆς Χλόης. Gnathon, on the other hand, finding Daphnis unimpressed by his persuasive talk (4.11.3 τὰς τε αἴγας ἔπιηνε καὶ συρίσαι τὸ αἰπολικὸν ἡξίωσε, 4.12.1 ἔπειθε), prepares a longer speech for Astylus, with the purpose of receiving Daphnis as a slave and taking him away, to the city, with him: 4.13.1 συνέτατε λόγον καὶ ἐρωτικὸν καὶ μακρόν (“he composed a speech both erotic and long”).207 Thus artistic skill is complemented by alienation; physical distance is mirrored by distressingly extended time (at 2.24, Daphnis painfully awaits abducted Chloe’s safe return, νυκτὸν πασὸν ἐκείνη ἔδοξε μακροτάτη γεγονέναι) or is overcome by the promise of a longer pleasure: in another scene, Daphnis sips his wine slowly in order to prolong the pleasure of kissing the invisible trace of Chloe’s lips, after their long separation (3.8.2 βραδέως ἔπινε παρέχον αὐτῷ διὰ τῆς βραδυτῆτος μακρότεραν ἡδονήν), while Lycaenion differentiates between animals’ and humans’ sexual activity in terms of duration of pleasure: 3.17.2 πρόσεστι γὰρ αὐτῶς χρόνος μακρότερας ἡδονῆς. In the claustrophobic literary space of an island, where proximity does not guarantee connection and distances need to be repeatedly emphasized, time is affected as well: unsurprisingly in a novel about virginity, time

207 The actual speech (at 4.16.2-4 and 4.17.3-7) ironically comprises a mythological list of beloved herdsmen (ἔρωτικήν μυθολογίαν).
is expanded, but not even that will lead to the expected sexual fulfillment, as suggested by the inefficiency of “lying together naked for longer” at 3.14.1 (γυμνὴν γυμνῷ συγκατακληθῆναι μακρότερον). The overly protected space, the pure literary artifact, needs external intruders (in the form of the very personas of the author of the artifact) in order to achieve its resolution and fulfillment.

Lampis’ figure is the least creative of the abductors of this novel, as he doesn’t make any effort to disguise himself or his intentions (whereas Dorcon plays the wolf, Lycaenion the teacher, Gnathon the distressed lover). If the other three abductors look back at the author, Lampis is a debased version of Eros: like Eros, he trespasses into a fenced garden and has an aesthetical impact on it (he tries to take their beauty away – 4.28.7 διαφθεῖραι καὶ ἀποκοσμῆσαι); unlike Eros, Lampis is a real (not disguised) transgressor, and not a secret author/ maker of the garden. He cannot control his sexual desire, and the flowers maintain their beauty despite his intentions, not because of them (at 4.28.8, the surviving flowers continue to shine - ἔλαμπε).

In contrast, Dorcon, Lycaenion and Gnathon impersonate facets of the author: they all use imitation and disguise while trying to alienate the characters from their storyline. None of the three is mentioned in the random description of the painting in the prologue, which supports the idea that they are auctorial intruders in the fabula. They all hide their unacceptable intentions (because they violate the stated rule of σωφροσύνη) under the acceptable pretense of rescue and aid: Dorcon shows up in time to save Daphnis from the pit, Lycaenion asks Daphnis to save her and her gander, while Gnathon implores Astylus to save his life, afflicted by the distress of unreciprocated love. And their pretenses do become true, although not in their expected context: Dorcon will save Daphnis from the pirates, Lycaenion will save Daphnis from sexual ignorance, and Gnathon will save Chloe from her abductor.
This “rescue” mission seems to be at the core of Longus’ poetics – the impulse to repair an imperfect world, prone to decay and death. In the same way as Daphnis anticipates his act of plucking Chloe’s virginity by choosing to rescue the apple both from its sterile, transitory perfection, and from falling and corruption, Daphnis and Chloe’s author is concerned with depicting a world in its weightless presence. This artistically achieved “real-like” fiction is on the one hand the veiled expression of its author’s desire and, on the other, the thing apart, existing in its own right. By placing a secure distance between his narratorial/auctorial persona and the depicted world, Longus confers artistic autonomy on the work of art, but also permanence on the material world of shepherding and immortality on the instantiation of first sexual consummation.

For Longus, respecting and preserving Chloe’s virginity entails a corresponding narrative structure, within which Chloe’s myth (the fabula) needs to be protected mainly from its author’s aggression. By blurring Chloe’s physical features in descriptions and repeatedly displacing her sexual difference, Chloe’s integrity and unity, but also the novel’s, are maintained – even at the cost of losing (visual) beauty. The novelistic strategy of focalization, or imagining other people’s perspectives, remains the only way to ensure escape from the confining, sealed-off virginal/fictional world.
6 Achilles Tatius: Questioning perception

6.1 Introduction

If Longus was overly concerned to preserve at least the illusion of a universe pervaded with παρθενία in his novel, Achilles Tatius chooses to undermine such an illusion and, at the same time, uphold an out-of-touch, out-of-view, Platonic dimension of παρθενία.

While the direction of the influence is difficult to demonstrate, Achilles Tatius apparently responds to the deliberate simplicity exhibited by Longus with an emphasis on revealing the props and hidden techniques involved in the act of literary writing. The technique of the homodiegetic narrator, unique among the Greek novelists, serves exactly the purpose of showing off the substructures of the literary act. The result is that this novel reads as

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208 As this chapter will demonstrate, there are clear parallels between the two authors (most strikingly, the relation between a painting and a narrative at the beginning of the novels, the myth of the Syrinx, or the similarities between the scenes of Lycaenion and Melite). Both texts are dated in the latter half of the second century. There are two papyri (P. Med. 124 and P. Oxy. 3836) of Achilles Tatius’ novel, dated, for paleographical reasons, in the second century (Garnaud 1991: IX, XXIV). The references to the revolt of the Egyptian boukoloi in 172 A.D. place the novel of Achilles Tatius after this date. On the other hand, there are no papyri of Daphnis and Chloe and no clear internal references to historical events that would provide a time framework, except for the bridges of marble mentioned in Longus 1.1. Mason (referred to by Morgan 2004: 2) suggests that Daphnis and Chloe was written after the earthquake of 148 (mentioned by Aelius Aristides, Behr 1994: 1192-1204); the earthquake was followed by the rebuilding of the city of Mytilene and the construction of the new marble bridges. If Mason’s terminus post quem for Longus is correct and the construction of the bridges lasted for a decade or more, it follows that it would be entirely possible to place Achilles Tatius sometime after 160. For the opposite view, that Longus imitates and hence comes after Achilles Tatius, see Holzberg 1995: 93.

209 Genette 1980 defines the homodiegetic narrator as the narrator who also plays the role of an actor (that is character) in the narrative. Genette opposes it to the heterodiegetic narrator, in which the narrator and the character are apparently distinct. If Longus moves quickly from a homodiegetic narrator in the prologue to his novel, Achilles Tatius pushes that further: he extends the homodiegetic technique to the major part of the narrative, Clitophon’s story. Achilles Tatius and Longus are both unique among the extant Greek novels for using this technique, albeit to different degrees; however, the earlier Latin novel of Petronius and the roughly contemporaneous Metamorphoses of Apuleius elevated the techniques associated with the homodiegetic narrator to a remarkable refinement, as shown by Conte 1998.

210 The functions of Achilles Tatius’ homodiegetic narrative have been the subject of several studies. Reardon (1994: 80-96) is interested in the play with the restricted knowledge that a first-person narrative entails, as well as in the generic transformations involved. For Chew (2000: 57-70), the ego-narrative is just one strategy which sets Achilles Tatius apart and facilitates a heavy parody of the ideal Greek novel, perhaps Chariton’ Calirrhoe. Fusillo (1989: 158-170) interprets the use of “I” as an (asymmetrical) innovation of the erotic romance, which generically requires parallel narratives from both the male and female protagonists. In contrast, Achilles Tatius’ novel,
though all the symbols are spelled out and already interpreted, offered to the audience in a certain degree of “nakedness.” This “transparency” is nevertheless illusory, and repeatedly undermined: *Clitophon and Leucippe*, more than any of the other extant Greek novels, walks on a narrow balance beam between parody and seriousness. At the same time, the depiction of the exposed maiden (either Leucippe or other maidens such as Europa) will analogously suggest a failed objectification; Leucippe’s nakedness and vulnerability is as misleading as her repeated *Scheintöde*.

In Achilles Tatius’ terms, the parody comes at the expense of the artifice; when we discern Clitophon’s careful technique in attempting to seduce Leucippe, unique in the Greek novels, in which the reciprocity of erotic feelings is guaranteed and the maiden does not require “conquest,” we laugh. In the same way, the intensely visualized and often butchered body of Leucippe is an (abject) object of comic grotesque. However, by the same token, the easily perceptible strategies and techniques which sustain these scenes crumble under their own incapability of grasping (both concretely and cognitively) the real nature of Leucippe’s body and virginity.

Structurally, Achilles Tatius’ novel plays with the Platonic stark dichotomy between the (visible, thus constraining) written text, and the (invisible, thus liberating) oral speech.211 In this paradigm, Leucippe’s virginal body (and the novel as genre) aligns itself together with elusiveness and invisibility, (provisional silence followed by) speech, freedom, defeat of apparent death, prolongation of the story, and truth.

211 *See Phaedrus* 275d-e where the two types of written speech are described: one is silent like a painting, does not choose its readers, cannot defend itself, and cannot answer questions; the other is alive, written into the mind of the learner, chooses its readers and is able to generate further speech. Ní Mheallaigh (2007) explores the multiple links between Achilles Tatius’ novel and *Phaedrus*. 
6.2 Description of place, description of maiden

The conspicuous eroticization of space in Achilles Tatius’ novel has been repeatedly pointed out by scholarship, most recently by Guez (2012: 137-156) and De Temmerman (2012: 525-534). In the following analysis I will consider the purpose of this specific use of descriptions of space as an attempt to render concrete (and thus elucidate) the abstract character of παρθενία, and subsequently the meaning of the marital union. Accordingly, I will discuss Achilles Tatius’ use of recurrent, transparent sexual metaphors not as unmotivated sexual metaphors, but as tentative routes towards a definition of an elusive παρθενία.

The opening of the novel apparently alludes to Longus’ description of the landscape of Mytilene, a mixture of sea and land (1.1 Σιδῶν ἐπὶ θαλάσσῃ πόλις), but also to the parallel experience of an outsider arriving (from nowhere!) at the shore, in this case of Sidon: 1.2 ἐνταῦθα ἡκὼν ἐκ πολλοῦ χειμῶνος. By comparison, Longus’ narrator’s wandering (Longus 1.1 ἐν Λέσβῳ θηρόν ἐν ἄλσει Νυμφῶν) results in a similarly accidental encounter with a painting which depicts, in another medium (belonging to the visual arts), the landscape in which it is placed. The painting (Achilles Tatius 1.2 γραφὴν ἀνακειμένην γῆς ἄμα καὶ θαλάσσης) displays the same mixture of land and sea as the initial depiction, and, perhaps like Longus’ εἰκόνα γραπτήν (1.1), is an offering to an erotic divinity.

The motif of the mixed land and water recurs often enough in Achilles Tatius’ novel to provoke wonder about its significance. The city of Tyre, Clitophon’s native city, but also the locale of the most important part of Clitophon’s narrative (the meeting and eloping of Clitophon and Leucippe), plays a parallel role to Sidon, which opens up the novel, in the same way that Clitophon’s narrative is a secondary “bay” in the larger frame of the novel. Sostratus, the father of Leucippe and located in Byzantium, offers an exotic description of Tyre from far away when he identifies an unspecified place mentioned by an oracle where the Byzantines
should bring their offerings to Heracles. The beginning of the riddle (2.14.1 νῆσος τις πόλις ἐστὶ φυτώνυμον αἶμα λαχοῦσα/ ἱεθμοῦν ὀμοῦ καὶ πορθμὸν ἐπ’ ἱππέρυμο φέρουσα) sounds eerily similar to the sea city Sidon where our first narrator arrives after his shipwreck (1.1 Σιδὼν ἐπὶ θαλάσσῃ πόλις). The second description item, of a plant that shares its name with the people of the city, would be appropriate for the Phoenician Sidon as well. Sostratus, promptly supported by his superior Tyre-born Chaerephon, interprets the oracle as referring to Tyre and not to Sidon probably because Tyre is an island, while Sidon is not. This choice of the destination of their sacrifice matters for the narrative thread: Sostratus’ interpretation will make Callisthenes an envoy to Tyre, and an unintended abductor of Clitophon’s bride-to-be, Calligone. It seems as though Clitophon’s inserted narrative avoids getting in touch with the framing narrative, placed in Sidon: when the couple and their helpers elope at 2.31 they quickly pass through Sidon at night and embark on a random ship in Berytus’ harbor. Clinias later (5.9) reports that he was rescued by a Sidonian ship travelling to Sidon after the shipwreck they all suffered and was careful to ask the Sidonians not to mention his name to anyone in the city in case someone might identify him as Clitophon’s friend and likely aide. But to return to the oracle of the Byzantines, after Sostratus locates the place concealed by the riddle, Chaerephon enthusiastically supports his interpretation with three digressions referring to other exotic places where he himself claims to have seen mirabilia (2.14.7 ἐθεασάμην γὰρ ἐγὼ τοιαῦτα μυστήρια): the fiery spring in Sicily, the singing river in Spain, and the Indian-like land of Libya. When he describes the river in Spain though, Chaerephon undermines the validity of his testimony; the river does not offer anything to the sight, but to the ears, if you wish to hear it (2.14.8 εἰ μὲν ἵδος αὐτὸν εὐθὺς, οὐδὲν ἄλλου κρείττων ἐστὶ ποταμὸν· ἂν δὲ ἄκουσαι θέλης τοῦ ὄδατος λαλοῦντος, μικρὸν ἄναμεινον ἐκπετάσας τὰ ὅτα). This fantastic river foreshadows the myth of Syrinx, in which the nymph first disappears from sight, but then lets out, under the
artistry of Pan, beautiful music. In the context of Callisthenes’ plan to abduct a maiden he had fallen in love with by hearsay (2.13.1 ἐξ ἀκοῆς ἐραστῆς), the exchange between Sostratus and Chaerephon underscores the elusive source of desire: Callisthenes falls in love with hearing about Leucippe’s visible appearance, and Chaerephon has to stop seeing in order to hear the spring’s music. Additionally, hearing the oracle prompts Sostratus to remember and describe the city of Tyre, to which the reader has access through several narrative layers.

In the same way that Leucippe is desired by both Clitophon and Callisthenes at this moment of the narrative, Sostratus describes Tyre as essentially “shared” and claimed by both land and sea:

2.14.2-4 ἐρίζει δὲ περὶ ταύτης γῆ καὶ θάλασσα. Ἕλκει <μὲν ἡ θάλασσα, Ἕλκει> δὲ ἡ γῆ, ἢ δὲ εἰς ἀμφότερα αὐτὴν ἡμοσε. καὶ γὰρ ἐν θαλάσσῃ κάθηται καὶ ὡκ ἀφῆκε τὴν γῆν· συνδεῖ γὰρ αὐτὴν πρὸς τὴν ἥπειρον στενός αὐχήν, καὶ ἐστὶν ὅσπερ τῆς νῆσος πράξελος. οὐκ ἐρρίζοται δὲ κατὰ τῆς θαλάσσης, ἀλλὰ τὸ ὄδωρ ὑπορρεῖ κάτωθεν. ὑπόκειται δὲ πορθμὸς κάτωθεν ἰσθμὸς· καὶ γίνεται τὸ θέαμα καίνον, πόλις ἐν θαλάσσῃ, καὶ νῆσος ἐν γῇ.

Land and sea compete over Tyre: the sea pulls her one way, and the land pulls her the other way, and she bonds herself to both. For she both rests on the sea and does not let go of the land: a narrow isthmus binds her to the mainland, a sort of neck to the island. She is not rooted into the bottom of the sea, but water flows beneath her. A passage of water lies underneath the isthmus; the sight turns to be novel: a city on the sea, and an island on land.

This depiction of Tyre, itself modeled after Sidon, can also be read as a lengthier, convoluted gloss on the depiction of Mitylene in Longus 1.1:

Πόλις ἐστὶ τῆς Λέσβου Μιτυλήνη... Νομίσεις οὐ πόλιν ὅραν ἄλλα νῆσον.

There is a city, Mitylene of Lesbos... You will think that you see not a city but an island.

The key word of Longus’ description (νομίσεις) is missing from Achilles Tatius’ account, which replaces the invocation of a reader’s imagination with extensive visual detail. The maiden-like character of the island connected to the mainland, originating in Homer’s
Scheria,\textsuperscript{212} is suddenly fully revealed and made explicit. The isthmus is a kind of a neck (στενὸς αὐχήν, ὀσπερ τῆς νῆσου τράχελος), which binds the land to the sea; thus the city rests in-between, disputed by land and sea (ἐλκεῖ <μὲν ἡ θάλασσα, ἐλκεῖ> δὲ ἡ γῆ) in the same way as a maiden can be disputed by two suitors; the verb used for the fitting bonds between Sidon and the two natural elements, ἡρμοσε, also carries the meaning “to betroth.” Actually, the passage recalls a wedding anecdote told by Plutarch (\textit{Moralia, Amatoriae narrationes} 1.7222c) in which a bridegroom and an abductor forcefully tug at a bride’s body in different directions until the bride is torn apart: ἔλαθεν ἡ παῖς ἐν χερσὶ τῶν ἀνθελκόντων διαφθαρεῖσα.

