

**Female Friendships in the Ancient Greek
Novels**

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In her comic strip “The Rule”, Alison Bechdel sets out three rules to determine if there is a sufficient level of female representation within a film or other area of fiction: there must be at least two female characters, these female characters have to directly interact, and their conversation needs to be about something other than a man.¹ The Greek novels would struggle to pass this test. Whilst the surviving novels contain multiple female characters, they do not always interact directly with each other and when they do, their conversations usually revolve around men. Although the genre presents strong, active and intelligent heroines, it also objectifies women as objects of desire, assets and obstacles for men. Because the novels prioritise the women’s connections to the male characters, the female characters relationships with each other are treated as a lesser priority. Even in supposedly female “exclusive” spheres within the texts, the influence of men and male values is present and impacts how the women and their relationships with each other are depicted.² Consequently, the existence of novelistic female friendships has long been dismissed and overlooked by scholars. Yet this does not mean these relationships are absent from the texts.

¹ Bechdel (1985/2008), 22.

² Egger (1999), 125.

As this thesis demonstrates, the ancient novelists intended certain bonds between women to be viewed as friendships, even if most of these relationships are undeveloped, marginalised and not entirely positive, with participants mainly acting in their own self-interest instead of out of affection for their *confidantes*. Throughout the surviving material, there are signs of affection between women and female solidarity, although this is often a case of being “told” that two women are fond of each other rather than “seeing” genuine closeness. Equally important are instances where two “positive” female characters are deliberately distanced from each other. The main question, therefore, should not be whether the novels contain any female friendships but rather how these friendships are portrayed and how they can improve our understanding of the genre and wider Graeco-Roman culture. The novels were written under the Roman Empire in a period undergoing many changes, including border expansion which resulted in people from different cultures being incorporated into Roman society, a transition to an imperial system from a democracy, and increased social mobility.³ This is reflected in the genre. The novels also take inspiration from earlier literature, such as epic, tragedy, comedy and historiography, and adopt and adapt earlier literary stereotypes and friendship models from both the Greek and Roman worlds.⁴ Several novelistic female antagonists are driven by jealousy and unable to control their emotions, which fits into an established pattern in

³ Reinhold (2002), 25-44.

⁴ Billault (1996), 117-8; De Temmerman and K. Demoen (2011), 1; Goldhill (2008), 189; Haynes (2003), 113; Hunter (2008), 261; Morgan (1993), 223; (2008), 219, 221; Scourfield (2004), 167; Whitmarsh (2008b), 3-4. Ruiz-Montero (1996), 48-70 offers an overview on the influence of other Graeco-Roman literary genres.

Graeco-Roman literature, reflecting works like Semonides fr. 7 and tragedy (with examples including Clytemnestra's portrayal in the *Oresteia*, Medea in Euripides' and Seneca's plays of the same name and Phaedra, especially in Euripides' second *Hippolytus*).⁵ Yet, whilst aristocratic characters such as Melite and Statira show hints of these traits, they ultimately demonstrate self-control. This portrays them as secondary heroines within their respective texts. The novelistic female friendships also are inspired by the portrayal of female bonds in other works, such as the idea of female secrecy and women conspiring together.⁶ By focusing on the overlooked female friendships, this thesis aims to improve our understanding of ancient beliefs about women and how they were perceived to interact and communicate with each other.

1.1 Previous Scholarship

Traditionally, there has been little scholarly interest in studying supporting female characters in the Greek novels, aside from certain antagonists. This is surprising. As a genre, the ancient novel has often attracted attention as it arguably subverts conventional Graeco-Roman literary gender roles by presenting intelligent, independent and proactive heroines in contrast to the more passive novelistic heroes.⁷ Morales claimed that the novels are mainly studied because of their "radical representations of gender and cultural

⁵ Pp.88-9 and pg.242 discuss this trope further. Any footnote citing "pg.", "pp." or section (e.g. 2.2.1) without mentioning an external source refers to further discussions within this thesis.

⁶ 2.4.4.

⁷ Billault (1996), 118; Bowie (2003), 96; Haynes (2000/1), 87; Johne (1996), 163, 178.

identity”.⁸ Yet scholars have frequently overlooked the supporting female characters in studies of gender roles.⁹ This is partly because most of these characters are undeveloped and lack emotional depth, with Anderson describing them as “one-dimensional minor characters”.¹⁰ However, these characters are important when looking at wider issues within the novels, such as attitudes towards gender and class, and therefore recent scholarship has started to study them.¹¹ Admittedly, many of these works still primarily focus on the protagonists and view the supporting characters as a way to improve our understanding of how novelistic heroes and heroines are portrayed, instead of looking at their importance in their own right. For instance, Haynes’ *Fashioning the Feminine in the Greek Novel* dedicates chapters to both the female and male “minor” characters.¹² Yet, Haynes states that these characters should, at least in part, be studied to inform readings of the heroine rather than be looked at for their own significance.¹³ De Temmerman’s *Crafting Characters: Heroes and Heroines in the Ancient Greek Novel* takes a similar approach in using supporting characters to enhance his readings of the protagonists.¹⁴ Two works on slavery focus on the enslavement of the elite protagonists over the “natural” slave characters.¹⁵ Whilst supporting characters remain undervalued, their inclusion in scholarly

⁸ Morales (2001), VIII.

⁹ Haynes (2003), 101.

¹⁰ Morales (2001), XXVII; Anderson (1982), 15.

¹¹ Haynes (2003), 123; Morales (2001), XXVII.

¹² Haynes (2003), 101-55.

¹³ Haynes (2003), 101.

¹⁴ De Temmerman (2014). For instance, Arsace and Cybele in the *Aethiopica* are discussed to highlight the growth of Theagenes’ rhetorical skills ((2014), 269-77).

¹⁵ Owens (2020); Panayotakis and Paschalis (2019).

works suggests a growing recognition that they can meaningfully contribute towards readings of the novels. Many of the articles in Repath and Whitmarsh's *Reading Heliodorus' Aethiopica* include minor characters in their titles and focus on their roles, including two on Thisbe and one on Arsace.¹⁶ This pattern fits a wider trend in scholarship of studying marginalised groups in literature, that were previously overlooked.¹⁷

Overlooking the novelistic minor characters has caused scholars to also frequently dismiss or undervalue the notion of female friendships within the genre. With the possible exception of Plangon and Callirhoe's relationship, scholars have argued that novelistic heroines are isolated from other women and lack close female friends.¹⁸ This is problematic. Although no specific term is used to denote female *confidantes* in this genre, unlike their male equivalents, some notion of female friendship exists in four of the canonical five novels.¹⁹ These relationships are not always portrayed in a positive light or fully developed, but nevertheless display mutual unity and affection that mark these bonds as friendships.

¹⁶ Grethlein (2022); Morales (2022); Zeitlin (2022).

¹⁷ E.g. *Female Characters in Fragmentary Greek Tragedy* (Coo and Finglass (2020)); *The Cambridge History of Gay and Lesbian Literature* (McCallum and Tuhkanen (2014)); *The Poor, the Crippled, the Blind and the Lame: Physical and Sensory Disability in the Gospels of the New Testament* (Gosbell (2018)).

¹⁸ Haynes (2003), 150; Johnes (1996), 201-2; Morales (2008), 49. This relationship is discussed in Chapter 2.

¹⁹ Egger (1999), 123n46; Johnes (1996), 201. However, there are words that denote mistresses and slaves (e.g. δέσποινα (Heliod.1.15.2); θεραπαιναν (Ach.Tat.2.8.1)).

As with the minor female characters, scholarship is gradually recognising the importance female friendships play within the novels, again reflective of wider scholarship on the topic in ancient literature. Konstan's *Friendship in the Classical World* focused on friendships between men with his brief section on the novels not mentioning a single relationship between female characters.²⁰ Konstan only included women when talking about their bonds with men. Since then, there has been an interest in addressing the "lack" of female friendships in Graeco-Roman literature and studying relationships between women. Fogel addresses the lack of female friendships within Cicero's *De Amicitia* by offering interpretations in to how to read them in the text; Williams takes a similar approach by addressing the general absence of aristocratic female friendships within Roman literature.²¹ Fogel's approach of reading "hidden" female friendships in a male oriented text is a relevant model for identifying hints of female solidarity within relationships that are mainly relegated to the background of their novels, such as the friendships between Rhodogune and Callirhoe and Nausicleia and Charicleia.²² Williams' work stresses the rarity of literary friendships between aristocratic women and the importance of studying the examples that remain. This has influenced this thesis, which also studies marginalised friendships in addition to the more prominent female bonds. With regards to the Greek novels, scholars have looked at some of the *confidantes* and female friendships, but often only as

²⁰ Konstan (1997), 116-7.

²¹ Fogel (2009); Williams (2012), 67-76.

²² See section 3.2.1.

part of wider studies.²³ As of yet, there has been no major study looking specifically at the novelistic female friendships. Hock, writing on Polycharmus, argues that scholarship has neglected studying friendships in general and he acknowledges the existence of female friendships in the *Callirhoe*.²⁴ De Temmerman's "Here's to Friendship: An Overlooked Pair of Friends in an Ancient Greek Novel" similarly acknowledges that scholarship frequently overlooks female friendships within the novels.²⁵ Examining Callirhoe's relationships with Statira and Rhodogune, he argues that these bonds are clearly depicted as friendships and he studies their overall portrayal and the significance of their inclusion. This suggests a recognition that these bonds are important in enhancing readings of the novels and a need for scholarship to look at these relationships when studying the portrayal of novelistic women. This thesis takes a similar approach to De Temmerman on a larger scale, by looking at the topic across the genre, instead of focusing on a specific novel, and examining different models of friendship in addition to aristocratic bonds, including those between mistresses and slaves, *hetairai*, and the instances where women are deliberately distanced from each other. This approach should offer greater insights into the genre as a whole, such as how it depicts friendships, women and social classes.

²³ For instance, works classifying female characters discuss *confidantes* (Egger (1999), 122-5; Haynes (2003), 123-30; Johne (1996), 201-2) and wider works on slavery discuss mistress-slave relationships (Montiglio (2019); Morgan and Repath (2019); Owens (2019); (2020)).

²⁴ Hock (1997), 162, 159.

²⁵ De Temmerman (2019a), 89.

Whilst not a primary focus of this thesis, when studying novelistic female characters there is always the underlying question of intended readership. Traditionally, a main debate surrounding this genre is whether the novels were primarily intended for a female audience.²⁶ Whilst recent scholarship has moved away from this topic, it is still relevant for this thesis as male and female readers could have reacted differently to portrayals of certain characters, relationships and scenes.²⁷ There were educated aristocratic women who were literate at the time the novels were written and there are many references to female characters reading and writing within the texts themselves.²⁸ However, due to the low literacy levels at the time, it is unknown whether sufficient women were literate to make this group the primary intended audience for the novels.²⁹ The inclusion of female friendships could suggest an attempt to appeal to an aristocratic, educated female reader. Yet, as this thesis will demonstrate, these relationships are mostly undeveloped, marginalised and relegated to the backdrop of the novels. In contrast, their relationships with male characters are so prominent that they primarily define the portrayal of female characters and the roles they assume within the narratives. In many cases, this results in the women losing their agency and being primarily viewed as male assets or desirable

²⁶ Haynes (2003), 2-10; Hunter (2008); and Whitmarsh (2008a) offer general summaries. See Egger (1994), 31-5; (1999); and John (1996), 156-64; for discussions favouring female readership; Bowie (2003), 95-106 for primarily male readership.

²⁷ Bremmer (2017), 109.

²⁸ Ach.Tat.5.18.2-6; 5.20.4-5; 5.24.1-3; Charit.4.4.5-7; 4.5.1; 8.4.4-5; 8.4.8; Heliod.2.10.1-11.1; 4.8.1-8; 8.3.1; 10.2.2; Xen.2.5.1-2; 2.5.4-5; 2.12.1; 5.11.1-12.1; Egger (1999), 113. Pp.166-7 discuss female letters under the Roman Empire.

²⁹ Bowie (2003), 95; Morales (2001), XI.

objects. As Morales argues, whilst there are reasons to advocate for female readership, it is difficult to determine how far a female reader would have been able to relate to the novelistic women.³⁰

1.2 Ancient Friendships

There is no singular model for friendship within the ancient world, with Verboven claiming that there is “no such thing as the ‘real’ Roman friendship”.³¹ In addition to personal, private relationships based on mutual affection, under the Roman Empire other bonds defined as friendships could include family ties, political alliances, guest-host relationships and patron-client bonds.³² Most friendships were of a transactional nature, with both parties receiving mutual benefits, and there was a difference between hierarchal relationships and those concerning people of a similar social status. These ideas of friendship are reflected in the novelistic female bonds, which drew on many earlier models of friendship.³³ One model of note is Aristotle’s discussion of friendship in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, where he argued that three types of friendships existed: utility, pleasure and virtue.³⁴ The first two were formed out of usefulness and self-interest, but the third is dependent

³⁰ Morales (2001), XI.

³¹ Verboven (2011), 411.

³² Caine (2009/2014), x; Fogel (2009), 77n2.

³³ Friendship playing a central role in Graeco-Roman literature can be dated back to Achilles and Patroclus’ friendship in the *Iliad*. See Konstan (1997), 24, 27-8, 37-42; Van Kesteren (2019), 359-62; and Williams (2012), 153-55.

³⁴ Arist.*Nic.Eth.*8.3.1156a6-b24; Caine (2009/2014), x; Cooper (1980), 303; Verboven (2011), 404.

on both parties wishing the other well for the other person's sake, not their own, and requires similarity and equal virtue.³⁵ It is this type of friendship that Aristotle considered to be the best.³⁶ The structure of this thesis takes inspiration from Aristotle's groupings by treating the mistress-slave relationships, which resemble Aristotle's friendships of utility, separately from the "equal" bonds, which mainly draw on the friendships of virtue. Roman philosophical works also take up Aristotle's debate over the nature of friendships of "utility" versus "virtue". For instance, there was a split in how the Epicureans and Stoics viewed friendship, with the former viewing it as a universal necessity and the latter as relying heavily on virtue.³⁷ In a letter, Seneca scorned Epicurus' idea of men helping each other to benefit themselves and argued that this was a bargain, not a friendship.³⁸ Laelius in Cicero's *De Amicitia* claimed that friendship could only occur between good men with equality between them.³⁹ Yet in his public *Pro Roscio Amerino* speech, Cicero argued that friendships were formed for mutual benefit suggesting that this notion would have appealed to contemporary jurors, even if it went against Cicero's personal views.⁴⁰ This debate makes Aristotle still a relevant model for looking at friendships within the novels, despite the time gap.

