

Ἀμῆχανόν τι κάλλος. Re-evaluating the Concept of Beauty in Heliodorus' *Aithiopika*

Ἀμῆχανόν τι κάλλος. Una revaluación del concepto de belleza en las *Etiópicas* de Heliodoro

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ABSTRACT: Of the extant ancient Greek novels, Heliodorus' *Aithiopika* is by far the most 'sophisticated'. One of its topics is the virtually irresistible, and almost 'divine', beauty of both protagonists, Theagenes and Charicleia. Whereas earlier scholarship brought Heliodorean beauty into line with Platonic concepts and highlighted its ethical value or even metaphysical character, this article tries to throw into relief another aspect of Heliodorean κάλλος, emphasising a link between the *Aithiopika* and rhetorical exercises based on beauty. Thus, κάλλος makes explicit the persuasive effect of the text itself. By means of Heliodorus' art of description, the quality of beauty also bears meta-literary implications. The *Aithiopika*, consequently, advertise in a self-referential way their own rhetorical attraction and persuasiveness.

KEYWORDS: Heliodorus, Novel, Protagonists, Beauty Concept, Persuasiveness

RESUMEN: De las novelas griegas antiguas que se conservan, las *Etiópicas* de Heliodoro son por mucho las más 'sofisticadas'. Uno de sus temas es la belleza virtualmente irresistible y casi divina de ambos protagonistas, Teágenes y Cariclea. Mientras que anteriormente se asociaba la belleza en Heliodoro con conceptos platónicos y se subrayaba su valor ético o incluso su carácter metafísico, este artículo intenta resaltar otro aspecto del κάλλος heliodoreano, poniendo énfasis en el nexo entre las *Etiópicas* y algunos ejercicios retóricos basados en la belleza. Así, κάλλος vuelve explícito el efecto persuasivo del texto mismo. Mediante el arte heliodoreano de la descripción, la cualidad de la belleza revela implicaciones metaliterarias. Por consiguiente, las *Etiópicas* dejan ver de manera autoreferencial su propio atractivo retórico y fuerza persuasiva.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Heliodoro, novela, protagonistas, concepto de belleza, fuerza persuasiva

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No doubt he was conscious himself of the improbability of the story and strove painfully to make it sound more likely, to weave it into a romance that would sound plausible.¹

The Brothers Karamazov, part IV, book XII, ch. 6.

Regarding its style and creative approach to its earlier literary tradition, Heliodorus' *Aithiopia* —usually dated to the third or fourth century CE²— is, apart from being the lengthiest and latest of the extant ancient Greek love novels, undoubtedly also the most 'sophisticated'.³ For in the *Aithiopia*, Heliodorus of Emesa reworked the popular novel genre, generating a complex narrative architecture in ten books, which consist of a multi-layered plot that unfolds in an anachronic form:⁴ the homecoming of the princess Charicleia to Aithiopia. One of the central topics of the text is the virtually irresistible, and almost 'divine', beauty of both protagonists, Theagenes and Charicleia.⁵ From the beginning to the end of the novel, beauty has a strongly aesthetic, and thus a self-referential, value in Heliodorus, as the effect of κάλλος is related to the one which emanates from the shining sunlight.⁶ Compare, for example, the first words of the novel (1.1.1: Ἡμέρας ἄρτι διαγελώσης καὶ ἡλίου τὰς ἀκρωρείας καταυγάζοντος) with a later passage, where Charicleia's garment radiates the brilliant sun: (1.2.5) πρὸς τὸν ἡλίον ἀνταυγαζούσης.⁷ Moreover, 'beaming' beauty is not only correlated with sun, but also with lightning.⁸ And eventually, as emerges from the final

¹ Dostoyevsky 1912, p. 815. From the speech of the prosecutor Ippolit Kirillovitch. A little later in the novel, the defendant Fetyukovitch ironically responds to Kirillovitch's above quoted words in his own speech, saying: "It is worse if we are carried away by the artistic instinct, by the desire to create, so to speak, a romance, especially if God has endowed us with psychological insight" (*Ibid.*, p. 823, ch. 10). I am grateful to Aldo Tagliabue for commenting on a draft version of this article, and to the anonymous reviewers of *Nova Tellus*.

² Morgan 1996, pp. 417-421 and Tagliabue 2016, p. 398 n. 3 offer useful discussions about the date of the *Aithiopia* with further references.

³ On general overviews on the *Aithiopia*, cf. Morgan 1982, 1992, 1993, 1996 and Hunter 1998. The first English monograph dedicated to Heliodorus is Sandy 1982, in German Paulsen 1992. Elmer 2008 tracks down Heliodorus' intertexts. Bühler 1976 is a classic on the initial scene of the novel, which he compares to a film setting. On the same scene, cf. (amongst others) Bartsch 1989, pp. 47-50, Livibella Furiani 2003, pp. 417-419, Grethlein 2017, pp. 77-80, Lefteratou 2018, pp. 95-97.

⁴ On the innovative narrative technique of the *Aithiopia*, cf. e.g. Winkler 1999, Hunter 2014, Grethlein 2016.

⁵ On beauty in Greek antiquity see Most 1992 and, as a more extensive approach to the subject, Konstan 2014. On classical Greek sculpture, see Clark 1985, pp. 9-22.

⁶ Cf. already Rohde 1876/⁵1974, pp. 436-438 on the programmatic role of the sun for Heliodorus' novel. At the end of book 10 the protagonist Theagenes is dedicated to Helios as a priest.

⁷ Cf. Hld., 3.3.4 (Theagenes' appearance compared to a lightning); 3.4.5 (Charicleia's hair gleams like the sun); 7.7.7 (Charicleia's shining eyes as sunbeams). See also Chariton, 4.1.9. Cf. Keul-Deutscher 1996, pp. 324-325.

⁸ Cf. 1.2.5; 3.3.4; 7.7.7; 7.10.3; 10.9.3. Cf. Ach. Tat., 1.19.1; 2.1.2; 5.1.1.

paratext of the novel (10.41.4),⁹ the author's name, Heliodorus, may be appropriate for someone who calls himself a Descendant of the Sun and whose work praises the god Helios.

Earlier scholarship has essentially brought beauty in Heliodorus into line with Platonic concepts of the term and highlighted both its ethical value and even its metaphysical character.¹⁰ This view takes its starting point from the novelistic topos of focusing on the divine beauty of the protagonists, which indeed deserves discussion: according to Meike Keul-Deutscher, the concept of beauty in Heliodorus is, first, beyond all criticism, as its elements are associated with virtues such as εὐγένεια, αἰδώς, and σωφροσύνη. Secondly, beauty as an ideal concept in Heliodorus is according to her not only based on an ethical foundation, it is in addition even related to divine favour.¹¹ Thus, she places Heliodorus' treatment of human beauty within the Platonic tradition, that is, as mainly oriented towards a philosophical ideal, as is maintained especially by Plato in his Theory of Forms and somewhat later Plotinus.¹² Thirdly, Keul-Deutscher distinguishes κάλλος as an ethical, quasi-religious phenomenon in Heliodorus' novel from those written by the generic predecessors.¹³

⁹ Τοῦνδε πέρας ἔσχε τὸ σύνταγμα τῶν περὶ Θεαγένην καὶ Χαρίκλειαν Αἰθιοπικῶν· ὁ συντάξεν ἀνὴρ Φοῖνιξ Ἐμισσηνός, τῶν ἀφ' Ἡλίου γένος, Θεοδοσίου παῖς Ἡλιόδωρος (“So concludes the *Aithiopika*, the story of Theagenes and Charicleia, the work of a Phoenician from the city of Emesa, one of the clan of Descendants of the Sun, Theodosios' son, Heliodoros”). See Núñez 2009 on the narrator-author relationship in the novel. On text and translation of Heliodorus see below, nn. 20-21.

¹⁰ This view is represented by Keul-Deutscher 1996, cf. esp. pp. 331-332 the comparison with Platonic and Neoplatonist concepts of beauty. From a different perspective, Hani 1978, p. 271 compared the *Aithiopika* to Plato's *Phaedrus*. Dowden 1996, p. 280, on the other hand, associated the novel with Plotinus' *Ennead on Beauty* (1.6), thereby highlighting the mystic overtones in Heliodorus, which according to him are seriously employed — contrary to the perspective of, *inter alia*, Winkler 1999. Cf. Whitmarsh 2002, p. 117: “Beauty, which is here not just a physical attribute, but also (in Heliodorus) an index of ethical virtue and metaphysical favour”. On the convention observed in the Greek love novels, taking as its beginning Chariton, to compare the beauty of its heroines with the statues of goddesses, see Bierl 2002, pp. 10-14. In my view, we encounter in Heliodorus a refined philosophical tone, but there is no recognizable uniform philosophical or theological system. This is complemented by the general impression that aesthetic aspects still remain understudied in this novel.

¹¹ Keul-Deutscher 1996, pp. 322-325. Cf. de Temmerman 2014, pp. 246-277. For Montiglio 2013, pp. 65-105, beauty in the novels serves as a generic signal of the protagonists' origins that becomes pivotal as the recognition approaches (although we observe e.g. Achilles Tatius playfully challenging these novelistic stereotypes).

¹² Keul-Deutscher 1996, pp. 330-333, esp. p. 331 (“[...] legt den Schluß nahe, daß sich Heliodor an einer philosophischen Grundlage orientiert”). According to Liviabella Furiani 2003, pp. 420-428 the *Aithiopika* mirror a philosophical debate concerning the primacy of optic vs. acoustic senses in the perception of beauty.

¹³ It would require more space to analyze the similarities and differences between the Greek novels concerning the concept of κάλλος. However, I shall mention one common aspect in all

In my view, however, beauty in the *Aithiopia* is not beyond all criticism in a way that Keul-Deutscher wants us to believe. Although the different psychological reactions of Heliodorus' internal audiences to beauty (some react with awe and timidity, others with impertinence and without any inhibitions),¹⁴ could be harmonized by pointing to Plato's *Phaedrus* as a model, where two types of souls are described in their different reactions to κάλλος (250e-251a),¹⁵ my article reveals that beauty in Heliodorus appears rather as a multidimensional aesthetic concept. This in turn leads me to a second critical thought: without completely excluding its ethical, especially Platonic, and religious dimensions, the concept of beauty is in addition and in particular related to aesthetic and rhetorical values and sensorial aspects, which earlier scholarship seems mostly to have underrated. Instead of simply elucidating ethical or metaphysical positions, Heliodorus rather plays knowingly with its own aesthetic effects, inviting its readership to reflect upon the multilayered mediations applied.

With this in mind, this article tries to throw into relief another, principally aesthetic, aspect of Heliodorean κάλλος.¹⁶ Beauty, as I argue, serves as a

the novels, which Keul-Deutscher clearly underestimates, i.e. that beauty is above all considered a sensual and erotic phenomenon (cf. Liviabella Furiani 2003, pp. 432-434). Thus, in Hld., 7.9-10 Theagenes' beauty arouses the sexual desire of Cybele and Arsace. The mutual love of the two protagonists is contrasted with the erotic promiscuity of Thisbe and Arsace. Therefore, I consider that the philosophical model of ideal love which Keul-Deutscher 1997 attributes to Heliodorus' novel, even though she acknowledges the existence of various counter-figures (*Gegenfiguren*, cf. pp. 353-358), relies on a rather simplistic view and does not take into account the different perspectives of the narrative polyphony within the novel figures' world(s). Similarly, the heroes in Xenophon and Chariton become victims of their own beauty (κάλλος), which for them becomes a moment of threat and ruin. Cf. X. Eph., 2.1.3; 5.5.3; 5.5.5; 5.7.2 and Chariton, 1.14.8; 5.5.3; 6.6.4; 7.5.3. But see Apu., *Met.*, 4.29.5, where Venus gets envious of Psyche's beauty (4.28.2-3: *pulchritudo, formositas*). In Achilles Tatius (e.g. Ach. Tat., 1.4.2-5), and in Longus (Long., 1.13.1-4; 1.32.4), descriptions of beauty are characterized by its inherent sensuality. However, Montiglio 2013, pp. 95-101 assigns to beauty the function —especially in Longus— to distinguish the protagonists from poor country folks and indicate their noble descent. On beauty as status symbol in the novels, cf. Dubel 2001 (κάλλος rather concerns the impression, which the heroines and heroes produce in their social environment). On beauty in Achilles Tatius, cf. Kauffman 2015. On the beauty of Chariton's Callirhoe, which aims at appealing to a wide (internal and external) audience, cf. Schmelting 2005.

¹⁴ E.g. in the 'Persian' episode, set in Memphis, where Theagenes becomes the object of the desire of Arsace, the sister of the Great King.

¹⁵ This view is held, e.g., by Keul-Deutscher 1996, p. 331.

¹⁶ Recent approaches to the *Aithiopia* either focus on the religious or metaphysical aspects negotiated in and by the text —cf. esp. Papadimitropoulos 2013, e.g. p. 111 ("a kind of spiritual journey, which is not so dissimilar to the journey of the soul on earth as described in Plato's *Phaedrus*")— or otherwise envisage Heliodorus' sophisticated narrative technique, on which see Núñez 2009, Hunter 2014, Grethlein 2016. On the fertile employment of narratology and cognitive studies on Heliodorus, cf. Grethlein 2015, 2015a. Regarding earlier narratological aspects of the novel, John R. Morgan's analyses offer a good starting point: cf. Morgan 1989a,

central hermeneutical keyword within Heliodorus' novel: in a self-referential way, the text makes explicit the persuasive effect of its own descriptive passages, which becomes especially visible on the basis of the internal beholders' perception of the main characters' beauty. These internally conveyed reader responses offer to the external reader a corresponding type of reaction to the descriptive art of the author, by which the protagonists are in turn created.¹⁷ I will demonstrate the self-reflexive and sophisticated quality that is inherent in Heliodorean *κάλλος* by connecting the beauty of Theagenes and Charicleia and the use of *κάλλος* in rhetorical texts.

Let us start by looking more closely at Heliodorus' text: wherever both young people show up, they arouse the emotions of their fellows and onlookers. This we can observe right from the opening scene of the novel, where the reader is presented with a visual introductory tableau.¹⁸ This tableau displays the scenery of a carnage which has taken place only a short time ago, and is internally focalized through the eyes of a band of Egyptian brigands,¹⁹ who do not understand at all what has happened or what is happening:

1.2.1. Ἦδη δὲ αὐτοῖς κειμηλιόσιν ἄποθεν μικρὸν τῆς τε νεῶς καὶ τῶν κειμένων θέαμα προσπίπτει τῶν προτέρων ἀπορώτερον· κόρη καθήστο ἐπὶ πέτρας, ἀμήχανόν τι κάλλος καὶ θεὸς εἶναι ἀναπειθούσα, τοῖς μὲν παροῦσι περιαλωγούσα φρονήματος δὲ εὐγενοῦς ἔτι πνέουσα.²⁰

They had reached a point of short distance from the ship and the bodies when they found themselves confronted by a sight even more inexplicable than what they had seen before. On a rock sat a girl, a creature of such indescribable beauty that one might have taken her for a goddess.²¹

In the following description, the pirates predominantly focus on the corporeal aspect of Charicleia:²² they successively observe the young maiden's

1994, 1998, 2007. The exploration of the novel's self-referentiality in Winkler 1999 has been influential.

¹⁷ Some scholars have highlighted the text's multileveled concern with the aesthetic immersions of internal viewers and external readers. Cf. Whitmarsh 2011, pp. 172-175, Grethlein 2017, pp. 107, 123-125 (the *Aithiopika* as a 'meta-narrative'), Wolf 2020, pp. 355, 359.

¹⁸ On this scene, cf. e.g. Bartsch 1989, pp. 47-50, Grethlein 2017, pp. 77-80, Lefteratou 2018, pp. 95-97.

¹⁹ Cf. Hld., 1.1.1 (ἐπὶ τὸν πλησίον αἰγιαλὸν τῆ θέα κατήγοντο); 1.2.7 (Ταῦτα ὁρῶντες οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι πρὸς ἑτέρας ἐννοίας τὴν γνώμην μετέβαλλον).

²⁰ Heliodorus' Greek is quoted from the Budé series edition of Rattenbury/Lumb/Maillon 1960³.

²¹ The translation of the *Aithiopika* is Morgan's: cf. Morgan 1989, in Reardon's collection of English translations of the Greek love novels, from which — unless otherwise indicated — I have taken all translations of passages from novels in this article.

²² Though even the pirates attribute to her aspect a corresponding inner virtue, e.g. when they describe in her an "air of courage and nobility".

head, her shoulders, arms, hands, fingers, and again her head, thereby applying to their gazes a downward direction over her body, which in the end is lifted again.²³ Eventually, they follow Charicleia's own gaze to the "manly beauty" (1.2.3: ἀνδρείῳ τῷ κάλλει) of the young man lying at her feet, who, despite his obvious pain, manages to direct his eyes towards the girl. When Charicleia stands up, the armed pirates are terrified and cover themselves, under the impression that they are witnessing the epiphany of a goddess, supposedly Artemis or Isis (cf. also 10.9.3).²⁴ Here the term ἀναπεῖθιν is remarkable, which, appearing as a participle ἀναπέιθουσα in 1.2.1, refers to Charicleia and is syntactically juxtaposed to ἀμήχανόν τι κάλλος, i.e. her indescribable —or rather irresistible or inimitable²⁵— beauty. It is mainly beauty's persuasive effect which *makes* the brigands *believe* that they are witnessing the epiphany of a goddess and which *makes* them *associate* beauty with divinity.²⁶ Here, for the first time in the novel, we grasp the persuasive power of κάλλος, which prompts the viewers to make certain assumptions (e.g. in identifying the protagonist with a peculiar divine power). Many other examples can be listed, where the protagonists' κάλλος in Heliodorus affects other figures' actions or intentions and where this beauty may even perform a key narrative function: whereas Charicleia captivates the Nile pirates by her ἀμήχανόν τι καὶ δαιμόνιον κάλλος (2.30.6; cf. 1.2.1; 3.3.4; 5.9.2), which emanates mainly from the brilliance of her flashing eyes (2.4.3), the sight of Theagenes' persuades the people staring at him to think him an embodiment of masculine beauty (1.2.3: ἦνθει δὲ καὶ ἐν τούτοις ἀνδρείῳ τῷ κάλλει) and a true descendant of the great hero Achilles (4.5.5).²⁷ The human environment

²³ On the construction of gender roles through the representations of vision (man sees, woman is seen and controlled) in Achilles Tatius, see Morales 2004. Leucippe, from Morales' perspective, is subjected to the gaze of other characters, but her beauty conversely has a kind of power over these viewers, though it does not overturn the gendered divisions of the gaze. On beauty as an artful narratorial construction in Achilles Tatius, cf. Kauffman 2015, who sees a self-reflexive quality in Achilles' depictions of 'unreal' and 'incredible' beauty.

²⁴ Cf. Hld., 1.2.6 (οἱ μὲν γὰρ θεὸν τινα ἔλεγον, καὶ θεὸν Ἄρτεμιν ἢ τὴν ἐγγώριον Ἴσιν); see also X. Eph., 1.2.7, Chariton, 1.1.2 (ἦν γὰρ τὸ κάλλος οὐκ ἀνθρώπινον ἀλλὰ θεῖον, οὐδὲ Νηρηΐδος ἢ Νύμφης τῶν ὁρειῶν ἀλλ' αὐτῆς Ἀφροδίτης); 5.2.6; 6.3.5. Similarly, in Apuleius' *Cupid and Psyche*, Psyche prompts her many admirers to guess she herself is the goddess of love (Apu., 4.28.3: *inaccessae formositatis admiratione stupidi et [...] ut ipsam prorsus deam Venerem religiosius <venerabantur> adorationibus*; 4.31.1 *spectatur ab omnibus, laudatur ab omnibus*; 4.31.2: *mirantur quidem divinam speciem, sed ut simulacrum fabre politum mirantur omnes*).

²⁵ Cf. LSJ s. v. ἀμήχανος on the semantic sphere of this almost untranslatable word.

²⁶ On Charicleia's epiphany, see Whitmarsh 1998. Cf. Chariton 3.2.15 beauty's similar persuasive effects on its beholders: τὸ δὲ δημωδέστερον πλῆθος ἀνεπίθετο διὰ τὸ κάλλος καὶ τὸ ἄγνωστον τῆς γυναίκος ὅτι Νηρηΐς ἐκ θαλάσσης ἀναβέβηκεν ἢ ὅτι θεὰ πάρεστιν ἐκ τῶν Διονυσίου κτημάτων· τοῦτο γὰρ οἱ αὐτὰ διελάουσι.

²⁷ Especially striking in this passage is the juridical vocabulary, which takes κάλλος as a sign or proof of Theagenes' aristocratic pedigree and of his noble descent from Achilles

of both protagonists is, so to speak, thunderstruck by their excelling beauty and nobility (8.17.2: κάλλει δὲ καὶ εὐγενείᾳ διαπρόεποντας): there seems to be nothing that anyone can do about it. The common people especially are overwhelmed by the protagonists' κάλλος: the crowd which is allured by their beauty is unable (ἀμήχανοι, ἀδύνατοι) to control their inner emotions by any form of self-restraint (3.3.8: τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς πάθος ἐγκρατεία κρύπτειν ἀδύνατοι; cf. 4.3.2-4). Both male and female sexes, Greeks and barbarians (e.g. 2.33.3),²⁸ are affected (3.3.8).²⁹ Only the two protagonists, through their outstanding κάλλος, experience πάθος and Eros' tortures (4.10.5) equally, suffering τὸ ἴσον πάθος by the other one's sight.³⁰

Regarding Heliodorus' narration, the δύναμις of beauty to civilize 'even' barbarians' hearts³¹ may advance the story or provoke an unexpected turn of events, more often to the better.³² And throughout the novel, beauty makes the readers speculate on the couple's high birth. Admittedly, this may favour an interpretation that focuses on beauty's participation in divine and numinous power,³³ since wonder (θαῦμα) is also a kind of reaction related to epiphanies from the gods. Nevertheless, I would like to concentrate rather on the persuasive effect of godlike κάλλος: obviously, it changes and affects the emotions of the beholders of καλά. These are filled with admiration,

(ἀναφέρει δὲ ἑαυτὸν εἰς Ἀχιλλέα πρόγονον καὶ μοι καὶ ἐπαληθεύειν ἔοικεν, εἰ δεῖ τῷ μεγέθει καὶ τῷ κάλλει τοῦ νεανίου τεκμαίρεσθαι, πιστουμένων τὴν Ἀχιλλεῖον εὐγένειαν). On the pivotal role of the young Achilles in elite education during the (Late) Roman Imperial Period, see Cameron 2009.

²⁸ Thus, Liviabella Furiani 2013, pp. 428-434, differentiates three aspects of visual experience of beauty in the *Aithiopiaka*. According to her, it is universal and equal among all persons and peoples (1). Beauty follows an aesthetic canon of proportion and symmetry (2). This experience implies a strong erotic connotation (3).

²⁹ One famous exception proves this rule concerning the power of beauty: the only one to resist successfully to Charicleia is the old and wise Calasiris, who at an earlier occasion in Delphi has experienced Charicleia's beauty, as a result of which he is not, one may conclude, ἀπειρόκαλος. Compared with the other figures in the novel, he does not succumb to her beauty, and what is more, he is even able to respond to this impression through a well-versed description of her (Hld., 3.6.2), thereby corresponding to the Imperial ideal of a πεπαιδευμένος, as e.g. constructed in Lucian's *De Domo*.

³⁰ Comparably, in Apuleius the *pulcherrima* Psyche is attracted by the palace of Cupid, which is just as beautiful as she is herself (4.28.2: *prolectante studio pulcherrimae visionis rimatur singula*).

³¹ Cf. 5.7.3; 8.9.4.

³² Cf. 2.30-31: Sisimithres and Charicles adopt the foundling, 8.9.9: the Persian judges refrain from an execution by stoning; 10.9.5: the Aithiopians wish Charicleia to be spared from sacrifice; 10.39: the Aithiopian gymnosophists resolve to abolish human sacrifice in the future. Cf. Keul-Deutscher 1996, p. 326, who certainly overstates the ethical implications of the function of κάλλος.

³³ Cf. Keul-Deutscher 1996, pp. 325-327. Ironically, however, in Apuleius, the association of human beauty with divinity — *Met.*, 4.29.5 characterised as *inmodica translatio* — causes the *indignatio* of the gods.

astonishment, and amazement, and some hearts are utterly enraptured with the beautiful protagonists.³⁴ Thus, the protagonists' particular attractiveness radiates a highly gripping effect, which elicits in the beholders — as also in the internal recipients of κάλλος — strong psychological reactions. Among these are repeatedly θαύμα (“wonder”),³⁵ ἐκπληξις (“confusion”),³⁶ and, more generally, πάθος (“affect”, “emotional suffering”).³⁷ Notably, all these terms point towards concepts which denote successful rhetorical illumination (ἐνάργεια) by means of a speech (λόγος), which appeals to all senses of its recipients.³⁸ Already the rhetorician Gorgias of Leontinoi (ca. 485-380 BCE), a leading representative of the first sophistic movement, writes about the πάθημα διὰ τῶν λόγων (*Hel.*, 58-59), the inner suffering provoked by words: in a similar fashion, through her extreme physical and godlike beauty, Helen had the power to arouse the desire of unnumerable men (*Hel.*, 19-25, especially §19 on her ισόθειον κάλλος). Analogously again, Gorgias enables λόγος (speech, but also poetry) to create in the listeners particular forms of inner passion, such as anxious shiver, tearful compassion, and painful desire. Later in the fourth century BCE, Aristotle in his *Rhetoric* attributed to πάθος a central function in inducing persuasion (*Rh.*, 1356a; 1377b-1378a), by which the audience of a speech is usually carried away with enthusiasm (*Rh.*, 1408a-b);³⁹ for Aristotle, πάθος obtains a pivotal function as technical proof (ἐντεχνος πίστις), in line with argumentation (λόγος) and the speaker's character (ἦθος). It affects the judgment of the addressees and prompts them to be filled with enthusiasm. And later still for Ps.-Longinus, excessive and enthusiastic πάθος (as a source of ὕψος, lit. “height”; but here “grandeur”)⁴⁰

³⁴ Cf. *inter alios* Thyamis 1.19.7-1.20.2, the Tyrian merchant 5.19; 5.21.1, or the pirate Trachinos 5.20.6, all of whom chase the beautiful Charicleia.

³⁵ Cf. e.g. Hld., 1.2.5; 1.3.6 (θαυμάζειν); 3.4.8. But see also X. Eph., 1.2.5; 2.2.4; 3.2.6; 5.7.3, Chariton e.g. 1.1.16; 2.2.8. Θαύμα is not only a reaction to beautiful things, but also a reaction to rhetorical enchantment, cf. Pi., *P.*, 1.26 (θαύμα ἀκούσαι) and Pl., *Sph.*, 233a8-9 (τὸ τῆς σοφιστικῆς δυνάμεως θαύμα).

³⁶ Cf. Hld., 1.2.5; 1.3.5; 3.3.8 (ἐκπλήττειν); 3.4.8. On the description of similar effects in the other Greek novels, cf. X. Eph., 1.2.7 (1.12.1: καταπεπληγότες), Chariton, 5.3.9, Ach. Tat., 1.4.5. Notably, Aeschin., *Or.* 1.134 makes ἐκπληξις as a reaction to κάλλος explicit (κάλλει [...] διενεργόντες ἐκπλήξωσί τινας).

³⁷ Cf. esp. Hld., 3.3.8; Ach. Tat., 1.9.1. On the πάθος caused by love cf. 8.5.1. Goldhill 2007, pp. 3-8 and Zeitlin 2013 highlight the strong emotional impacts of ekphrases onto their audiences.

³⁸ Such vividness is central to effective oratory: cf. Quint., 6.2.32 (ἐνάργεια, *quae a Cicero-ne inlustratio et evidentia nominatur*).

³⁹ In *Rhetoric III*, Aristotle's advice concerns the use of style which enhances the effect of πάθος. Overlong monstrosities of words or an old-fashioned style may carry away an audience, provided that the orator exhibits a credible degree of enthusiasm, which in turn may emphasize rational dimensions. But for Aristotle, the influencing of the audience by the orator also appeals to reason and is carried out by the means of argumentation.

⁴⁰ On τὸ σφοδρὸν καὶ ἐνθουσιαστικὸν πάθος, cf. Ps.-Longinus, *Sublim.*, 8.1.6 and generally *Sublim.*, 9-15.

is produced by solemn motives, amplification, the successful imitation of literary models, and the use of imagery (φαντασία).⁴¹

If we take a close look at the word κάλλος itself, we discover that in rhetorical theory it was also coined to denote a technical term and even a stylistic category. In the Imperial Age, when the Greek novels were composed, its use was described by model exercises in Greek prose composition and rhetoric, which were taught as a standard curriculum to anyone who was educated independent of their literary ambitions, and was thus available to any student of style. Hermogenes of Tarsus (ca. 160-230 CE) in his rhetorical textbook *Περὶ ιδεῶν*, which as a standard work had a far-reaching effect from late antiquity onwards, regarded κάλλος as a keyword. In this sophisticated treatise on the systematic recording and evaluation of stylistic criteria, Hermogenes categorized certain stylistic forms (ιδέαι). Each one is described and documented with literary material. Stylistic mastery, he says, arises through the perfect mixture of such ιδέαι. The twelfth chapter (*id.* 1.12: *Περὶ ἐπιμελείας καὶ κάλλους*) deals widely with elegance (or care in composition) and beauty. Hermogenes considers beauty above all as a matter of harmony and apt proportion:

1.12.20-30. ἐπειδὴ γὰρ καθόλου τὸ κάλλος ἐστὶ συμμετρία μελῶν καὶ μερῶν μετ' εὐχροίας, δι' ὧν δὴ λόγος τις γίνεται, εἴτε ιδεῶν ὅλων μίγνυμένων εἰς ταῦτόν εἴτε καὶ τῶν συμπληρούντων ἑκάστην ιδέαν – ταῦτα γὰρ οἷον μέλη καὶ μέρη ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ –, δεῖ δὴπουθεν, εἰ μέλλοι καλὸς ἔσσεσθαι, ἂν τε ποικίλος ἂν τε μονοειδὴς ἦ, συμμετρίαν ἔχειν τούτων, ὅ ἐστιν εὐαρμοσίαν, καὶ τινα ἐπανθεῖν αὐτῷ οἷον εὐχροίαν, τὴν ἐμφαινομένην διόλου μίαν τοῦ ἤθους ποιότητα, ἣν δὴ καὶ φύσει τινὲς χρώμα λόγου ὀνομάζουσι.⁴²

In general, beauty is a symmetry of limbs and parts, along with a good complexion, and it is through these that a speech [*lógos*] becomes [beautiful], whether entire types [of style] are combined into the same [speech] or they [sc. the elements] make up each type individually, for these are, as it were, their limbs and parts. It is necessary, then, if a speech is to be beautiful [*kalós*], whether it is variegated or uniform, that it have symmetry among these, that is, harmony, and that a kind of good complexion bloom upon it, which takes the form of a single quality of character throughout, and which some indeed naturally call the color of a speech.⁴³

⁴¹ We might add that πάθος is generally a keyword for the ancient Greek love novel: most prominently and programmatically, the word πάθος (ἐρωτικόν) opens Chariton's text, probably the earliest extant work of Greek prose fiction, following the paratextual (resp. peritextual) naming of the author ("My name is Chariton, of Aphrodisias"). The translation of the first sentence reads: "I am going to tell you the story of a love affair that took place in Syracuse", cf. Chariton 3.2.6.

⁴² On the text cf. Patillon 2012.

⁴³ Transl. by Konstan 2014, p. 101. Harmony and proportion form the basics of the famous sculptor Polyclitus' (second half of fifth c. BCE) aesthetic theory, which he expounded in his

Hermogenes thus follows Plato (*Phaedrus*, 264c) in constructing an analogy between a beautiful body and a discourse (λόγος), making a comparison between a well-organized, that is well-proportioned, speech and the human form. By attributing κάλλος to discourse or speech, Hermogenes underlines the power of λόγος on an audience, which is overwhelmed not by logical arguments but rather by stylistic, that is aesthetic, effects. At the same time, the term κάλλος (as a category of style) “does not entirely lose its connection with the visible and continues to bear, however lightly, overtones of attractiveness and perhaps a quasi-erotic, or at least sensual, appeal”.⁴⁴ Thus, Hermogenes’ stylistic criteria for κάλλος in a verbal text seem not only to suit ekphraseis representing beauty in the *Aithiopia*, but also the effective and vivid descriptions of the beauty of the characters. In Heliodorus, one can detect connections between ἐνάργεια (*inlustratio, evidentia*) and the kind of stylistic symmetry that Hermogenes sees as the basis of κάλλος in a text. Following the first vivid description of the protagonists’ beauty at the beginning of the novel, e.g., the narrator comments on the effect that such κάλλος exerts on its spectators, the Egyptian brigands: Hld., 1.4.3 Οὕτως εὐγενείας ἔμφασις καὶ κάλλους ὄψις καὶ ληστορικὸν ἦθος οἶδεν ὑποτάπτειν καὶ κρατεῖν καὶ τῶν ἀρχμηροτέρων δύναται. Here, syntactic parallelism and chiasmus create a symmetry of style, rendering the beauty of the characters a figure for the novelist’s descriptonal technique.

Secondly, in a rhetorical textbook composed in late antiquity, belonging most probably to a later date than the *Aithiopia* (whatever the precise chronological relationship between the two), we encounter a remarkable set description concerning the creation of κάλλος, which resembles its use in Heliodorus’ novel in many ways. This exciting text is transmitted among exercises in rhetorical and literary description (ἔκφρασις) within the work of the Greek sophist Libanius of Antioch (fourth c. CE).⁴⁵ Although Richard Foerster declared the *Descr.* 30 to be spurious and attributed it to an anonymous rhetorician (Ps.-Libanius),⁴⁶ this exercise on ἔκφρασις κάλλους is a valuable document, signifying the huge range of its author’s literary expertise. It can be read as an instruction on how to depict ‘beauty’ in a

treatise called *Canon*, and whose theoretical principles he is said to have illustrated in his statue called the Spearbearer (*Doryphoros*), cf. *ibid.* 2014, pp. 106-108.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 2014, p. 102.

⁴⁵ On the text see Foerster 1915, pp. 541-546. Stenger 2009 contains a great deal of valuable information on this pagan teacher of rhetoric (cf. p. 419 s. v. Libanius).

⁴⁶ According to Foerster 1915, pp. 438-439, the ekphraseis 8-30 are to be considered as pseudepigrapha and only 1-7 as genuine (*Descriptiones sub Libanii nomine traditae sunt 30. Sed cum elocutionis, imprimis verborum delectus, tum compositionis ratione habita non plures quam septem [...] pro genuinis habere possum*). Description 30 was identified as belonging to the rhetorical school of Gaza, which was prominent in the late fifth and early sixth centuries CE, on which see Gibson 2008, pp. 427-429.

literary text.⁴⁷ At the centre of this *ἔκφρασις κάλλους*, Ps.-Libanius places a description of a beautiful girl leaning out of a window. His unnamed speaker elevates the *ekphrasis* to a form of true rhetorical art, which gives the impression of a model description to be embedded by writers such as Heliodorus in their novels. Compared to the theoretical treatise of Hermogenes, Ps.-Libanius' graphic description is more suitable to practical use and much easier to be adopted in a concrete literary text:

Descr. 30.1-6: (1) Τήμερον εἶδον κόρην ἐκ θυρίδος προκύπτουσαν καὶ ἰδὼν ἐαλώκειν εὐθύς, ἔμπνουν γὰρ ἐδόκουν τὴν Σελήνην ὄραν ἐπὶ γῆς ἢ μεταπεπλάσθαι τὴν Ἀφροδίτην εἰς ἄνθρωπον καὶ πείθειν εἶχον ἑμαυτὸν ὡς αὐτῷ κάλλει τὸ πρόσωπον ἰνδαλμάτισται. (2) Ἔρωσ γὰρ ἐκ τῶν ἐκείνης ὁμμάτων ἐτόξευε. καὶ προκατελάμβανε τὴν θέαν ἢ τόξευσις. καὶ πῶς ὀφθαλμοὶ μὲν τὸ κάλλος ἐθαύμαζον, ψυχὴ δὲ τῆς ὀδύνης ἦσθάνετο καὶ βλέπειν ἐθέλων ἀπέθανον. καὶ τὸ μὲν κάλλος γλυκύ, ἢ δὲ τρώσις πικρά. (3) καὶ πῶς γλυκύτερον ἦν τὸ λυπεῖν. τῶν γὰρ ὀφθαλμῶν λιχνευομένων εἰς ὄρασιν τὸ κάλλος εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν διωλίσθαι καὶ πῦρ ἐρωτικὸν τὸ πᾶν ἐλυμαίνεται. τίς γὰρ ἂν ἐκείνης τὸ κάλλος ὑπογράψαιτο; τίς παραδοίη γραφῆ; τίς διαμορφώσει τοῖς χρώμασι; (4) καλὸς Ἀπελλῆς καὶ λόγος τούτου πολὺς, ἀλλὰ μέχρι ταύτης καλὸς. καὶ πῶς ἐπιγραφέτω τῇ Τύχῃ καὶ χάριτας, ὅτι πρὸ ταύτης ἠρίστευσε καὶ τῆς ζωγραφικῆς ἐδείκνυ τὸ ἔντεχνον καὶ κάλλος οὐκ εἶχεν ὄραν ὑπερῆκων χειρὸς ἔντεχνον μίμημα. ἀλλ' ἔσχεν ἂν κἀκείνος τῆς συμφορᾶς παρηγόρημα τὸ κάλλος ὄραν ἐπὶ γῆς εὐτονοῦν καὶ τῶν ὁμμάτων τὴν δύναμιν καὶ ταυτὸν ὑπομένειν τοῖς πειρωμένοις κάλλος ἡλίου παραδοῦναι τοῖς χρώμασι. (5) κάλλιστος οὖν ζωγράφος καλλίστης κόρης ἢ ἐμὴ ψυχὴ. ἀχρωματίστως γὰρ τὸ κάλλος ὄρα παρ' ἑαυτῆ <καὶ> συμμερόρφωται. καὶ νῦν ὄραν τὴν εἰκόνα πεφάντασται. καὶ πολέμιον ὁ τεχνίτης ἔχει τὸ τέχνασμα. μεμψαίμην <ἂν> τοῖς ἐμοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀμόρφου κόρης ἠράσθησαν, ἀλλὰ τῇ ψυχῇ, ὅτι πέπονθεν, ἀλλ' ἠδὺ τὸ πάθος καὶ τοῦ πάθους μᾶλλον ὁ θάνατος, ἵν' ἔχη στεφανηφορεῖσθαι τῷ Ἔρωτι τοιοῦτου γενόμενος κάλλους ἀγώνισμα. (6) ἐγὼγε οὖν ἐξ εὐπορίας ἠπόρημαι καὶ λέγειν ἔχων πολλὰ ταῖς τῶν πολλῶν ὑπερβολαῖς ἀνακρούομαι καὶ τὴν εὐπορίαν τοῦ λόγου ἀπορία σιγῆς διαδέχεται. οἶδε τὸ πάθος ψυχὴ κἀκείνη σοφιστεύει τὸν ἔρωτα καὶ δι' ὧν ἐπεπόνθει δεῖξει τοῦ κάλλους τὴν δύναμιν.⁴⁸

(1) Today I saw a girl peeping out of a window, and upon seeing her I was immediately captivated; for I seemed to be seeing the Moon alive and breathing on

⁴⁷ On the connection of the standard rhetorical exercises, *progymnasmata*, with Heliodorus' novel, cf. the studies by Fernández-Garrido 2011 (on the use of ἠθοποιία), Malosse 2012 (on the forms of διήγημα, ἔκφρασις, and ἠθοποιία), Zeitlin 2013, pp. 27-29 (on ἔκφρασις). On ἔκφρασις in Heliodorus, cf. the approaches by Bartsch 1989, pp. 109-143 (and *passim*; on the *progymnasmata* and the novels cf. pp. 7-12) and Whitmarsh 2002, who considers Charicleia herself as an embodiment of *ekphrastic illusion*, insofar as her complexion is the result of her mother's watching an art-work at the very moment of her daughter's conception. On the novels' rhetoricity, cf. Hock 1997, and on the novelists' use of character types as an aspect of their engagement with the literary toolkit provided by rhetorical education, cf. de Temmerman 2007.

⁴⁸ The Greek text is taken from Foerster 1915, pp. 541-546.

earth, or Aphrodite changed into human form, and I was able to convince myself that her face appeared like immaterial beauty. (2) For Love shot his arrows at me from her eyes. And his shooting preoccupied my sight. And somehow my eyes marveled at her beauty, but my soul felt grief, and I died, wishing to look at it. And her beauty was sweet, but the wounding bitter. (3) And the pain was somehow sweeter; for as my eyes greedily desired to see, her beauty slipped into my soul, and the fire of love began to cause my complete ruin. For who could sketch out her beauty? Who could commit her to painting? Who could give her form with paint? (4) Apelles was a fine painter, and there is much discussion of him, but he was fine only up until her. And let him somehow also inscribe his thanks to Fortune, that he had his heyday before her and revealed the artistry of painting before her, and that he did not have to see beauty triumphing over an artistic imitation made by his hand. But even that man, as a consolation for his misfortune, would have had to see beauty being vigorous on earth and the power of her eyes, and to endure the same thing as those who try to commit the beauty of the sun to paint. (5) So, my soul is a most beautiful painter of a most beautiful girl; for it sees beauty by itself without color <and> has conformed to it. And now it has imagined that it sees an image. And the artist has his artwork as an enemy. I <would> blame my eyes, but they fell in love with a not unlovely girl; rather, I would blame my soul, because it suffered, but the suffering was sweet, and death more so than the suffering, so that it might be able to be worn as a victory wreath by Love, having become the feat of such beauty. (6) So, from my former abundance, I have been left lacking, and though I can say many things, I stop short of the exaggerations of the masses, and a silence brought on by lack takes over from my former abundance of speech. My soul knows suffering, and it gives expert performances on love, and it will reveal the power of beauty through what it has suffered.⁴⁹

In the first three subsections of Ps.-Libanius' text (which altogether comprises 19 paragraphs), the male narrator describes how he once marveled at the outstanding natural beauty of an unknown girl. The reader familiar with the *Aithiopika* is immediately struck by several common elements between Ps.-Libanius' set description of the κόρη and those elaborated by Heliodorus, particularly regarding the internal beholder's perception of beauty in both texts. Like Heliodorus' internal spectators, Ps.-Libanius' narrator compares the girl to a divine and immaterial, even ideal, appearance (§1 to the goddess Aphrodite); he too describes how his eyes admire the κάλλος (§2 ἐθαύμαζον) and how he becomes entangled and even suffers a strong bodily reaction: an inner wounding by the sight (cf. §5 ἡδὺ τὸ πάθος), which has slipped into his, i.e. the beholder's, soul. Even the god Love himself, who in comparison to Ps.-Libanius' text plays only a minor role in Heliodorus, "was somehow astounded (ἐκπληττόμενον) by the sparklings of her beauty" (§10). The power of her eyes is also compared to shining sunbeams (§4).

⁴⁹ The translation of Ps.-Libanius' ἔκφρασις follows Gibson 2008, pp. 502-507, here esp. pp. 503 and 505.

Although the girl's sight left a strong impression on the speaker, "[his soul] knows suffering, and it gives expert performances on love, and it will reveal the power of beauty through what it has suffered." (§6 οἶδε τὸ πάθος ψυχῆ κάκεινη σοφιστεύει τὸν ἔρωτα καὶ δι' ὧν ἐπεπόνθει δείξει τοῦ κάλλους τὴν δύναμιν). The somewhat obscure phrase⁵⁰ σοφιστεύειν τὸν ἔρωτα in Ps.-Libanius points to the fact that the narrator manages to hide his inner emotions: his soul will in turn give an artful description of its sufferings, thereby revealing τοῦ κάλλους τὴν δύναμιν, which undoubtedly refers to an elaborate rhetorical description, a sophisticated response to inner feelings of the sort Ps.-Libanius has composed. Nevertheless, the mention of the divine powers, Aphrodite and Love, metonymically denotes the erotic effect which the attractive sight has exercised on the speaker's sensual perception. At the same time, the rhetorical questions at the end of the quoted passage (§3 "who could sketch out her beauty? [...] Who could give her form with paint?") reveal artistic imitation as the central task of the rhetorical ἔκφρασις κάλλους. Interestingly, this is in accordance with a practice observable in the novels, where the artistic or rhetorical imitation of κάλλος in words is problematized and similar topical (under)statements about the indescribability, inexpressibility, and inimitability of the protagonists' outstanding beauty are used, which is —after all— described, expressed, and imitated in the same texts.⁵¹

The main concern of Ps.-Libanius' text is, I would suggest, how κάλλος is to be mediated through a text which 'transports' the particular beauty of an internal figure. From here we can draw, in my view, a parallel to the novelist's task to imitate perfectly and reproduce beauty through the representational medium itself, the description in the text.

Compare with Ps.-Libanius a passage from the beginning of Achilles Tatius' novel *Leucippe and Clitophon* (1.4), where the internal narrator and protagonist of the story, Clitophon, describes how he once saw a beautiful

⁵⁰ Surprisingly, the sentence forms an intertext with Hld., 1.10.2, where the narrator of the subplot, the Athenian Cnemo, informs the protagonists how once he was desired eagerly by his Phaedra-like stepmother Demaenete, who —in sharp contrast to Ps.-Libanius' narrator— succumbed to her passion completely: Ἡ δὲ ἐπειδὴ τὸ πρῶτον εἶδεν ἐκτὸς ἑαυτῆς γίνεται καὶ οὐδὲ ἐσοφιστεύειν ἐτι τὸν ἔρωτα, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ γυμνῆς τῆς ἐπιθυμίας προσέτρηχε καὶ περιβαλοῦσα «ὁ νέος Ἴππόλυτος, [...] ὁ ἐμός» ἔλεγε ("The moment she saw me, she was beside herself. **She no longer made any attempt to disguise her passion**; her desire was quite blatant. She ran to me, threw her arms around me, and cried, 'My young Hippolytos!'""). This similarity of expression of Ps.-Libanius and Heliodorus is already pointed out by Foerster 1915, p. 542 *in app. crit.* On p. 445-446 n. 1 he acknowledges that Ps.-Libanius widely imitates Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus: the latter (3rd or 4th c. CE: on the date of the *Aithiopica* cf. n. 2) seems to provide a *terminus post quem* for Ps.-Libanius' text.

⁵¹ Cf. Hld., 1.2.1 (ἀμήχανόν τι κάλλος); Apu., *Met.*, 4.28.2 (*at vero puellae iunioris tam praecipua tam praeclara pulchritudo nec exprimi ac ne sufficienter quidem laudari sermonis humani penuria poterat*).

young maiden (whose name is Leucippe, as we will later learn). First, he compares her delightful beauty to a painting of the goddess Selene sitting on a bull which he had seen before. After the description, he makes known his inner feelings:

1.4.4. Ὡς δὲ εἶδον, εὐθὺς ἀπωλώλειν· κάλλος γὰρ ὀξύτερον τιτρώσκει βέλους καὶ διὰ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν καταρρεῖ· ὀφθαλμὸς γὰρ ὁδὸς ἐρωτικῆ τραύματι. (5) Πάντα δέ με εἶχεν ὁμοῦ, ἔπαινος, ἔκπληξις, τρόμος, αἰδώς, ἀναίδεια. Ἐπήνουν τὸ μέγεθος, ἐκπεπλήγμην τὸ κάλλος, ἔτρεμον τὴν καρδίαν, ἔβλεπον ἀναιδῶς, ἠδοῦμην ἀλώναι. Τοὺς δὲ ὀφθαλμοὺς ἀφέλκειν μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς κόρης ἐβιαζόμην· οἱ δὲ οὐκ ἤθελον, ἀλλ' ἀνθειλκον ἑαυτοὺς ἐκεῖ τῷ τοῦ κάλλους ἐλκόμενοι πείσματι, καὶ τέλος ἐνίκησαν.⁵²

As soon as I saw, I was done for: beauty pricks sharper than darts, and floods down through the eyes to the soul (for the eye is the channel of the wounds of desire).⁵³ All kinds of reactions possessed me at once: admiration, awe, terror, shame, shamelessness. I admired her stature, I was awestruck by her beauty, I was terrified in my heart, I gazed without shame, I felt ashamed at having been captivated so. I tried to force myself to tug my eyes away from the girl, but they resisted, tugging themselves back there again, as if towed by the lure of beauty. In the end, the eyes won.⁵⁴

As in Ps.-Libanius, the Achillean narrator suffers inner wounding from *κάλλος* (cf. e.g. *ἔκπληξις*), admitting at the same time that against such beauty he will not be able to keep his countenance perfectly; this is indicated by the use of *ἀναίδεια*, which anticipates a reaction to a beautiful sight which comprises immoral acts. In this, Achilles' text evidently differs from the other descriptions of beauty mentioned above. Nevertheless, as the initial comparison with the painting of the goddess Selene suggests, we are also in this case dealing with a highly sophisticated elaboration of an *ἔκφρασις κάλλους* as it is modelled in an exemplary fashion in Ps.-Libanius' description. In my view, the rhetorical description of outstanding beauty shows the novelists' attempt to imitate or reproduce the effect of beauty within the representational medium of the text. This seems to be

⁵² The text follows Garnaud 1991.

⁵³ In the extant Greek love novels, *πάθος* is usually directed via the eye or its 'tool', the gaze: whenever beautiful things are watched, they enter the souls of the viewers and stir up a range of emotions. Cf. on this implicit gaze theory concerning the origins of emotions (most prominently: love) several passages in the novelists, e.g. Chariton, 5.3.8-9, X. Eph., 1.3.2, and also Apu., *Met.*, 5.22.4 (Psyche watches sleeping Cupid and is, to follow the wordplay, affected psychically: *dum saepius divini vultus intuetur pulchritudinem, recreatur animi*). Cf. also Keul-Deutscher 1997, pp. 342-343. On the importance of vision, visuality, and gaze in the novels, see Morales 2004, pp. 8-35. On visuality in Heliodorus, cf. Menze 2017.

⁵⁴ Transl. by Whitmarsh 2001/2006.

confirmed by the last sentence in the Achillean passage: the narrator tries to force his eyes away from the sight, “but they resisted, tugging themselves back there again, as if towed by the lure of beauty” (ἀλλ’ ἀνθειλκον ἑαυτοῦς ἐκεῖ τῷ τοῦ κάλλους ἐλκόμενοι πείσματι). Here we deal with a remarkable polysemy, or better, bisemy (as the simplest type of ambiguity), of the word πείσμα, which denotes figuratively a “rope/ship’s cable” (LSJ s. v. 1), but, in an extended metaphorical sense, “persuasion” (LSJ s. v. 2, cf. πείθειν, πειθῶ). Accordingly, the beholder’s eyes are both concretely and metaphorically pulled towards the beautiful sight.⁵⁵ To put this point in other words, beauty exerts a gripping power of persuasion which oscillates between an almost physical coercive force and a rhetorically effective authority (πείσμα in both senses respectively).⁵⁶ In the novel, πάθος is provoked by the sight of the protagonists’ ἀμήχανον κάλλος.

We may, in any case, assume from what has been said that by the time Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus produced their novels, which are firmly rooted in Greek literary culture, the term κάλλος, as shaped through rhetorical theory, would be well known to educated contemporaries, just as these novelists were. Although Ps.-Libanius’ model description of the creation of κάλλος is most probably to be dated later than Heliodorus’ novel, the similar conceptual devices of the ἐκφρασις κάλλους mirror the same cultural ‘sediment’ of rhetorical and literary training from the Imperial Age down to late antiquity. All these authors have to be looked at against a common cultural and educational background, which imbued them with various aspects of cultural knowledge, constituting altogether the concept of Greek παιδεία. From this perspective, the particular ‘rhetoricity’ which permeates these texts becomes more understandable.

These observations reveal a new aspect of the concept of beauty in the *Aithiopika*. On the one hand, we grasp κάλλος as a rhetoric device worked out in textbooks dealing with the art of rhetorical description (cf. Hermogenes, Ps.-Libanius), whilst on the other hand κάλλος is elaborated in descriptive passages within the novels themselves, marking out and narrativising the consequences of the protagonists’ overwhelming⁵⁷ and irre-

⁵⁵ Cf. the connection of persuasive speech and strong chains fastened by the ears of the listeners in Lucian’s προοιλιά *Heracles*, which is embedded into a description of a grotesque statue of the Gallic god Heracles Ogmios, which by the Gauls is esteemed the god of eloquence. On the ekphrasis in the *Heracles* cf. Bartsch 1989, pp. 26-27, 29, 42.

⁵⁶ See on this the note in Whitmarsh 2001/2006, p. 147 *ad loc.* (“towed by the lure”): “this translates ‘dragged by the *peisma*’ (both ‘cable’ and ‘persuasion’)”. Cf. Whitmarsh 2020, p. 140 *ad Ach. Tat.*, 1.4.5 (“a play on words”).

⁵⁷ It is remarkable that this powerful beauty of the novel’s protagonists is matched by the protagonists’ rhetorical skill and charisma, which they use in order to surmount difficulties and obstacles. In Heliodorus, although the equal ranking of the couple is emphasized, the heroine of the novel leaves undoubtedly the stronger impression, not only due to her beauty, but also

sistible beauty (ἀμήχανον κάλλος).⁵⁸ There are many passages in which the description of beauty elicits strong admiration in its beholders, which in my view can be read as an implicit reflection on the whole novel's aesthetic. At the beginning of Book 3 we read the general enthusiastic response of the internal recipient Cnemon to Calasiris' account of the Delphic procession, in the course of which the two protagonists meet (3.1.1). This description by the internal narrator Calasiris fosters not only the internal recipients', i.e. Cnemon's, imagination, but also the imagination of the external recipients, who are invited to reproduce the scene as it really took place. There are, however, further descriptive passages, in which an internal audience serves as a model for the readers wondering at Heliodorus' art of description. This is the case in 3.4.8, where the crowd gathered at Delphi admires the two young people's beauty and loses their hearts to them, in the case of the men to Charicleia, and in the case of the women to Theagenes. Similarly, in 4.3.2-4 Theagenes' beauty wins the sympathy of its beholders during the description of the foot-race at Delphi. Although one could enumerate more passages, in which the description of beauty in Heliodorus functions as a metaliterary pointer to the aesthetic and rhetorical power of the novel,⁵⁹ these few examples must suffice here.

David Konstan, in his monograph on the ancient Greek idea of beauty and its fortunes, comments that the term κάλλος could often be applied to things other than the human form. Its sense extended "from sexual attractiveness or desirability to the attractiveness of such things as art, poetry, certain physical features [...] and abstract entities such as the soul and its virtues".⁶⁰ As a quality it could even be attributed to works of art described in literature (through ekphrasis).⁶¹ This wider application of the word κάλλος to various objects, which transcends the original signification of erotic attractiveness of a human form eliciting a strong desire in its beholders, is useful for its examination in, among others, the Heliodorean

because of her pragmatic capabilities, whose Odyssean nature is unmistakable. Cf. Charicleia's use of deceptive speech in Hld., 1.22.2; cf. also Theagenes' *Trugrede* in Hld., 7.13.

⁵⁸ When the protagonists are described by a talented speaker, as by Calasiris in Hld., 3.4.7 —on the scene, cf. Grethlein 2017, p. 110—, he is able to make the listeners observers of the heroes so well illustrated that he may even provoke an "affective transmission" from speaker to audience, and then again to himself, the speaker, as he is aroused by his addressees' enthusiasm. Calasiris falls victim to his own art of description, when he believes that the protagonists, who he had described to Cnemo, have actually arrived («θεωρεῖν αὐτοὺς καὶ ἀπόντας ᾤθηθην, οὕτως ἐναργῶς τε καὶ οὕς οἶδα ἰδὼν ἢ παρὰ σοῦ διήγησις ὑπέδειξεν»). On the phenomenon, as described in Cic., *De Or.*, 2.191, cf. Stroh 1979, pp. 124-125, who aptly termed it *Affektübertragung*.

⁵⁹ Cf., e.g., 1.2.1-3; 1.4.3; 2.4.3; 2.30.6; 2.33.3; 3.3.4; 3.3.8; 4.5.5; 5.9.2; 8.17.2.

⁶⁰ Konstan 2014, p. 96. Cf. esp. ch. 4 ("Beauty Transfigured" on pp. 96-134).

⁶¹ On beauty mediated through ekphrasis or "Pictures into Words" in the Imperial Age, cf. *ibid.* pp. 108-116.

novel. Heliodorus' terminology, which denotes not only the protagonists' beauty but also the quality of rhetorical persuasion, offers to the hermeneutically active reader the opportunity to establish a general relation between the effect of the protagonists' sight on the internal public and the aesthetic appeal of Heliodorus' text itself.⁶² Emerging from his art of description, by which the novelist stages the protagonists and other figures in the text, the quality of beauty may therefore also be claimed for the textual medium, through which this effect is in turn displayed. The novel consequently advertises its own artful rhetoric in a self-referential way to the readers. The metadiegetic narrative of the *Aithiopika* conveys internal 'reader reactions', which correspond to the narrative polyphony found elsewhere in the text.⁶³ The internal recipients' responses towards the beautiful sight of both protagonists, which I have listed above, can be interpreted as a kind of *mise en abyme*: in each case, the reactions of the viewers or recipients in the text illustrate the rhetorical power of the text.⁶⁴ Thus, the internal audiences in the novel receive the beauty of the protagonists (as e.g. it is described by Heliodorus) in a similar fashion to the readers who may wonder at the beautiful art of (e.g. stylistic) representation which is conveyed through the text itself, and who are thus invited to participate into the internal figures' experience.⁶⁵ When we read the descriptive scenes Hld., 3.1.1, 3.4.8 and 4.3.2-4 in this way, the external readers are invited to an analogous response *to* the representation, i.e. the artful description of both protagonists, as the internal audience *within* the representation, be it the internal narratee Cnemon listening to Calasiris' account, or the internal viewers of Charicleia's and Theagenes' beauty at the procession for Neoptolemus or at the Pythian Games. *Κάλλος* thus bears

⁶² Such an analogy between the internal audience *in*, and the external audience *of*, the novel corresponds to the statement in Schmeling 2005, p. 37 concerning Callirhoe's beauty, according to whom "by logical extension Chariton exposes an unstated hope that similarly large crowds of readers (secondary/external audience) might be enticed to read his novel. Because Chariton hopes to win a large external audience for his novel and also needs to explain plausibly how Callirhoe attracts such large internal crowds, he must make Callirhoe an exceedingly beautiful, appealing, and magnetic character. She is his vehicle for the road to popularity and must be surrounded by masses of people come to glimpse the beauty of a reportedly (and thus exaggerated) transcendental goddess".

⁶³ The most prominent exponent of a reader responding *in* and (similarly) *to* the text is undoubtedly Cnemon, who particularly likes digressions and spectacular descriptions. Cf. e.g. 3.1.1, where he criticizes Calasiris' narration, or 3.4.7, where he enthusiastically interrupts and comments on Calasiris' narration.

⁶⁴ Cf. Morales 2004, who also tracks back parallelisms of the hermeneutic activities (both viewing and reading) of the characters in the text and the effects they may have on readers of the text, including the instability of ekphrasis and interpretation.

⁶⁵ On reading as the "re-experience of the experience of the characters in the mitigating frame of 'as-if'", cf. Grethlein 2017, p. 119. On 'aesthetic illusion' in Heliodorus, cf. Wolf 2020, pp. 355, 359.

a strongly self-referential significance,⁶⁶ which works as a central hermeneutical tool throughout the text. The internal viewers' reactions, which are embedded in the text, in a meta-literary way *mirror* the encouraged reaction of readers to the novel itself. A close parallel is the eighth book of the *Odyssey*, where the Homeric audience is invited to compare their responses to the reactions elicited by Demodocus' song (as recounted in the poem). Comparably, the reactions to *κάλλος* treated in this article prompt the Heliodorean readers to relate their impressions of the description to the impressions of the internal figures responding to the protagonists' beauty.

This beauty appears to be not only an almost pictorial quality of objects mediated through ekphraseis,⁶⁷ but, more generally, through its sensual and bodily appeal, a means of presenting the whole story in a lively and persuasive way. As readers we can perceive the spell of Charicleia's and Theagenes' beautiful appearances (the ἐκφράσεις κάλλους) in a manner comparable to the way we perceive other objects represented through a vivid style. This appeals to a wider fascination with self-reflexive descriptions, in which the external readers are invited to participate in the internal viewers' experience of *κάλλος*. These external recipients' reactions may, again, resemble the reactions of the internal beholders of visual⁶⁸ beauty.⁶⁹ Heliodorus of Emesa applied the rhetorical concept of *κάλλος* as a poetical device to the *Aithiopika*. In it, beauty serves as an implicit stand-in keyword for the aesthetically attractive effect of the text on its reading audience.⁷⁰ Beauty in Heliodorus is therefore first and foremost, a textual quality pointing in a self-referential way to the rhetorical and literary attractiveness of the representational medium itself, the *Aithiopika*.

⁶⁶ Whitmarsh 2011, pp. 172-175 offers a sophisticated assessment of Calasiris' description of the Delphic procession to the enraptured Cnemon. After discussing whether Cnemon represents a positive or negative model for the reader, he argues that, because of its focus on the beauty of Theagenes and Charicleia and its impact on the spectators, "this ecphrastic passage serves as a complex, multilayered *mise-en-scène* of readerly desire" and "showcases Heliodorus' astonishingly self-reflexive, theoretical approach to narrative description" (p. 175).

⁶⁷ On *ekphraseis* in Heliodorus, cf. Menze 2017. On the novels in general, cf. Bartsch 1989. Lefteratou 2019 analyzes the materiality of the described objects and the miniature artistry of the narration, which Heliodorus' readers were supposed to appreciate.

⁶⁸ On the auditory experience of beauty in Heliodorus, in contrast, cf. Liviabella Furiani 2003, pp. 434-439.

⁶⁹ Grethlein 2017, pp. 107-125 ("The Reconfiguration of Time in Heliodorus' *Ethiopica*") offers a thorough analysis of readerly involvement and the limits of readerly absorption in the *Aithiopika*, highlighting Heliodorus' awareness of the simultaneity of immersion and distance in response to narrative.

⁷⁰ Similarly, Morgan 2013 underlines that Heliodorus equates "the text of his novel with the person and body of his heroine [Charicleia]" and thus establishes "a paradigm of reading as a chastely erotic action" (p. 236).

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