Moreover, if Mytilene \textit{appears} to be an island, due to focalization, as the reader cannot see its connection to the mainland, Achilles Tatius’ reader is presented with a fully described isthmus in a large panorama, in which no detail seems to be lacking. We \textit{know} that Tyre is not really an island, but this does not change its conflicted, ambivalent character. Moreover, the ancient reader was most likely aware that the isthmus had been erected several centuries ago by Alexander and his engineers during the siege of Tyre in 332 B.C.\textsuperscript{213} Thus even a fully artificial, see-through creation can evoke wonder, similarly to the \textit{paradoxa} of nature mentioned by Clitophon.

This essentially artificial, unnatural and paradoxical character of the union between land and sea is suggested in the oracle’s description of Tyre as the place where “Hephaestus rejoices in holding Athena” (2.14.1 ἔνθ’ Ὡφαιστος ἔχων χαίρει γλαυκόπιν Αθήνην); this puzzling phrase of the Byzantines’ oracle is interpreted by Sostratus as the strengthening of the olive tree by the fire coming from the earth: Tyre is thus the only place where Athena does \textit{not} reject Hephaestus: 2.14.6 οὕτως οὐ φεύγει τὸν Ὡφαιστον Αθήνη. No wonder that Chaerephon

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\textsuperscript{212} See above, 1.2 (32-43).
\textsuperscript{213} Pliny, \textit{Natural History} 5.19 (76) (Tyros, quondam insula praealto mari DCC passibus divisa, nunc vero Alexandri oppugnantis operibus continens).\
\end{flushright}
feels the need to support such an amazing statement with a series of worldwide *mirabilia*. The transformation of landscape – island into mainland or reversely, the appearance of new islands – was seen by Ovid in line with his other metamorphoses (15.287 *Fluctibus ambitae fuerunt Antissa Pharosque/ Et Phoenissa Tyros: quarum nunc insula nulla est/ Leucada continentem veteres habeuere coloni/ Nunc freta circumvent*).

To return to the initial setting of the novel, the *locus amoenus* of Sidon is connected to Leucippe, the *παρθένος* of the novel, through an artificial intermediary: the painting that the anonymous first narrator happens upon represents Sidon and the abducted Europa. While Clitophon’s internal narrative will avoid Sidon at all costs, his maiden is clearly a “Europa” in disguise. Not differently than in the case of the paintings admired by Encolpius and Eumolpus in Petronius’ *Satyricon* (83-84), both Longus and Achilles Tatius connect the initial painting to the story that is to follow, the plot of the novel. In the *Satyricon*, the paintings portray the famous pederastic affairs of Hercules, Jupiter and Apollo (83.4 *ergo amor etiam deos tangit*), and Eumolpus’ first story is about his successful seduction of a youth while infiltrated as a tutor in the boy’s house in Pergamum (*Sat*. 85-87). For Achilles Tatius, the painting of the abduction of Europa by Zeus facilitates the meeting of the first narrator with a second narrator, Clitophon, who also observes and identifies with the subject of the painting: the story of his love suffering is occasioned by this recollection. Moreover, many hints

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214 Strabo 1.3.4 ff. is a long list of such changes, especially 1.3.16: creation of Therasia (the new island in the caldera at Thera), destruction of a city near Sidon, Piraeus being once an island, Leucas, Bura and Helice (swallowed up by a tsunami/earthquake) and, at 1.3.19, Antissa, formerly an island, on Lesbos.

215 Morgan (2007) discusses the motif of a spontaneous meeting with a stranger in front of a painting, which is present in Achilles Tatius 1.2 and Petronius 83; in both texts, the shared attention to the artistic representation breaks a conversation and occasions the emergence of a significant narrative thread. Morgan further suggests a parallel between Clitophon and Encolpius, based on several similarities between the two novels and attempts a Contean reading of Achilles Tatius’ novel.

216 A common motif in love literature (e.g. Theocr. 8.61-62 ὦ πάτερ, ὦ Ζεῦ, ὦ μόνος ἡράσθην· καὶ τὸ γυναικόφιλας), but Achilles Tatius apparently hints at this passage in 1.5-6. when Clitophon listens to a song about Apollo’s desire for Daphne and concludes that he should not be σώφρον if even Apollo cannot be.
throughout the novel point to an analogy between Leucippe and Europa\(^{217}\) and, respectively, Clitophon and Zeus.\(^{218}\) We could thus say that the ecphrasis of the painting condenses, in mythical terms, the plot of the abduction of Leucippe as narrated by the “abductor” himself. Conversely, Longus’ narrator tells us only a few basic things about the painting that he has happened upon and, with his intent made explicit, he decides to derive his omniscient, heterodiegetic ensuing narrative from this source of inspiration (ἀντιγράψαι τῇ γραφῇ) with the help of a local interpreter.

But arguably the most striking difference between the two novels lies in the narrator’s challenging adoption of σωφροσύνη. If Longus’ narrator begins his narrative by praying to be able to maintain his sexual self-control, in which he almost succeeds, Achilles Tatius’ first narrator describes himself as an ἐρωτικός, and Clitophon is quite ostensibly non-chaste, as he proclaims a sophisticated knowledge of sexual love, and admits to previous sexual experience with prostitutes. His difficulty in retaining sexual self-control\(^{219}\) and/or imitating a maiden’s behavior is a prominent theme in this novel, as opposed to Longus. The theme of male inadequacy in chaste roles will be discussed in more detail towards the end of this chapter; suffice it for now to say that the narrator’s intrusive character and his lack of continence are

\(^{217}\) The most obvious one occurs the first time Clitophon sees Leucippe: 1.4.3 τοιαύτην εἶδον ἐγὼ ποτὲ ἐπὶ ταύρῳ γεγραμμένην Σελήνην.

\(^{218}\) This identification is certainly the source of the self-irony ubiquitous in the novel. Like Zeus, who turns into a bull for the sake of Eros (1.13) who in turn drives him (2.1 τὸν ἄγοντα τὸν βοῦν Ἔρωτα), Clitophon is often portrayed as the unexisting subject to erotic desire. On the other hand, he is compared to a god when advised on how to approach Leucippe (1.10. 1-2, and 2.4.5). In his first interactions with Leucippe (1.5.7 μὴ κρείττων εἰ τοῦ θεοῦ), Clitophon reproaches himself for being more chaste than a god (Apollo), while a youthful statue of Zeus at Pelusium is likened to Apollo (3.6.1). Menelaus explicitly associates the God with stratagem, disguise and inventiveness (3.21.1) and Clitophon responds to Menelaus’ enactment of the mock sacrifice of Leucippe by worshipping him as a god (3.23.1). If a man, specifically the narrator, is like a god in his skillful manoeuvering of the story, Eros is, inversely, “a self-taught sophist,” who controls the story in the same way a narrator would: 1.10.1 αὐτοδίδακτος γὰρ ἔστιν ὁ θεὸς σοφιστῆς. Thus, the narrator of the story, Clitophon, is subject to his own desire in the same way as Zeus obeys Eros’ lead: hence, the narrative is in actuality written by Eros himself. This is not unlike Longus’ statement that the author of Chloe’s myth is Eros (2.27).

\(^{219}\) See, for example, 1.5.6-7, or 2.5.2, where Eros addresses Clitophon: ἂν φυλάξῃ μου τὸ τόξον, οὐχ ἔχεις φιλάξαι τὸ πύρ· ἂν δὲ κατασβέσῃς σωφροσύνη τὴν φλόγα, αὐτὸ σε καταλήψωμαι τὸ πτερῷ (“if you keep yourself safe from my bow, you will not be able to keep safe from my fire; and if you quench the fire by your self-control, I shall conquer you by my wings”).
connected in Achilles Tatius in a parallel but reversed manner from that in Longus’ novel. Longus’ narrator refuses any direct involvement in the plot, preserves his σωφροσύνη and, as a consequence, disguises himself in his literary artifact and covers up the artifice of his literary creation. The narrator of Achilles Tatius at once exposes and infiltrates himself into the fictional world, hence revealing the artifice of his literary creation.

As we have seen, Achilles Tatius underscores the mixture between sea and land first as a reference to Longus’ peculiar depiction of the landscape of Mytilene; furthermore, the space which the main narrator enters, at once geographical and imaginary space, is presented in terms of a virginal, sheltered inside, in the tradition which associates the intimacy of the house with the protected body of the παρθένος as opposed to the harsh weather outside of this haven (Hesiod, Op. 504-535).

Thus, the city of Sidon is situated on the shore of the double harbour inside a bay (δίδυμος λιμήν ἐν κόλπῳ), a harbour which locks the sea outside (ἡρέμα κλείων τὸ πέλαγος). While the first harbor is natural (ὁ κόλπος κατὰ πλευρὰν ἐπὶ δεξιὰ κοιλαίνεται), the second (στόμα δεύτερον... γίνεται τοῦ λιμένος ἀλλος λιμήν) is reached by a built channel which allows the sea water and ships to get in and find shelter from the winter weather (χειμάζειν ταύτη τὰς ὀλκάδας ἐν γαλήνῃ). During the summer the ships can remain in the outer harbour (τοῦ λιμένος εἰς τὸ προκόλπιον). Similar to a wandering ship, the narrator, speaking in the first person like Longus’ narrator, arrives at this sheltered place after a storm (ἐκ πολλοῦ χειμῶνος, in Greek from the same root as χειμάζειν in the previous sentence); in his search for a place to bring his offerings of gratitude for being saved (σῶστρα) to the local goddess, Astarte, the narrator also goes deeper, into the second layer/bay of the novel, that of the painting of Europa, which is analogously constructed around the combination between the land of Sidon and the Phoenician sea.
If Achilles Tatius renders all the defining elements of the introductory description of landscape ambivalently geographical and virginal, as words like λιμήν, κόλπος, κλείς, or στόμα, already heavily sexualized in Greek literature, suggest, the description of the painting is even more explicitly so: if the sea is the realm of Zeus’ bull, the land is the place of the meadow and of the maidens’ group (ἐν τῇ γῇ λειμῶν καὶ χορὸς παρθένων), from which Europa, the beautiful maiden (καλὴ παρθένος), has been separated. The previous λιμήν anticipates the λειμῶν: two liminal places separating shelter from danger. The meadow as maiden is a metaphor as old as the *Homer Hymn to Demeter* (*Hymns* 2.7), but Achilles Tatius is careful to underline the artistic character of the depiction. The foliage is intertwined creating a perfectly covered and sheltered space, which is also enclosed from all sides (ὅλον ἐτείχίζε τὸν λειμῶνα περιβολή), much like Longus’ παράδεισος tended by Lamon (Longus 4.2-3), whose clearly demarcated fences, covering foliage and elaborate craftsmanship invite transgression. If the author of Lamon’s garden was remarkably absent, despite its seeming unnatural character (Longus 4.2.6 ἐδόκει ἡ τούτων φύσις εἶναι τέχνης), the author of the painting in Achilles Tatius’ novel is very much present in his creation, through his intention. We assume his creative mind from his inherent presence in the description of the work of art (ἐγραψὲν ὁ τεχνίτης ἀνέψίξεν ὁ γραφεύς ἐτείχὶζεν ὁ τεχνίτης), and in the emphasis on the artistry underpinning the visual product (e.g. ἐγέρασπτο, ἐπεποίητο, γεγράφθαι καὶ τὰ κινήματα). Moreover, the (internal) author of the garden himself (ὀχετηγὸς τίς) is also present within the γραφή, marking, in an auctorial gesture, the channel for the water to nourish the land and the plants (ἀνοίγων τῆν ὀδὸν τὸ ρέψαμι).

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220 According to Aristotle (*Gen. Anim.* 1.3, 716b-717a), females from all species have a double uterus. Whatever that means in terms of ancient knowledge of anatomy, the *double* fold of the uterus, which could have been the result of a folk etymology of the word ὑστέρα from ὑστερος as “(a second element) following, coming after”, can explain the presence of the double bay at the beginning of the novel, as well as the double beginning of the story (the narrator opens up the first “bay” of the novel, followed by Clitophon’s narration occasioned by the painting at 1.3, which delineates the second, rather artificial, and more sheltered “bay,” where one can spend a long winter safely *listening to stories*).
The meadow of the painting, observed by both the narrator and Clitophon, is in its turn remarkably similar to the garden in which Clitophon found his beloved Leucipe at 1.15. Clitophon plays with the terms whose ambiguity was already present in Longus: the παράδεισος is an ἄλσος which hides behind its τειχίον intertwined foliage, embraces of flowers and leaves (1.1.3 ἐγίνετο τοῖς ἄνθεσιν Ὀροφός ἡ τῶν φύλλων συμπλοκή 1.15.2 τῶν πετάλων περιπλοκαί, τῶν φύλλων περιβολαί, τῶν καρπῶν συμπλοκαί. τουατή τις ήν ὀμλία τῶν φυτῶν). The embrace is to the same extent a metaphor for the sexual embrace as it is a metaphor for metaphor – the multiple, rich, creative crossing of meanings, which, in the mingling between maidens and landscape, cut both ways. Europa’s meadow is imbued with virginal features, in its both fragile and strong bonds and covered by a thick hair of flowers: 1.1.3 ἐκόμα πολλοίς ἄνθεσιν ὁ λειμών. The maidenly meadow, used as a disguise, shows up also in Satyrus’ shrewd story about the gnat and the lion; the gnat plays the role of the male (2.22.3 ἐμπεσὼν δὲ ὡς ἀπὸ βέλους ποιῶ τὸ τραῶμα... ἐγὼ δὲ παρὼν οὐ πάρεμι- ὅμοι δὲ καὶ φεύγω καὶ μένω etc.), while the lion has mostly the power of a woman (2.22.2 μαχομένη γυνή), fighting with claws and teeth, with his impressive hair around his neck (πολλὴ περὶ τῶν αὐχένα κόμη). In turn, the gnat only dresses up in a meadow’s hair (ἔμοι... κάλλος δὲ αἵ τῶν λειμώνων κόμαι- αἱ μὲν γάρ εἰσιν ὀσπερ ἐσθήτες), but his real nature is that of a manly warrior (2.22.3 τὴν ἀνδρείαν μου... ὄργανον γὰρ ὅλος εἰμί πολέμου). The imperceptible transition from maiden to the physical space is the literal representation of a metaphor: when Pan stretches to grasp Syrinx’ tresses, believing that the erotic chase is over, his hand only

221 Συμπλοκή is the word used by Aristophanes in his speech to explain the purpose of Zeus’ creation of the genitals in men and women: to offer the possibility of union, for procreation or pleasure (Plat. Symp. 192c). Clitophon himself, during the improvised symposium on the boat in Achilles Tatius’ book 2 (37), shows off his moderate knowledge on the topic and opposes the softness of women’s bodies during sexual embrace (γυνακί μὲν οὖν ὑγρὸν μὲν τὸ σῶμα ἐν τοῖς συμπλοκαῖς) to the “uneducated” embraces of boys (παιδών δὲ περιπλοκαί ἄμαθες).
clutches the hair of the reeds (8.6.9 ὁ μὲν ὕπτω τεθηρακέναι καὶ ἔχεσθαι τῶν τριχῶν, καλάμων δὲ κόμην εἶχεν ἡ χείρ).

But to return to Europa’s painting and Leucippe’s garden, the contiguity between the meadow and παρθενία acts as mirroring and serves to elucidate the more abstract concept through its concrete equivalent. By locating the maiden in the meadow and furthermore endowing the maiden with meadow-like features and the meadow with maiden-like features, the author strives to elucidate the nature of virginity itself, otherwise impossible to catch in straightforward, referential language.

On the other hand, although Melite is not connected with a garden, both she and subsequently Clitophon describe their sexual act in terms of embrace and not marriage (5.25.7 and 8 in Melite’s pleading words, and 5.27.2-3 in Clitophon’s rationalization: οὐδὲ γάμος ἔτι τὸ πραττόμενον ἦν, ἀλλὰ φάρμακον ἄσπερ ψυχῆς νοσούσης. περιβαλούσης οὖν ἣνειχόμην καὶ περιπλεκομένης πρὸς τὰς περιπλοκὰς οὐκ ἀντέλεγον). Her embrace with Clitophon is nevertheless literal, to the same extent that it is also not marital. The embrace is thus simply a union, which can join together distinct or naturally connected elements. This ambiguity is retained in the use of περιπλοκή for speech: the (sexually unrestrained) general Charmides is looking for winding words (περιπλοκὰς ἐξητει λόγων) to divert everyone’s attention from his infatuation with Leucippe, and also to keep her around at 4.3.2. Of course, the contiguity of the physical and rhetorical aspects of συμπλοκή is not new: Plato has used the term to mean both sexual relations (Symp. 191c) and specific combinations of words (Soph. 262c). Moreover, περιπλοκή, while similarly ambivalent, has even a stronger (and disparaging) sense of “complex, prolix discourse” (e.g. Euripides Ph. 497). But at the “feast of shamefulness” (8.4.1 ὅλον τὸ συμπόσιον αἰδῶς) in the final book, just before the trials of the two women and the trial of Thersander, the priest of the temple asks the strangers Sostratus, Clitophon and
Leucippe to tell their story, in all its intricacies, as it fits a wine-feast (8.4.2 ὁκεῖ μοι περιπλοκὰς τινας ἔχειν οὐκ ἀπεδεῖς, οἶνῳ δὲ μάλιστα πρέπουσιν οἱ τοιοῦτοι λόγοι); Sostratus begins by noting that his story is all too simple (ἀπλοῦν) and he passes the story-telling role to Clitophon – who apparently will extricate and explain the intertwining plots of their previous adventures. His major manipulation of the narrative is in terms of omitting the embarrassing episode of Melite – ironically, against the explicit bidding of his future father-in-law (8.4.4 λέγε, τέκνον Κλειτοφῶν, μηδὲν αἰδοῦμενος). In the embrace of words a lie about σωφροσύνη is woven.222

But then again the embraces within the garden/meadow or maiden look harmonious, simple and transparent in their texture, without concealed elements. Lest the significance of doubling and mirroring for this novel may still escape the reader, Clitophon points to the spring in the center of the garden, artificially collected in a basin and creating, through mirroring, the illusion of a second garden: τὸ δὲ ὕδωρ τῶν ἀνθέων ἦν κάτοπτρον, ὡς ὁκεῖν τὸ ἄλσος εἶναι διπλοῦν, τὸ μὲν τῆς ἀληθείας, τὸ δὲ τῆς σκιᾶς. The spring in Leucippe’s garden is confined (1.15.6 περιεγέγραπτο) in a square basin which is man-made (1.15.6 χειροποίητος); the language used to denote its artistic character resembles the language of the creation of paintings; the boundaries between art and nature are increasingly harder to discern, or art is fully welcomed in nature’s embrace. Moreover, the garden’s birds’ plumage looks like flowers (ἤν ἄνθη πτερῶν), Leucippe’s beauty is more sparkly than that of a peacock (1.19.1), and, at the top of the climax of likenesses, Leucippe herself is a flowery meadow:

222 Achilles Tatius seemingly derived his model for the intricate deceiving speech as opposed to the simple straightforward one from Polynices’ words in Euripides’ Phoenician Women: 469-496 ἀπλοῖς ὁ μύθος τῆς ἀληθείας ἔριν, καὶ ποικίλων δὲ τὰν ῥήματα ἐρμηνεύομεν; ἔχει γὰρ αὐτὰ καὶ φαρμάκον ἀδίκος λόγος/νοσῶν ἐν αὐτῶι φαρμάκων ἑπτα, μήτερ, οὗτοι περιπλοκὰς/λόγοις ἀθροίσας εἶπον ἀλλὰ καὶ σοφοῖς/καὶ τοῖσι φαύλοις ἐκατα, ὡς ὁκεῖ δοκεῖ. The connection between the intricacy of words and φάρμακα also appears in Clitophon’s excuse about his behavior with Melite, albeit in the claimed positive sense of the drug (5.27.2).
For the beauty of her body competed with the flowers of the meadow; her complexion was beaming with the hue of the narcissus, a rose was springing from her cheek, the sparkle of her eyes was gleaming like a violet, and her grape-like locks were more curled than ivy: such was the meadow on the face of Leucippe.

Thus, the meadow in the initial painting *precedes and anticipates* the depiction of the maidens, Europa’s companions; the artist placed all of them except Europa close to the sea, on a promontory (*πρὸς ταῖς ἐπὶ θάλασσαν τῆς γῆς ἐκβολάις*). Their appearance is a mixture of bonds and broken bonds: they wear bound garlands (*στέφανοι δεδεμένοι*), but their hair is flowing loose on their shoulders (*κόμαι λελυμέναι*); their upper body is covered by the chiton (*τὸ μὲν ἄνω, τοῦ χιτῶνος*), and they wear sandals (*τὸ δὲ κάτω, τοῦ πεδίλου*), but their legs are uncovered below the knee, as the girdle holds the chiton up (*τὸ ζῶσμα μέχρι γόνατος ἀνείλκε τὸν χιτῶνα*). Their disorderly appearance suggests the very moment of the loss of virginity, in between still extant bonds and their unbinding. Their conflicting emotions, joy and fear (*τὸ σχῆμα ταῖς παρθένοις καὶ χαρᾶς καὶ φόβου*), as well as their desire to both stay on the shore and to follow the bull into the sea creates the impression of eternal “loss of virginity,” so characteristic of pursued nymphs, who become at once frozen and embedded in their setting. The rigidity and artificiality of this depiction is underscored by the use of *σχῆμα* – at once appearance and guise, bodily expression of internal feelings and trite figure of speech.

In contrast to her companions, Europa wears a short white chiton covering only the top of her body *and* a purple skirt; the colour of the skirt and the veil that she wears, similar to the sail of a ship bellying in the wind, suggests traditional wedding imagery (Seaford 1987: 124). Moreover, her tunic, while properly placed and confining her body, at the same time reveals the body underneath:
A tunic was covering her chest down to her modesty: from there a robe was hiding the lower part of her body. The tunic was white; the robe red; but the body was visible through the garment – her deep navel, her even abdomen, her narrow middle. The narrowness around the waist was widening down from there. The breasts were gently protruding from her chest; the girdle, bringing together her tunic and her breasts, was confining them, and the tunic was turned into a mirror for the body.

The whiteness of the chiton actually points the reader to its transparency. The body whose traces can be guessed underneath the garments is of course a ubiquitous convention in Greek paintings and reliefs. But Achilles Tatius associates this limpidity with Leucippe (“the white horse girl”) and with παρθενία: in Evanthes’ painting of Andromeda in 3.6-7, Perseus’ future bride has white, almost livid-white arms, suggesting the proximity of death, but also wears a long white tunic made from very thin silk, resembling a spider-web: ποδήρης ὁ χιτών, λευκός ὁ χιτών· τὸ ώφασμα λεπτόν, ἀραχνίων ἐοικός πλοκή. The maidenly spider which catches the manly gnat in Satyrus’ account manages the feat precisely through the trick of her invisible chiton (2.22.7 ὁ δὲ κώνωψ... ἀράχνης λανθάνει νήμασιν ἐμπλακεῖς, καὶ τὴν ἀράχνην οὐκ ἔλαθεν ἐμπεσών. ως δὲ οὐκέτι εἰχε φυγεῖν, ἀδημονών εἶπεν· “ὦ τῆς ἀνοίας· προυκαλούμην γὰρ ἐγὼ λέοντα, ὦλιγος δὲ με ἤγγευσεν ἀράχνης χιτῶν”). Whiteness is sheerness in the case of the extraordinarily clear water of the Nile, which rivals the transparent cup into which it is poured: 4.18. 3-4 ἀρυσάμενος οὖν ύαλον τῆς διαφανοῦς κύλικα, τὸ ὕδωρ ἐώρων ὑπὸ...
λευκότητος πρός τὸ ἔμπωμα ἀμφιλόμενον καὶ τὸ ἔμπωμα νικώμενον. Equally marvelous is the transparent drinking cup set by Clitophon’s father during the symposia set for Dionysus’ festival, coming right after a learned digression on the presumably Tyrian origin of wine. This crystal cup is fashioned with embedded outlines of vines and grapes (2.3.2 κύκλῳ δὲ αὐτὸν ἄμπελοι περιέστεφον ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ τοῦ κρατῆρος πεφυτευμέναι), and also Dionysus as their grower (2.3.2 ἵνα τὴν ἄμπελον οἷνῳ γεωργῇ); but the striking feature of the cup is its translucence: when the cup is empty the grapes look unripe (ὁμφαξ ... ἕφ’ ὃσον ἦν κενὸς ὁ κρατήρ), whereas when it is full of wine, it makes the immature clusters look ripe (σταφυλὰν τὴν ὀμφακα ποιεῖ). If the cup itself and the vines attached to it are like a maiden’s body, the wine is blood-like: 2.2.4 αἷμα γλυκό. But Leucippe’s garden (1.15) anticipates this cup in its depiction of intermingling vines of ivy, sunlight which changes the color of leaves, or drinking cups of red and white-hued flowers (1.15.5 μία μὲν τῷ ῥόδῳ καὶ τῷ ναρκίσσῳ ἡ κάλυξ, ὃσον εἰς περιγραφήν· καὶ ἦν φιάλη τοῦ φυτοῦ).

The description of the flowers in Leucippe’s garden not only mirrors the flowers of Europa’s painting, but their colour resembles the deep calm of the sea (1.15.6 τῷ ἱώ... χροιὰ δὲ οἶαν ἡ τῆς θαλάσσης ἀστράπτει γαλήνη) within the sheltered bay, as evoked at the very beginning of the novel (1.1 ἀλλὸς λημῆν, ὡς χειμάζειν μὲν ταῦτη τὰς ὀλκάδας ἐν γαλήνῃ). The calm of the sea appears to be violet-hued, in contrast to the Homeric attribute of “whiteness” assigned to the calm of the sea (Od. 10.94 λευκῆ γαλήνη). Or, if the Homeric λευκῇ means translucent, the depiction of the sea in Achilles Tatius puts together a color (red or purple) intensely associated with brides and weddings and the transparent hue which best defines

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225 See above, at 1.2 (40, n. 61), in the context of Alcinous’ garden, the discussion of unripe grapes as metaphor for παρθένοι.
Leucippe, the protagonist of the novel: invisible and shining at the same time, her παρθενία at once draws and evades vision.\textsuperscript{226}

Europa’s description is significant because it foreshadows the key elements defining the figure of Leucippe. Nonetheless, Clitophon notices other features in her than those that the narrator had noticed about Europa of the painting: similarly to her description as “meadow” in 1.19.1-2, Leucippe’s beauty and entire source of allure is limited to her face.

\begin{quote}
A maiden suddenly appears from my left and her face strikes my eyes. I once saw a picture of Selene like her, riding a bull; her eyes were fierce in a pleasurable way; her hair blond, curly blond; her eyebrows black, a dark black; her face white, the white was turning into rosy towards the middle of the face and was imitating the purple that the Lydian woman uses to dye the ivory; her mouth was a flower of roses, when the rose begins to open the lips of its petals. When I saw her, I was lost.
\end{quote}

The focus on the face as opposed to the emphasis on the body in the description of Europa is a particular characteristic of this novel, whatever its significance may be. Scholars have been puzzled by the reference to Selene on the bull, right after the detailed depiction of Europa on the bull.\textsuperscript{227} After the first dinner after the arrival of Leucippe and her mother at

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{226} Apuleius describes Venus in the dramatic performance of the Judgement of Paris (\textit{Met.} 10.30-32), dressed in a similarly diaphanous, body-clinging garment. While Venus is usually the middle-aged mother of Cupid in Apuleius’ novel, this representation of Venus is uniquely from her maidenhood: \textit{Met.} 10.31 \textit{Super has introcessit alio visendo decrepere praepollens, gratia coloris ambrosei designans Venerem, qualis fuit Venus cum fuit virgo, nudo et intecto corpore perfectam formositatem professa, nisi quod tenui pallio bombycino inumbrabat spectabilem pubem: quam quidem laciniam curiosulam ventus satis amanter nunc lascivians relabat, ut dimota pateret flos aetas pulchra; nunc luxurians aspirabat, ut adhaerens pressule membrorum voluptatem graphice delinearet. Ipse autem color deae diversus in speciem, corpus candidum quod caelo demeat, amictus caerulius quod mari remeat.}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{227} Gaselee 1959: 14 corrects Selene, found in most manuscripts, with Europa, to make the connection to the painting Clitophon was just watching. Cueva (2006) gives a summary of the discussion and argues for the reading Selene. To support Cueva’s and Morales’ (2004: 38-48) arguments, I would add the description of the bull to be sacrificed at Tyre (2.15). This magnificent bull points to a connection to Leucippe and Selene, but he is also apparently the source of the disguise of Zeus in Europa’s story (2.15.4). The shape of his horns is like a crescent,
\end{quote}
Tyre, Clitophon lies sleepless, filled with the image of Leucippe’s face (1.6.1). This focus on the face may be related to the importance of sight as displacement for the sexual act; after all, Clitophon is grateful to his father for seating the girl just under his eyes (1.5.2 μοι κατ’ ὀφθαλμοὺς ἄνέκλινε τὴν παρθένον), gazes at her with all his face (ὅλοις ἐβλεπον τὴν κόρην τοῖς προσώποις), and chooses to walk around the house bent over a little book only to get under Leucippe’s face (1.6.6 κατὰ πρόσωπον τῆς κόρης); according to Clitophon eyes are the means through which the erotic wounds affect a person (1.4.4 ὀφθαλμὸς γὰρ ὀδὸς ἐρωτικὸ τραύματι) in a gloss on Lycaenion’s loving but possibly traumatic “way.” (Longus 3.18-20). If the eyes are analogous to the mouth in their desire to consume, and the mouth is analogous to the sexual organs, what is the relevance of Europa’s emphasized body and Leucippe’s emphasized face?

Let us compare Clitophon’s characterization of Leucippe with that of Melite:

5.13.1-3 ἦν δὲ τῷ ὄντι καλὴ καὶ γάλακτι μὲν ἄν εἶπες αὐτῆς τὸ πρόσωπον κεχρίσθαι, ἱδεῖν δὲ ἐμπλωτεύθησα ταῖς παρειαῖς. ἐμάρμαιρεν αὐτῆς τῷ βλέμμα μαρμαργήν Αφροδίσιον· κόμη πολλή καὶ βαθεῖα καὶ κατάχρυσος τῇ χρωί, ὡστε ἔδοξα σῦκ ἀπὸδος ἰδεῖν τὴν γυναῖκα.

She was truly beautiful and her face – you could have said – was anointed with milk while a rose has grown on her cheeks. Her eyes were sparkling with the twinkles of Aphrodite; her hair was long and thick and golden in its colour, so that I considered the woman not unpleasing to look at.

The two women are remarkably similar, and Clitophon focuses on the same features of the face, with little variation. What is different is the intensity of his reaction when confronted with each woman’s appearance. The reversal of the roles is underscored by the repetition of while their colour is, in an apparent learned riddle, the colour for which the Thracian horses are praised in Homer. If we look up the Homeric reference (Il. 10.435) we find those most beautiful horses described as λευκότεροι χιόνος, “whiter than snow.” If Leucippe is like Selene but also white like a bull that is similar to Selene, and Zeus chooses to take a bull’s form to seduce the maiden Europa, an act either mocked or noted for its extraordinary character at 1.1.13 and 2.37.2, then Clitophon’s mimicking Leucippe’s παρθένια suddenly becomes the core constituent of the novel.
the motif of the “feast of the eyes” with Melite this time in the role of the avid gazer, unable to abstain from objectifying Clitophon’s body.

But if the appearances of Melite and Leucippe are so much alike, why does all the desire of the narrative flow towards Leucippe, even in her most desexualized guise, as the beaten, hair-shorn slave Lacaena? Ironically, the carnal relationship to Melite is represented as abstract and philosophical, and the chaste self-denial of Leucippe is depicted as highly concrete. Achilles Tatius’ strategy in Melite’s seduction speech is to interpret literally, but abstractly Lycaenion’s educative definition of human sexual intercourse (Longus 3.17.3 ἄλλα ταῦτα πηδήματα καὶ τὸν ἐκεῖ γλυκύτερα· πρόσεστι γὰρ αὐτοῖς χρόνος μακρότερας ἡδονῆς). Melite experiences another kind of leapings – her hearts’ flutterings (A.T. 5.27.1 ὁρᾶς, πῶς πηδᾷ... γένοιτο δὲ καὶ ἡδονῆς· καὶ ἔσκειν ἱκετεύειν σε τῷ πηδήματι). If the core feature of παρθενία consists in being non-concrete and elusive, Clitophon’s intercourse with Melite shows that even this feature can be simulated; which further leads to an even more evasive and slippery concept of παρθενία.

6.3 Proving virginity

Konstan (1994: 64), Morales (2004) and Whitmarsh (2012) have highlighted the importance of vision in Achilles Tatius’ novel. More often than not, vision is invasive, intrusive, and consumptive, an anticipation of rape. Even when it is mediated through hearing, as in the case of Callisthenes and Thersander, who both become irresistibly attracted to Leucippe just by hearing what other people say about her beauty, merely imagining beauty leads them both to commit violent acts to quench their sudden, unexplainable desire. But if we read deeper into the narrative we will find that, for all its violent nature, sight is ineffective.
In this context, the above stated fact that there are no discernible physical differences between Leucippe and Melite serves the argument. In line with the other Greek novels, most male characters fall desperately and uncontrollably in love with Leucippe, but less so with Melite. This might simply follow an old literary trope in Greek literature about the attractiveness of maidens as opposed to married women (e.g. Theocr. 12.5 ὡσσον παρθενικὴ προφέρει τριγάμοιο γυναικός), but because the novels are interested in almost conceptually defining the nature of παρθενία, the difficulty in determining what distinguishes Leucippe from Melite serves to indicate that there is no clear mark of virginity.

Nothing could be more appropriate for such a theme than the trials set up by Achilles Tatius. For the first time in Greek literature, an author has the strange idea that παρθενία can be established through proof and social consensus. This happens within a more credible trial, the trial of Clitophon, thrown into prison by Thersander and charged first with μοιχεία with Thersander’s wife and secondly with murdering Leucippe. All the five Greek novels and Petronius and Apuleius have at least one trial in them, but the trials of virginity and chastity for Leucippe and Melite are original; there is nothing comparable in previous Greek literature. The ordeals themselves, although supernatural, ultimately obey the same technicalities as the formal trials, as Melite’s ingenious escape shows. Schwartz (2001: 110) concludes her analysis of Clitophon’s trial by stating that

“Leucippe’s virginity test is a red herring: it is the ordeal of Melite that represents the final resolution of the story. While the reader has little doubt that Leucippe is a virgin, Melite not only seems like an adulteress, but is in fact one. A legalistic technicality in the wording of the oath not only exonerates Melite, but enables Clitophon the moichos to get away scot-free with his crime and to live happily ever after with his virginal bride – a subtle, yet profound subversion of the genre’s sense of justice.”

While I agree that the ordeals of the two women ultimately serve to qualify or disqualify Clitophon from marriage, the subversion of Melite’s trial undermines Leucippe’s trial as well.
If the river can be deceived by reading literally an oath, perhaps by a trick Leucippe somehow convinced Pan to play the panpipes in the locked cave. The unknowability of Leucippe’s sexual status is a constant theme of the novel. Unlike Chloe, Leucippe appears to be well educated in love-matters; she (subtly but purposefully) suggests that she listens not without interest (1.19.1 ἡ δὲ ὑπεσήμανεν οὐκ ἀμεῦς ἀκοῦειν) to Clitophon and Satyrus’ conversation about the amorous character of the peacock or the mighty desire which unites all creatures, birds, rivers, snakes in matrimony (1.16-18) and even responds by playing the kithara herself, and singing about the rose, which breathes erotic desire and acts as the gift of Aphrodite (2.1.2). The two tease one another with mythological banter (2.6). Overall Leucippe seems to be willing to be seduced by Clitophon’s arguments: she reacts to Clitophon’s advances with moderate caution (2.7-8) and, unlike Chloe, seems to be socially aware of appropriate behavior when she interrupts her kiss twice (2.8.1, 2.10.4-5). The turning point in her openness to Clitophon comes at his failed attempt to infiltrate himself into her chamber at night. It is only as a result of the desperation of her mother that Leucippe becomes aware of the possibility of “damaging” her παρθενία and most importantly of the impossibility of proving it: 2.25.1-3 and 2.28.2 “τί πλέον εἶπο σοι, τίνα δὲ ἄλλην προσαγάγω πίστιν τῆς ἁληθείας μείζονα; εἰ παρθενίας ἐστὶ τις δοκιμασία, δοκίμασον.” (“What else can I tell you, what other bigger proof truth can I bring? If there is a test of virginity, test me”). Her reaction to her mother’s judgment is nonetheless not naïve as Chloe’s, when her mother decides to marry her fast lest she might give away her παρθενία for an apple (Longus 3.25.2): when explaining what happened before Clitophon managed to sneak away, Leucippe justifies her silence by invoking the power of fear which acts as a chain for the tongue. Furthermore, before Clitophon even attempts to suggest eloping, she begs the slave Satyrus to abduct her: 2.30.1 “δέομαι πρὸς θεῶν ξένων καὶ

ἐγχωρίων, ἐξαρπάσατε με τὸν τῆς μητρὸς ὀφθαλμὸν, ὅπη βούλεσθε” (“I implore you, by foreign and our own gods, seize me away out of my mother’s sight, wherever you want”). On top of everything, when Leucippe leaves her home secretly at night, she is led out by the hand again by the suggestively called slave Satyrus (2.31.3 Λευκίππην τοῦ Σατύρου χειραγωγοῦντος) while a carriage is waiting outside with Clinias and two other slaves, outrageously mimicking and parodying the wedding transition, during which the bride and the groom only are riding the chariot.

Achilles Tatius enjoys paradoxes: while making fun of and denying that there is such thing as παρθενία, he nonetheless proclaims it. If Melite’s ordeal questions the validity of any and all tests proving a female sexual state, the myth underlying it upholds the existence of this elusive state. The myth of Syrinx, on the one hand, and the myth of Rhodopis, on the other hand, are not to be opposed to each other, in the same way Leucippe and Melite are not opposites. Why would a test verifying a married woman’s adulterous behavior be based on a myth about virginity loss, unless marriage as institution was not based on preserving virginity? Rhodopis swears an oath to “stay the same” forever, avoid men and the harm brought about by Aphrodite (8.12.2 ὁμοσεν ἀεὶ παραμενεῖν, καὶ τὴν πρὸς ἄνδρας ὀμλίαν φυιεῖν, καὶ τὴν ἐς Ἀφροδίτης ὤριν μὴ παθεῖν). Eros, at the prompting of his mother, sends an arrow to her and makes her fall in love with another chaste youth, Euthynicus, who is also hit by an arrow of Aphrodite. They consume their desire in looking at each other intensely, then, unable to suffer the burning wounds, they belie their oath in a cave (8.12.7 ἐστησαν μὲν τὸ πρῶτον τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐκατέροι, μηδέτερος ἐκκλίναι θέλων ἐπὶ θάτερα· κατὰ μικρὸν δὲ τὰ τραύματα ἀμφοῖν ἐξάπτεται, καὶ αὐτοῦς ὁ Ἕρως ἠλούνει κατὰ τούτο τὸ ἄντρον... καὶ ἐνταῦθα τὸν ὄρκον ψεύδονται). There is a sense of inevitability coming after the oath: the two seem to be doomed to fail in their undertaking; the looking, hurting and eventual lie, which goes back to the
original oath follow one another so tightly that they overlap. Euthynicus’ and Rhodopis’ hybris is simultaneously a crime against chastity and a crime of betraying their professed will. We are only told about the consequence affecting Rhodopis’ fate: Artemis turns her into a spring, with a pun on the verb λύειν, “to melt/ turn into water” and “untie the maidenly girdle” at once (8.12.8 εἰς ὄξωρ λύει τὴν κόρην, ἕνθα τὴν παρθενίαν ἔλυσε). Rhodopis’ fate is similar to that of Syrinx, whose body melts into the reeds (8.6.9 εἰς τοῦς κολάμους λελύσθαι τὴν κόρην), and does not hide beneath the plant, as Pan mistakenly believed when he cut them away.

Losing virginity as a form of lie or betrayal is a common phrase in Achilles Tatius. Thersander famously charges Leucippe with being a false virgin (8.3.3 ψευδόπαρθένου). To take virginity away coincides with lying about it: if during the test of the cave a woman lies about her virginity (8.6.14 ἐὰν δὲ ἡ τὴν παρθενίαν ἐψευσμένη), silence ensues and she disappears into the cave, as proof that her παρθενία had vanished. Both the future bride’s father Sostratus (8.7.3-5) and the future groom Clitophon (8.13.2) are politely doubtful about Leucippe’s exaggerating her virginity, not unlike Thersander was, in more violent terms (6.21.3). Clitophon hides his suspicions under his fear that Pan himself, the lover of maidens (8.13.3 θεὸς ἐστι φιλοπάρθενος), might try to force himself on Leucippe in the cave: thus, the trial of Pan is no different than all the male pursuers of Leucippe throughout her previous adventures. Clitophon’s prayer is thus addressed to Pan, not to deny Leucippe’s virginal status (8.13.4 μὴ ψεύσῃ τὴν παρθένον).

Thus Clitophon’s claims about not only his own, but also Leucippe’s, παρθενία are highly suspicious. According to his own account, he manipulates his story to his future father-in-law with respect not only to his own sexual self-restraint, but also to Leucippe’s behavior (8.5.5 ἔξηρον καὶ τὰ αὐτῆς ἔτι μᾶλλον ἡ τάμα), perhaps also hinting, outside of this narrative

Segal (1984: 86-87) made this observation: “The echoes of the story of Pan and Syrinx in Leucippe’s final test recall the risk of physical violation that have been so prominent in her previous trials.”
layer, at his retelling of Leucippe’s passionate defense of her chastity, nobility and freedom even during her servitude.

The ambiguous treatment of παρθενία, σωφροσύνη or αἰδώς, is present everywhere in the novel. Achilles Tatius’ use of αἰδώς is especially emblematic for his interest in the conflicted interval between body and society. While αἰδώς is sometimes simply respect (1.11.3 for the father), or neutral for Europa’s or Leucippe’s genital area (2.23.5), Achilles Tatius welcomes humorous ambiguities. Clinias, in his role of praeceptor amoris, advises Clitophon to draw near Leucippe in a non-straightforward manner since the boy and the maiden are alike with respect to their αἰδώς (1.10.3); in their inexperienced ways, they believe that αἰδώς is a matter of words (a belief which will be reinforced in Leucippe’s reaction to her mother’s naming out loud an act to which she had been silently acquiescing, at 2.29), as opposed to a real deed, euphemism for sexual intercourse (1.10.4 έὰν δὲ αίτήσης τὸ ἔργον προσελθὼν, ἐκπλήξεις αὐτῆς τὰ ὅτα τῇ φωνῇ, καὶ ἔρωθρᾳ καὶ μισεὶ τὸ ρῆμα). Αἰδώς is placed in the midst of the conflict between sight and hearing, as its source is spoken words, but its appearance is visible (2.29.2). A puzzling passage is 5.12.1, where Clinias and Satyrus attempt to convince Clitophon to marry Melite, by listing the possible advantages to be gained from such a union: τὸ μὲν γὰρ κάλλος ἡδονήν, ὁ δὲ πλοῦτος τρυφήν, ὁ δὲ ἔρως αἰδώ προξενεῖ (“her beauty will bring you pleasure, her wealth prosperity, her sexual desire respect/ or sexual fulfillment”). Later in the story, when Clitophon tells his adventures to Leucippe’s father, he omits the affair with Melite (8.5.3 ἐν μόνον παρῆκα τῶν ἐμαυτοῦ δραμάτων, τὴν μετὰ ταῦτα πρὸς Μελίτην αἰδώ), and yet he “falsifies nothing” (8.5.2 ἐξήρων τὸ πράγμα ἐμαυτοῦ πρὸς τὴν σωφροσύνην μεταποιῶν καὶ οὐδὲν ἐψευδόμην). At the same intersection between social constructions of respectability and sexual behavior comes the statement of the priest of Artemis on Thersander’s respectability: 8.9.2 καὶ τοί γε νέος ὃν συνεγίνετο πολλοῖς αἰδοίοις ἀνδράσι...
If αἰδώς can be turned into its opposite, then the meaning of ὑβρίς can become confused as well: most often the word is used for sexual intercourse viewed as unwanted (8.5.5, 8.12.2, 8.9.), or for physical acts of violence (7.14.3 or 8.1.4, when Clitophon is hit in the face by Thersander. But while Sosthenes claims that Leucippe will interpret as ὑβρίς having sex just one time with Thersander (6.15.2), Melite implores Clitophon for just one-time sex (5.26.2) and claims that the highest ὑβρίς she endured was Clitophon behaving as a woman in her bed (5.25.7 ἀλλὰ, τὸ πάντων ὑβριστικώτατον, σοῦτως ἀνέστης ὡς ἄλλη γυνή). Of course, Melite plays the role of Alcibiades, humiliated by Socrates’ lack of sexual interest when sharing a bed (Symp. 219b-d).

On the other hand, for Leucippe herself the ὑβρίς of the pirates is also non-concrete, it consists in words: they changed her name into Lacaena (6.16.5 ὑβρίς αὕτη ἐστὶ πειρατική· λελήστευμαι καὶ τούνομα).

In this context, it is difficult to read the trial of Leucippe’s παρθενία as non-subversive. Despite being successful, the trial itself is not reliable and perception, visual or aural, is not reality.
6.4 Can there be such thing as men’s παρθενία?

Not coincidentally, Achilles Tatius’ novel is at the same time closer to the parodic tone of the Latin novels, and markedly interested in the limited access to παρθενία for men.230 Even the author’s name can be taken as a reference to the picture of Achilles in disguise mentioned admiringly by Melite to Clitophon after she dresses him up in order to help him evade her house (turned into prison): 6.1.3 ὡς εὐμορφότερος παρὰ πολὺ γέγονας τῇ στολῇ· τοιοῦτον Ἀχιλλέα ποτ’ ἐθεασάμην ἐν γραφῇ. When he sees Melite only left in the room, the guard reacts to the substitution as though to the deer replacing a now gone maiden, identifying Clitophon with Iphigenia (6.2.3 θέαμα... παραδοξότατον, τῆς κατὰ τὴν ἔλαφον ἀντὶ παρθένου παροιμίας). The same sense of unfitting clothes can be detected in Clitophon’s frequent musings over the proper name to be assigned for his maidenly behavior, in his letter to Leucippe (5.20.5 μαθήσῃ τήν σὴν με παρθενίαν μεμιμημένον, εἰ τις ἐστι καὶ ἐν ἀνδράσι παρθενία) or in his narrative to Leucippe’s father (8.5.7). The latter occurrence uses a similar verbal trick as Melite’s oath: Clitophon has acted maidenly to Leucippe so far.

Clitophon’s series of examples of successful, although improbable, marriages in the natural world at 1.18 seems to offer a key to the riddle of the disguised male. In the example of the snakes, the genders of the lovers are portrayed so radically apart that the snakes actually belong to two different species: the male is a snake of the mainland and the female is a half-fish half-snake of the sea or of the island (1.18.3 ὁφις θάλάσσιος, 1.18.5 ὁ μὲν ἡπειρώτης ἐραστής, ἥ δὲ ἐρωμένη νησιώτης). Despite their apparent incompatibility, particularly because the male has a deadly “kiss” (1.18.4 ὅτι θάνατον ἐν τοῖς ὀδοὺσι φέρει), their union is nonetheless possible once the groom “vomits death to the ground” (1.18.6 ἡ δὲ ἐρριμεμένον ἰδὴ

230 On the theme of male παρθενία in the novels, see especially Ormand (2010: 171-176) and Jones (2012: 41-88).
τὸν θάνατον χαμαί); only then does the previously cautious bride come to the mainland and accept her partner’s kisses without fear. Thus, a male needs to let go the part of his masculinity that causes death in his bride, which would be sexual incontinence. In acting as a “misperformer of masculinity,” to use Jones’ words (2012: 261), the man becomes more similar to the bride herself, but through this trick or disguise, marriage and preservation of παρθενία remains possible. While Aphrodite and Artemis remain starkly opposed to one another, as Rhodopis’ myth shows, the cave of the panpipes is the unlikely place of an unlikely agreement between Pan and Artemis (8.6.11 and 8.13.4 ὃ δέσποτα Πάν,... ταῦτας πρὸς τὴν Ἄρτεμιν συνθῆκας ἔχεις).

Callisthenes, involved in the parallel love plot, after he disguises himself as a pirate (and disguises his fellow pirates as women at 2.18.3) only for the sake of love, changes again, putting on an attractive appearance of chastity (8.17.5 κοσμιώτατον καὶ ἐπιεικῆ καὶ σώφρονα). His adherence to Calligone’s παρθενία is affirmed by his willingness to provide the dowry for her, taking over the role of her father. The story of his miraculous conversion (8.17.5 θαυμαστὴ μεταβολή) is narrated by Leucippe’s father, whose gullibility has just been questioned when he was convinced by Leucippe’s oath by Artemis (8.7.5 μὰ τὴν γὰρ Ἄρτεμιν, οὐδέτερος ἡμῶν οὐδὲν ἐψεύσατο) and afterwards by the ordeals of the two women that Clitophon had been chaste. In a sense, Callisthenes’ initial plan, to turn an abduction (ἁρπαγὴ) into a wedding at Byzantium (2.13.3), is accomplished, albeit with a different bride and in a different place, in Tyre. Leucippe’s story is no different: she too transformed her abduction through the miraculous cooptation of her abductor to παρθενία into lawful γάμου, at Byzantium.

Thus, the conspicuous theme of male virginity is important for two reasons: first, merely asking the question (can men have or show παρθενία?) suggests the symbolic, abstract,
non-biologic nature of the concept; secondly, by rejecting such a possibility, \( \pi\alpha\rho\theta\epsilon\nu\iota \) returns to the biological female without marking her body.

**6.5 Conclusion**

So, what is \( \pi\alpha\rho\theta\epsilon\nu\iota \) for Achilles Tatius? Ormand (2010: 162-165) asks the same question, but chooses to answer it in the negative:

“Rather than think of virginity in terms of a ruptured membrane, then, we need to think of it in terms of knowledge: a woman ceases to be a parthenos, fully loses her parthenia when we know that she has had sex … and not before.”

Such an understanding of \( \pi\alpha\rho\theta\epsilon\nu\iota \) goes against the overarching dismissal of perception in Achilles Tatius’ novel. Leucippe claims to be a virgin despite having been abducted by pirates (6.21.3 and ff.) in her passionate confrontation with Thersander, who uses common sense against her claim (φιλοσόφων ἦν τὸ πειρατήριον;). There are conflicting opinions, within the novel, with respect to the chastity of both Leucippe and Melite, and the trials fail to bring absolute certainty. But nevertheless, there is no concrete reality to point to behind \( \pi\alpha\rho\theta\epsilon\nu\iota \); Leucippe identifies it with her freedom (6.22.4 ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ γυμνή, καὶ μόνη, καὶ γυνή, ἐν ὀπλον ἔχω τὴν ἑλευθερίαν) that she is not willing to give away, even when physically forced. Clitophon, in his account to Leucippe’s father, makes a similar assertion at 8.5.5-6: his bride-to-be has been a slave, lost her hair, endured physical violence, but nevertheless succeeded in retaining her virginity, even among pirates (ἐν μέσοις λῃσταῖς ἐμείν \( \pi\alpha\rho\theta\epsilon\nu\iota \)), and as such did not lose her identity, but stayed the same (καὶ ἐμείν, πάτερ, τοιαύτη μέχρι τῆς παρούσης ἡμέρας οἶον αὐτὴν ἐξέπεμψας, ἀπὸ Βυζαντίου).
Not unlike matrimony, *παρθενία* is a conviction, a belief, which is expressed in words and resists dismantling; the more intense the desire to *see* it, the more it fails to truly reach it.

For Melite, the Thessalian women know a magic drug that keeps their men under the illusion that no other woman matters to them:

5.22.2 ἀκούω τὰς Θετταλὰς ύμας ὄν ἐν ἑρασθήτε μαγεύειν οὕτως, ὡστε μὴ πρὸς ἄτεραν ἐτί τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἀποκλίνειν γυναῖκα, πρὸς τὴν μαγεύουσαν οὕτως ἔχειν, ὡς πάντα νομίζειν ἑκείνην αὐτῆ.

I hear that you, Thessalian women, cast such a spell over those whom you desire, that your man does not incline anymore towards another woman, and his feelings for the woman who bewitched him are such that he thinks she is everything for him.

Similarly, the magic that is also elsewhere associated with Leucippe (Morales 2004, Cueva 2006) is not necessarily a φάρμακον (5.22.3) as Melite imagines, but her extraordinary ability to survive the necessary deaths associated with abduction. Among the mirabilia recounted by Chaerephon to illustrate the possibility of union between fire and water (2.14.6-10), are the Libyan maidens, who know something that cannot be contained in words (Ἱσασὶν τὸ ἀπόρρητον) about the treasure stored well below a λίμνη, when they smear a pole with pitch (κοντὸν πεφαρμαγμένον), open the lock of the river (ἀνοίγουσι τὸ ποταμὸ τὰ κλεῖθρα) and seize its “fish”, that is its gold, with this bait, up to the land (εἰς τὴν ἥπειρον ἥρπασε τὴν ἀγραν).

To sum up, the implication is that, while clothing can be removed or changed (as in the case of the prostitute and Leucippe), the inner belief of the παρθένος that she carries a treasure within her, as irrational as it might appear, stands at the core of her *παρθενία*. Clitophon explains the divine nature of female beauty as originating in its incorruptibility (2.37.1 ἐξ οὐκε μᾶλλον εἶναι τὸ τῶν γυναικῶν κάλλος, ὡσον μὴ ταχὺ φθείρεται· ἐγγὺς γὰρ τοῦ θείου τὸ ἄφθαρτον). Achilles Tatius certainly does not mean that women (as opposed to men?) do not grow old; instead, he proclaims that all female beauty (τὸ τῶν γυναικῶν κάλλος) stems from
παρθενία, traditionally defined as ἁφθορος or “incorrupted,”231 the only category that is the object of dispute, but also the means of reconciliation between men and women.

231 See above, the Introduction (1-28).
7 Heliodorus: Charicleia the μισόλεκτρος καὶ ἀνέραστος

7.1 Παρθενία as ἀπορία

Παρθενία, the ambivalent and typically short-lived premarital stage, is protracted in Heliodorus’ novel for the duration of ten books of adventures and seventeen years of story time. The means to preserve that intact body state, the self-restraint, σωφροσύνη, together with its derivatives, shows up in the novel thirty-three times, out of which thirty-one instances refer to sexual restraint in a context of threat.

In contrast, Heliodorus uses the term παρθενία four times only, every time in a setting of debate. The reader first learns about Charicleia’s determination to preserve her virginity and not marry in her own speech reported by Charicles in Calasiris’ account:

2.33.5 ἐπανατείνεται ἐκθειάζουσα παρθενίαν καὶ ἐγγὺς ἀθανάτων ἀποφαίνουσα, ἄχραντον καὶ ἀκήρατον καὶ ἀδιάφθορον.

…the deifying the virgin state that, she declares, is closest to the immortals, and calling it stainless, undefiled, incorruptible.

To Charicles’ disappointment, Charicleia does not let herself be convinced to accept a husband and utters an encomium of virginity which echoes Clitophon’s encomium to women’s beauty in Achilles Tatius (2.37). She divinizes virginity, wants to preserve it for life, and compares it to immortality by stressing its “uncorrupted,” “unmixed” character, ἄχραντον, ἀκήρατον, ἀδιάφθορον. The successive alliterations on ε and α highlight the negative demarcation of virginity, the rejection of “impurity” that she outwardly (ἐπανα-, ἐκ-, ἐγ-,
ἀποφαίνουσα) proclaims and displays. Without mentioning virginity, Clitophon had similarly defined women’s beauty as closest to the divine because ἀδιάφθορον.232

Παρθενία shows up again in Charicleia’s words reported by Calasiris at 4.10.3; after falling in love with Theagenes, she confesses her inner conflict between the overwhelming emotion, inexperienced so far, and the revered name of virginity:

Ὡς ἐμὲ γε λυπεῖ μὲν καὶ ἡ νόσος ἀκμάζουσα, πλέον δὲ τὸ μὴ κρατήσαι τῆς νόσου τὴν ἁρχὴν ἄλλ’ ἔτηθήναι πάθους ἀπειρημένου μὲν ἐμοὶ τὸν πρὸ τούτου πάντα χρόνον λυμαίνομενον δὲ καὶ μέχρις ἁκοῆς τὸ παρθενεῖας ὄνομα σεμνότατον. (4.10.3)

For my acute disease tortures me, and, even more, my inability to control the first onset of the disease, and my surrender to a passion, which so far I have always refused, and which defiles, even by its mere mention, the honoured name of virginity.

The threat hovering over virginity belongs again to the imagery of staining, λυμαίνεσθαι, also perhaps alluding to the frequent imagery of dissolution (λύειν) of virginity. Instead of the dangerous word ἔρως Charicleia uses a circumlocution with a negative epithet (πάθος ἀπειρημένον, a feeling ambivalently described as inexperienced or refused, a verbal adjective derived either from πειράω or from ἀπολέγω), since the mere uttering of the forbidden word might taint by its proximity the other word that she cherishes most. The use of aposiopesis illustrates Charicleia’s characteristic inhibition and hesitancy over words, present in her speech throughout the novel. Calasiris picks up in his response ἀπείρατος, a term exclusively used in the Aethiopica to designate lack of experience in love,233 which he

232 See the discussion of “corruption” and the ways in which female beauty is described as ἀδιάφθορον, in chapter 6, on Achilles Tatius (174-201). For the philosophical implications of the term, see Kruck (2011).

233 In 3.17.4 Theagenes confesses his unexpected love to Calasiris, recalling at the same time his previous decision to keep himself inexperienced with women: ὡμίλιας γάρ ἐπὶ γυναικός εἶναι διετείνετο πολλά διομνύμενος. Similarly, in 10.9.4 Theagenes describes himself as ἀπείρατος τῶν τῆς Ἀφροδίτης. More specifically, when rejecting Arsace’s sexual advances, he calls himself inexperienced in Charicleia: μὲ τὸν Χαρυκλείας ἀπείρατον (7.25.7). In 1.19.4, when trying to convince his fellow robbers to give the prisoner Charicleia to him for marriage, Thyamis presents himself in a positive light, as a γυναικὸν ὄβρεως ἀπείρατος (“inexperienced in raping women”). Charicleia is described as ἀπείρατος twice, by Theagenes in 2.4.3: νύμφην; ἄλλ’ ἀνόμωφεντος· γαμετήν; ἄλλ’ ἀπείρατος, and by Hydaspes in 10.33.2: γάμου καὶ ἀνδρὸς ὡμίλιας ἀπείρατον τὴν κόρην ἢ ἐσχάρα διδόειξε.
considers to be the happiest choice (εὔδαιμον), and suggests the solution of abstinence until marriage (πρὸς τὸ σῶφρον) for the girl’s mental struggle.

Σωφρονεῖν is thus described as the set of behaviors that promotes and maintains bodily sexual integrity, anchored in the moment and committed to resisting the concrete manifestation of sexual desire.

Less than a value to be treasured, σωφροσύνη is in the Aethiopica predominantly a specific women’s behavior, intimately linked with a noble birth. Thyamis guesses from Charicleia’s chaste soul that she is of noble birth in 1.20.2, and Calasiris is upset about her inappropriately sad reaction at her girlfriend’s wedding in 6.9.3, invoking her previous nobility and self-control in facing adversities: οὐδὲ σε γνωρίζω τὸ παρόν, ἀεὶ γενναίαν καὶ σῶφρονα τύχας ἐνεγκεῖν τὸ πρόσθεν ἐγνωκός.

Euphrates, the eunuch in the satrap’s court, asks his servant Bagoas to treat the prisoners Charicleia and Theagenes with consideration as they seem to be both of noble birth and chaste, in 8.13.2 (τἄλλα δὲ, ὡς ἔοικεν, εὖ γεγονότας καὶ ὡς ἡ πεῖρα μοι καὶ τὰ ἔργα παρέστησε τὰ πάντα σῶφρονας); his experience as eunuch (being in charge of Oroondates’ women’s fecundity) is invoked to certify the chaste and noble birth appearance of the two heroes.

But most significantly, Charicleia’s mother exposed her infant daughter with certain tokens of recognition, among which there is a letter that links her noble birth to the responsibility of preserving chastity (4.8.7):

ὅπως εἰ περιγένοιο μεμνήση τῆς εὐγενείας τιμῶσα σωφροσύνην, ἢ δὴ μόνῃ γυναικείαν ἀρετὴν χαρακτηρίζει.

If you should survive, remember your noble origin; honor chastity, which is the only characteristic of a woman’s virtue.
Preserving sexual restraint is thus connected to Charicleia’s own legitimate conception: she is bound to prove her legitimate birth through her actions, contrary to her apparent different complexion. Her chastity is seen as an act of memory (μεμνήση) or a manifest expression of her identity, which she had assumed even before being aware of who she was. At the same time an embodiment of the narrative of her unusual birth, Charicleia is also the source out of which the narrative threads of the novel unfold.

In contrast to her, Arsace is described as being of noble birth and nevertheless acting inconsistently with her origin: ἐξ εὐγενείας ὑπέροχος... ἄλλως δὲ τὸν βίον ἐπίμοιος καὶ ἠδονής παρανόμου καὶ ἀκρατοῦς ἐλάττων. (7.2.1)

Σωφροσύνη is also the expected response to an unchaste offer. Both Dēmaenete and Arsace look at, respectively, Cnemon and Thyamis with lascivious eyes:

τὸ βλέμμα τοῦ σώφρονος ἐξιστάμενον (1.9.3)
Her look was overpassing the boundary of chastity.

ὁφθαλμοὺς τε ἐπέβαλλεν οὐ σώφρονας καὶ νεύματα τῶν αἰσχροτέρων αἰνίγματα. (7.2.2)
She was casting immodest eyes [at him] and noddings, signs of shameful things.

Neither Cnemon nor Thyamis is able to comprehend this sexual message initially; in Thyamis’ case, his natural but also cultivated σωφροσύνη prevents him from reading Arsace’s revealing body language:

Καὶ τὰῦτα ὅ μὲν Θύαμις οὐδὲ κατὰ μικρὸν προσίετο, φύσει τε καὶ ἐκ παιδῶν εὖ περικώς τὰ εἰς σωφροσύνην (7.2.3)

And Thyamis responded to these advances not in the slightest, as he was well predisposed towards sexual restraint through his nature, since he has been a child.

As on other occasions, chaste behavior creates misunderstanding and obstructs communication. Σωφροσύνη is also the expected response to ὠβρίς, sexual violence. If
σωφροσύνη is closely related to one’s identity and needs narratives to sustain that identity, rape is meant to alienate the subject from herself, and definitively break the narrative through death. During Charicleia’s false death in the pirates’ cave, Theagenes mourns over the corpse and interprets her death as the result of her persistence in sexual resistance (2.4.2: δῆλον μὲν ὡς σωφροσύνης ἀντεχομένη). Charicleia herself fantasizes about an ideal, pure death through hanging, as an evasion from male destructive desire, in which her identity will be enduring and will even provide a narrative for her grave:

Εἰ μὲν εἰς θάνατον ἄνόβριστον, ἦδο τὸ τέλος, ... ἐγὼ μὲν ἄγχόνη προλήψομαι τὴν ὑβρίν, καθαρὰν ἐμαυτὴν ἄσπερ φυλάττω καὶ μέχρι θανάτου φυλάξασα καὶ καλὸν ἐντάφιον τὴν σωφροσύνην ἀπενεγκαμένη. (1.8.3)

If I approach a death without sexual violence, sweet will be my end...I will anticipate sexual violence through a noose, having preserved my purity then, as I preserve it now, unto death, and taking with me my chastity as a noble obituary.

The corpse of the woman, as with Leucippe’s in Achilles Tatius’ novel, is not beautified, but rather seen as a display of relief from male adulterating desire, a portrayal of unique and true otherness, beyond any kind of instrumentality.

On another occasion, Charicleia reaffirms her obstinate refusal to change her mind even in the face of violence (1.25.4), but admits her initial sense of vulnerability upon her first encounter with Theagenes. Their love is oxymoronically named σωφρονοῦν ἔρως (4.18.2), a tensioned juxtaposition of words, similar to the fatherly sexual attraction that the people of Meroe feel for their king Hydaspes:

10.3.3 ἄνδρὸς δι’εὔνομίαν τε ἁμα καὶ τὸ πρὸς τοὺς υπηκόους ὠλεὼν τε καὶ ἴμερον πατρικόν τινα ἔρωτα τοῖς δήμοις ἐνστάξαντος.

...[Hydaspes], a man who by his uprightness, as well as his cordial leniency towards his subjects, had inspired into his people a sort of fatherly love.

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234 Achilles Tatius 3.15.
Heliodorus uses two other comparable phrases, which put together the two opposing driving forces ἐρως and σωφροσύνη, first in Cnemon’s ironical denunciation of his adulterous stepmother, when he breaks into her chamber at night:

Ποῦ ποτε ὁ ἀλληρίτως ὁ λαμπρὸς τῆς πάντα σωφροσύνης ἐρώμενος; (1.12.2)

Where is the illustrious guilty one, in love with this personified chastity?

Secondly, in an ironical phrase about the other Phaedra of the novel, Arsace, Charicleia makes a pun, hinting at the lack of concordance between her name and character: τὴν πάντα ἁρίστην Ἀρσάκην (7.21.1).

While building his novel on this creative dialectic between desire and its unceasingly receding object, Heliodorus emphasizes the concealed, disconcerting nature of the heroine, but at the same time the unpredictability of the plot as perceived by its internal listeners or by the intended reader. One way of representing this progress into the unknown is the widespread use of negative terms.

Heliodorus generally shows a strong preference for negative epithets: nevertheless, most often these epithets surround Charicleia. Her very first appearance, at 1.2.1, focalized through the eyes of the robbers, illustrates this negative characterization well:

θέαμα προσπίπτει τῶν προτέρων ἀπορώτερον· κόρη καθήστο ἐπὶ πέτρας, ἁμήχανον τι κάλλος καὶ θεός εἶναι ἀναπέιθουσα.

A sight more incomprehensible than the previous ones strikes them: a young girl was seated on a rock, such an unconceivable beauty that she appeared to be a goddess.

The robbers do not know who she is, and neither does the reader. The phonetic play on the syllable πο/πόρ increases the state of aporia experienced by the viewers, a loss of

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235 As we will see, virginity is seen as a kind of ἀπόρημα (3.9.1); thus, Charicleia’s virginal status is identified with her viewers’ experience of her; in both ἀπορία and παρθένος there is perhaps a word play on the root of por-/per-/pér, piercing, penetrating, crossing, expanding the frequent reference to experience in love.
understanding which lingers over the very next word, κόρη, and is further endorsed by the epithet ἀμήχανον (“hard to deal with, hard to understand”).

Her beauty is described as ἀψευδες (2.2.3), ἀφραστον (5.11.1) ἀθίκτον (10.9.4). Language cannot encompass her: οὐς εἶναι τοῦ κύλλους ὑπερβολήν οὐδὲ αὐτῷ δυνατόν εἶναι τῷ λόγῳ φράζειν (5.10.2). Charicles bitterly calls her ἡ μισόλεκτος καὶ ἀνέραστος (3.9.1). Charicleia’s negative demarcation suggests an absence, an incomprehensible lack, perplexing precisely because of its virtually unlimited power to generate narrative and text. This absence culminates in invisibility: in the fifth book of the novel, we find out that the origin of the sea-shore scene battle that opens the first book is Charicleia herself. During the battle, she stands in the dark, on the boat, and sends her arrows bringing death and without being seen: οὐχ ὑπερβολὴν (5.32.4). The fighters themselves are at a loss, suspecting a god that has been causing these wounds:

Τῶν δὲ ἀγνοούντων τὸ κακὸν καὶ δαμονίους εἶναι τὰς πληγὰς ἐνίων ὑπονοούντων. (5.32.4)

While they did not know where the evil came from and some thought that the wounds were inflicted by daemons…

Charicleia’s bodily invisibility is thus an essential part of Heliodorus’ narrative strategy of partial cognition, discussed by Winkler (1982: 137 ff.), Morgan (1994a) and Hunter (1998: 40-59). There are other moments in the novel when she hides in the dark: in the robbers’ secret, intricate cavern (1.29), and in Nausicles’ house, when Cnemon, wandering at night through the unknown chambers (κατ’ οἰκίαν ἀγνοοστον ἀλόντα 5.2.5), stops at a door to listen to Charicleia’s lament (ἥσθετο γυναικὸς λαθραίον τι καὶ γοερόν): just by hearing her voice and without seeing her, Cnemon mistakes Charicleia for Thisbe for the second time.

Heliodorus thus presents virginity as a problem which needs to be solved, a code which waits to be deciphered or merely negatively, as an expression of a failure to encompass, or
delineate Charicleia in her virginity. The narrator and reader have to content themselves with approximation and provisional language.

Charicleia is also seen as a riddle-to-be-deciphered, ἀπόρημα, when Calasiris gives the diagnosis of βάσκανος to her sudden and mysterious illness. However, Calasiris’ answer is ambiguous: although well aware of Charicleia’s love sickness, he chooses to describe the disease, ἔρως, not untruthfully as a contagious disease spreadable through the air and affecting the sight. If Charicles had had the ability to read through Calasiris’ words, he would also have found the answer (and solution) to his major problem regarding Charicleia and for which he had solicited Calasiris’ help: her obstinate persistence in virginity. Charicles, who doesn’t interpret the answer as ἔρως, but as βάσκανος, is relieved at finding a diagnosis, and praises Calasiris for finding the solution to the problem (3.9.1 τὸ ἀπόρημα διέλυσας). But the verb λύειν and its compounds (especially διαλύειν) are used in Greek, in combination with παρθενία, to signify the dissolution of virginity, from the frequent metaphor of unloosing the girdle, λύειν ζώνην. Before Heliodorus, Achilles Tatius punned on the literal and metaphorical meaning of the word, when Rhodopis lost her virginity and melted into a spring in 8.12.8: εἰς ὃδωρ λύει τὴν κόρην, ἐνθα τὴν παρθενίαν ἔλυσε.

Indeed, Charicles naively wants a love charm to magically fix Charicleia’s virginity oath and her presumed βασκανία (3. 18-19). Instead of magic, what makes Charicleia reconsider her oath is her first meeting with Theagenes, which, in Platonic terms, awakens her reminiscence:

ἐπὶ πολὺ κατ’ ἀλλήλων πήξαντες ὦσπερ εἰ που γνωρίζοντες ἣ ἱδόντες πρότερον ταῖς μνήμαις ἀναπεμπάζοντες. (3.5.4)

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236 Dickie (1991) discusses Helidorus’ intentional incongruity in altering his source on the evil eye (Plut. Mor. 680C-683B) in order to portray Calasiris as master of manipulation: he will indeed determine both Charicles and the narrative to allow the couple to escape, under his protection, and travel back to Ethiopia.

237 Charicles asks Calasiris for healing, ἱασίς, but at the same time a way to induce desire for men and marriage, ἔφεσιν τίνα γάμων καὶ ἀνδρὸν ἐμποίησα (3.18-19).
…with eyes fixed on each other, as if they were recognising or seeing something that they were bringing back to memory from before.

This atypical scene of anagnorisis, in which the characters had not seen each other before, is actually a moment of anamnesis, which puts the heroine in touch with a so far unknown, buried desire, and which triggers her ensuing decision to learn about her origin and her identity, and understand herself.

On the other hand, the lack of sexual restraint repeatedly results in loss of social identity and exclusion from community for men and death for women: Cnemon, although unjustly accused of incest and adultery with his stepmother, nevertheless has to suffer the stigma of exile. His father Aristippus, once he finds about Demaenete’s lascivious behavior, exiles himself:

Εἰς ἄγρόν τινα καὶ ἐσχατιάν ἑαυτὸν ἀπόψισε (1.14.5)

He exiled himself to the countryside, to a far-away place.

Demaenete, however, who finds herself unable to mislead anymore, once her trick has been revealed, becomes unable to survive and has to commit suicide. But the wise Calasiris himself is also the expatriate victim of concupiscence; according to his own account, he left Memphis when he realized he was tempted by the seducing Rhodopis (2.25.4 φυγῇ κολάζω τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν, “I punish my lust with exile”).

In Charicles’ case, the origin of his leaving is not explicitly adultery but certain fateful family events (δυσπραξία τῶν κατὰ τὴν οἰκίαν), first the loss of his daughter, killed by fire on her wedding bed and consequently the loss of his grieving wife (2.29.4).

Καθ’ ἣν νύκτα συγκατεκλίθη τῷ γῆμαντι, κατ’ αὐτὴν ἡ δυστυχίης ἐτελεύτα, σκηπτοῦ τινος ἡ χειροποιήτου πυρὸς τοῖς θαλάμοις ἐμπεσόντος.
On the very night when she went to bed with her groom the unfortunate died, as a thunderbolt or man-made fire struck the conjugal chamber.

Charicles’ daughter’s death by nuptial fire evokes again the destructive character of male sexual desire; in this context Charicles’ ardent wish for Charicleia’s marriage appears to be a perplexing act of forgetfulness and recklessness. This naiveté matches his subsequent ignorance about Charicleia’s lovesickness. His exile is thus, similarly to that of the other men in the novel, still caused by a mysterious anomalous erotic event of a female family member.

But unlike the other women in the novel, Charicleia suffers exile, not death; her wanderings are nevertheless justified in order to protect Persinna’s life against the expected accusation of adultery at the disclosure of her different, impossible to conceal, white skin. Her exile as an infant and young girl brings about a slightly different kind of identity loss than in the case of adult males who suffer expatriation; without a father to accept and define her, she becomes anonymous and unknown not only to others, but also to her own self. Her virginity is a refusal of growth determined by her lack of knowledge of a model of life to be followed.

Charicles entreats Calasiris to convince her, either by words or actions, to acknowledge her womanhood and submit to a husband, but Calasiris knows better that acceptance of self comes through self-discovery and regression into that unknown past which Charicles does not even consider:

Πείσον ἡ λόγοις ἡ ἔργοις γνωρίσαι τὴν ἐαυτῆς φύσιν καὶ ὅτι γυνὴ γέγονεν εἰδέναι.

(2.33.4)

Persuade her, whether by words or by works, to know her own nature and to be aware that she is a woman.

To return to the association between exile, adultery, identity loss and the process of self-recovery through narrative, all these themes are to be found in Heliodorus’ version of Homer’s name, origin and biography. According to Calasiris (3.14) and echoing Charicleia’s story, Homer was an Egyptian from Thebes who was sent into exile by his father on account of
being a bastard (νόθος), a result of a strange union (ἀνόμοιος μίξις) between his mother and Hermes; the proof and mark (σύμβολον) of his anomalous generation was his overly hairy thigh. This unusual physical characteristic (corresponding to Charicleia’s white complexion) marked his name and identity and, through his geographical displacement, condemned him to a continuous feeling of inadequacy and shamefulness (φυγὰς εἶναι καταιδούμενος): on account of this humiliation, Homer decided to conceal his name and Egyptian identity, in his nevertheless abundant poetry, a result of his wanderings amid various Greek cities (παρ’ Ἕλλησιν ἄλητεύων καὶ τὴν ποίησιν ἄδων), an act of silence which brought universality to his song:

η καὶ τοῦτο σοφία κατεργάζομενος κάκ τοῦ τήν οὖσαν ἀποκρύπτειν πᾶσαν ἑαυτῷ πόλιν μυστήριον. (3.14.4)

Or, by devising this through strategy, and by concealing his real city, he was wooing all cities to be his own.

Expatriation and identity loss occasion thus the positive outcome of a successful transgression of ethnic borders or of a fortunate act of translation: all the Greek cities “recognize” themselves in Homer’s poetry and claim to be his unknown birth place. Anonymity paradoxically brings about recognition (granting that it is a “false” one) and fame (granting that it is ascribed to an impostor).

If a virginal state is preserved through a corresponding self-protective conduct, the emotion that reflects παρθενία and sustains σωφροσύνη is αἰδώς, the inhibitory feeling of shame. Heliodorus uses αἰδώς mostly with reference to sexual propriety. As an inhibitory emotion, through αἰδώς the subject acknowledges sexual desire and anticipates its possible fulfillment. Always prospective, the emotion of shame parallels and fuels the unfolding of the narrative which strives towards full revelation of meaning: if the appropriate conduct preserves the state of being hidden, latent, unvoiced, typical of the maiden, αἰδώς acknowledges in a
contradictory way a not-yet-channeled sexual drive; αἰδώς cannot be hidden, not even by the black complexion of Meroebus, when announced by Hydaspes about his arranged marriage to Charicleia:

Ὁ δὴ Μερόηβος πρὸς τὴν ἀκοὴν τῆς νύμφης ὑψηλῆς τε ἁμα καὶ αἰδοὺς οὐδὲ ἐν μελαίνῃ τῇ χροϊᾷ διέλαθε φοινιχθεῖς. (10.24.2)

Meroebus, hearing about the bride, turned red both by pleasure and by modesty, and not even his black complexion could hide it.

The emotion of αἰδώς is thus felt inside one’s body and displayed in characteristic body language, such as blushing (3.5.6; 10.18.3), lowering the eyes (1.20.2), keeping silence (3.14.4, about Homer; 10.22.1, about Charicleia, who does not keep silence appropriately to her maidenly modesty). Interestingly enough, this red color of the blush is the single color in the Aethiopica beside white and black238 colors that carry special significance for the plot. The other red hue besides human complexion as expression of embarrassment is the color of precious stones, particularly the amethyst, which will be discussed later, as metaphor for Charicleia’s virginity.

The three main relationships that involve a feeling of αἰδώς from one or both sides are the relationships between lovers, parents and children, and the subjects and their king; the one who is more inclined to feel αἰδώς is the more vulnerable one, the person who is expected to grow and possibly threaten the other’s identity. They all involve the frightening prospect of crossing societal boundaries. Charicleia and Theagenes both feel αἰδώς right after they fall in love:

 שלך καταδεσθέντες τὸ γεγονὸς ἐπιφράσαν καὶ αὕθες ὑχρίσαν... ἀπλῶς μυρίον εἰδοὺς ἐν ὀλίγῳ τῷ χρόνῳ... καὶ μεταβολὴ παντοῖα χροιᾶς. (3.5.6)

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238 On colors in the Aethiopica, see Dowden (2005), Morgan (2005). Bowie (1998) discusses the red hue in Heliodorus’ novel in the context of the ἐπιφάνεια imagery and demonstrates that the crimson red is associated explicitly with Theagenes and subtly, but consistently with the author (a Phoenician, 10.41.3); complementarily, the lamp and the connected imagery of elucidation is explicitly connected with the overly shining Charicleia and implicitly with the novel itself (Bowie 1998:18).
As though ashamed by what happened, they blushed and turned pale again… to put it simply, a thousand expressions came and went in a short time… and all sorts of changes of skin colour.

The process of falling in love is thus unconscious, and the complex emotion of αἰδώς brings about the awareness of a pleasant past event (τὸ γεγονός), which produced an irreversible internal change, together with the conflicting self-censure and anticipation of public blame.

Heliodorus’ insistence on the double nature of αἰδώς, source of both pleasure and displeasure, both social acceptance and social rejection, both appreciation of the other and fear of the other, reflects the ambivalent, transitional character of virginity, the dissolving of the pre-marital state into the marital one, the letting go of one’s identity before forming a new one to replace it. Moving to a new sexual state or to a new cultural environment involves the same anxiety-driven step into unknown territory.

As has been shown by Anderson\textsuperscript{239} shame is associated with increased body language and decreased spoken language, an almost painfully self-imposed silence, a lack of agency in expressing oneself, and a giving of oneself to somebody else to be interpreted. The danger of a possible wrong interpretation is always there, and hence the fear inherent in αἰδώς.

But if we look at αἰδώς from a semiotic perspective, as the accompanying emotion of virginity, αἰδώς can be defined as fear of transparency, and also fear of contamination: in semiotic terms, virginity is a closed sign, a sign whose signified fails to be revealed. Αἰδώς is the fear of being misread, the awareness of a possibly inadequate interpretation, and the ambiguous anticipation of either self-revelation, or alienation: it belongs to the passive and objectified that awaits to be known and revealed by another, as (s)he can’t know herself/himself on her/his own.

\textsuperscript{239} Anderson (2009) 20-22.
7.2 *The mise en abyme in Calasiris’ embedded narratives*

The crucial strategy of the use of the theme of virginity is evident in the series of embedded narratives which begin at *Aethiopica* 2.21.2. The primary narrator, who will only disclose his name at the very end of the novel as Heliodorus, tells us how Cnemon meets Calasiris who tells him how he met Charicles, who told him about how he had met an Ethiopian messenger (later revealed to be Sisimithres) who had told Charicles an incomplete story about a little girl whom he had brought with him from Ethiopia. We can represent this five-level succession of narratives by the following graph:

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                  Primary narrator (to the reader)
                     /                        /
                    /                          /
                   /                            /
                  Calasiris (to Cnemon)         Charicles (to Calasiris)
                                     /                        /
                                   /                          /
                                  /                            /
                                 The Ethiopian messenger (to Charicles)
                                                   /                        /
                                                      /                          /
                                                          /                            /
                                                              Charicleia
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In narratology, this arrangement of the story is called a Chinese-box structure (another equivalent image being the Russian nesting doll): a larger narrative contains a smaller narrative which contains another one even smaller, and the sequence can supposedly be extended *ad infinitum*. All these different layers are not identical, as in a Russian doll, but
similar to one another: in Heliodorus’ Chinese box structure, all the layers involve a meeting between a narrator and a narratee, both male and father figures, the first of which will try to “entrust” his personal story about Charicleia to the other. At the core of this multilayered narrative lies the heroine’s elusive, impossible to be possessed, virginal body.

Charicleia is represented as the ideal “contained” object: she has no name and is unable to communicate, as she does not speak Greek, but trusts Charicles and gives herself into his care without resistance. In a paradoxical way, all her “containers” are male narrators and father figures who fail to achieve contiguity with their “daughter.”

This series of embedded narratives is carefully and gradually layered in terms of knowledge about Charicleia: Calasiris knows less than Charicles, Charicles knows less than the Ethiopian messenger, who does not have the chance to finish his story. At the extremes of this three-layered pyramid of narratives we have the all-knowing narrator, on the one hand, and, on the other, the yet-to-be-revealed object of narration, Charicleia. They are both anonymous at this point: Charicleia, the unknown nameless girl, receives her name from her first Greek “reader,” her “father” Charicles, in his attempt to appropriate her, as she is his “gift.”

In the narrative encounter between the Greek Charicles and the Ethiopian messenger, who remains so far anonymous, Charicleia is at the same time the message and the feminine body entrusted. The encounter between the Ethiopian messenger and Charicles is unsatisfying: not only does the Ethiopian barely speak Greek, but he is also in a rush, as he is only temporarily in Egypt, on a special mission. This is not the time for a convoluted story. The messenger has Charicleia and wants to entrust her to Charicles; however, instead of plainly delivering his intention, the Ethiopian chooses to entice Charicles with the promise of a

personal message (τι βούλεσθαι ἰδίᾳ φράζειν) only to be conveyed into a temple: once they arrive there he however seems to change his mind and offers Charicles the opportunity to buy something genuine (ἀκραιφνη... καὶ δόλου παντός ἐκτός) like the plants and roots Charicles was interested in. But when Charicles agrees, he is again presented with something else instead: a purse full of marvelous precious stones (βαλαντίδιον... λίθων πολυτίμων). At this step of the climax, Charicles wants to move back, as he feels overwhelmed and unable to buy any of those stones. But to his surprise, the messenger offers them as gifts (δῶρον). Nonetheless, the accumulation of promises does not end here: hidden at the height (or bottom) of this climax is the final gift, more precious than all the others, an irresistibly and overpoweringly beautiful young girl (κόρην ἀμήχανόν τι καὶ δαιμόνιον κάλλος).

In semiotic terms, this process of continuous substitution, from a promised verbal secret, to some exotic plants, precious stones, and finally to a virginal body resembles Eco’s infinite regression or unlimited semiosis241: a signifier stands for a signified, but this signified becomes a signifier for another signified. This series of substitutions, while presumably slippery and elusive to the interpreter, is not deceptive: the signifiers do not contradict one another, but gradually reveal more information about the succeeding “meaning.” The shared imagery evoked by the secret message to be delivered in a temple, by the genuine roots, the precious stones, and Charicleia’s virginal body, underscores rarity, exquisiteness, and profundity. The herbs are called genuine, ἀκραιφνη: this epithet is elsewhere used in the novel for Charicleia (3.4.1) and for the amethyst given to Nausicles instead of Charicleia in 5.13.4. Each of these elements can stand for the next one through metaphor or metonymy and, by enticing anticipations, they coerce Charicles into becoming an interpreter of signs.

241 Eco (1979: 188-198).
Furthermore, the messenger explains how he decided to take the girl out of Ethiopia to Egypt in order to seek another parent for her: although isolated in a farm, far from the dangers of the city, among shepherds who were not allowed to talk about her to anyone, the girl’s beauty was overtly shining: τὸ κάλλος δ’οὐδ’ ἄν ὑπὸ γῆν κρυπτόμενον ἔλαθεν ἄλλα μοι δοκεῖ κἂν ἐκεῖθεν διεκλάμψαι (2.31.3). Hence, the danger of being disclosed (δείσας μὴ φωτισθείη) lies in the girl’s very beauty; the image of the underground which cannot hide her radiant body recalls the image of the precious stones. In a conflicted way, the girl’s body attracts interpretation and refuses it, under the menace of death (ἀπόλοιπο μὲν αὐτῆ), it longs for clarification and resists being deciphered.

The desire to tell the complete story, to exhaust it is at the same time a wish to escape the narrative, to end it. By unraveling the successive accounts about Charicleia, the narrator attempts to grasp her final “meaning,” reveal her birth story and identity; but this attempt is frustrated by the disappearance of the Ethiopian messenger, the one who promised to deliver the explanatory exegesis the next day. He left the city under the threat of death: θάνατον αὐτὸ τοῦ σατράπου διαπειλήσαντος (2.32.2). Thus, revealing Charicleia is a dangerous act itself: from here, there is no way out, and the only thing to do is to move back and start on another direction. Charicles doesn’t find the messenger and returns (ὑπέστρεφον) to the only thing he has: Charicleia’s body, a signifier without a signified. And in a similar vein to the Arabian Nights, the death threat creates narrative, and constructs text. The return takes longer (from 2.32.3 up to the end of Calasiris’ narrative in 5.33.3) and is even more prolonged by the narratee’s (that is, Cnemon’s) desire to listen to all the details of the story.

Heliodorus (to the reader)

The intermediary narrators gradually withdraw (Sisimithres, willingly, Charicles, unwillingly) until Calasiris himself entrusts the narrative back to the primary narrator and subsequently dies. The narrative thread returns to the tension between the hidden, so far unknown to us, author of the narration and its ultimate object, the equally hidden Charicleia.

7.3 Precious stones as metaphors for Charicleia’s παρθενία

In comparison with the other ancient novels, Heliodorus’ Aethiopica displays an outstanding interest in precious stones, which has been noticed by scholarship. Since gems are most often offered as substitutes or promises for Charicleia and/or Theagenes, I will explore their function as metaphors for Charicleia’s virginal body, and, thus, carrying literary significance.

243 Pulquério Futre (1981-1982) offers a detailed stylistic analysis of the ecphrasis of Nausicles’ stone, while Debray-Genette (1980) is more interested in larger theoretical issues surrounding descriptions. Dubel (1990) was not accessible to me at the time of writing this dissertation. Bowie (1995: 279-280) thoroughly discusses the pastoral significance of this description, but without connecting it to the other gems in the novel. Bartsch (1989: 123, 149) also briefly mentions it, while Hardie (1998: 28-29) discusses the “ekphrastic surrogacy” of Nausicles’ amethyst and connects it with other significant artworks in the novel (the description of Charicleia’s exquisite chestband at 3.4.1-5).
When Calasiris delusively advises Charicles to give Charicleia exquisite jewelry to win her over and make her agree to marriage, he uses a rationalization Charicles swiftly buys into:

\[ \text{ἀπαραίτητον ἔχει πρὸς γυναῖκα Ίυγγα χρυσὸς καὶ λίθος. (4.15.2)} \]

Irresistible is the allure of gold or gems to a woman.

Nevertheless, it is conspicuously ironical that only men are lured into admiration of precious stones throughout the novel: not only is Charicles enticed by Sisimithres’ promise of precious stones in 2.30.3, Nausicles lured by Calasiris’ gift of an amethyst ring in 5.15.1, and Theagenes flattered by Arsace’s gift of golden necklaces with jewels in 7.27.1, but an entire war – between Egyptians and Ethiopians – is stirred on account of the emerald mines. Even more, Calasiris’ deceptive sententia might allude to the male author of the novel – Heliodorus himself – who writes his novel about a war over emerald mines.

In Sisimithres’ series of promises to Charicles, as we have seen, the gems were used as substitutes for the seven-year old Charicleia. Moreover, Sisimithres travelled to Egypt for two reasons: to entrust Charicleia to another “father” and to deliver the official message to the satrap not to exploit the emerald mines anymore, which legitimately belong to the Ethiopians:

\[ \text{ἐπέταττεν ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν σμαραγδείων μετάλλων ὡς Αἰθιοπία προσηκόντων. (2.32.2)} \]

He ordered the satrap to stay away from the emerald mines, as they belonged to Ethiopia.

But the seven-year old Charicleia, although white and given to a stranger in Egypt, belongs to the Ethiopians too. And the message of deterrence carried by the messenger on the emerald mines applies to her too: Charicles was chosen as a suitable protector who would respect Charicleia as a free woman and marry her to a free man (ἐλευθέραν ταύτην ἤξειν καὶ ἐλευθέρῳ...
πρὸς γάμον ἐκδώσειν ταύτην, 2.31.4), on account of his truly Greek character (τὸν σὸν τρόπον... Ἐλληνικὸν ὄντα τῷ ὄντι).

7.3.1 Nausicles’ amethyst

This use of jewels, as parallels or substitutes to Charicleia, is generalized in the novel. Nausicles strongly desires Charicleia, but when Calasiris offers him in exchange (λύτρα Χαρικλείας, 5.15.1) a ring with an engraved amethyst which he pretends to have found in the fire after a sacrifice, he is more than happy to accept it instead of Charicleia:

μέγεθος ὃςον ὃμμα παρθενικὸν περιγραφῇ... Ἀμεθύσου δὲ Αἰθιοπίδος ἀκραιφνῆς μὲν καὶ ἐκ βάθους ἐαρινῆ τις ὡρα πυρεύεται... οὐ γὰρ ἐπιψεῦδεται τὴν προσηγορίαν, ἀλλὰ ἀληθῶς ἀμέθυσος τῷ φέροντι γίνεται, νηφάλιον ἐν τοῖς συμποσίοις διαφυλάττουσα. (5.13.3)

As large in diameter as a maiden’s eye… But a sort of spring-like season shines forth, genuine and coming from the depth of the Ethiopian amethyst… it does not misrepresent the name given to it, but in truth prevents intoxication in its wearer, and preserves him sober at drinking parties.

The amethyst is obviously an Ethiopian amethyst (like Charicleia), and as large as the eye of a virgin girl (μέγεθος ὃςον ὃμμα παρθενικὸν περιγραφῇ).244 Its true, genuine (ἀκραιφνῆς) and deep radiance (ἐκ βάθους ἐαρινῆ τις ὡρα πυρεύεται) is confirmed by the transparency of its etymology: οὐ γὰρ ἐπιψεῦδεται τὴν προσηγορίαν. The exceptional character of the stone lies in the conformity between its name and its power, in other words, between its signifier, προσηγορία, and its signified, δύναμις. In truth (ἀληθῶς), the wearer of this stone will have self-restraint and be sober in the middle of drinking parties (νηφάλιον ἐν τοῖς συμποσίοις διαφυλάττουσα). Similarly, Charicleia miraculously preserves her sexual self-restraint in the

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244 Linking a stone to a girl’s eye is certainly not a common comparison in Greek literature. The phrase recalls the object of erotic yearning in Plato’s Phaedrus 253e: τὸ ἐρωτικὸν ὄμμα. But, as Hunter (1998: 48-50) shows, Charicleia’s deflowering is associated with eye-loss (διακόρησις, with κόρη meaning both girl and pupil of the eye) in her nightmare at 2.16, and Charicles affectionately compares losing her to losing “his own eyes” at 4.19.8.
middle of the threatening circumstances of captivity, war, and exile (αἰχμαλωσία καὶ πόλεμος καὶ τοσοῦτος ἐξοικισμός, in 10.7.8).

But Nausicles’ amethyst is superior to others because of the scene carved on it (γραφὴ ἐξεστο). This is the only engraved gem in the novel, and this detailed depiction of a pastoral scene on a kingly ring (δακτύλιον τίνα τῶν βασιλικῶν), in 5.14, bears self-referential and metatextual undertones. The ecphrasis brings together an unresolved tension between art and life: εἰς μύμημα ζῴων ἐκεκοίλαντο. A young herdsman (παιδαρίσκος) is depicted sitting on a rock and guarding his flock while playing a flute. The sheep’s wool seems golden, but this is due to the amethyst’s natural reddish color (οἰκεῖον ἔρυθημα τῆς ἀμεθύσου), not to some artistic trick (οὐ τῆς τέχνης τούτο χαριζομένης); the lambs’ jumps around and over the rock are attentively depicted: some lambs’ leaps are weak (ἀπαλὰ σκιρτήματα); other lambs try to climb on the shepherd’s rock, while others wheel in noble circles around the shepherd (οἱ περὶ τὸν νομέα κύκλους ἀγερώχους ἐξελίπτοντες) as though the uneven ground (κρημνὸς) were the platform of a pastoral theater (ποιμενικὸν θέατρον). And other lambs, in their leaps, lightly touch the rock with their feet (ἅλμασιν ἀκρωνύχοις τὴν πέτραν ἐπέξεον). But the oldest and most confident ones attempt to escape the circle of the stone (ὑπεράλλεσθαι βουλομένοις τὸν κόκλον), only to be prevented by the golden setting of the ring (χρυσῆ μάνδρα, meaning both “stable” and “bezel”); the blurred line between reality and artistry is even more accentuated by the identity between the shepherd’s πέτρα and the kingly λίθος:

η δὲ ἦν πέτρα τῷ ὄντι καὶ οὐχί μύμημα, τῶν γὰρ ἄκρων τῆς λίθου μέρος εἰς τούτο περιγράφας ὁ τεχνίτης ἐδειξεν ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας ὁ ἐβουλευτο, περίεργον ἡγησάμενος λίθον ἐν λίθῳ σοφίζεσθαι. (5.14.4)

The rock was a real stone, and not an imitation; for the artist, delineating a part of the margins of the stone for this purpose, showed what he intended from the real material, considering it overwrought to design one stone upon another.

245 The epithet ἀγέρωχος makes the playfulness of the lambs “tragic,” converts their immature non-directed play into a performance, surrounding the shepherd’s rock.
The stone seems to be at the core of the scene: the lambs position themselves around it, farther or closer, and even attempt to touch it; their leaps resemble a pastoral dance to the shepherd’s song, who nevertheless fails to control them, as the most confident try to escape the limitations of the pastoral landscape altogether: only the absent artist imposed control over them by crafting the ring setting as a created barrier between work of art and reality. As Bowie has observed, this pastoral scene alludes to Daphnis’ unique theatrical performance of panpipes in Longus’ novel (4.15). The goats sit around Daphnis (standing under a tree, and not seated on a rock) as if in a θέατρον and compliantly react to his over powerful, Orpheus-like, song (πειθομένους προστάγματι δεσπότου): their different reactions to his correspondingly different songs are attentively recorded. Heliodorus’ flock of lambs likewise seems to pasture in the rhythm of the shepherd’s panpipes, but the emphasis falls contrariwise to their innocent jumps at varying degrees of spatial distance from the rock. Above all else, the rock is thus Heliodorus’ particular and innovative focus. Its self-referential connotation becomes apparent in the comparison between the radiance of the amethyst and that of the sun: ὥσπερ ἥλιος τῇ φλογὶ τῆς ἁμεθύσου (5.14.3).

In Bowie’s interpretation, this allusion to Daphnis and Chloe invites the reader “to contrast the huge Aida-like stage across which Heliodorus has his characters process with the miniature and enclosed world of Longus.” Thus, in the same way in which Calasirius undervalues this gem that he offers instead of Charicleia (which Bowie as well sees as

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246 Bowie (1995: 278-280) is interested in the contrasting character of this pastoral ecphrasis to the rest of the novel.

247 Bowie (1995: 280). Bowie (1998: 9-10) finds convincing evidence for another reference to Longus in Heliodorus’ text: the depiction of the carefully crafted Phoenicians’ boat in 5.18.2 resonates with Philetas’ labors on his garden (2.3.3). Both work as mise en abyme scenes in their particular larger works, but more importantly, the two veiled allusions to Longus in a context of craftsmanship emphasize Heliodorus’ engaged dialogue with his predecessors on the writing of prose fiction.
“emblematic of the work Charicleia in which she has the leading role”\(^{248}\), Heliodorus invites the reader to recognize the superiority of his novel against his predecessor. While I agree with the conspicuous reference to Longus’ text, my larger analysis of the semiology of precious stones in Heliodorus’ novel asserts the recurring interchangeability between Charicleia and different gems: Nausicles’ jewel is an allusion to Longus while remaining at the same time self-referential. The added “stone” into the scene affirms Heliodorus’ literary innovation and contribution to a newly defined genre, as well as his sense of belonging to a “novelistic” tradition. On the other hand, the stress on the shepherd’s inability to control his lambs in contrast to Daphnis’ mastery over his goats, suggests the author’s difficulty in exerting control over his text as the narrator of the Aethiopica repeatedly refuses to play the omnipotent and omniscient role of the narrator of Daphnis and Chloe.

But the pastoral scene depicted on the amethyst also resonates with another scene in Daphnis and Chloe: at 2.29, just after the pirate’s chief has the vision of Pan who warns him about disturbing Eros while he was creating a story out of a girl, a mysterious panpipe’s sound is heard on the shore from the cliff: Longus stresses that the sound was pastoral and not terrifying (οὐκέτι πολεμικός καὶ φοβερός ἄλλὰ ποιμενικός). Only Chloe’s and Daphnis’ sheep and goats react spellbound to this unseen player (all the other cattle stay unmoved by the magic of the tune) by forming a chorus-like circle around Chloe and leaping joyfully:

Кαι ταῦτα μὲν περιστάτατα κύκλω τὴν Χλόην ὀσπερ χορὸς σκιρτώντα καὶ βλεχώμενα καὶ ὄμοια χαίρουσιν, αἱ δὲ τῶν ἄλλων αἵπολων αἵγες καὶ τὰ πρόβατα καὶ τὰ βουκόλια κατὰ χώραν ἔμενεν ἐν κοῖλῇ νη καθάπερ αὐτὰ τοῦ μέλους μὴ κηλοῦντος. (Longus 2.29.1)

And the sheep and goats surrounded Chloe in a circle just like a dancing band, frisking and bleating and appearing to enjoy themselves, while the goats, sheep, and cows of the other herdsmen remained in the confines of the ship’s hold, as though the music did not charm them.

The same concern, of controlling unruly animals (σκιρτάν seems to mean the unmanageable leaps of young animals) is at the core of this scene, but this time the originator of the mesmerizing tune is hidden, out-of-view, although suspected to be Pan: τὸν συρίττοντα ἔβλεπεν οὐδείς. (2.29.3) If Heliodorus’ amethyst alludes to this passage as well, the absent artist who has imposed boundaries on the lambs’ uncontrollable leaps (be it either the engraver of the stone or the writer of the novel) is compared to Longus’ Pan, who controls from far away the narrative surrounding Charicleia.

Therefore, if we read the description of this jewel as not only hinting at Longus’ text, but also self-referentially, this pastoral theatre remarkably evokes the first ‘theatre’ which opens the novel, in 1.2: amid of the remnants of a bloody symposium on the Egyptian seashore, Charicleia is seated on a rock and approached by two sets of bandits who watch her first from a distance. Her golden dress, like the lambs’ wool in 5.14, beams in the sun.

In this opening scene, a god has displayed the intriguing sight of wine and blood:

Μυρίον εἶδος ὁ δαίμων ἐπὶ μικρῷ τοῦ χωρίου διεσκεύαστο, οἶνον αἷμα μιᾶς, καὶ συμπόσιος πόλεμον ἑπιστήσας, φόνους καὶ πότους, σπονδὰς καὶ σφαγὰς ἐπισυνάψας, καὶ τοιοῦτον θέατρον ἡσταῖς Ἀἰγυπτίους ἐπιδείξας. (1.1.6)

The daemon had placed countless images within a small space, tainting wine with blood and setting war over banquet, mixing murders and drinks, libations and slaughters, and displaying such a sight to the Egyptian brigands. The δαίμων who set up such a detailed scene on such a small piece of land corresponds to the τεχνίτης who carved the pastoral setting on Nausicles’ ring stone. If the appearance of Charicleia follows the desolate corpse-scattered location of a συμπόσιον, in book 5, the ecphrasis of the amethyst precedes a συμπόσιον, the drinking party of Nausicles and his guests, Cnemon and Calasiris (called εὐώχια in 5.15.3 and συμπόσιον in 5.16.3). Moreover, during this banquet, Calasiris tells the last part of his narrative, which comes to describe and
explain the background of the opening scene of the novel: the two συμπόσια overlap and mirror each other. In Cnemon’s words (5.16.4), Calasiris is like a δαίμων who mixes up sweet wine with sweet words (λόγων ἡδυσμα τῷ πότῳ συναναχέων), recalling the fluid imagery of the wine and *blood* in the initial spectacle set by the authorial δαίμων. Furthermore, it is only in the fifth book of the novel that the reader is informed about the planned wedding between Charicleia and the pirate Trachinus that precedes the massacre we watch in the first book of the novel: τὸν λήσταρχον εἰς γάμον παρασκευάζοντα τὸ συμπόσιον (5.30.2). At the same time, the similar confessions of Nausicles and Cnemon on their shared experience with Thisbe occasioned by the familiarity of the banquet lead to the single actual wedding of the novel (excepting the final one), the wedding between Nausicles’ daughter, Nausicleia, and Cnemon (6.8). Their wedding *unexpectedly* follows the banquet:

> ὁ Ναυσικλῆς ... εἰς ἀυτοσχέδιον γάμον τὸ παρόν συμπόσιον ἀναδείξας (6.8.2)

> Nausicles ... having named the present banquet as the feast for the unplanned wedding

Thus the circle of the narrative is now closing: Charicleia’s unfulfilled wedding of the first book, preceding a bloodstained συμπόσιον, is turned into Nausicleia’s consummated wedding (as suggested by the nuptial language in 6.8.3), *after* a story-filled συμπόσιον.

The analogous construction of the two sequences can be summarized in the following diagram:

**Book 1**

Charicleia’s unconsummated wedding to Trachinus → Bloody συμπόσιον (the narrator δαίμων mixes wine and blood) → Charicleia on her rock
Book 5

Nausicles’ gem engraved with the shepherd on the rock → Story-filled peaceful συμπόσιον (the narrator δαίμων mixes wine and words) → Nausicleia’s consummated wedding to Cnemon

During the pirates’ initial banquet, Charicleia keeps herself at a safe distance, on the boat. Likewise, she refuses to take part both in Nausicles’ symposium (ἡ Χαρίκλεια δὲ χωρισθεῖσα τὸ ἑαυτῆς ἔπρατεν 5.15.3) and in Nausicleia’s wedding (ἡ Χαρίκλεια δὲ χωρισθεῖσα μόνη τῶν ἄλλων ἔρχεται δωμάτιον, 6.8.3). In the middle of sexual feasting (suggested by the wedding, but also by the women dancing for Demeter) she bolts the door to her chamber keeping herself out in the same way the amethyst keeps its wearer untouched by wine in the middle of drinking parties:

τὰς θύρας εἰς τὸ ἁφαλές ἐπικλεισμένη πρὸς οὐδενός (6.8.3)

Closing the doors securely so that no one could come in…

The association between sexual consummation, drinking party, and artistry or storytelling is underscored by the highly marked verb that describes the end of the party in 5.34.1, διελύετο τὸ συμπόσιον, used elsewhere, as it was shown above, to describe the dissolution of virginity.

In this context, the intaglio, like Charicleia, strikingly avoids all symptive and sexual connotations. The work of art displays itself as self-sufficient and alien to its immediate background; its creator is, like Charicleia’s father at this point of the story, manifestly absent, but equally absent are the mobility, and the continuous crossing of physical, cultural, and geographical boundaries that are prevalent in the rest of the novel. This unique pastoral scene of the Aethiopica describes a positive space demarcated by negative definition: music
performance takes place in a safely enclosed environment, marked by the presence of non-adult playfulness, as the singer is a παιδαρίσκος and its flock made of lambs, ἀρνία. The encapsulation of music in a visual piece of art verbally described in a novel stands for an artistic meaning reflected through three different media, with severe disjunctions between them: for why would a pastoral scene be represented on the seal ring of a king? And why would the novel need a pastoral ecphrasis when there is no other mention of pastoralism? The unspecified message of the shepherd’s song is not translated transparently from music to stone and then word, and this failure to communicate beyond one’s art material effectively echoes the unsuccessful attempts of the lambs to go beyond the barrier of the ring setting. The meaning of the work of art rests hidden and protected under the folds of artistic expression, although at the same time, in a unique form of contiguity, the meaning and its expression converge, as the third-degree fictional rock is the second-degree fictional amethyst. The πέτρα, around which the lambs orbit and which they desire to go beyond, is metonymically the λίθος which is deeply desired by the merchant Nausicles as ransom, λύτρα, for virginal Charicleia. The use of the verb ἐκκοιλαίνειν, to carve inside out, restates this enigmatic congruence between interiority and exteriority, signified and signifier, or the innermost recess of the human body (κοιλία) and its artistic expression (the novel itself, constructed around a woman’s virginal place).

7.3.2 Charicleia and the pantarbe

The other outstanding precious stone of the Aethiopica is the παντάρβη, gem of another royal ring: Hydaspes’ marriage ring given to his wife Persinna and later handed over to her exposed daughter Charicleia. The first mention of this ring in the novel is made by Calasiris in 4.8,
when he convinces Charicles to show him the tokens of recognition received from Sisimithres together with the seven-year-old Charicleia. One of these tokens is a textile band, ταινία, inscribed with kingly Ethiopian letters, as Calasiris is able to discern and read. For the Greek Charicles, who cannot understand the writing, the band is perhaps (and not untruly) inscribed with sorceries meant to keep Charicleia away from marital life (ἀνέραστος) and from having offspring (ἀγονος):

Δέδοικα μὴ τινος ἐμπέπλησται γοητείας... ἀνάγραπτος, ἐχθροῦ τινος αὐτὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἀνέραστον ἀποβιώνα ταῦτα ἀγονον ἐπιβουλεύσαντος. (4.7.13)

I fear lest it might be full of some sorcery and inscribed, through some scheme of an enemy so that she may live the rest of her life as from the beginning, without love and offspring.

Calasiris nevertheless understands the exotic characters and gives a full citation in Greek of the text on the band (4.8), which is Persinna’s letter to her infant daughter, explaining her unusual conception and the reason for her exposure. Immediately after asking her daughter to keep the memory (μεμνήσῃ) of her noble origin and preserve her σωφροσύνη (4.8.7.4.8.7 ὡς εἶ περιγένοι μεμνήσῃ τῆς εὐγενείας τιμῶσα σωφροσύνην, ἡ δὲ μόνη γυναικείαν ἀρετὴν χαρακτηρίζει, “If you should survive, be mindful of your noble descent; honor chastity, the distinguishing mark of woman’s virtue”), the queen entreats Charicleia to remember to seek and guard, for her own interest, her parents’ marriage ring, which is placed among the recognition tokens:

Μεμνήσῃ δὲ πρὸ πάντων τῶν συνεκτεθέντων σοι κειμηλίων δακτύλις τοῦ ἐπιξητεῖν καὶ σεαυτῇ περιποιεῖν, ὁ δὲ πατὴρ ὁ σος ἐμοὶ παρὰ τὴν μνημεῖαν ἐδορήσατο βασιλείῳ μὲν συμβόλῳ τὸν κύκλον ἀνάγραπτον λίθῳ δὲ παντάρβῃ καὶ ἀπορρήτῳ δυνάμει τὴν σπενδόνην καθιερωμένον. (4.8.7)

Remember first of all to seek and guard for yourself, among the objects exposed with you, a ring; it is the marriage ring that your father gave to me; the circle is inscribed with the royal sign and the setting is consecrated with a pantarbe stone, endowed with a secret power.
The appeal to memory (μεμνήσῃ) connects Charicleia’s εὐγενεία to its concrete expression, the royal betrothal ring, evidence of Charicleia’s legitimate conception and at the same time echoing the preceding appeal to σωφροσύνη. Thus, similarly to Heliodorus’ intricate narrative, the ring looks back retrospectively to the conception of its heroine and forward to her expected upright sexual conduct. The mark of nobility in women (χαρακτηρίζει249), chastity, corresponds in equal measure (μὲν... δέ) to the royal inscription on the ring (συμβόλω τὸν κύκλον ἀνάγραπτον) and to the gemstone (λίθῳ... καθιερωμένον, “consecrated,” a verbal form which parallels the participle ἀνάγραπτον, but also recalls Calasiris’ description of the characters of Persinna’s letter in 4.8.1, γράμμασιν... ιερατικοῖς). The imagery of engraving/inscribing a gem replicates the conjugal union symbolized by the ring: the derivative Greek words for sealing, σημεῖον, σύμβολον, γραμματεῖον, echo at a distance the technical term for violating a seal, διαφθορά,250 negatively used by Charicleia in her eulogy for virginity at 2.33.5.

The παντάρβη has a transparent etymology, like Nausicles’ amethyst; its name (“afraid of everything”) corresponds in an unexplained way to its meaning (δύναμις). However, unlike in the case of the amethyst discussed above, this connection is not made explicit but remains outside of human reasoning and expression (ἀπόρρητος). In accordance with Heliodorus’ typical postponement of narrative information, we only find out what the stone’s power is four books later (8.11.8): after miraculously escaping burning, Charicleia realizes that her salvation was due to the stone that she was carrying, together with the band, wrapped around her chest. The παντάρβη had the secret power to protect the one wearing it from fire, a literary reworking

249 Seals, along with coins, were included in the generic family of χαρακτήρες, “marks,” “impressions.”
of the older theme concerning the property of certain stones to resist fire.\textsuperscript{251} As an object containing the narrative of its wearer’s legitimate birth, and miraculous shield against male \textit{adulterating} desire, the παντάρβη is a hallmark of Charicleia’s \textit{identity}, as it has been suggested by Morgan (1998:70) who similarly sees “an analogy between the pantarbe jewel and virginity, a metaphorical equation of one of the text’s central official values with an object of rarity, value and magical power.” At the end of the novel, in between several scenes of \textit{anagnorisis}, the heroine will escape burning once again during the trial of her virginity: although standing on a brazier (ἐσχάρα), she remains unharmed. The reader is not told if Charicleia wears the παντάρβη at this moment, but he must know that παντάρβη is Charicleia’s virginity, which stays untouched by the fire of desire.

\section*{7.3.3 Intertextuality with Posidippus?}

The centrality of the stones’ imagery in Heliodorus’ novel recalls Posidippus’ \textit{Λιθικά}, the poems which programmatically open his recently discovered collection of epigrams.\textsuperscript{252} Posidippus similarly associates gems with women and sexual exchange,\textsuperscript{253} but I find an even more direct allusion in Heliodorus’ use of the very first words of Posidippus’ text – Ἰνδὸς Ὑδάσπης, the “Indian river Hydaspes.” To my knowledge, the source of the gem that formed the subject of Posidippus’ first poem,\textsuperscript{254} Hydaspes, is only used as a proper name for a \textit{person} in Heliodorus’ \textit{Aethiopica}: Hydaspes is the Ethiopian king father of the heroine Charicleia, the

\textsuperscript{251} In his \textit{De lapidibus} 22.8, Theophrastus divides stones into those which are affected by fire and those which are not (περὶ δὲ τῶν πυρουμένων καὶ τῶν ἀπυρώτων λίθων).
\textsuperscript{252} Gutzwiller (2005).
\textsuperscript{253} Precious stones start being literary topics after Alexander’s expedition to India (see Bing 2005: 119-140). \textit{The Book of Revelation} 4.3 describes heaven using imagery of gems and precious metals; Victorian literature (most famously Emily Dickinson) drew on this tradition in its veiled erotic images.
\textsuperscript{254} Larger discussion on Posidippus’ interest in the “paradox of water as the formative element for hard substances” in Gutzwiller (2005: 302). On Hydaspes’ name, see Jones (2006: 548), who considers the eponym of the Indian river part of Heliodorus’ strategy of evoking “a general atmosphere of realism.”
jewel of the novel. Thus, going back to the source, recovering the absent father, and resisting sexual change through protracting marriage, all coherently encompass Aethiopica’s literary message.

Other possible connections with Posidippus’ epigrams include Athenaeus’ comment (13, 596) on a possibly larger work of Posidippus with the title Aethiopia: according to Athenaeus, Posidippus mentioned Doricha, Charaxus’ lover, often in this not extant work, although he had also dedicated an epigram to her (AB122). Doricha is the other name by which Rhodopis, the mistress of Sappho’s brother, is known. Δωρίχα alludes to gift imagery similarly to Charicleia’s name, while Rhodopis’ name shows up in the novel as Calasiris’ temptress.

We can speculate even more on a possible response of the author of Aethiopica to Posidippus when reading the latter’s epigram 140, preserved in the Anthologia Palatina. The epigram has a sympotic and poetic theme: the poet addresses a certain Heliodorus, asking him to pour wine in cups for Nanno, Lyde, Mimnermus, Antimachus, and then for Posidippus himself and for “whoever happens to be in love.” The next dedicatees are Hesiod, Homer, the Muses, and the last one, Mnemosyne. As scholars have noticed, Posidippus’ literary cup mixes together names of women, of literary works, of their authors, and of Muses, all connected through the common erotic motif. The last line of the epigram seems to shed light on Heliodorus’ elaborate narrative of the amethyst, previously discussed: Ἐρωτεύσ, νῆφεϊν οἴνοθέντι οὐχί λίθην ἄχαρι (“ye Loves, to remain sober after much wine is not at all
unpleasant.

For Heliodorus, the amethyst (standing for Charicleia), was \( \nu\eta\varphi\alpha\lambda\omicron\ \epsilon\nu\ \tau\omicron\zeta\ \sigma\upsigma\mu\nu\pi\omicron\sigma\io\zeta\ \delta\iota\alpha\varphi\upsilon\lambda\acute{\alpha}t\omicron\upsilon\omicron\sigma\a. \) Strikingly evocative is also Posidippus’ use of the adjective \( \acute{\alpha}\chi\alpha\r, \) but even more so, the general meaning of this epigram surprisingly fits the poetics of the \textit{Aethiopica}: heavy drinking of literary sources is pleasant if controlled. The novel’s intense dialogic discourse (or heteroglossia, in Bakhtian terms) is pleasurable, so long as the genre’s integrity/ virginity remains contained.

In general terms, precious stones and virginity share certain characteristics: gems are valuable and rare, can be counterfeited and therefore necessitate trials (in Isidorus’ terms, \textit{ratio probandi, Etym.} 16.15), they originate from dark mines, eroticized caverns, but they nonetheless shine, and their concentrated concreteness makes them excellent carriers of complex meanings, so that Pliny defines them, at the very beginning of his book on gems (\textit{NH} 37.1), as \textit{in artum coacta rerum naturae maiestas}.

But very often these precious stones are called, by ellipsis, just stones (in Calasiris’ already discussed \textit{sententia} in 4.15.2), omitting the epithet \( \pi\omicron\lambda\omicron\tau\imath\omicron\omicron\omicron\zeta. \) How are we to understand the semiotics and the role simple stones play in the novel then? Similarly to gems, ordinary stones are presented as signifiers, vehicles for hidden and often unexpected meanings: stones are said to be replaced by cups in the pirates’ banquet/ fight at the beginning of the novel (1.1.4), but used as unconventional weapons in the same scene described four books later by Calasiris (5.32.3). Using slings (\( \sigma\varphi\varepsilon\nu\delta\omicron\omicron\eta, \) a word evoking the setting of a ring) the besieged inhabitants of Syene throw stones with letters attached to them at 9.5.2. When Charicleia and Theagenes exchange signs of recognition at 5.5.1, they promise that if they lose one another they will write their codified names on temples, statues, herms and stones at crossroads (\( \epsilon\pi\gamma\rho\acute{\alpha}\f\omicron\epsilon\nu\ \lambda\acute{i}\dot{\omicron}\omicron\omicron\iota\omicron\ \epsilon\pi\tau\omicron\omicron\acute{\delta}\omicron\omicron\omicron\). The pirates’ complicatedly built cavern where

\(^{258}\) Tr. Austin and Bastianini (2002: 179).
Charicleia stays hidden and is misrecognized as Thisbe has a stone at the entrance which is repeatedly mentioned by Cnemon, Theagenes and Thermouthis (2.3.1 and 2.12.4): its feminized character (τὸν λίθον τὸν οὐδόν τοῦ σπηλαίου τὸ κάλυμμα διαφαινόμενον) confuses the identity of the women veiled behind it.

In all these instances, stones mark boundaries to be crossed and messages to be delivered to the other. Most often they are misinterpreted and improperly received, but even in their failure to communicate they contain semantic implications for Heliodorus’ novel, often described by the scholars as a “hermeneutic hothouse.”

7.4 Heliodorus and the genre of the novel

Heliodorus’ novel is constructed on the over-arching metaphor of virginity, understood as both unfulfilled sexual desire and, more concretely, the place of the feminine lack. For Heliodorus, absence creates proliferation (the absence of Hydaspes is compensated by three other “fathers” for Charicleia), the virgin place generates text to cover and enfold it. Moreover, the ambivalent nature of virginity, which is on the one hand, as a metonymy, concrete and contiguous, and, on the other hand, as a metaphor, abstract and transcendent, promotes a new way of reading prose: not as historical writing, but as literary fiction.

Furthermore, Heliodorus’ novel shows a compulsive concern with the ambiguities suggested by the father/daughter relation. The daughter feels torn between αἰδώς towards her parent and αἰδώς towards herself as autonomous identity: when faced with her previous “father,” Charicles, in 10.38.1, she forgets her αἰδώς in order to fall at his knees and call herself a parricide. On the other hand, the father, when not sterile, completely lacks control

over his offspring: the black Ethiopian Hydaspes fathers a white woman, who loses her native language and becomes linguistically and culturally proficient in Greek. Fathering becomes a mediated act of creation, in which the result of conception does not resemble its originator anymore. Like Charicleia, the novel wanders about through various literary allusions in search of its author: Heliodorus’ sphragis comes at the very end of his ten-book Aethiopica. Since intertextuality, the literary game so appreciated in ancient literature, questions the boundaries of any given literary text, boundaries which are unlimitedly permeable to cultural influences, the raised problem of virginity attempts to indicate the ways in which an author can achieve “purity” and “originality” in his creation, or, in other words, can leave his own literary upbringing behind in order to represent his artistic object in an unmediated approach. By acknowledging his virginal, intact creation, despite the novel’s intense dialogue with all the other genres, the author finally reveals himself as the hidden persona behind the narrative. Or, if Heliodorus is just an evocative significant name looking back to Posidippus and fitting the internal tension of the novel between gems and sun and not the author’s real name – the daughter-text continues to fabricate her (its) father.
Conclusion

This dissertation has aimed to highlight the bridge between sexual inexperience and a category of literary discourse, particularly interested in issues of representation and fiction, in Greek literature. The thesis has focused on the theme of παρθενία in a selection of texts coming from the three major genres, epic, lyric, and dramatic, followed by an analysis of the extant Greek novels. By sidestepping the more frequent social reading of παρθενία in the novels, this approach chose to take at face value the novelists’ implicit decision not to engage with Christianity or contemporary history. Formalism and too much attention to close reading of ancient literary texts has often been subject to criticism in the last half-century; however, the literary discourse is a language with its particular code, as recent findings, displaying the abundance and variety of intertextuality and literary games from our earliest recorded literary texts on, have shown. In order to make the step from the text to the real historical world in which a text is produced by its author, we need to fully grasp the kind of “game,” or set of codes, which characterizes each text. The ancient writers divided these explicit and implicit set of conventions into genres (εἰδῆ): a different kind of reception, expectation, reading to get the point of the author was needed in the case of an oral performance of Homer’s Odyssey, a lyric song of Sappho, or an Aeschylean tragedy or in the case of a private reading of a novel. Nonetheless, these different genres are in dialogue and certain themes revolve around similar concerns. As literary creations, they claim to represent (or to have a connection to) reality, no matter how remotely.

Thus, description of space and choice of locale, the emphasis on islands, peninsulae, and travel, appear to root the literary texts in the real world. But geographical description and ecphrasis belong to the same category – a demarcation of an artificial world, marked by
illusory distances from reality, metonymy and metaphor, and at the same time endless vulnerability to interpretation (and hence artistic invulnerability and immortality).

On a time scale, the pre-symbolic phase represented by παρθενία announces a postponement of symbolisation marked by subjective time; this delay is filled with waiting, wishes, hopes, prayers, intention, and more visual representations of fulfillment. In this subjective dimension of a thought that is about to become real, concrete, and tangible, lies also a woman’s attachment to her own παρθενία, a desire which, by its unfulfilled character, is not-yet-subject to change and corruption.

However, in the absence of a possible literal meaning symbols cannot exist: virginity may be like a garden but is not a garden; however in the absence of the metaphor of the garden we may lose its meaning. Thus, putting aside all the metaphors that profusely surround παρθενία in Greek texts is akin to fetishizing it – something which does not appear in any of the literary sources that we have preserved from Ancient Greece. Fetishes are rigid; παρθενία is flexible enough to grow out of its bodily confines into an institution – monogamy.

Therefore, in a stronger tone than their predecessors, the novels strive not to offer a mimesis of the real as is, but a mimesis of the virginal mode of as if: building symbolic systems contingent upon and attached to reality. At the same time, these novels and their quasi-anonymous authors self-consciously admit their creations’ unavoidable departure and divorce from the mode they seek to imitate.

The contribution of this dissertation consists, I think, in opening new ways of understanding the Greek concept of female virginity. Rather than subduing their condition to anonymous societal pressures, Greek maidens seem to work at creating symbolic systems, among which the social order, highly privileged by modern scholarship interested in ancient gender norms, is by no means the only one or the most relevant. This dissertation has shown
that other symbolic systems, such as language, textiles, fictional literature, music, or poetry are conceived in Greek sources as connected with the (elusive) female virginity. Whether this fact has any implications for the way we understand the social concepts of παρθενία or monogamous marriage remains to be considered.
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