³⁵ Arist.*Nic.Eth.*8.2.1155b33-4; 8.3.1156b7-22; Konstan (1996), 74; Smith Pangle (2002), 48, 50, 57; Tutuska (2010), 353-4; Ward (2016), 108.

³⁶ Arist.*Nic.Eth.*8.3.1156b7-8; McCoy (2013), 147; Smith Pangle (2002), 57.

³⁷ Verboven (2011), 404.

³⁸ Sen.*Ep.*9.8-10.

³⁹ Cic.*Amic.*18; 69.

⁴⁰ Cic.*Rosc.Am.*111.

On the whole, less importance is placed on female friendships than male within Graeco-Roman literature, although the extent varies according to the individual works and genres. However, this does not mean that Graeco-Roman literature completely excluded the topic of female friendships. Whilst the poet Sappho notably described female bonds, examples can also be found in works written by men and the novels reflected many earlier models.⁴¹ In ancient philosophical works there is a notable lack of discussion about female friendship, for instance Aristotle and Cicero viewed friendships involving women as inferior to those between men.⁴² Yet Plutarch's *Bravery of Women* argues that many women had carried out great deeds by working together, including encouraging their male relatives in battle, holding meetings to vote and even fighting invaders.⁴³ In epic, including Homer and Virgil, women usually were depicted as prizes, as the objects of desire of men, and subsequently were isolated from each other, outside of any familial bonds. This resembles the distancing of female characters within *Leucippe and Clitophon*.⁴⁴ Aristophanes depicted women bonding together and forming effective alliances against men similar to the novelistic mistress-slave bonds, notably in the *Ecclesiazusae*, *Lysistrata* and *Thesmophoriazusae*.⁴⁵ Other literary models could include Lucian who depicted women interacting with

⁴¹ Sappho.fr.27; 71; 88; 94; 121. See Calame (1996), 113-7; Klinck (2008), particularly 20, 25; and Konstan (1997), 47-8.

⁴² Arist.*Nic.Eth.*8.7.1158b12-9; Cic.*Amic.*46-7; Cooper (1980), 307; Fogel (2009), 77, 84, 89; Williams (2012), 66.

⁴³ Plut.*Mor.De.mul.vir.*243E-250F; 243D-E; 244F-245A; 245B-C; 244D; 245E.

⁴⁴ 4.4. *Leucippe and Clitophon* is abbreviated elsewhere in this thesis to *L&C*. Similarly, *D&C* refers to *Daphnis and Chloe*.

⁴⁵ Culpepper Stroop (2004), 46-7, 59-60, 63, 66; Lowe (2008), 45-6; Moodie (2012), 267-74.

each other and displaying signs of friendship in his *Dialogues*, a notable example being his *Dialogues of the Courtesans*. These relationships resemble the bond between Arsinoe and Thisbe in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*.⁴⁶ Petronius' *Satyricon* also prominently featured a close friendship between two freedwomen, Fortuna and Scintilla, which offers a rare example of an "equal" female bond in Roman literature and is reminiscent of the affection shown between women of a similar status in the Greek novels.⁴⁷

Tragedy also represents an important model for studying female friendships within the novels, particularly when looking at jealousy, manipulations and pity. Women, such as female choruses, often were sympathetic towards each other and were co-conspirators in the tragedies, by confiding in each other and agreeing to conceal secrets.⁴⁸ All of the friendship types discussed within this thesis contain relationships that resemble these ideas. The idea of female solidarity in tragedy could also be considered to be especially prominent when looking at the relationships between sisters. Coe notes that sisterly bonds were central to some fragmentary works, notably Sophocles' *Tereus* and Euripides' *Erechtheus*.⁴⁹ Yet she also argues that in the surviving extant plays there are not many examples of women acting out of sisterhood, with

⁴⁶ See pp.207-8.

⁴⁷ Petron.*Sat.*67.5-6; 67.11-13; 74.12; 75.2. See 3.2. Whilst the Roman novels share similarities with the Greek novels, most scholars view them as separate genres as the latter focus on the mutual love between their protagonists and this element is missing from their Roman equivalents.

⁴⁸ Eur.*Andr.*144; 421-2; *El.*1168; *Hipp.*710-4; *IT.*1060-72; *Med.*136-7; 259-68; 357-63; 1233-5; Soph.*Ant.*84-5; *Trach.*307-34; Chong-Gossard (2008), 134-48, 150-4, 155-75, 181-2; Fletcher (2003), 35-6, 38, 39, 42-3; Mills (2014), 105-8.

⁴⁹ Coe (2020), 42, 48-61.

female characters instead prioritising their bonds with their fathers and brothers.⁵⁰ The novelistic female friendships are often similarly marginalised in favour of the connections the women have with men.

Writing on Antigone and Ismene's relationship in Sophocles' *Antigone*, arguably the most prominent sister bond in all surviving Greek tragedy, Goldhill argues that Antigone demonstrates a complete rejection of sisterhood by prioritising her dead brother over any other connections.⁵¹ However, Honig offers a different and more sympathetic reading of the text in which the sisters do not compete against each other but unite around their brother's death.⁵² Her main argument, that Ismene carried out the first burial of Polynices, is intriguing but lacks any firm evidence to support it.⁵³ Yet Ismene demonstrates sisterly affection, in her promise to keep silent over Antigone's plan to break the law and in her attempt to be punished alongside her sister.⁵⁴ The idea of women conspiring together and keeping secrets also features heavily in the novel, notably when Plangon and Callirhoe hide the heroine's pregnancy from Dionysius in the *Callirhoe*.⁵⁵ There are also hints of sisterly affection from Antigone in her decision to confide in her sister and ask for help and in her later attempt to prevent Ismene from also dying.⁵⁶ Most novelistic female friendships feature some element of reciprocity, whether

⁵⁰ Coo (2020), 47, 40.

⁵¹ Goldhill (2008), 153, 157.

⁵² Honig (2013), 154, 156, 151-70.

⁵³ Honig (2013), 156-62, 164-5, 168; *Soph.Ant.*245-72.

⁵⁴ *Soph.Ant.*84-5; 536-45.

⁵⁵ See section 2.4.4.

⁵⁶ *Soph.Ant.*18-77; 41-3; 546-7; 553-60.

through the women's mutual reliance on each other in the unequal friendships or through their mutual affection in the equal friendships. Even in the missed opportunity, Melite asks Leucippe to repay her previous kindness.⁵⁷ The female relationships in the Greek novels therefore both adopt and adapt earlier models of friendships.

1.3 The Nature of the Genre

Several difficulties arise in performing a study of female friendships across the novel genre as a whole instead of focusing on one specific relationship or novel. A main issue is that the genre is not "fixed" and can be difficult to define. When studying friendships, caution is needed in grouping them to ensure they do not become overgeneralised stereotypes. This is important because each novelistic friendship is unique, even though it may share traits. This reflects the flexibility of the genre. The word "novel" is a modern term with no ancient equivalent, meaning a modern audience might interpret the genre differently to a contemporary reader.⁵⁸ The alternative term used to describe this genre, "romance", also has different connotations, including separating these works from the Roman novels, which do not revolve around their protagonists' mutual love for each other.⁵⁹ There was seemingly some

⁵⁷ Ach.Tat.5.22.2.

⁵⁸ Goldhill (2008), 185; 190; Holzberg (1996), 11; Morales (2001), VIII; Morgan (1993), 176; Swain (1999), 3; Whitmarsh (2005), 588; (2018), 16.

⁵⁹ Scholars using "romance" include Alvares (2012); Hilton (2019); Ricquier (2019); and Perry (1967).

recognition that certain fictional works could be grouped together.⁶⁰

Macrobius referred to works, including the Roman novels, as *fabulae*.⁶¹

Photius in his 9th century summary of *The Wonders Beyond Thule* describes its influence on works including the *Aethiopica*, *Babyloniaca* and *L&C* and groups together the latter three in his summary of Iamblichus' text.⁶² Yet, this does not mean that their conception of the genre was as rigidly defined as modern definitions. Seven surviving works are currently classed as novels by most scholars studying this genre: five Greek and two Roman.

However, fragments, summaries and other fictional works exist that resemble the novels.⁶³ A contentious issue in scholarship has been how to classify these texts and define the term "novel". As Morgan argues, whilst all novels are considered works of fiction, not all fictional works are novels.⁶⁴ Perry originally argued that the "novels" could be split into two groups: "serious or ideal" (covering the surviving Greek novels and Iamblichus' *Babyloniaca*) and the "comic or unideal" (Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, Lucian's *True Stories* and Petronius' *Satyricon*).⁶⁵ However, as Ruiz-Montero points out, the surviving fragments of now lost works make these "traditional" categories too simplistic for this genre, described by Whitmarsh as "most polymorphous" in

⁶⁰ For overviews of ancient terms used to refer to novelistic works see Morgan (1993), 177-8; and Ruiz-Montero (1996), 32-7.

⁶¹ Macrobius *In Somn.* 1.2.7-8.

⁶² Photius *Bibl.* 112a1-6; 73b.25-32.

⁶³ Stephens and Winkler (1995) have collected, translated and commented on several fragments of "lost" novels. Reardon (1989/2008) also provides translations and analysis of novelistic fragments and summaries.

⁶⁴ Morgan (1993), 176.

⁶⁵ Perry (1967), 87-8.

form.⁶⁶ Stephens instead advocates for four subgroups: idealistic, those covering the life of a non-Greek hero, the Roman novels (following criminals or marginalised social groups) and Antonius Diogenes' *The Wonders beyond Thule*.⁶⁷ The difficulty then is how scholars determine the boundaries between a "novel" and a "fictional work containing novelistic elements"; the distinction is often blurred and dependent on the preference of the individual scholar. Reardon's collection of the Greek novels includes *Apollonius, King of Tyre* and Lucian's *True Stories* due to their resemblance to the novels, despite most scholars not considering them to be part of the genre.⁶⁸ Kanavou argues that Iamblichus' *Babyloniaca* would have been viewed as an "idealistic" novel that pushes the genre boundaries in a similar fashion to *L&C* or the *Aethiopica* and Whitmarsh similarly argues that it resembles the surviving novels but displays innovation and experimentation.⁶⁹ However, Stephens and Winkler believe that the *Babyloniaca* cannot be considered to be a Greek novel.⁷⁰ This thesis considers the *Babyloniaca* to be an idealistic novel and the discussions of the relationship between *Sinonis and the Farmer's Daughter* support this text being part of the same genre as the canonical novels.⁷¹ Whilst the *Babyloniaca* is unconventional in its approach, it contains features that resemble the surviving novels, such as a strong heroine and passive hero, various obstacles to the protagonists' relationship, and a "happy" ending

⁶⁶ Ruiz-Montero (1996), 29; Whitmarsh (2018), 10.

⁶⁷ Stephens (1996), 657.

⁶⁸ Reardon (1989/2008).

⁶⁹ Kanavou (2019), 110-1; Whitmarsh (2005), 602

⁷⁰ Stephens and Winkler (1995), 179.

⁷¹ 4.2.

when Sinonis and Rhodanes eventually reunite and marry. In contrast, *D&C* is not described in depth in this thesis because it is the only surviving novel without a significant friendship between two female characters. Lycaenion, the female antagonist, ultimately serves as an ally to the protagonists, similar to Melite in *L&C*.⁷² Yet, whilst Melite has a direct and significant relationship with “Lacaena”, Lycaenion only indirectly interacts with Chloe through Daphnis and her interests are aligned with him.⁷³ As the text offers no signs of affection or solidarity between the two characters, this relationship is not classified as a friendship. The other four surviving novels and Iamblichus’ *Babyloniaca* contain clear examples of female exclusive alliances and bonds, or at the very least offer an opportunity for these friendships to form.

Even considering just the surviving novels creates problems in defining boundaries as there is wide variation in how the individual novelists approached certain generic conventions. This is reflected through the different attitudes the individual novels take towards female friendships and the variances within relationship types. *Callirhoe* offers three close *confidantes* to its heroine and the *Ephesian Tale* sets up Rhode as a close companion of Anthia, although this is an idealized mistress-slave relationship. The *Aethiopica* presents three volatile friendships (Demainete and Thisbe, Arsace and Cybele, Arsinoe and Thisbe) and a positive but marginalised bond between Charicleia and Nausicleia. Leucippe is distanced from the other

⁷² Long.3.15.5.

⁷³ Long.3.16.4. Pg.331.

women in *L&C*, despite Melite's attempt to form a bond with her.⁷⁴ As stated, *D&C* contains no female friendships. Whilst readers would not have expected these works to follow an exact model, these variations are especially unsurprising given the scarcity of surviving material and large time gap between the novels. No exact date can be given for any of the novels, but general scholarly consensus is that Chariton's *Callirhoe* and Xenophon's *Ephesian Tale* are amongst the earlier examples.⁷⁵ These are usually dated to the start of the Second Sophistic at the end of the 1st century AD, although this is not universally established.⁷⁶ Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, considered to be the latest of the extant novels, is often placed in the 4th century AD.⁷⁷ Taking these dates as a rough estimate, the novels span a time period of over 200 years and only a limited sample has survived. This makes it difficult to determine the genre's "norms" and its development, although as Whitmarsh argues this does not mean that there were no established conventions, with later novels appearing to challenge these conventions.⁷⁸ Consequently, any modern readings need to approach the topic with caution, especially projects such as this which do not approach each novel individually. Anderson is sceptical of works comparing authors against each other due to the lack of surviving material.⁷⁹ This cautious approach has merit, but I believe there is

⁷⁴ 4.3.1; 4.3.2.

⁷⁵ Most scholars date Chariton's *Callirhoe* as the earlier novel (Bowie (1999), 40, 46-9; Ruiz-Montero (1996), 30; Tilg (2010), particularly 83-92), but others have placed *Ephesian Tale* first (O'Sullivan (1995), particularly 145-70).

⁷⁶ An argument can be made for the genre originating earlier than the Second Sophistic (Ruiz-Montero (1996), 30n6, 59-65; Whitmarsh (2018), 11-2).

⁷⁷ Bowie (1999), 41; Whitmarsh (2018), 12.

⁷⁸ Whitmarsh (2005), 588.

⁷⁹ Anderson (2017), 1. Scholars taking an alternative approach include Jones (2006); Lefteratou (2018); and Montiglio (2013).

value in comparing the different attitudes each author has towards certain topics and examining any similarities/differences.

Whilst the influence of previous Graeco-Roman literary tropes on the novelistic friendships is clear, only limited conclusions can be reached when looking at how this theme developed within the genre itself. It is likely that some conventions were established by the time the “later” novels were written, although this does not imply widespread genre unity in how the individual novels approach conventional patterns and tropes.⁸⁰ The “convention” of the protagonists having reciprocal love for each other distinguishes the “ideal” novels from similar works, yet three surviving novels challenge this concept.⁸¹ Clitophon marries Melite, Callirhoe knowingly commits bigamy and Clitophon and Daphnis both sleep with other women whilst supposedly being devoted to Leucippe and Chloe.⁸² Sinonis, the heroine of the *Babyloniaca*, goes further by voluntarily agreeing to marry Garmus to spite Rhodanes for kissing the Farmers’ Daughter.⁸³ Achilles Tatius and Iamblichus use their female characters to further challenge the idea of “true love” by portraying the women as being interchangeable in their roles and through male misidentifications of female characters.⁸⁴ Therefore, whilst useful conclusions can still be drawn from studying female bonds, there is a

⁸⁰ Anderson (2017), 11-3; Bowie (1999), 41; Holzberg (1996), 12.

⁸¹ König (2008), 131; Morgan (1993), 224.

⁸² Ach.Tat.5.14.2-3; Charit.2.11.5; 3.2.16-7; Ach.Tat.5.27.3-4; Long.3.18.3-4. Although Daphnis’ affair occurs due to his naivety rather than a conscious betrayal of Chloe.

⁸³ Phot.Bibl.77b22-3; 78a4; Morales (2006), 87.

⁸⁴ 4.6; 4.5.2.

danger of overgeneralising these friendships and how they develop within the genre.

1.4 Chapter Outlines

This thesis groups novelistic female friendships into three categories: “unequal”, “equal” and “the missed opportunity”. Scholars usually classify female characters into four groups: heroines, antagonists, mothers/daughters and *confidantes*.⁸⁵ This classification system is too broad to be used effectively.⁸⁶ This genre is not “fixed” and “key” novelistic character types and themes are treated differently across the surviving novels.⁸⁷ There are women who could fit into multiple categories and some that do not fall under any. The Witch of Bessa in Heliodorus’ *Aethiopica* could be seen as a grieving mother or as a hostile antagonist. Clitophon’s sister Calligone plays a prominent role in *L&C*, yet her lack of agency and absence of a direct bond with the novel’s heroine means she cannot be viewed as either a hostile rival or *confidante*.⁸⁸ Even within those four “traditional” categories, distinctions can be drawn between certain groups of characters. Melite (*L&C*) and Lycaenion (*D&C*) are primarily portrayed as rivals to their novels’ heroines yet ultimately choose to aid the protagonists instead of acting with violence, unlike most female antagonists in this genre. A similar issue can be found in

⁸⁵ Egger (1999), 120; Johne (1996), 172; Haynes (2003), 101-30.

⁸⁶ De Temmerman ((2019a), 86) expresses a similar viewpoint.

⁸⁷ Pp.14-20.

⁸⁸ Pp.293-4.

the *confidantes* category, the most relevant group for this study. Discussing the relationship between Mesopotamia and Berenice in Iamblichus' fragmentary *Babyloniaca*, Morales argues that scholars ignore the significance of their bond by grouping it amongst the other novelistic homosexual relationships, instead of focusing on how it offers a rare ancient literary depiction of a romantic bond between two women.⁸⁹ Whilst the genre's portrayal of female friendships is not as unique, scholarship has taken a similar approach by grouping all female *confidantes* under the same category without distinguishing between the different types of friendships within this genre. As this thesis will demonstrate, a relationship between two women of similar social status is different from a mistress-slave bond, where one woman owns the other. I have therefore chosen to group the friendships discussed in this thesis into three categories: Unequal, Equal and the Missed Opportunity. Whilst not every bond follows a pattern similar to the other relationships they have been grouped with, such as the bond between the *hetairai* Arsinoe and Thisbe being included within the aristocratic friendships, similarities can be found across all the relationships discussed in each chapter. This thesis looks at the implications for how this influences our understanding of the genre, such as the question of female agency and of social hierarchies.

⁸⁹ Morales (2006), 79.

Chapter 2 (pp.27-150) discusses the “unequal” female friendships between women of “naturally” different social statuses.⁹⁰ Most bonds discussed in this genre occur between mistresses and slaves, with Charicleia’s relationship with Arsace being the exception as the aristocratic woman is never the slave’s owner. The relationships included are: Clio and Leucippe (*L&C*), Plangon and Callirhoe (*Callirhoe*), Rhode and Anthia (*Ephesian Tale*), Thisbe and Demainete (*Aethiopica*) and Cybele’s relationships with both Arsace and Charicleia (*Aethiopica*). This chapter argues that there is some sort of friendship between the women but mainly based on mutual dependency instead of affection, thereby resembling the friendships of utility discussed by Aristotle.⁹¹ Mistresses and slaves are cunning and display a wide variety of manipulative techniques, which are applied with success in their schemes and conspiracies, especially when the women work together. However, both participants place their own interests first when they feel these bonds are no longer useful to them, even if doing so is detrimental to their former allies. Most of these bonds are therefore marginalised by the novelists by either being relegated to the novels’ backgrounds, undeveloped, and/or being defined by mutual selfishness. The slaves are characterised similarly to other Graeco-Roman literary stereotypes, such as the “ideal” slave (Rhode), the easily manipulated slave (Clio), and the *servus callidus* (Plangon, Thisbe,

⁹⁰ Characters in the novels frequently change social statuses but continue to be characterised according to ancient elitist expectations of the social classes they were born into. “Naturally” here and elsewhere in this thesis refers to the characters’ original social class.

⁹¹ Pg.29; pg.32.

Cybele). This chapter discusses how this genre adopts and adapts these previous models.

The “equal” friendships between women of similar social status are discussed in chapter 3 (pp.151-261). This includes the bond between the *hetairai* Thisbe and Arsinoe (*Aethiopica*) and the aristocratic friendships of Rhodogune and Callirhoe (*Callirhoe*), Statira and Callirhoe (*Callirhoe*) and Nausicleia and Charicleia (*Aethiopica*). This chapter addresses the traditional scholarly criticism of the genre lacking relationships between women of a similar status. Although most of these bonds are undeveloped and relegated to the background of their respective narratives, with the exception of that between Statira and Callirhoe, it is clear that these relationships were to be viewed as friendships as there are signs of mutual affection. However, the novels prioritise the women’s roles as male possessions and objects of desire over their roles as *confidantes*. The novels frequently position their aristocratic female characters as competitors against each other, usually for the affection of a man. Within these competitions, the women are judged solely on their physical attractiveness by a primarily male audience. This chapter looks at how this fits in with other Graeco-Roman views on female beauty and its importance in a female-exclusive private sphere compared to one dominated by men. It considers the question of agency, with the women often unwillingly set up as rivals by male characters yet unable to prevent this from happening. The rivalries cause personal tension in the form of jealousy or envy, creating the possibility of betrayal. However, the women in these

friendships are often characterised as having similar natures according to their social classes, which enables them to form positive bonds with each other. As with other ancient literary courtesan relationships, Thisbe and Arsinoe display a lack of self-restraint, leading to the latter's betrayal of the former after Thisbe's appropriation of Nausicles. In contrast, in the aristocratic friendships, the women are able to control their emotions which ultimately enables them to form lasting friendships, despite the tension caused by the male characters.

Chapter 4 (pp.262-341) takes a different approach by looking at the missed opportunity for a female friendship between Melite and Leucippe in *L&C*. Melite attempts to form some sort of friendship with Leucippe when the latter is disguised as "Lacaena". However, Leucippe's awareness that the women are rivals for Clitophon's affections ultimately makes Melite's attempt one-sided. When the heroine's identity is revealed, the women become isolated from each other and no longer have a direct or personal bond within the narrative. This chapter discusses the implications of this failed bond and also uses Calligone (*L&C*) and the women in Iamblichus' *Babyloniaca* to demonstrate that Melite and Leucippe's relationship fits into wider patterns within the novel and genre. Throughout both novels, the women's relationships with the male characters are prioritised and they are therefore primarily defined by their usefulness and desirability to men. Melite is set up as an almost secondary heroine within the novel resembling Leucippe and her experiences in many ways, with her sexuality setting up Melite as a reverse

parallel to the heroine's chastity.⁹² This fits into the wider picture within this novel and the *Babyloniaca* of boundaries being blurred between the heroines and female antagonists, challenging the idea of the novelistic heroine being exceptional and without an equal. This idea is further emphasised by Melite and other women being in some senses interchangeable with novelistic heroines. Male characters frequently mistake women for each other or fail to identify female characters, in contrast to Melite and the Farmer's Daughters recognitions.⁹³ This suggests that, from a male viewpoint, all women are indistinguishable from each other and lack uniqueness. This challenges the idea of "mutual love" that is so frequently associated with this genre.⁹⁴

The thesis concludes by arguing that friendships clearly exist between women within the novels, and the female characters place great importance on these bonds by demonstrating mutual affection, confiding in one another and conspiring together. It identifies different models of friendships which are reflective of wider ancient views on social hierarchies, with the aristocratic women reflecting the concept of *sophrosyne* and the mistress-slave bonds being friendships of utility. Many participants within these friendships contain similar traits, which allows the women to bond, but also increases the risk of the women losing their individuality and uniqueness by being grouped into overgeneralised stereotypes, emphasised by Melite, Leucippe and the other

⁹² See 4.6.1.

⁹³ 4.5.1; 4.5.2.

⁹⁴ Haynes (2003), 35; Jolowicz (2021), 123; Konstan (1994), 9, 67-8; Reardon (1989/2008), 333-4.

novelistic women in the “missed opportunity” chapter being interchangeable from a male perspective. This ultimately raises questions about the wider topics of female agency and the generic ideal of “true love” and is part of the wider picture of novelistic female friendships being framed by the male agenda, with the women’s roles as *confidantes* being a secondary priority to their roles as male assets and objects of desire. As a result, female bonds are marginalised within the texts, leading to the women either being distanced from each other or tension being present within their bonds.

Chapter 2: The Unequal Friendships

2.1 Introduction

The portrayal of relationships between women of different social status in this genre is not positive. These bonds are full of deception, mutual mistrust, and the underlying potential of betrayal. Rhode and Anthia's relationship is the only prominent mistress-slave bond to not contain any of these traits, but this only occurs because the slave is so defined by her devotion to her mistress that she subsequently lacks any agency or individuality of her own. This reflects ancient elitist attitudes towards slavery. Slaves were legally the property of their masters and therefore expected to devote their lives to serving their owners' interests.⁹⁵ The novels reflect this attitude, with slaves swiftly removed from the narrative after they have outlived their usefulness, such as Clio being placed on a separate ship and Rhode vanishing from the middle of *Ephesian Tale* until her presence is required to reunite the protagonists.⁹⁶ As a result, several authors portrayed friendships as only existing between people of an equal status. In his *Panegyricus*, Pliny the Younger questioned if friendship could exist between people with "one perceiving himself to be the master and the other a slave".⁹⁷ Plato argued that genuine friendship only occurs between equals.⁹⁸ Baltzly and Eliopoulos

⁹⁵ Owens (2020), 198. Varro describes slaves as talking tools (Varro.*Rust.*1.17.1).

⁹⁶ Ach.Tat.2.31.1-4; Xen.2.4.1-4; 2.9.1-2.

⁹⁷ Plin.*Pan.*85.2.

⁹⁸ Pl.*Leg.*837a-b.

interpreted this as equality in social status, but this could also apply to qualities such as virtue and experiences undertaken.⁹⁹ Quintus Cicero in his letter to his brother about the manumission of Tiro wrote “you had preferred him to be a friend rather than a slave to us”, which Williams argued implies that masters and slaves cannot be friends.¹⁰⁰ Because of these negative ancient attitudes towards unequal friendships, Haynes claimed that the novels represent a male devaluation of female friendship by having most female *confidantes* be slaves.¹⁰¹

This does not mean there are no novelistic friendships between women of different statuses, only that these relationships take a different form with these alliances being formed from mutual benefit and necessity rather than out of affection.¹⁰² The prominent examples of novelistic mistress-slave bonds imply some female solidarity with women working together in their plots and schemes, even when the relationships are heavily marginalised as with Rhode and Anthia or Clio and Leucippe. Ancient literature is full of slaves acting as close *confidantes* to their mistresses: keeping them company, offering advice and helping with their various affairs. This is reflective of contemporary society, where mistresses and maidservants lived together in close quarters and bonded together, despite their differing statuses.¹⁰³ Unequal novelistic

⁹⁹ Baltzly and Eliopoulos (2009), 18.

¹⁰⁰ Cic.*Fam.*16.16; Williams (2012), 24. Alternatively, it could be interpreted as implying that friendship was possible, but not encouraged.

¹⁰¹ Haynes (2003), 124.

¹⁰² Aristotle claims friendship can exist between masters and slaves if both are in their “natural” positions (Arist.*Pol.*1255b14-7).

¹⁰³ Rowlandson (1998), 85; Vlassopoulos (2007), 38.

female friendships are different from those between equals, lacking envy, jealousy and rivalry, but contain mutual self-interest and manipulation. These relationships most closely resemble the friendships of utility defined by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics*.¹⁰⁴ Whilst he argues that the best friendships are made up of “equality and similarity”, he acknowledges that friendships can exist between those of opposites based on benefitting themselves.¹⁰⁵

Unequal female relationships in this genre are characterised by their mutual dependence and reliance on each other, with slaves dependent on the goodwill of their owners and mistresses reliant on their slaves helping with schemes and keeping silent. Therefore, there is always the underlying potential for betrayal. Apart from Rhode, all these women primarily act in their own self-interests, even if this harms their companions. Mistresses lack concern for their slaves’ welfare and even threaten violence if they feel their slaves have not been helping their agenda, as demonstrated by Demainete and Arsace.¹⁰⁶ Slaves willingly manipulate other characters and their self-interest creates an underlying potential threat of disloyalty, with Thisbe actively betraying her mistress.¹⁰⁷ Significantly, the slaves often exploit previous acts of loyalty and their victims’ trust to manipulate. Panayotakis

¹⁰⁴ Hock (1997), 159. On Aristotle’s depiction of friendships of utility, see Alpern (1983); Smith Pangle (2002), 40, 45-7; Vernon (2005), 16-9; and Ward (2016), 103, 106, 110-4. Pg.32 discusses this further.

¹⁰⁵ Arist.*Eth.Nic.*8.1159b5-6.

¹⁰⁶ Heliod.1.15.1; 7.22.2; 7.23.3; 8.6.6.

¹⁰⁷ Pp.53-8.

argues that the portrayal of slavery in literature reflected the anxiety masters had of their slaves influencing and possibly betraying them.¹⁰⁸ However, deception is not unique to slaves as mistresses and heroines can also effectively manipulate. Aristocratic women are often represented as intelligent and more deceptive than their male counterparts, despite being exploited and tricked by female slaves, implying that all novelistic women can manipulate.¹⁰⁹ The similarities between mistresses and slaves are frequently used to characterise aristocratic characters in a certain manner, either to portray the heroines in a positive light by emphasizing their positive traits or by contrasting their *sophrosyne* with the immorality of the slaves or to draw attention to their mistresses' negative traits.¹¹⁰

The novels use existing literary tropes in their depictions of female slaves.¹¹¹ Rhode is the stereotypical "good" slave, whose characterisation is dominated by her devotion to Anthia, preventing her from having any individuality or agency apart from her desire to help the protagonists.¹¹² Clio is a maidservant exploited by an outsider to become an asset to male plotters, with her actions and bond with Leucippe viewed through an elitist male gaze.¹¹³ Yet the most common trope is the *servus callidus*, most commonly associated with New

¹⁰⁸ Panayotakis (2019), X. Discussed further at pp.47-8.

¹⁰⁹ Charit.6.5.8; Heliod.1.21.13; 1.10.3-4; 1.12.3-13.3; 7.2.1; 7.4.3-5.2.

¹¹⁰ De Temmerman (2019b), 20; Hilton (2019), 5; Owens (2019), 39.

¹¹¹ De Temmerman and Demoen (2011), 1; Morgan (1993), 228; Whitmarsh (2008a), 85.

¹¹² Pp.141-3.

¹¹³ See pp.140-1 for other examples.

and Roman Comedy.¹¹⁴ These slaves usually help their primary masters with their love affairs, using their manipulative skills, opportunism, and understanding of the other characters. Plangon, Thisbe and Cybele all resemble these cunning slaves through their ability to deceive, but there are notable differences. Whilst the comic slaves occasionally display self-interest through their fear and greed, they serve their primary masters faithfully, which contrasts with Plangon's switching allegiance and Thisbe's betrayal of Demainete.¹¹⁵ Cybele manipulates her mistress effectively, but fails to deceive the protagonists due to her inability to understand their mindsets.¹¹⁶ Whilst these individual female relationships differ, they are similarly marginalised by the elite male novelists.

This chapter studies novelistic mistress-slave relationships and examines similarities between the individual bonds and with earlier models. It argues that these friendships resemble Aristotle's friendships of utility, with these tenuous relationships revolving around mutual dependency and self-interest. The women in these relationships are often characterised similarly. Cybele, Thisbe and Plangon use similar manipulative tactics to serve their own interests and present a warning to ancient slaveowners of the dangers of

¹¹⁴ There were clever comic female slaves particularly in Plautius (including Milphidippa (*Miles Gloriosus*) and Astaphium (*Truculentus*)), but these often played smaller and less effective roles compared to male slaves. On the *servus callidus* in Roman comedy, see Fitzgerald (2019), 189-91, 193, 195-8; McCarthy (2004), 12-3, 22-3, 27-8, 32, 81, 100-1, 123, 143-4, 161; and Schironi (2013), 449-58.

¹¹⁵ Charit.3.1.6-8; Heliod.1.15.2-17.4. Whilst comic slaves do not turn against the *adulescens*, they frequently deceive and manipulate their secondary masters. Examples include Palaestrio (*Miles Gloriosus*), Pseudolus (*Pseudolus*) and Syrus (*Heauton Timorumenos*). For further information see Fitzgerald (2019); and Schironi (2013), 449-458.

¹¹⁶ Including when Cybele advises prostration to the protagonists (Heliod.7.17.2-4). Pp.110-1.

trusting slaves. Mistresses are depicted similarly to their maidservants, suggesting that to some extent all novelistic women, regardless of their social statuses, were similarly stereotyped. Overall, these unequal friendships are depicted negatively, with the novels marginalising female slaves and subsequently their bonds with their mistresses.

2.2 Mutually Dependent Relationships

The relationships in this chapter most closely resemble the friendships of utility defined by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics*.¹¹⁷ As noted, he acknowledges that friendships can exist between opposites based on benefitting themselves.¹¹⁸ Most novelistic mistress-slave relationships contain a form of mutual dependency. Slaves are dependent on their mistresses' goodwill to receive benefits and for their own safety. Mistresses require assistance from their slaves for their schemes and then need the slaves to keep silent. As scholars on Aristotle have noted, these relationships are not necessarily fully exploitative, as the participants have to co-operate and trust each other to some extent and work efficiently with each other when pursuing the same goal.¹¹⁹ However, these bonds are unstable and easily breakable when either participant believes it no longer serves their own purposes, reflecting the instability of Aristotle's friendships of utility.¹²⁰ This

¹¹⁷ See Alpern (1983); Smith Pangle (2002), 40, 45-7; Vernon (2005), 16-9; and Ward (2016), 103, 106, 110-4.

¹¹⁸ *Arist.Eth.Nic.8.1159b5-6*.

¹¹⁹ Alpern (1983), 304; Stern-Gillet (1995), 38. See particularly 2.4.4.

¹²⁰ *Arist.Eth.Nic.8.1156b19-24; 8.1157a14-6*.

section discusses novelistic variations on the friendship of utility model, ranging from the “ideal” versions to those primarily categorised by self-interest, to the betrayals committed by slaves when they believe these bonds are no longer in their best interests.

2.2.1 The “Ideal” Model

In the friendships depicting “ideal” mistress-slave relationships, the dependency between mistresses and their slaves is downplayed as the subservience of the slaves makes any future betrayal or exploitation of this bond unlikely. These bonds reflect the “ideal” friendship of utility according to the views of ancient slaveowners. The friendships of Rhode and Anthia (*Ephesian Tale*) and the latter part of Plangon and Callirhoe’s relationship (*Callirhoe*) best fit this model, although the second more strongly resembles Aristotle’s theory because of Rhode’s stereotypification as a literary “good” slave.¹²¹

These bonds have similarities: there is some affection between the women and both slaves are granted their freedom, which elevates their status and enables a more equal friendship with their former mistresses. Initially in the *Callirhoe*, Plangon took advantage of Callirhoe’s naivety and fear to manipulate the heroine.¹²² Yet after the slave’s report to Dionysius, Plangon

¹²¹ Pp.141-3.

¹²² See 2.3.1 in particular.

becomes and stays loyal to Callirhoe and their bond changes to one of mutual dependency after Plangon is freed.¹²³ This is highlighted by the slave not entirely disappearing from the novel after her main purpose in the narrative ends, which is consistent with the portrayal of other female confidantes within the *Callirhoe*. Plangon continues to be mentioned as a close companion for Callirhoe: the heroine confides in her that Chaereas might still be alive and says goodbye to her in Callirhoe's farewell letter.¹²⁴ This implies that the two women continue to have a strong bond and that Plangon has firmly shifted her main allegiance to Callirhoe from Dionysius. In return, Callirhoe asks Dionysius to grant Plangon her freedom.¹²⁵ This suggests that the heroine feels affection and gratitude towards Plangon, whilst remaining blind to her earlier manipulations. In addition, Plangon's social elevation to a freedwoman would make her a more suitable companion for Callirhoe, enabling the women to have a more "equal" friendship based on mutual affection and not just utility.¹²⁶

As with Plangon, it is implied that Rhode receives her freedom upon the death of her master by becoming one of his heirs, although this is not granted by the protagonists or stated by the text.¹²⁷ The prosperity granted to Rhode and Leucon may be seen as their well-earned reward for their devotion to

¹²³ Charit.3.1.6-8; pp.48-50.

¹²⁴ Charit.3.9.3; 8.4.5.

¹²⁵ Charit.3.8.1.

¹²⁶ However, as will be discussed (pp.35-7), freedmen were still socially inferior to their former masters and often still dependent on them.

¹²⁷ Xen.5.6.3.

Anthia and Habrocomes. This is further enhanced by Xenophon portraying the two couples as friends and including Rhode and Leucon among the happy partnerships in the conclusion.¹²⁸ Their affection is not one-sided, as Anthia has a joyful reaction when reunited with the former slaves, hugging and kissing them.¹²⁹ The ending describes Rhode and Leucon as the protagonists' "companions living together in everything", which Owens has interpreted as them forming a replacement family with Anthia and Habrocomes.¹³⁰ These scenes of affection would suggest that this work presents a more sympathetic view towards slavery than some of the other novels.¹³¹ Anthia and Callirhoe's continued friendships with their ex-slaves promotes the idea that novelistic female characters were only able to form strong, positive bonds with other women of a similar social status. Plangon and Rhode's freedom is reflective of the increasing social mobility under the Roman Empire and the slaves receiving their freedom on account of their loyalty reflects ancient slaveowners' ideals.

However, despite the social elevation of Plangon and Rhode, the two remain subservient towards their former mistresses. Whilst protagonists and slaves may technically share the same status at times, they are never truly equal in the novels, reflecting the inequality in society between freeborn and freed

¹²⁸ Jacobs (1999), 122; Xen.5.15.4.

¹²⁹ Xen.5.12.6.

¹³⁰ Xen.5.15.4; Owens (2020), 48.

¹³¹ For instance, Clitophon in Achilles Tatius's novel only thanks Menelaus for saving Leucippe but not his slave Satyrus (Ach.Tat.3.23.1).

citizens.¹³² Although freedmen could become exceedingly wealthy under the Roman Empire, they were unable to escape the social stigma of the elite.¹³³ Maclean claims that it was a common insult to call a freedman a *servus*.¹³⁴ Seneca hints at freedmen being a lesser class by having the Emperor Augustus accuse Cinna of being unable to defend his home due to being defeated by the influence of a freedman.¹³⁵ Although Pliny the Younger shows no sympathy to slaves who killed their master in *Letter 3.14*, he distinguishes the victim from himself and his addressee by mentioning that Larcus Macedo's father was an ex-slave and highlighting the victim's negative traits.¹³⁶ The novelistic mistress-slave bonds are never between "equals" and the freedwomen remain subservient and dependent on their former owners, making these bonds continue to be friendships of utility. Under the Roman Empire, ex-slaves were still reliant on their former masters and expected to continue to perform duties for their previous owners, who were able to act if the freedmen were unable to fulfil these obligations.¹³⁷ Suetonius claims that Claudius legalised the re-enslavement of freedmen if they were considered ungrateful towards their patrons.¹³⁸ Ex-slaves would take their former

¹³² Gaius' *Institutes* distinguishes between those freeborn and those freed (Gai.*Inst.*1.10). In Petronius' *Satyricon*, the wealthy ex-slave hosts a lavish dinner party (Petron.*Sat.*26.9-78.8) which contains alludes to high status but ultimately goes against aristocratic ideals with its' "crassness, vulgarity and excess" (Love (1991), 119, 119-20).

¹³³ Maclean (2018), 2; Mouritsen (2011), 12. For ancient criticism of Roman manumission, see Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *Roman Antiquities* (Dion.Hal.*Ant.Rom.*4.24.4-8).

¹³⁴ Maclean (2018), 39; Cic.*Rosc.Am.*48.140; Pl.*Ep.*8.6.4.

¹³⁵ Sen.*Clem.*1.9.10.

¹³⁶ Plin.*Ep.*3.14.1. The letter describes Macedo's cruelty to his own slaves while describing his father's status (Plin.*Ep.*3.14.1) and later his arrogance in allowing his slave to touch an Equestrian, with Pliny not condemning the Knight's decision to slap the master in retaliation (Plin.*Ep.*3.14.7-8). The negative traits assigned to Macedo resemble the "bad freedmen" stereotype discussed by Maclean (2018), 39-40.

¹³⁷ See Bradley (1987), 81-112; and Mouritsen (2011), 36-73 on freedman obligations.

¹³⁸ Suet.*Claud.*25.1.

owners' family names and rely on them for financial support. As Tran notes, slavery often created a permanent bond between masters and slaves which continued after emancipation and few freedmen ever achieved complete independence.¹³⁹

There are undertones of Plangon's dependence on her ex-masters in the *Callirhoe*. Her continued presence as Callirhoe's close *confidante* suggests she is still part of the household and dependent on Dionysius and the heroine for shelter. Furthermore, whilst Plangon receives her freedom, there is no mention of her "husband" receiving his freedom, making him still the property of Dionysius and implying the freedwoman is still reliant on Callirhoe. Even the heroine's decision to free Plangon is not entirely altruistic, with Callirhoe aware that her own position and reputation relies on Plangon's silence. The text makes this explicit: "she asked for Plangon to be freed... not only from her own feelings but also that the change in fortune might make Plangon more trustworthy towards herself" (ἤξιωσεν ἐλευθερωθῆναι Πλαγγόνα... ἵνα μὴ μόνον ἐκ τῆς γνώμης ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκ τῆς τύχης ἔχη τὸ πιστὸν παρ' αὐτῆ).¹⁴⁰ Whilst Callirhoe remains in a position of authority over Plangon, her acknowledgement that she needs her ex-slave to feel indebted to her demonstrates this has become a mutually dependent bond. Callirhoe's new awareness of the potential dangers that Plangon presents and quick actions to eliminate the threat further highlight their mutual dependency, in

¹³⁹ Tran (2013), 1024, 1001.

¹⁴⁰ Charit.3.8.1.

contrast to Plangon's earlier exploitation of Callirhoe's previous innocence and naivety. This scene, combined with the heroine's intelligent response to Artaxates' later propositions, demonstrates Callirhoe's growth throughout the narrative.¹⁴¹ The contrast between Callirhoe's later encounters with the slaves and Plangon's manipulations during the pregnancy suggests that the heroine is no longer unaware of the threats posed by slaves and has grown into her aristocratic heritage through her ability to control these situations.¹⁴² The influence the two women have after the marriage reflects this: Callirhoe takes an increasingly active role in the narrative whilst Plangon's role and influence is reduced. Whilst once able to influence other characters, Plangon is demoted to her "rightful" role as Callirhoe's subordinate serving her former mistress. The relationship has transitioned into the "correct" bond, with the mistress in control and the subordinate furthering their interests, but with both reliant on each other.

Rhode also has a mutually dependent bond with Anthia, due to their social positions, but this element is concealed within the text. This is mostly because Rhode is defined by her devotion to her masters, which removes any possibility of her turning on Anthia and hides her reliance on her former mistress. In being freed and gaining wealth, Rhode and Leucon end up in a better position than their former masters. Tagliabue has argued this reversal of the initial hierarchy demonstrates that Xenophon promotes the idea of a

¹⁴¹ Charit.6.5.8; Owens (2020), 75.

¹⁴² Owens ((2019), 44; (2020), 59, 73) notes that Callirhoe reclaims her *sophrosyne* through her rejection of the Persian king.

new society not based on status.¹⁴³ However, this is contradicted by the freedmen continuing to help their former masters and place their interests above their own, making this relationship one-sided in favour of the protagonists. For instance, the freedmen set up a dedication to the protagonists, which suggests that Rhode and Leucon often thought about their masters after they were separated.¹⁴⁴ This devotion is one-sided as the protagonists do not think about their slaves during the same period. The protagonists' main priority is each other and not their faithful servants, whose lives revolve around the protagonists despite their own economic success. Commentating on the portrayal of servile figures on tombstones, Wrenhaven notes that although faithful slaves are portrayed as looking up at their masters, their gazes are not returned which suggests that reciprocal affection is only for free people.¹⁴⁵ In the ancient world, loyal slaves could be valuable to their masters in helping them, but were considered inferior and not worthy of having their affection returned.

This inequality is further demonstrated by Rhode and Leucon sharing their new-found wealth with Habrocomes and by extension Anthia.¹⁴⁶ Although this could be read as the former slaves helping their friends, when combined with Rhode and Leucon's consistent portrayals throughout the novel it again demonstrates their social inferiority. As property themselves, the possessions

¹⁴³ Tagliabue (2012), 36.

¹⁴⁴ Xen.5.10.6.

¹⁴⁵ Wrenhaven (2012), 102-3.

¹⁴⁶ Xen.5.10.12.

of slaves were legally the property of their masters and therefore by sharing their wealth this could be read as them holding in trust the protagonists' assets.¹⁴⁷ Maclean argues that most traits patrons expected from their freedmen were the same they would expect from slaves and "good" freedmen were frequently stereotyped in Roman Literature as loyal and unselfish.¹⁴⁸ For instance, Pliny the Elder describes a freedman killing himself out of loyalty when his master dies, despite being his heir.¹⁴⁹ Rhode and Leucon's unselfishness in giving up their own wealth resembles this. Their willingness to put the protagonists' interests above their own shows they fit the "good" freedmen model and suggests that they still consider themselves to be the protagonists' servants.¹⁵⁰ This eradicates the possibility of the ex-slaves turning against their former masters, making this a one-sided relationship and unequal. Rhode and Leucon address Anthia as "mistress" (ᾠδέσποινα) in the final stages of the novel, demonstrating their continued subservience.¹⁵¹ This proves that the former "natural" slaves still display servile behaviour despite being freed and highlights the inequality between them and the protagonists. As Jacobs convincingly argues, this creates some uncertainty about Rhode and Leucon's positions in the final stages of the novel: they break through the social barriers and obtain their freedom and happiness yet remain submissive to their former masters.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ This attitude can be found in ancient sources such as Gaius' *Institutes* (*Gai.Inst.*2.86-91).

¹⁴⁸ Maclean (2018), 39.

¹⁴⁹ Plin.*HN.*7.36.122.

¹⁵⁰ Owens (2020), 45.

¹⁵¹ Xen.5.12.5.

¹⁵² Jacobs (1999), 123. Jacobs ((1999), 122) also questions the "equality" of Hippothous' relationship in the closing stages.

Both Plangon and Rhode's relationships with their mistresses are examples of mutually dependent friendships, with mistresses benefiting from their slaves' help and loyalty and Plangon and Rhode relying on Callirhoe and Anthia for their own safety and ultimately their freedom. Yet the bonds offer different models: the bond in the *Callirhoe* more closely resembles Aristotle's theory, with clear mutual dependence, whilst the *Ephesian Tale* offers an idealised model from a Roman slaveowner's perspective. These relationships work due to the slaves' loyalty towards their owners and both parties being unwilling to turn against each other. The elevation of Plangon and Rhode in status implies that it is easier to maintain a successful friendship of utility when both women are freed than when one party is a slave, with most mistress-slave bonds driven by mutual self-interest.

2.2.2 Self-Interest

Most of the novelistic mistress-slave bonds are formed on the basis of mutual self-interest, reflecting Aristotle's friendships of utility. Both parties display a willingness to work together as long as it suits their own interests. As previously discussed, all novelistic slaves are reliant on their master's goodwill for their own safety and additional benefits. Similarly, most mistresses have to confide in and rely on their slaves: Arsace, Callirhoe, Demainete and Leucippe all depend on their maidservants for help with schemes and subsequently become reliant on their slave's silence. However, both

participants in these relationships place their own agendas first, creating the possibility that they could go against the other woman's interests to benefit themselves. This does not necessarily mean that the mistresses and slaves would betray or harm the other, rather it highlights the fragility of friendships driven by mutual use rather than affection.

Clio and Leucippe (*L&C*) fit the above pattern due to their reliance on each other. However, the women display little concern for each other after the seduction plot fails, prioritising their own safety instead. This implies that their friendship is only one of utility. Clio, after being punished for her "supposed" involvement in the failed tryst, flees the house and begs Clitophon and Satyrus to take her with them (Κάγῳ σὺν ὑμῖν ἦν γὰρ περιμείνω τὴν ἔω, θάνατός μοι πρόκειται, τῶν βασάνων γλυκύτερος).¹⁵³ Both quickly remove her from the narrative by sending her on a separate ship.¹⁵⁴ Significantly, this is the only instance where Clio's words are revealed when she expresses fear for her own safety.¹⁵⁵ She does not mention her mistress. This differs from the idealised devotion of Rhode.¹⁵⁶ Instead, Clio places her own interests first, suggesting that she does not have a close bond with Leucippe. Furthermore, the text makes no mention of Clio informing the heroine of her plans to escape or asking the men to help Leucippe escape,

¹⁵³ Ach.Tat.2.24.1; 2.26.3.

¹⁵⁴ Owens (2020), 158.

¹⁵⁵ Ach.Tat.2.26.3. References to slaves fearing torture from their masters include Herod.5.19; 26-8; 35-6; Juv.14.20-2; Lys.1.18-20; Plaut.*Men*.983; *Mil*.279; 310-11; 397; Propert.3.6.6; Sen.*Ep*.4.4.

¹⁵⁶ See pp.141-4.

implying a lack of concern for the other woman. This does not mean their relationship is not a friendship, but it is one that prioritises self-interest. Clio initially appears content to serve Leucippe, but abandons her when her own safety is threatened. This reflects ancient beliefs of slaves being greedy and working in their own interests, instead of helping their masters.¹⁵⁷ With her loyalty uncertain, Clio is swiftly removed from the narrative, preventing any future possible betrayal of the protagonists. It could be argued that Clio attempts to take the heroine's place by fleeing with her lover (Satyrus), especially as Leucippe later does the same. This fits into the wider theme in this novel of female characters being interchangeable from a male perspective, with men frequently misidentifying and mistaking women for each other and the "boundaries" between female roles being blurred.¹⁵⁸ This suggests that both women are characterised similarly, with only Leucippe's higher social status and role as the object of Clitophon's affections distinguishing her from her slave.

Like her slave, Leucippe shows little concern for her companion after Clio's escape. She "becomes more confident" (μᾶλλον ἐθάρρησε) upon finding out that Clio has fled, but expresses no concern for the other woman's safety, instead concentrating on defending her own reputation.¹⁵⁹ As Leucippe learns about Clio's departure from her mother and not Clio herself, this suggests a

¹⁵⁷ In ancient literature, slaves frequently steal from (Mart.11.54; Plin.HN.33.26; Columella.Rust.1.7.6-7) and betray their owners for financial gain (App.BCiv.4.51.222; Liv.Per.77; Val.Max.6.5.5-7).

¹⁵⁸ Discussed further in 4.5.2, 4.5.3 and 4.6.

¹⁵⁹ Ach.Tat.2.28.2.

lack of trust from the slave. Whilst Leucippe's reaction could be interpreted as joy that her companion successfully escaped, the circumstances surrounding this passage make it clear that the heroine is primarily relieved for herself, believing her own position to be more secure without Clio's presence. Due to widespread beliefs that slaves would naturally lie, their testimonies were only considered truthful if they were extracted by torture.¹⁶⁰ Before learning of her escape, Clitophon and his male companions express concern that Clio may reveal the plot under torture, which Pantheia intended to be the case.¹⁶¹ Immediately after hearing of the escape, Leucippe gains confidence and questions how she can prove her innocence to her mother (bringing up "proof" (πίστιν) and a "test of virginity" (παρθενίας... δοκιμασία)).¹⁶² Without Clio's testimony, Pantheia cannot prove the heroine's guilt, making her daughter's remarks sarcastic. In caring for her own safety and lacking concern for her servant, the heroine places her own interests first. Again, this suggests a lack of a close bond between the women and primarily a relationship based on mutual usefulness. Whilst no betrayal occurs, both women prioritise their own agendas without considering how their actions impact the other.

Another mistress-slave relationship driven by self-interest is between Cybele and Arsace in the *Aethiopica*. Cybele is loyal to her mistress throughout and even attempts to falsely implicate Charicleia in her own murder.¹⁶³ However,

¹⁶⁰ Antiph.1.8; 1.10; Dem.30.37; Lyc.*Leoc.*29.

¹⁶¹ Ach.Tat.2.25.3; 27.1-2; 28.1.

¹⁶² Ach.Tat.2.28.2-3.

¹⁶³ Haynes (2003), 125; Heliod.8.8.2.

she does not do so purely out of devotion. The slave is described as having benefitted from her favourable position with her mistress, including having influence and access to Arsace and having her son made head steward.¹⁶⁴ This implies that Cybele primarily chooses to serve Arsace as she believes this is in her and her family's best interests. Yet the slave expresses bitterness when she feels her mistress has acted unjustly against her family by breaking her promise to Achaemenes and favouring Theagenes over him.¹⁶⁵ This suggests that Cybele is not fully devoted to her mistress and has the potential to betray her like her son or Thisbe.¹⁶⁶ This is enhanced by Arsace's use of physical force to throw Cybele out of a room and the slave being described as afraid of punishment or being killed by her mistress on more than one occasion.¹⁶⁷ This is reminiscent of Thisbe's fear of Demainete punishing her earlier in the novel, which eventually leads to her turning on her mistress.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, despite Cybele's continued loyalty to her mistress throughout the narrative, it is clear that she serves Arsace to benefit herself and out of fear, instead of affection.

Likewise, Arsace does not fully trust Cybele, despite needing to rely on her, and she seems aware that her slave has other priorities. After Cybele repeatedly fails to secure Theagenes' affections, Arsace becomes suspicious of her slave, similar to how Demainete blames Thisbe for Cnemon's exile.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ Heliod.7.12.6; 7.20.2; 7.23.4; 7.24.4.

¹⁶⁵ Heliod.7.28.3.

¹⁶⁶ Heliod.1.15.2-17.4; 8.1.5-8.

¹⁶⁷ Heliod.7.22.2; 8.6.6; 7.23.3.

¹⁶⁸ See pp.52-6.

¹⁶⁹ Heliod.8.5.7; 1.15.1; Owens (2020), 129.

However, whilst Arsace's anger and suspicions are somewhat justified by Cybele repeatedly giving her mistress false hope then failing to deliver on her promises, the mistress ultimately chooses not to act against her slave.¹⁷⁰ By doing so, no betrayal occurs and the tenuous friendship of utility between the women remains intact. Furthermore, Arsace refuses to be fully persuaded by Cybele's lies about Achaemenes' betrayal.¹⁷¹ Although she shows no manipulative tendencies herself, this presents Arsace as an intelligent woman who is correctly wary of her slave.¹⁷² Whilst Arsace is more vulnerable to Cybele's manipulations than Demainete, she also seems more observant when it comes to the potential threat posed by her slave. Consequently, both parties mistrust each other but maintain their relationship because it suits their own agendas. Yet, despite Cybele's faithfulness, there is a constant possibility of either of the women turning on the other out of self-interest.

In both bonds discussed here, the element of mutual dependency is more visible than those discussed in 2.2.1. These bonds are primarily driven by utility, with the women displaying minimal affection towards each other and placing their own interests first. Whilst Clio and Cybele do not actively betray their mistresses, these relationships are fragile with the underlying possibility of either party harming the other, either intentionally or collaterally.

¹⁷⁰ Helioid.7.15.5; 7.22.1.

¹⁷¹ Helioid.8.5.7.

¹⁷² In the ancient world, slaves were frequently portrayed as liars (*Digest*.48.18.1.23; Plaut.*Cas*.685-8; Quint.*Inst*.4.2.69; Tac.*Hist*.4.23). Wiedemann ((1987), 25) notes that negative traits associated with slaves, including lying, were also frequently applied to women.

2.2.3 Betrayal

As discussed, the friendships of utility in Aristotle work only when both participants believe it to be in their own best interests and when there is some trust established between the people involved.¹⁷³ If either party loses faith in these qualities, there is a risk of them not only protecting their own self-interest but also actively working against their former ally. This can be seen with some of the novelistic slaves. The betrayals can be divided into groups: minor disobediences and Thisbe's deception of Demainete (*Aethiopica*), in which the slave intentionally harms her mistress.

The first "type" relates to when slaves choose to disobey direct orders from their masters to serve their own agendas. Two notable examples are when Cybele disobeys Arsace's order to not let Theagenes suffer too much by ordering him to be tortured further, and when Plangon changes Callirhoe's words in her report to Dionysius.¹⁷⁴ In both cases, the slaves act on their own initiative and their disobedience suggests a potential to actively harm their masters, despite neither woman intending this. These relationships can be read as reflecting ancient slaveowner fears of disloyal and uncontrollable slaves. The Roman Empire's expansions led to many people being enslaved and multiple slave uprisings occurred during this period, with recorded

¹⁷³ Pp.29.

¹⁷⁴ Heliod.8.6.5; Charit.3.1.6-8.

instances of slaves harming their former masters in the process.¹⁷⁵ Pliny the Younger and Tacitus describe the murders of masters at the hands of their slaves and Suetonius argues that the Emperor Claudius' freedmen and slaves plotted against him.¹⁷⁶ There also appears to have been a well-known proverb, cited by Macrobius and Seneca, that claims the Romans had "as many slaves as enemies".¹⁷⁷ Although not necessarily committed by "cunning" slaves, multiple references in the novels associate slaves with violence: from the unsuccessful slave uprising in the *Callirhoe*, to the threats made by Artaxates and Sosthenes, to Sosthenes physically whipping Leucippe for refusing his advances.¹⁷⁸

Whilst Cybele remains loyal to Arsace, Plangon's minor "betrayal" of Dionysius subtly marks a shift in her allegiance from him to Callirhoe. Until this point in the novel, the slave had been primarily working against the heroine to suit her master's interests. Yet when Dionysius instructs Plangon to report Callirhoe's exact words without leaving anything out the slave does not do as she is ordered.¹⁷⁹ Instead of being a "reporter", she alters Callirhoe's words slightly.¹⁸⁰ Whilst the main points of Callirhoe's original speech remain, such as her fear of becoming a concubine and being unable to raise her child,

¹⁷⁵ Urbainczyk ((2008), 100) claims that ancient writers believed the damage caused by slave revolts to be worse than modern scholars suppose.

¹⁷⁶ Plin.*Ep.*3.14; Tac.*Ann.*14.42-5; Suet.*Claud.*5.13.2. On slave rebellions and revolts under the Roman Empire, see Bradley (1987), 145-6; (2011), 364-7; and Urbainczyk (2008), especially 10-28, 100-16.

¹⁷⁷ Sen.*Ep.*47.5; Macrobius.*Sat.*1.11.13.

¹⁷⁸ Charit.4.2.5-6; 6.7.7; Ach.Tat.6.13.3-4; 5.17.6.

¹⁷⁹ Charit.3.1.6; De Temmerman (2014), 69.

¹⁸⁰ Smith (2014), 346n140.

the tone is altered. Instead of Callirhoe's reluctance and fear, Plangon creates an impression of a proud aristocratic woman willing to enter into marriage for the sake of begetting children.¹⁸¹ Surprisingly, there are still scholars who have not acknowledged these changes and believe Plangon was loyally reporting Callirhoe's words to Dionysius.¹⁸² Although the changes are slight, such as changing Callirhoe's "fear" (δέδουκα) to "pride" (τὸ φρόνημα) and making the heroine "willing" (θέλω) to marry instead of being "unwilling" (ἀκούσης), they are important not only in demonstrating Plangon's eloquence (like other literary cunning slaves) but also because for the first time in the narrative she does not work in her master's interests but in Callirhoe's by portraying her in the best light to achieve the heroine's goals.¹⁸³ To clarify, Plangon does not actively seek to betray or seriously harm her master, unlike other slaves in this genre, but she disobeys his direct orders in not reporting Callirhoe's exact words.¹⁸⁴

Like Cybele and Thisbe, Plangon takes advantage of her primary master to suit multiple agendas, which marks a departure from Satyrus and other more comically presented slaves. Slaves in Greek and Roman Comedy rarely turn on their young primary masters (the *adulescens*), although some betray their secondary masters (usually their new master or the father of the

¹⁸¹ De Temmerman (2014), 69.

¹⁸² See pg.60.

¹⁸³ Charit.2.11.5; 3.1.6. Satyrus in *L&C* can also be described as eloquent, particularly in his debate with Gnathon (Ach.Tat.2.20.3-22.7).

¹⁸⁴ Such as Thisbe and Achaemenes in the *Aethiopica* who intend to harm their mistresses. Their betrayals result not only in the public humiliations of Demainete and Arsace but also their deaths.

adulescens).¹⁸⁵ Whilst Alvares argues that Dionysius resembles the middle-aged husband from New Comedy and not the young protagonist, he is Plangon's main master and therefore the one she should not deceive.¹⁸⁶ Although Callirhoe arguably could represent a female version of the lovestruck *adulescens* (as well as the girl fought over), Plangon's previous deception of her to help Dionysius demonstrates that, unlike the comic slaves, Plangon has no single master.¹⁸⁷ This makes her a potential threat to both Dionysius and Callirhoe, who need her help but can never be sure of her loyalty, reflecting ancient slaveowner fears.¹⁸⁸ Their initial naivety and blind trust in Plangon enables the slave to use her knowledge of them to manipulate, implying that she is perceptive and ultimately prioritises her own interests. Again, this highlights the precarious nature of friendships of utility and how they can lead to betrayal if either party decides it is no longer in their best interests.

Dionysius clearly trusts Plangon. He refers to her as "loyal Plangon" (*Πλαγγόνιον φιλοδέσποτον*), with his words signalling his expectation she is completely faithful to him.¹⁸⁹ This is consistent with his earlier claim that

¹⁸⁵ See pg.31n115.

¹⁸⁶ Alvares (2002), 113.

¹⁸⁷ See James (2013), 182-6 for more on these stereotypes in Roman comedy.

¹⁸⁸ Pp.48-50.

¹⁸⁹ Charit.3.1.8. *φιλοδέσποτος* appears in multiple texts to describe a faithful slave (Diod.Sic.17.66.5; *Scholia in Odysseam* 2.52.6), including twice more in the *Callirhoe*. In both cases, the word is applied to Phocas by the narrator (Charit.3.7.2) and Dionysius (Charit.3.9.12). Unlike Plangon, Phocas operates solely to help his master with no ulterior motive implied by the text.

Plangon would value his life over her own freedom.¹⁹⁰ Both instances reflect the ancient elite expectation that slaves lived only to serve their master. Perkins argued that this is a common attitude shown by the individual novelists, yet with the exception of Rhode, the main female slaves in this genre do not blindly serve their primary master.¹⁹¹ Plangon's alteration of the heroine's original speech is designed to suit Callirhoe's purposes not Dionysius'. In Callirhoe's original acceptance she revealed that her main concerns in consenting were the fear her son would not be raised by Dionysius and that she would become his concubine. Plangon's speech is designed to alleviate her fears by successfully obtaining promises from Dionysius. Her last line addresses Callirhoe's first concern: "if he does not want not to become a father, he must not be a husband (εἰ μὴ θέλει πατὴρ γενέσθαι, μηδὲ ἀνὴρ ἔστω)."¹⁹² The use of the imperative (ἔστω) creates a sense of necessity over having children and establishes this in Plangon's argument. Subsequently, Dionysius quickly alleviates this issue and believes that Callirhoe is entering the marriage happily with her concerns dealt with. Plangon does not serve Callirhoe's interests in the beginning of their relationship, but in disobeying Dionysius' direct order and securing assurances for the heroine, Plangon fits into the wider ancient literary stereotype of a slave helping to conceal her mistress' pregnancy and her

¹⁹⁰ Charit.2.8.2. Saïd ((1999), 96) has used this as evidence to argue that, along with her characterisation, Plangon represents urban ideas towards slavery.

¹⁹¹ Perkins (1995), 59.

¹⁹² Charit.3.1.8.

interests become aligned with Callirhoe.¹⁹³ Plangon's decision to disobey Dionysius highlights the fragile nature of the mutually dependant bonds between masters and slaves within the novel and reflects Roman fears of disloyal slaves. As discussed, Callirhoe eventually retains Plangon's loyalty by recognising the nature of this bond and acting accordingly to make the slave indebted towards the heroine, therefore retaining the mutually dependant element of their relationship.

In the *Aethiopica*, Thisbe goes further than the minor disobediences committed by Cybele and Plangon, by actively intending to harm Demainete when the slave feels her own safety is threatened.¹⁹⁴ This relationship bears some resemblance to Plangon and Callirhoe's bond, with the mistresses relying on their slave to keep quiet over their past misdeeds and the slaves needing their mistresses' favour for their positions and security. In the *Callirhoe*, there is some trust and loyalty between the women which enables them to maintain their bond. In contrast, Demainete and Thisbe quickly turn on each other when Demainete seeks a scapegoat for Cnemon's exile and Thisbe feels her own life is in danger, suggesting that both view their bond as expendable when it no longer suits their own purposes. In this aspect, their relationship resembles other female friendships in the *Aethiopica*. As

¹⁹³ Egger (1999), 123n49. Another example is Persinna concealing Charicleia's birth with the help of her servants in the *Aethiopica*.

¹⁹⁴ The segment in which Thisbe and Demainete mainly appear in the *Aethiopica* is commonly referred to as the "Athenian Novella", where the protagonists' friend Cnemon relates his backstory in three separate sections. This makes Thisbe the only slave in this chapter to not have a direct relationship with the heroine, despite both being mistaken for each other throughout the novel (Helioid.2.3.3-5.4; 2.12.3; 5.8.3-4).

discussed in the next chapter, Thisbe is ultimately betrayed by a former friend, Arsinoe, after the former appropriates the latter's boyfriend.¹⁹⁵ Through these two relationships, Heliodorus creates a bleak view of female friendships in the Athenian Novella, suggesting that they are full of mistrust, manipulations and easily broken by betrayal. Demainete and Thisbe's crimes are revealed by their close companions, despite their *confidantes* initially keeping silent. In comparison to other novels, the *Aethiopica* portrays female friendships as more fragile and seemingly warns of the dangers presented by intelligent, manipulative women, who quickly turn against their former allies.

Thisbe's plot involves Aristippos catching his wife having an "affair". This fits into a wider pattern in Graeco-Roman literature. As far back as the *Odyssey*, ancient slave owners were aware of the dangers disloyal female slaves potentially presented to a household.¹⁹⁶ They were especially concerned that maidservants could assist their mistresses in affairs. Even under Imperial Rome, respectable citizen wives were not supposed to interact in public with other men and so their maidservants often served as go-betweens between wives and their lovers, as well as helping provide access to the bedchamber.¹⁹⁷ Their role is reflected in this genre by Pantheia immediately assuming that Clio helped her daughter's seducer after catching Leucippe and Clitophon in bed.¹⁹⁸ Thisbe's situation is strongly reminiscent of the slave girl

¹⁹⁵ See 3.6.3.

¹⁹⁶ Hom.*Od.*15.416-81; 18.320-339; 19.91-5; 19.153-5; 22.421-32; 22.440-5; 22.457-73.

¹⁹⁷ Sen.*Controv.*2.7.

¹⁹⁸ Ach.*Tat.*2.24.1.

in Lysias' *On the Murder of Eratosthenes*.¹⁹⁹ The two slaves both help facilitate their mistresses' illicit love affairs (or at least attempted affairs), before revealing to their masters the "whole truth" out of fear and helping them catch their wives in the act.²⁰⁰ The difference between these two situations is that Thisbe is in complete control of her actions. The slave in Lysias' speech is both anonymous and not heavily personalised. Similar to other ancient literary slaves, including Clio in this genre, she is enticed into helping the affair by Eratosthenes instead of acting on her own initiative.²⁰¹ Her decision to reveal the truth is done under threat of torture and her betrayal under orders.²⁰² In contrast, Thisbe skilfully plans, sets up and executes the entire betrayal on her own initiative and expertly lies to Demainete, Aristippos and Arsinoe to achieve this. She does not wait for circumstances to fall into place but actively organises everything so the deception is successful. There is no immediate direct threat that forces Thisbe to betray her mistress in this way or order from her master as in Lysias. Instead, Thisbe approaches him on her own initiative to reveal the "truth" to Aristippos: a role more similar to the old woman informer in Lysias 1 than of the maidservant.²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ Parallels can also be drawn to Chaereas' actions in the *Callirhoe* when he believes Callirhoe has had an affair (Charit.1.4.1-12). I chose to focus on the connections with Lysias 1 instead as whilst Callirhoe's maidservant is involved in the false adultery plot, she is not a conspirator and aware of the plan nor does she betray her mistress. For more on the connection between the *Aethiopica* and *Callirhoe* regarding adultery scenes see Hunter (2008), 810-2. For possible connections between Chariton's Novel and Lysias 1 see Kapparis (2000); and Porter (2003).

²⁰⁰ Lys.1.12; 19-20; 23. Although as Trenkner ((2014), 159-60) has demonstrated, many of these features were common motifs and do not mean that Heliodorus was specifically referencing Lysias. On the slave in Lysias 1, see Wolpert (2001), 419, 421-2.

²⁰¹ Lys.1.8; Ach.Tat.2.4.2-3. See pp.137-40 for Clio.

²⁰² Lys.1.18; 21-2.

²⁰³ Heliod.1.16.2; Lys.1.15-7; Schwartz (2012b), 174n66.

Thisbe is both perceptive and strategic when she decides to betray her mistress. Whilst the text claims Demainete “was by herself” (γένουτο καθ’ ἑαυτήν) when she unfairly berated Thisbe for not helping her with her lust for Cnemon, it is unclear whether she was completely by herself or with her slave.²⁰⁴ Either way, the novel makes it clear that Thisbe realised Demainete was plotting against her and the potential danger this placed her in.²⁰⁵ Joshel argued that slaves in Roman Comedy successfully deceive their secondary masters because they can understand them.²⁰⁶ This is reflected in the novels. By quickly recognising that her mistress could act against her, Thisbe demonstrates both perceptiveness and a wariness of Demainete, suggesting she does not fully trust her mistress. As a consequence, Thisbe decides to act pre-emptively against Demainete: “she would act first by treachery to secure her own safety” (φθῆναι τῆ κατ’ ἐκείνης ἐπιβουλῆ σωτηρίαν ἑαυτῆ περιποιοῦσα).²⁰⁷ Although fearful of Demainete’s anger, Thisbe had alternative options. She could have remained silent and continued to serve her mistress and appease her, as Cybele does with Arsace.²⁰⁸ If Thisbe felt she was in danger, she could have confessed the truth to her master or Cnemon. However, given Aristippos’ infatuation with his younger wife, it is likely Thisbe would have needed strong evidence to convince him and prove it.²⁰⁹ Even if

²⁰⁴ Helioid.1.15.1; Nimis (2009), 85.

²⁰⁵ Helioid.1.15.2.

²⁰⁶ Joshel (2011), 221.

²⁰⁷ Helioid.1.15.2.

²⁰⁸ See pp.45-6.

²⁰⁹ Helioid.1.9.2. Given that Aristippos claims to have been suspicious of Demainete having an affair for a long time (Helioid.1.16.5), he may have believed Thisbe, especially if Cnemon supported her claims. But this strategy would have posed a higher risk than following through with Demainete’s plan.

her master believed her, Thisbe likely would have been tortured in the resulting trial due to the law.²¹⁰ Likewise, attempting to curtail her mistress' growing instability would have been a risky strategy. The novel's use of "σωτηρίαν" and "περποιοῦσα" when describing Thisbe's decision empathises that the slave is concerned with protecting her own safety and that the slave believes betraying her mistress is the best way to secure this.²¹¹ In doing so, Thisbe reveals her main motivation to be herself and shows no loyalty to either of her masters. Combined with Demainete's quickness to turn against her slave, this suggests that this mistress-slave relationship is built on suspicion and self-interest. Hunter argued ancient and modern scholars have unfairly judged Thisbe as her status means that she cannot afford the moralities and idealised chastity of Charicleia. Although this is a valid point regarding ancient elitist attitudes and how this is conveyed by the novelists, it is difficult to argue that Heliodorus intended Thisbe to be viewed sympathetically.²¹²

Grethlein argued that this betrayal shows Thisbe "switching allegiances", but Thisbe was arguably never loyal to Demainete in the first place.²¹³ Consistent with the novelists' portrayal of other female characters, Heliodorus offers a limited insight into Thisbe's thoughts and first-person narration of the

²¹⁰ The torture of slaves for information is a recurring theme in the novels such as the torture of Callirhoe's maidservants (Charit.1.5.1-2), and Melite's offer to hand over her maidservants for questioning (Ach.Tat.7.10.2). Clio (Ach.Tat.2.26.2-3) and Sosthenes (Ach.Tat.7.10.3-5) run away to avoid this fate.

²¹¹ Heliod.1.15.2.

²¹² Hunter (2008), 807-8.

²¹³ Grethlein (2016), 321.

Athenian Novella by Cnemon does not help.²¹⁴ Nevertheless I believe Thisbe does work chiefly in her own interests throughout the text unlike Plangon who switches allegiance from Dionysius to Callirhoe whilst simultaneously benefitting herself in the process. Thisbe in the first part of the Athenian Novella obediently serves her mistress, but this is the only information given on their relationship and there is no indisputable demonstration of loyalty on Thisbe's part.²¹⁵ Instead, Thisbe flees after her part in the scheme is over.²¹⁶ Thisbe's status as Demainete's slave would place her in a precarious position if she refused to help or revealed the plot to Cnemon. Therefore, it can be argued that the slave serves her mistress' interests in the first scheme because it is her best option. This is supported when looking at Thisbe's selfish actions throughout the text and her relationship with Cnemon. When telling Cnemon of Demainete's "adultery" and in her letter, Thisbe claims to be on Cnemon's side, yet her actions throughout the text consistently prove otherwise.²¹⁷ Whitmarsh claimed Thisbe's letter presents her in a more sympathetic light than Cnemon, but it still portrays her negatively as she continues trying to manipulate Cnemon despite her past actions.²¹⁸ Thisbe flees Athens instead of taking responsibility for her actions, knowing Aristippos would be punished in her absence.²¹⁹ Like her mistress, Thisbe

²¹⁴ See for instance 3.7 on Nausicleia and Rhodogune.

²¹⁵ As discussed later (pp.134-6), what Thisbe says about Demainete (Helioid.1.11.5) cannot be considered reliable as her intention is to lead Cnemon into the trap.

²¹⁶ Helioid.1.12.3.

²¹⁷ Helioid.1.11.5; 2.10.1-4. On Thisbe's letter see Hunter (2008), 808-10.

²¹⁸ Whitmarsh (2008), 84. Despite Morgan's claims ((1999), 428) that Cnemon is horrified by Thisbe's death, he expresses happiness at her death (Helioid.2.11.1).

²¹⁹ Helioid.2.9.4.

primarily serves her own interests and the friendship between the women is tenuous and dependent on both of their interests being aligned. This represents the worst model for a friendship of utility and served as a warning to Roman slaveowners of the dangers disloyal slaves present, especially when combined with the minor disobediences committed by Cybele and Plangon. The novelistic female slaves help their mistresses by aiding them in schemes and keeping silence thereafter and these friendships offer mutual benefits to both parties. However, because the women prioritise their own self-interest, there is a constant threat of betrayal.

2.3 Manipulative Slaves

With most mistress-slave relationships being mutually dependant, both participants need to trust each other to some degree. Yet, as discussed in the previous section, these bonds are tenuous and vulnerable to betrayal and manipulation. Plangon, Thisbe and Cybele act against their mistresses and use a variety of manipulative techniques, which often draw from other Graeco-Roman genres. These range from presenting themselves as authoritative figures, to bringing up past loyalties, to altering reports, to flattery and coaxing. Mostly, these techniques succeed because the slaves understand their potential victims' mindsets and use their knowledge to manipulate their targets. Plangon, Thisbe and Cybele resemble the *servus callidus* stereotype

found in New and Roman comedy.²²⁰ However, unlike these earlier literary slaves, the novelistic slaves use their skills against their primary masters and other victims. This was an era of growing concern about how ex-slaves were able to gain power and influence, with freedmen even having influence in Imperial courts.²²¹ Therefore, the novelistic mistress-slave relationships reflect contemporary fears and present a warning about the dangers of relying on slaves. This section looks at the various techniques used by the novelistic “deceptive” slaves (Cybele, Plangon and Thisbe). It examines the pattern of slaves earning their masters and mistresses’ trust only to later exploit it for their own agendas. It looks at how slaves attempt to portray themselves as pseudo-authoritative figures to gain their victims’ trust, and the importance of slaves understanding their victim’s mindsets and acting accordingly.

2.3.1 The Manipulations of Plangon

Out of the novelistic manipulative female slaves (Cybele, Thisbe, Plangon) that trace their origins to the *servus callidus* stereotype, Plangon is the best manipulator, successfully satisfying multiple agendas and described as “naturally crafty” (φύσει γὰρ ἦν ἐντροπή).²²² Yet, modern scholarship often overlooks her deceptive qualities, despite them being vital to her

²²⁰ Refer to pp.30-1.

²²¹ Pp.94-6.

²²² Charit.2.6.5; Billault (1996), 117; Reardon (1996), 331; Ruiz-Montero (1996), 52; Smith (2007), 196-7.

characterisation and the *Callirhoe's* plot. Morales argued that Plangon's relationship with Callirhoe is the only example of a "true" female friendship within the Greek novels, although this thesis demonstrates that more exist.²²³ This claim is reflective of wider scholarship surrounding Plangon. Although some scholars have noted the connection between Plangon and the *servus callidus* stereotype, many still either ignore her entirely or downplay/misinterpret her manipulative tendencies, viewing them as "wise advice" instead.²²⁴ This is a mistake. When considering how Plangon convinces Callirhoe to marry Dionysius, the slave clearly has a lot of influence over the heroine and uses Callirhoe's trust to further other agendas.²²⁵ The slave's manipulateness is vital here for the narrative and in enabling the heroine to be characterised positively by absolving Callirhoe of blame.

Plangon is not a "one-dimensional character" and it is naïve to believe the slave only works in Callirhoe's interests in the pregnancy decision, with the slave serving multiple interests.²²⁶ She is not unique in this aspect: Melite and Lycaenion help the protagonists whilst satisfying their own lusts and Cybele serves Arsace's desires whilst furthering her own interests.²²⁷ What separates Plangon from these characters is that she successfully serves three different

²²³ Morales (2008), 49.

²²⁴ Johne (1996), 180; Anderson (1982), 13-14; Scourfield (2004), 177.

²²⁵ For instance, when Callirhoe is reluctantly persuaded to ask Dionysius for help because she felt indebted to Plangon (προηνεχυριασμένη (Ach.Tat.2.7.3)), with the slave viewing it as an opportunity (καιρὸν (Ach.Tat.2.7.2)). Plangon later pretends to agree (κατεπρωνεύσατο (Ach.Tat.2.10.6)) with Callirhoe whilst attempting to convince her to do the opposite whilst the heroine is not suspicious of her advice (παραινούσης οὐδὲν ὑπώπτευε (Ach.Tat.2.10.7)).

²²⁶ Anderson (1982), 15.

²²⁷ See pp.44-5.

interests throughout the novel. Plangon mainly furthers Dionysius's interests through the pregnancy manipulation, but still serves Callirhoe's needs by ensuring her child will not be a slave. Owens claimed that the slave acts in the heroine's interests due to Plangon's awareness of the potential dangers that Dionysius' jealousy presents to his slaves.²²⁸ However, whilst Dionysius' failure to fulfil his promises to his slaves and hints of violence support this theory, there is no explicit evidence to suggest that Plangon is personally afraid of Dionysius or working in the heroine's favour.²²⁹ Her delight at recognising the pregnancy and immediate thoughts of how best to use this imply that she primarily served other agendas rather than helping Callirhoe.²³⁰ Reardon argued that minor characters in the *Callirhoe* (including slaves) cannot effectively direct and resolve situations like the "cunning" slaves in New Comedy.²³¹ However, Plangon has three different agendas in the pregnancy manipulation and is able to somewhat satisfy them all: Callirhoe has her son knowing he will not be a slave, Dionysius marries the heroine and Plangon gets her freedom.²³²

The exclusion of Plangon's impact from scholarship discussing this scene also ignores the necessity of the slave's actions for the plot to function. Callirhoe's

²²⁸ Owens (2019), 44; (2020), 67.

²²⁹ Owens (2019), 44; (2020) 62, 68.

²³⁰ Charit.2.9.1. This section discusses Plangon's manipulative tactics (pp.65-6; pp.69-70; pp.81-91; pp.96-8) and shows that she does not act primarily in Callirhoe's interests until her report to Dionysius (see pp.48-50).

²³¹ Reardon (1999b), 178.

²³² Haynes ((2003), 128) convincingly argues that Plangon is actually the only completely successful character in the novel.

decision to knowingly commit bigamy is controversial by most standards, ancient and modern. There are other examples of sexual infidelities within this genre, but the *Callirhoe* controversially has the female heroine commit adultery and not the male hero, with the genre especially advocating fidelity for women.²³³ Arguably a more important difference is that Callirhoe's marriage to Dionysius poses a significant long-term threat to her relationship with Chaereas, as evidenced by the later trial over which man has the better claim to her.²³⁴ Spectators are equally split between Chaereas and Dionysius's claims, with Callirhoe herself described as torn between the two men.²³⁵ Unlike Clitophon and Daphnis' one-off affairs that do not threaten their love for their beloveds, Callirhoe feels some affection for Dionysius, going against the genre norm. Andromache, in a similar situation in Euripides' *Trojan Women*, notably derides the woman who casts her husband aside for another man.²³⁶ Callirhoe reluctantly marries Dionysius under difficult circumstances, but unlike Andromache she commits to the remarriage knowing her husband is still alive and arguably could have chosen differently.

For Callirhoe to remain partially sympathetic to an ancient audience, Chariton had to justify her decision.²³⁷ Kanavou suggests that Callirhoe's pregnancy was a "realistic turn of events", with Roman law determining paternity by the

²³³ Ach.Tat.5.27.1-4; Long.3.18.3-4.

²³⁴ Sinon is in *Babylonian Story* also marries a different man to the hero (Phot.Bibl.77b19), although she is not married to Rhodanes at the time.

²³⁵ Charit.5.8.7; 6.1.1-5; 5.8.6.

²³⁶ Eur.Tro.667-8. These include the loss of her husband, change in status to a slave in a foreign land and forced to be amorously involved with her new master.

²³⁷ Egger (1994), 41; Morgan (1993), 224.

legal marriage within which a child was born.²³⁸ Although this implies that the heroine did not have a viable alternative option to concealing the pregnancy, the narrative deliberately characterises Plangon as cunning to excuse Callirhoe's actions: "Callirhoe was not suspicious of what Plangon was advising, being a well-born young girl and ignorant of the dishonesty of slaves" (Ταῦτα τῆς Πλαγγόνης παραινούσης οὐδὲν ὑπώπτευε Καλλιρόη, μεῖραξ εὐγενῆς καὶ πανουργίας ἄπειρος δουλικῆς).²³⁹ The descriptions of "young girl" (μεῖραξ) and "ignorant" (ἄπειρος) stress Callirhoe's vulnerability to Plangon's manipulations. It would be wrong to argue that Plangon has no affection for Callirhoe. However, she primarily works in Dionysius' interests here and her "advice" is not impartial but designed to get Callirhoe's consent to the marriage. This is highlighted when Plangon realises that the heroine is pregnant and her initial thoughts are not of sympathy but of how this situation can benefit Dionysius.²⁴⁰ The slave sees the pregnancy as a way to further other agendas. This scene highlights the importance of not viewing these characters through a rose-tinted lens and classifying all slaves as either "good" or "bad". Ulterior motives and deceptions caused by female slaves are integral to the narratives of the *Aethiopica* and *Callirhoe* and should not be ignored in scholarly discussions of these texts.

2.3.2 Previous Loyalty

²³⁸ Kanavou (2015), 940.

²³⁹ Charit.2.10.7; Owens (2019), 42; (2020), 64-5.

²⁴⁰ Charit.2.9.1.

Most manipulation tactics used by novelistic female slaves succeed because their victims trust the slaves and believe them to be loyal. Whilst this is partly due to the mutually dependant nature of these bonds, the texts imply this trust has also been earned by the slaves' previous actions in favour of their masters.²⁴¹ For instance, when Callirhoe first enters Dionysius' household, only Plangon is singled out of the female slaves and named. Some background is given: her husband's position is stated and she is personally described as "not ineffective" (*οὐκ ἄπρακτον*).²⁴² This choice of phrase is significant as it often symbolised success in Greek literature.²⁴³ Plangon's introduction establishes her importance in the narrative and her future success as a manipulator, whilst implying that she has previously successfully helped her master. Dionysius' reference to "loyal Plangon" (*Πλαγγόνιον φιλοδέσποτον*) and orders for her to help him suggest that Plangon has earned his trust through her former actions.²⁴⁴ Likewise, Cybele's initial introduction immediately outlines her role in the narrative by describing her as "being accustomed to serving Arsace in her erotic pursuits" (*συνήθως τὰ ἐρωτικά τῆ Ἄρσάκη διακονουμένων*).²⁴⁵ The reference to her age (*πρεσβύτις*) and habit of interfering depicts her as experienced, similar to Plangon.²⁴⁶ The references to the female slaves' prior experience imply they are skilled manipulators and provide a basis for why their masters trust them,

²⁴¹ 2.2.

²⁴² Charit.2.2.1.

²⁴³ Dio.Chrys.Disc.37.24; Diod.Sic.14.19.2.

²⁴⁴ Charit.3.1.8; Charit.2.6.4-5; 2.8.1-2. See pg.50n188 for the implications of *φιλοδέσποτος* here.

²⁴⁵ Helioid.7.9.4.

²⁴⁶ Helioid.7.9.4.

subsequently allowing the slaves to manipulate them. Despite Cybele intending to manipulate the protagonists before she meets them, she never gains their trust.²⁴⁷ The difference between Cybele's success in influencing Arsace and her failure in deceiving Theagenes and Charicleia is partly because the slave has a long-term established bond with her mistress as opposed to the protagonists. The female slaves themselves seem aware of the value of their previous aid, examples being when Plangon asks Callirhoe to intervene and when Thisbe lures her mistress into a trap.²⁴⁸

In the first example, Plangon begs Callirhoe to "save" her husband from a beating from Dionysius.²⁴⁹ Instead of emotionally reacting to her husband's punishment, the slave sees an opportunity to further Dionysius' goals and takes advantage of this chance. Through exaggerating the situation, Plangon persuades a reluctant Callirhoe because the heroine was "feeling obliged for her previous kindnesses to her" (προηνεχυριασμένη ταῖς εὐεργεσίαις ὑπ' αὐτῆς).²⁵⁰ This demonstrates that Plangon is able to use her previous actions and trust created to coerce Callirhoe into acting against her will, showing her power over the heroine, and hinting that she can manipulate her into more extreme actions later in the narrative. In asking for Callirhoe's help, Plangon creates a false sense of the two women working as a team against their master, when in reality both Dionysius and the slave are aware of her true

²⁴⁷ Heliod.7.10.5-6; De Temmerman (2014), 270.

²⁴⁸ Charit.2.7.2-7.

²⁴⁹ Charit.2.7.2-7.

²⁵⁰ Charit.2.7.3.

allegiance. This later sets up Plangon's role as a *confidante* to Callirhoe in her pregnancy decision, especially when she says that she will betray Dionysius because of her connection to the heroine and when Callirhoe considers herself a co-conspirator in the scheme.²⁵¹ Their shared gender, current status and Plangon's previous kindness lead Callirhoe to naively believe the two are working together as partners in solidarity, when in reality Plangon is in control and serving other interests. The slave later switches allegiances in the novel and uses her master's existing trust in her to manipulate him.²⁵² This suggests a pattern in which Plangon subtly gains her victim's trust by making them indebted towards herself, then exploits this trust whilst acting as an ally and co-conspirator.

A similar, but more direct, use of this strategy can be found in the *Aethiopica* when Thisbe initiates her plan against Demainete. Whilst rebuking her mistress for unfairly blaming her, Thisbe reminds Demainete of her previous loyalty and falsely implies she still is loyal: "I always aided you in your desires both then and now" (Ἐγὼ μὲν σοι πρὸς τὸ βούλημα τὸ σὸν ἀεὶ τε καὶ νῦν ὑπηρετησάμην).²⁵³ In bringing up her previous actions committed on Demainete's behalf, Thisbe portrays herself as trustworthy and convinces her mistress that the two remain allies. A false affirmation of "allegiance" follows, with Thisbe stating her willingness to help Demainete and come up with a

²⁵¹ Charit.2.10.3; 3.2.13.

²⁵² Pp.48-50.

²⁵³ Helioid.1.15.2.

plan.²⁵⁴ This resembles the *servus callidus* with these slaves often being opportunistic and able to think on their feet, with their primary masters forced to trust them.²⁵⁵ In her second plot against Cnemon, Demainete had to trust Thisbe's ability to manipulate and the slave's loyalty to her. Despite her lack of involvement in the planning process, Thisbe opportunistically took advantage of Cnemon's worries about Demainete to reveal her mistress's "affair", causing him to fall for the trap.²⁵⁶ Whilst the text does not state that Thisbe's previous loyalty and help led to Demainete deciding to trust her again, Demainete's immediate acceptance of this offer and change in attitude imply it played a large part. She even calls Thisbe "dearest" (φιλότατη) and embraces her, suggesting complete trust.²⁵⁷

Egger claimed that if two women trust each other in the *Aethiopica*, there are always problems.²⁵⁸ Although I disagree with Egger's claims that female relationships are non-existent in this particular novel, as multiple exist (including some positive bonds), it still can be argued that there is no strong bond of trust between any two women in this novel.²⁵⁹ Charicleia does not completely trust Nausicleia's relationship with Cnemon and does not confide

²⁵⁴ Heliod.1.15.2.

²⁵⁵ Examples include Pseudolus tricking three people after accidentally meeting Harpax and tricking him into giving up the letter (Plaut.*Pseud.*592-694) and Syrus coming up with a new plan and persuading his master to go along with it after discovering Antiphila's true heritage (Ter.*Haut.*668-723). On comic *servus callidus* traits see Schironi (2013), 449-458; and Stürner (2020), particularly 137-8 and 141-5.

²⁵⁶ Helid.1.11.4-5.

²⁵⁷ Heliod.1.15.3; Heliod.1.17.1.

²⁵⁸ Egger (1999), 124n50.

²⁵⁹ Such as Charicleia's relationships with Persinna and Nausicleia. See pp.254-5 for discussions regarding scholarly exclusion of Nausicleia.

in Persinna about her relationship with Theagenes, despite her mother prompting her.²⁶⁰ With Demainete's previous mistrust of her slave and immediate realisation that she has been tricked after the betrayal, it is questionable how much she actually trusts her slave.²⁶¹ Regardless, she has enough confidence in Thisbe's loyalties to trust her words and subdue her suspicions for at least a short while, enabling the slave to lure her into the trap. This is ironic as previously Thisbe had been working in her mistress' interests when Demainete suspected her, but was plotting against her at this point. Therefore, Thisbe's tactic in referencing her previous loyalty successfully enables the slave to catch her mistress off-guard and fits into a wider pattern of female slaves using this manipulation tactic, when combined with Plangon's behaviour towards her masters. Although their male counterparts (with the exception of Achaimenes) generally remain loyal to their owners, the novelistic female slaves use their perceived loyalty to successfully create the illusion they are working in their master's interests whilst primarily serving themselves. This reflects the unstable nature of relationships based on mutual need and serves as a warning that a slave's loyalty is not guaranteed, regardless of their previous actions. In referencing their prior actions and loyalties, the female slaves are perceptive, by having their masters already indebted towards themselves before they attempt to deceive, and immoral, willing to exploit any advantage to suit their own agendas.

²⁶⁰ Helioid.10.29.2; 10.29.4; 10.33.4. See pp.250-1.

²⁶¹ Helioid.1.17.5.

2.3.3 Authoritative Figures and the Maternal Bond

In addition to using their previous actions to make their masters dependent on them, some novelistic female slaves attempt to portray themselves as pseudo-authoritative figures. This applies to the novelistic “nurse” figures: Plangon and Cybele, who immediately take charge when there are new additions to their households. When Callirhoe enters Dionysius’ house as a newcomer and recent slave, Plangon immediately takes a position of control, reassuring Callirhoe and directing her to take a bath and visit Aphrodite’s shrine.²⁶² The heroine reluctantly obeys Plangon and at the shrine is partly distressed because she cannot see the slave.²⁶³ Whilst Plangon voluntarily welcomes and reassures Callirhoe on her own initiative, the heroine’s response implies that she feels safe with the slave and trusts her. This indicates that Callirhoe will be vulnerable to future suggestions from Plangon. It is debateable whether Plangon is mainly motivated by self-interest (through the offer of her freedom), as some scholars argue, or by a desire to serve her master, which Dionysius himself implies is “most pleasing” (πολὺ ἡδίων) to her.²⁶⁴ Yet regardless of the motivation, Plangon is not working in Callirhoe’s interests at the beginning of their acquaintance. She befriends Callirhoe to further her own agenda and has no reservations about manipulating the

²⁶² Charit.2.2.1-2; 2.2.5.

²⁶³ Charit.2.3.9.

²⁶⁴ Haynes (2003), 124; Smith (2007), 158; Charit.2.8.2.

heroine's trust to achieve this.²⁶⁵ Similarly, Cybele welcomes Charicleia and Theagenes into Arsace's house and initially fools the temple sacristan and the protagonists into believing she will be an ally, even if this is only because the protagonists were distracted.²⁶⁶ By setting themselves up as authoritative figures, Plangon and Cybele gain the trust of their future victims and portray themselves as useful allies. When the slaves are later ordered by their primary masters to help them with their own agendas, Plangon and Cybele can offer "helpful" advice and "aid" to the newcomers by exploiting their dependence on the slaves. This depicts the slaves as having great foresight and as immoral in their manipulations.

Both Cybele and Plangon go further by presenting themselves as maternal figures, reflecting earlier Graeco-Roman literary works that use this imagery to demonstrate the closeness between nurses and their charges. Eurycleia in the *Odyssey* is addressed as *μαῖα* when Odysseus pleads with her to keep his identity hidden and many tragic nurses referred to their owners as *τέκνον* or *παλ*.²⁶⁷ The use of maternal imagery between a mistress and slave implies affection and a sense of mutual devotion. It also suggests that the slave receives some respect from her mistress, due to her age, position and closeness, granting some authority. Karydas claims that literary nurses had the ability to advise and influence their masters and offer judgement through

²⁶⁵ Owens (2020), 62.

²⁶⁶ Heliod.7.11.10; 7.12.1.

²⁶⁷ Hom.*Od.*19.482; Eur.*Andr.*827; 832; 866; *Hipp.*203; 212; 223; 238; 288; 297; 316; 338; 340; 348; 350; 353; 473; 517; 521; 705.

praising or blaming.²⁶⁸ In ancient Greece and Rome, nurses served as pseudo-mother figures for their charges by breast-feeding them, raising them and sometimes remaining with them after they become adults.²⁶⁹ Emphasis was placed on the emotional connections between nurses and their charges within Graeco-Roman literature. The *Digest* singled out nurses along with tutors as appropriate candidates for manumission.²⁷⁰ The speaker in Demosthenes' *Against Evergus and Mnesibulus* claimed to have taken in his manumitted elderly nurse as he could not bear that she should be in want.²⁷¹ Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* gives an emotional speech to Orestes' Nurse Cilissa in which she discusses rearing him and her grief at hearing of his "death", which contrasts his mother's joy and feigned distress.²⁷² However, most Graeco-Roman literature was written by men in a higher social position, offering no insight into how the nurses themselves viewed their situations.²⁷³ Therefore, the literary "good" nurse is an idealised stereotype solely devoted to her charge.²⁷⁴ Interestingly, the novelistic slaves seemingly show awareness of this stereotype and use it to take advantage of their masters/mistresses. Therefore, they present a twisted variant on this idealised relationship by using their perceived closeness to harm their charges instead of protecting them.

²⁶⁸ Karydas (1998), 1, 3.

²⁶⁹ Dasen (2011), 309; Laes (2011), 72-7; Veyne (1987), 14.

²⁷⁰ *Dig.*40.2.13.

²⁷¹ *Dem.*47.55-6.

²⁷² *Aesch.Cho.*743-65. See Karydas (1998), 38-43 for more on this speech.

²⁷³ Joshel (1986), 6.

²⁷⁴ Joshel (1986), 7; 9.

Although not a novelistic mistress-nurse bond, the relationship between Thisbe and Demainete arguably serves as an immoral twist of the bond between Phaedra and her Nurse in Euripides' second *Hippolytus*, in which the Nurse serves as a "motherly" figure for her mistress.²⁷⁵ Both slaves act in the role of *confidantes* by offering to help, then betray their mistresses' trust through revealing Phaedra's secret and luring Demainete into a trap.²⁷⁶ There are many connections that suggest Heliodorus intended Thisbe and Demainete's relationship to be viewed as an interpretation of Euripides' play. Like the Nurse, Thisbe asks her mistress to confide in her and Demainete confesses her love for Cnemon has left her with "pains" (τοