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A COMPANION TO THE ANCIENT NOVEL

Edited by

Edmund P. Cueva
and Shannon N. Byrne

WILEY Blackwell

This edition first published 2014
© 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Registered Office

John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

Editorial Offices

350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA

9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A companion to the ancient novel / edited by Edmund P. Cueva and Shannon N. Byrne.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-118-35041-6 – ISBN 978-1-118-35042-3 – ISBN 978-1-118-35043-0 (mb) – ISBN 978-1-118-35057-7 (epdf) – ISBN 978-1-118-35058-4 (epub) – ISBN 978-1-4443-3602-3 (cloth : alk. paper) I. Classical fiction—History and criticism. I. Cueva, Edmund P., 1964– II. Byrne, Shannon N., 1959–

PA3040.C66 2014

883'.0109–dc23

2013030056

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Cover image: *Daphnis and Chloe*, by Louis Hersent (1777–1860). Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Photo © Peter Horree / Alamy.

Cover design by Workhaus

Set in 10/12.5pt Galliard by SPi Publisher Services, Pondicherry, India

Printed in Malaysia by Ho Printing (M) Sdn Bhd

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CHAPTER 18

From the Epic to the Novelistic Hero

Some Patterns of a Metamorphosis

Luca Graverini

One of the most notable features of the novel of all times is its ability to absorb typical elements of other literary genres and adjust them to its own purposes. Among those literary genres, epic poetry certainly holds, for ancient novels, the place of honor: ancient fiction writers constantly took inspiration from Homer and Vergil to shape their narratives, and modern scholars frequently and willingly adopt Hegel's definition of prose narrative as "bourgeois epic" (a general overview and initial bibliography on the vast theme of the relationship between epic and novel can be found in Graverini-Keulen-Barchiesi 2006, 36ff.). The unquestionable continuity between epic and novel, however, should not allow us to forget differences and variations, especially when they appear to trace a coherent pattern that leads from one literary genre to the other. A particularly fruitful approach to this problem is the analysis of the relationship between epic and novelistic characters, since the construction of a character is perhaps what best defines a narrative: the *Odyssey*, after all, is Odysseus' story, like Chariton's novel is the story of Callirhoe¹—and already the presence of a heroine (or of a couple of heroes) instead of a single male protagonist says much about the differences between the *Chaereas and Callirhoe* and the *Odyssey*, and between novel and epic in general.

The construction of a novelistic character is a complex and sophisticated process that involves imitation of the epic model, but also change and innovation from it: most characters are, in a way, like Odysseus and Achilles, but none of them is, or could be, a faithful replica of those archetypes. Homer's heroes themselves would be out of place in the new world of the novel, and if, for example, Chaereas or Clitophon tried *tout court* to bring Achilles back to life in their words and acts, they would probably end up as Don Quixote, who is a complete misfit to the "real" world he lives in. What follows will be an analysis of the various narrative strategies adopted by ancient novelists to make Achilles, Odysseus, and their companions feel at home in a new world and in a new literary genre.

Cultural Mediation

Hellenistic culture looked at Homeric epic much in the same way in which we look at it: a fascinating literary form that is centuries old, related to a different world, something that needs to be studied and interpreted, something that underlies a long literary tradition. In some cases, this literary tradition helps reduce the distance that separates the epic from the novelistic world, thus making it easier for epic poetry to be assimilated and absorbed by the novel. Theater in particular often acts as a mediator. In Achilles Tatius' novel (which I have already and in some cases in more depth analyzed in Graverini 2010), the scene where Menelaus and Satyrus sit by the sea lamenting their situation and thinking about a subterfuge to prevent Leucippe from being sacrificed by the brigands (3.20) illustrates a good example of this process. It has been suggested (Cresci 1976, 123ff.) that this is an allusion to the Homeric passages where Achilles begs his mother Thetis for help (*Il.* 1.349ff.; 18.65ff.). There are no textual hints to connect Achilles Tatius' text with Homer. Nevertheless, both in the *Iliad* and in the novel, the scene takes place on the seashore; and just as Achilles received his new set of weapons from Thetis in response to his lamentations, Menelaus and Satyrus see a trunk going adrift on the sea and washing up on the beach and find some weapons inside it. However, there is a difference: these weapons are only fake weapons, those usually handled by actors who represent Homeric scenes on the stage, and they will come in handy for the deception Menelaus and Satyrus are going to stage for the brigands. Here, the novel clearly appropriates a famous Iliadic episode through the cultural experience of theater. In other words, epic becomes novel through comedy (or mime); theater helps in the process of "lowering" epic material, of making it more homogeneous to the novel.

Epic heroes are not only formidable warriors; they are usually good orators and storytellers too. While only a few characters in the ancient novel can show off a warlike heroism, many of them are also good storytellers; some of them (like Calasiris in Heliodorus' *Aithiopika*) offer very long retrospective accounts that fill in the reader on past events, like Odysseus did at Alcinoos' court or Aeneas at the court of Dido, but sometimes such an account would be perceived as out of place. This is the case when, in the *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* (abbreviated *HA*), Apollonius is invited to a banquet by King Archistrates. The attractive force of a well-established topos is too strong, and the king's daughter cannot help asking Apollonius to tell his story; however, contrary to what happens in the *Odyssey* and in the *Aeneid*, the reader is already informed of the hero's misadventures, and it would be pointless to tell them again. So, we are only told that Apollonius described all that had happened to him, and that at the end of his account he began to weep (16).

It is not only a question of narrative economy, but narrative technique is also to be taken into account: in the ancient novel, it often happens that a simple narration tends to become (or to mask itself as) performance and theatrical show, in an attempt to obtain total involvement of the reader in the narrative world. A "performative" account allows the members of its audience not only to *listen to* a report of a series of events, but also to *see* those events in the first person, as if they were taking part in them: the effect is that the audience experiences a sort of "full immersion" in the narrative world, something similar to what could be experienced in a theater (cf. Graverini 2012, 154 ff.). The

banquet at Archistrates' palace offers us a very graphic representation of this preference for performance over simple narration. Intertextuality makes it clear that, just as Apollonius is in some ways a new Aeneas, the king's daughter is a sort of reincarnation of Vergil's Dido: so, in Chapter 18, her love for Apollonius is described using several quotations from the famous beginning of *Aeneid* Book 4. However, the African queen fell in love with Aeneas after the hero's account of his exploits and misadventures, while Apollonius wins his queen's heart thanks to his histrionic art, by performing as a lyric singer, a comic and a tragic actor²: Apollonius is certainly a new Aeneas, but an Aeneas who is also an accomplished and versatile actor. The account of his adventures is only cursorily referred to; even the verbal aspect of his subsequent theatrical performance is totally neglected, and his performative abilities get almost all the attention. This scene can be considered as an effective mirror of Imperial times, when theater (especially mime and pantomime) and actors were an important element of social and cultural life (Graverini 2006, 16). On a more literary level, it is also a movement back from the *Aeneid*, explicitly recalled at the textual level, to Homer's description of Alcinous' banquet, whose "performativity" (Phemius' songs, but also dances and athletic games) were completely lost in Vergil's poem (together with another important detail, the hero's weeping, found in *Od.* 8.83f. and 521ff. and in *HA* 16, but not in Vergil). Contemporary world and literary tradition are both involved in the genesis of this scene.

Selection of Features and Gender Shifts

A straight and unmediated imitation of an epic hero, as I was saying at the beginning, would be a very difficult task for a novelistic character. Achilles, in particular, is a rather difficult model: none of the main characters in the ancient novels comes even close to his superhuman strength, bravery, and wrath. Nevertheless, Achilles is frequently mentioned in the Greek novels as the model of a particular aspect of a character's personality. Only a couple of times (Heliodorus 3.2.4 and 4.3.1) is he remembered as a paradigm of warlike valor; elsewhere, he is an example of friendship (Chariton 1.5.2), or simply Briseis' lover (Achilles Tatius 1.8.5). Most often, however, he is the prototype of the handsome hero. Of course, Homer already described Achilles as the most handsome of the Greeks (e.g. *Il.* 2.672ff.); however, it is meaningful that, among his many virtues, this is the one most frequently advertised by the Greek novelists, as in Heliodorus 2.34.4: "I met the young man yesterday, and he struck me as a truly worthy member of the clan of the Sons of Achilles, so tall and handsome to behold that the mere sight of him is proof of his ancestry"; cf. 4.5.5: "The young man traces his lineage back to Achilles, and I think he may well be right, if his stature and looks are anything to go by; they are a sure sign of a pedigree worthy of Achilles—except that Theagenes has none of his conceit or arrogance"; Chariton: 1.1.3: "There was a young man called Chaereas, surpassingly handsome, like Achilles and Nireus and Hippolytus and Alcibiades as sculptors and painters portray them" (the passage could be read as a sort of metaliterary programmatic statement about the relationship of the novel with epic, tragedy, and historiography, and perhaps Platonic dialogue); and Achilles Tatius 6.1.3. In this last passage, Clitophon is in disguise, dressed as a woman, and Melite says to him: "How much more lovely you have become in this dress. I once saw such an Achilles in a painting."

Rather paradoxically, Clitophon comes to look like Achilles when he cross-dresses: but of course this is not the Achilles who fought at Troy, but the young man his mother Thetis tried to keep safe from the dangers of war by disguising him as one of the daughters of Lycomedes, king of Skyros. This Achilles is a handsome and effeminate character, quite far from the handsome but warlike hero described in the *Iliad* and almost a personification of the idea of "sexual symmetry" suggested by Konstan (1994; cf. Morales 2004, 65f.). We know of Achilles' stay in Skyros thanks to traditions different from Homeric poems (see, e.g. Bömer 1982, 246f. *ad Ovid, Met.* 13,162–164, for an overview of sources and scholarship; and, more recently, Heslin 2005 and Fantuzzi 2012), so it is not by chance, I think, that in this passage the author refers not to literary sources, but to paintings (paintings and sculptures in Chariton 1.1.3): the aesthetic appraisal dominates, and obliterates any other narrative or heroic aspects of Achilles' character. Again, the appropriation of epic material by the novel is facilitated by a cultural mediation, this time provided by figurative arts; and an important aspect of this process is the feminization of the male hero.

The opposite process, the masculinization of a female character, is also frequent. The first book of Chariton's novel ends with the heroine's sleep, in the epic way—only in epic poems usually a male hero occupies that place of honor. In Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, Psyche is asleep between Books 4 and 5, and afterwards she urges herself to "take on a male spirit" (6.5.3). One of the ordeals angry Venus forces her to undergo is a descent to the Underworld (6.14–15), just as Odysseus and Aeneas already did before her; this experience takes place in perfect epic style in the middle of the novel (6.14–15).

The strong emotions of epic and warlike heroes can provide a paradigm of behavior to both male and female novelistic characters. In Chariton 1.4.6, Chaereas is shocked at the news that his wife is unfaithful to him, and his sorrow is similar to that of Achilles grieving for Patroclus: "a black cloud of grief covered him" (cf. *Il.* 18.22). It is not an isolated instance: it happens sometimes that different novelists refer to the same Homeric passages, as if a common repertoire of epic clichés has been defined by the first authors. So, Achilles Tatius uses the same expression at 6.8.3 (paraphrasing rather than quoting Homer) to describe Melite's reaction when she finds out that her beloved Clitophon has been thrown into jail. A woman is attributed the same emotional response as Achilles: it could seem a paradox or a learned witticism, and in a way it certainly is, but from another point of view it should not surprise us at all. Homeric heroes display their emotions with no restraint and they are not ashamed to cry, to shout, to tear out their hair, to roll on the ground in desperation. In later times, especially after Hellenistic philosophies had propagated the ideal of the *ataraxia*, "imperturbability," of the wise man, such displays of emotions were not considered proper anymore; indeed, the scholia to *Il.* 18.22 discuss the subject in these terms:

Zoilos says that on this occasion Achilles appears to be indecorous. He should have known that war is dangerous to everybody. Therefore, he should not have considered death as something terrible, and his excessive grief is womanly. Not even a barbarian wet nurse would behave this way. Even the lamentation of Hecuba on Hector dragged by Achilles was nothing like that. Zenodorus defends him instead and says that he is suffering because of the exceptionality of events.

So, when Achilles Tatius transforms the grieving Achilles into a woman, he also offers his readers a sort of narrative representation of a philological discussion that was probably current in his times. We will see that this is not the only instance of this phenomenon.

Philological Perspective

Achilles Tatius is probably the most sophisticated and provocative among ancient Greek novelists, at least as regards his use of epic models. We can appreciate these qualities if we examine another instance of parallel imitation of a Homeric passage in different novels. The imitated passage is, significantly, again from the same Iliadic context, the sorrow for Patroclus, which clearly offered a repertoire of emotions that could be easily exploited in a novelistic context. In *Iliad* 19.301, the unnamed Trojan slaves of Achilles cry for Patroclus after Briseis' funeral lament:

So she [Briseis] spoke weeping, and to it the women added their laments; Patroclus indeed they mourned, but each one her own sorrows ("Ὀς ἔφατο κλαίουσ', ἐπὶ δὲ στενάχοντο γυναῖκες / Πάτροκλον πρόφρασιν, σφῶν δ' αὐτῶν κήδε' ἑκάστη).

These highly emotional verses evidently struck Homer's readers to such an extent that they became proverbial (cf. Plut., *De laude ipsius* 546F); and it is not surprising to see them repeatedly imitated in the ancient novels. Chariton alludes to them twice, at 2.5.12 (a prose adaptation: Dionysius "begins to weep, ostensibly for Callirhoe, but in fact for himself") and at 8.5.2, where several Persian noblemen mourn at the announcement of Queen Statira's death: "apparently for Statira, but in fact each for his own sorrows" (this time a quotation proper, with the substitution of the proper name). In Heliodorus 1.18.1, Theagenes and Charikleia burst into tears when Cnemon has finished telling his story: "ostensibly at his story but in fact in remembrance of their own" (again a prose adaptation). In Achilles Tatius 2.34.7, the situation is very similar; the whole passage is worth quoting:

Kleinias wept as he was speaking, "outwardly for Patroklos" (Πάτροκλον πρόφρασιν), remembering Charikles. He [the character who had previously narrated his sad story] said, "Are you weeping for me, or has a similar experience sent you into exile?" Heaving a great sigh (στενάξας), Kleinias told him all about Charikles and his horse.

First of all, we must note that the passages by Chariton and Achilles Tatius raise a very interesting gender issue: Chariton transforms "Patroclus" into two women, Callirhoe and Statira; Achilles Tatius transforms him into the young homosexual partner of a narrating character. However, this is not only a further instance of genre shift like the ones we have already examined earlier, but it is also an example of an almost philological, if humorous and provocative approach. This is true in two ways. Generally speaking, it is well known that the true nature of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus was the object of heated discussions among ancient scholars (e.g. a famous passage is Plato, *Symp.* 179E_f): were they friends, or lovers? Our novelists are implicitly, and maybe

ironically, taking a stance in this debate. This philological aspect of imitation is especially clear in Achilles Tatius, who is not simply imitating the *Iliad*, but reading it through the thick lenses of literary history. The first imitator of Homer's *Iliad* was actually Homer himself, in the *Odyssey*, at 4.183ff., several characters break into tears after Menelaus has commemorated Odysseus, whom they believe to be dead:

So he spoke, and in them all aroused the desire of lament. Argive Helen wept, the daughter of Zeus, Telemachus wept, and Menelaus, son of Atreus, nor could the son of Nestor [Peisistratos] keep his eyes tearless. For he thought in his heart of peerless Antilochus.

The ancient commentators already noted that this scene is a sort of a rerun of the sorrow "for Patroclus" in the *Iliad*: these characters cry at the mention of Odysseus, but at least some of them have their own losses to grieve for. Here is the text of the scholia—that, by the way, point out once more the womanly character of these extreme manifestations of sorrow:

The poet clearly shows that, on the pretext of Telemachus, everybody cries for his own troubles: Helen because of what happened to her, or because "very prone to tears is the woman;" Peisistratos because of his brother. Also, the slaves cry "for Patroclus:" indeed, on the pretext of him, they cry because of their own troubles (*Il.* 19.302). E. Taking advantage of the opportunity in a very brilliant way, the poet makes his audience cry and then transfers this image on those who were listening [to the commemoration of Odysseus].³ He also uses a proper order. He makes Helen cry first: by nature, indeed, women are prone to tears. Then the guest, who is personally involved in the grief. Then Menelaus, rightly third, after the woman and the one who is personally grieving. Peisistratos comes fourth, and he—by Jove!—does not cry for Odysseus, whom he did not even know: he is moved by the memory of his own brother, like in the *Iliad* "on the pretext of Patroclus, but for their own troubles" (*Il.* 19.302). H.Q.R.

This scene in the fourth Book of the *Odyssey* was commonly read and studied in parallel to *Iliad* Book 19. This is extremely relevant to the interpretation of our passage in Achilles Tatius because of the identity, or more exactly because of the name of the character who has provoked Kleinias' sorrow with his story. His name is Menelaus: exactly the same name of the king of Sparta who in the *Odyssey* has just finished his commemoration of Odysseus. Is this just a coincidence? Most certainly not. On the contrary, we have all reasons to think that both Homeric models are artfully, deliberately, and ironically highlighted by the novelist. In comparison with Chariton and Heliodorus, Achilles Tatius' reference to the topic "crying for Patroclus" is clearly more elaborate and combines the *Iliad* with the *Odyssey*—or, better, Achilles reads the *Iliad* through the *Odyssey*. Not only does Kleinias cry "for Patroclus," like Achilles' slaves in the *Iliad*, he does so after a speech delivered by a Menelaus, like Telemachus, Helen, Peisistratos, and others in the *Odyssey*.

I think that we can consider the short dialogue between Menelaus and Kleinias to be a sort of dramatization of the traditional interpretations of the *Odyssey* preserved by the scholia we have just read. The scholiasts point out parallels, they describe a fragment of literary history exhaustively, but not without pedantry—fundamentally, they do what the author of this paper is trying to do. Achilles Tatius represents the same literary history

through the actions and speeches of his characters: the dialogue between Menelaus and Kleinias is a sort of dramatized lesson in Greek literature. Needless to say, this “philological” slant also contributes to placing the ancient novels, or at least some of them, in the mainstream of the most sophisticated Hellenistic literature (Heliodoros also seems to be well aware of issues of Homeric criticism attested in the scholia: cf. Telò 1999 and Capettini 2008).

Selection of Secondary Characters

An aspect of the sophistication of Hellenistic literature is to look for models even in the most hidden folds of the epic tradition; again, this is true for the ancient novels, too, which shape their characters not only after Achilles and Odysseus, but also—as we have seen in the previous point—after secondary epic characters. This can be considered the continuation of a very ancient literary practice, since the *Odyssey*, as Genette (1997, 197) pointed out, already differentiates itself from the *Iliad* also because a secondary character from the former poem becomes the main character of the second.

At the beginning of Chariton’s novel, Callirhoe falls in love with Chaereas; in distress, she lies on her bed, covered by blankets, and cries. Her nurse soon comes to announce her that her wedding day has finally arrived; Callirhoe does not know that her groom will be none other than Chaereas, and her despair is described through a formulaic Homeric verse: “and then her limbs gave way, her heart felt faint” (quoted also at 3.6.3 and 4.5.9). In Homer, that verse is used in *Iliad* 21.4 (Lycaon killed by Achilles) and *Odyssey* 24.345 (Laertes recognizing Odysseus), but in this context the most important occurrence is certainly *Odyssey* 4.704, where Penelope is in despair at the news that her son has gone to search for his father. The identification of Callirhoe with Penelope is reinforced by the fact that the whole scene I have described here is a clear echo of the beginning of *Odyssey* Book 23, and Callirhoe’s nurse behaves exactly as Penelope’s nurse Eurykleia did. At 21.355ff., when the bow contest is about to come to its tragic ending, Telemachus sends Penelope to her rooms; there she lays on the bed, crying for Odysseus, until she falls asleep. Then, after Odysseus has killed all the suitors, Eurykleia comes and wakes her up (23.1ff.) to tell her that her husband has finally returned home.

This implicit but clear identification of Callirhoe’s nurse with Eurykleia (and of Callirhoe with Penelope) introduces us to a novel that we can imagine as something related to the *Odyssey*, but especially to the most emotive, familiar, and feminine parts of the poem. It is also a rather subtle literary joke, since it lets the reader imagine a surprisingly early happy ending—could Callirhoe/Penelope meet and happily marry her Odysseus just a few pages after the beginning of the novel? Clearly, it is the task of the skilled novelists to prevent this from happening: Chariton will achieve this goal a few lines later by bringing his reader to another Odyssean narrative situation, the machinations of the suitors (1.2.1 οἱ γὰρ μνηστῆρες...). Thus, we realize that the happy ending was just an illusion: the suitors are still alive, misadventures and tragedies loom large, and the story can unfold.

Clearly, secondary characters and secondary models can also have something important to say about the nature and the general structure of the novel; this appears to be an underestimated aspect of ancient novels, and it could provide a subject for further, profitable studies.

Mythomania

Epic characters live on, not only in the actions, but also in the aspirations and dreams of their novelistic counterparts, who try to dignify themselves through implicit comparisons with their noble ancestors. Of course, their attempts are not always successful, and in some cases the novelist himself seems to take pleasure in frustrating them. In the *Satyricon*, Encolpius and other characters often refer to themselves in so lofty and sublime terms that a sharp and parodic contrast with their “real” conditions is inescapable; as Gian Biagio Conte (1996) famously states, Petronius frequently highlights their “mythomaniac” nature.

This concept can easily be generalized, and more instances of this narrative strategy can be found in other novels. In Apuleius, for example, Charite relives in a dream the dramatic adventure of her kidnapping (4.27.7):

I saw myself, after I had been dragged violently from my house, my bridal apartment, my room, my very bed, calling my poor luckless husband’s name through the trackless wilds. And I saw him, the moment he was widowed of my embraces, still wet with perfumes and garlanded with flowers, following my tracks as I fled on other’s feet. As with pitiful cries he lamented his lovely wife’s kidnapping and called on the populace for aid, one of the robbers, furious at his annoying pursuit, picked up a huge stone at his feet, struck my unhappy young husband, and killed him. It was this hideous vision that terrified me and shook me out of my deathly sleep.

This oneiric kidnapping echoes the “real” kidnapping Charite has narrated just a page earlier (4.26.3–8) quite closely, except for few, but important details: in her dream, the maiden is already married and the bridegroom dies while pursuing the kidnappers and urging other people to do the same; in the previous narration, the kidnappers arrive when the marriage has not yet been celebrated, their incursion takes place in a purely domestic and not public context, nobody dares to confront them, and of course Charite’s fiancé, Tlepolemus, does not die. These divergent details reveal that this dream reproduces and distorts not only Charite’s “real” experience, but also a literary model, namely the simile Homer uses to describe Odysseus’ despair in *Odyssey* 8.521ff.:

... the heart of Odysseus was melted and tears wet his cheeks beneath his eyelids. And as a woman wails and flings herself about her dear husband, who has fallen in front of his city and his people, seeking to ward off from his city and his children the pitiless day; and as she beholds him dying and gasping for breath, she clings to him and shrieks aloud, while the foes behind her smite her back and shoulders with their spears, and lead her away to captivity to bear toil and woe, while with most pitiful grief her cheeks are wasted: even so did Odysseus let fall pitiful tears from beneath his brows.

Actually, this Homeric simile becomes a topos in later epic poetry; before Apuleius, it already develops into the dream of a woman in Apollonius Rhodius (3.656ff.: Medea), Ennius (*Annales* 1.25ff.: Iliia), and Vergil (*Aeneid* 4.465ff.: Dido). So, in her dream, Charite lives her (rather ordinary) story over again, but she also dignifies it by implicitly comparing it to a well-established epic tradition; she is clearly not a parodic character like Encolpius in Petronius, and there is no trace of a destabilization of her sublime and

pathetic dream by a “hidden author,” but it would not be inappropriate to define her, by adapting Conte’s terminology, as a “mythomaniac dreamer” (on Charite’s dream, see more thoroughly Graverini 2003).

Parody

Charite’s mythomany mainly adds to the pathetic quality of the narration and prepares her following, sustained identification with Vergil’s Dido (see Finkelppearl 1998, 115ff.). However, when a text suggests a comparison between an epic and a novelistic character, it often lays more stress on the distance that divides them than on their similarity: the result is usually parody that is not ignored by Greek novelists, but most often practiced by their Latin colleagues. Petronius, in particular, is especially fond of desecrating epic parallels; his “mythomaniac” Encolpius frequently styles himself after Homeric or Vergilian heroes, even in situations that can hardly be considered heroic. At 132.11, he addresses his male member with a furious speech, reproaching it for his limpness and the consequent erotic failures; the reaction of the “cause of all his misfortunes” is famously described with a quotation of *Aeneid* 6.469ff., two verses that describe Dido’s refusal to answer to Aeneas’ address to her in the Underworld: “But on the ground / She fixed averted eyes. For all he spoke / Moved her no more than ...”

This passage, as Connors (1998, 32) points out, “has struck readers as the most transgressive of the *Satyricon*’s epic parodies,” and there is no need to linger over a minute analysis of the interaction between the two texts and their contexts, and of the comical effects this interaction produces. I would rather point out that even such a disruptive use of epic material follows the same patterns we have seen are followed by other, more “conventional” novels. In particular, this Vergilian imitation clearly moves along the axis of genre shift: Dido, the most feminine character in the whole *Aeneid*, becomes not a man, but directly, and paradoxically, the most masculine part of his body. Such an extreme genre shift also activates the possibility of a sophisticated philological approach to this intertext: Vergil’s Dido, in fact, can be considered in turn as the reincarnation of Homeric *male* heroes, and Servius already noted that the verses that describe her obstinate and angry silence “are drawn from Homer, who represents Ajax refusing to speak to Odysseus, since he had caused his death” (cf. *Od.* 11.563). Servius’ suggestion has been duly exploited by modern scholars (e.g. Fedeli 1989, 396f), but there are more subtle possibilities. The first of the two verses I have quoted earlier appears to be an almost exact translation of *Iliad* 3.217, which illustrates Odysseus’ rhetorical skills: when the hero rose to speak, the first impression was rather surprising and he appeared to be angry or even foolish or mad, since he “would stand and look down with eyes fixed upon the ground”; but then he would begin to speak with a loud voice, and his words were “like snowflakes on a winter’s day” (222). Vergil’s heroine is *already* the result of a gender shift from male to female, and from heroic to erotic; her silence is more eloquent than a long and angry speech, just as Ajax’s silence in the *Odyssey* or, even more, the silence that precludes Odysseus’ powerful rhetoric in the *Iliad*. Petronius does nothing else but play with these same shifts, reversing and/or maximizing them: what was male in Homer and female in Vergil becomes male again (male *par excellence*) in Petronius; what was heroic in Homer and erotic (or at least love-related) in Vergil becomes hyper-

erotic and almost pornographic in the *Satyricon*; the eloquent and powerful silence of Odysseus, Ajax, and Dido becomes a simple matter of fact in the novel, since Encolpius’ interlocutor has nothing to say, and indeed *could* say nothing at all.

Conclusions

Epic poetry and prose narrative are so close, but they are separated by a cultural gap that is too big to be really filled. Because of this gap, as we have seen, the ancient novelists have to work on their models and adapt them to a very different context; this adaptation usually points out both the similarity and the distance between epic and novel. We can find an icon of this complex relationship in Heliodorus 5.22.2–3, the only instance where an epic hero plays a role in an ancient novel. Odysseus himself appears to Calasiris in a dream, but the Trojan war is so far in time that he cannot be Homer’s hero anymore: he is an old man “withered ... almost to a skeleton, except that his cloak was hitched up to reveal a thigh that retained some vestige of his youth.”⁴ He is not even a man anymore: as a dream apparition, he acquires a quasi-divine status. As a consequence, we have a very unexpected role reversal here: Odysseus, the prototype of the man who is persecuted by a god, becomes a persecutor himself and threatens Calasiris:

You, my fine friend, are the only man who has ever treated us with such utter contempt. All others whose ships have passed by the island of Kephallenia have paid a visit to our home and deemed it a matter of importance to learn of my own renown. You, on the other hand, have been so neglectful as to grant me not even the common courtesy of a salutation, despite my dwelling in the vicinity. But your omissions will be visited on you very soon. Ordeals like mine shall you undergo; land and sea you shall find united in enmity against you.

Odysseus is clearly pointing out, for the benefit of Heliodorus’ readers, that the story of Calasiris and his friends is a sort of *Odyssey*, whose characters are in a way his own offspring. However, he also tries not to give us a wrong impression. This new *Odyssey* has its own new features, and a different balance between genders is prominent among them. Therefore, in the last part of his speech, Penelope and Charikleia come to the fore:

However, to the maiden you have with you my wife sends greetings and wishes her joy, since she esteems chastity above all things. Good tidings too she sends her: her story has a happy ending.

Notes

- 1 There are some clues as to the fact that at least some novels were known, or at least commonly referred to simply by the name of their heroines: for example Michael Psellus, at the beginning of his essay on the comparison between Chariton and Achilles Tatius, refers to their novels as “the book of Charikleia” and “the love story of Leucippes.”
- 2 HA 17: “the king’s daughter, when she saw that the young man was accomplished in all arts and skills, was wounded by burning passion.” Here and elsewhere, I adopt the English

translations provided by Reardon 1989 for the ancient novels, and from the Loeb collection for the other texts (when available; otherwise, the translations are mine). Occasional small adaptations are not noted.

- 3 This comment is a very early theorization of a common modern hermeneutical principle: the emotional response of a character in the narrative can be interpreted as a mirror of or a guideline for the emotional response that is expected from the reader.
- 4 Odysseus' thigh is an unmistakable sign of his identity in the three most important stages of his life: in his youth when he is wounded during a boar hunt that marks the beginning of his adulthood; as a grown-up, when Eurykleia recognizes him thanks to the scar left by that hunting feat and he is about to win back his reign and his wife; and, thanks to Heliodorus, who is clearly expanding on this Homeric tradition, in his old years, when he is nothing but a dream apparition that tries to influence the destiny of one of his many late literary descendants.

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Further Readings

Illuminating discussions on the relationship between epic and novel on a more general level are contained in several works by Massimo Fusillo, among which I mention his paper of 2005 "Metamorfosi romanesche dell'epica," in *La poésie épique grecque: métamorphoses d'un genre littéraire* ("Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique," 52), 271–273 (Vandoeuvres-Genève: Fondation Hardt); and his 2002 "Fra epica e romanzo," in *Il romanzo*, edited by Franco Moretti, vol. II: *Le forme*, 5–34 (Turin: Einaudi).

For a general approach to the problem in Bakhtinian terms, very useful insights are provided by Kahane, Ahuvia. 2005. "Epic, Novel, Genre: Bakhtin and the Question of History," in *The Bakhtin Circle and Ancient Narrative*, edited by R. Bracht Branham (*Ancient Narrative*, Suppl. 3). Groningen: Barkhuis, pp. 51–73.

The Latin novels provide an especially fruitful field for intertextual researches on the epic models of ancient narrative, and a great number of detailed studies have been produced. For Petronius, the best starting point is Gian Biagio Conte's monograph, already listed in the bibliography. For Apuleius, see various studies by Stephen J. Harrison, now collected in his volume *Framing the Ass. Literary Texture in Apuleius' Metamorphoses*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013. Useful starting points for further enquiries can be found in two other monographs already referred to in the paper for matters of detail, Finkelpearl 1998 and Graverini 2012.

On the "heroes" and characters of the ancient novels (but with no necessary connection to their epic models), see the collective volumes *Les personnages du roman grec*, edited by Bernard Pouderon, Lyon: Maison de l'Orient Méditerranéen 2001; and *Characterisation in Apuleius' Metamorphoses: Eight Studies*, edited by Stephen J. Harrison, forthcoming.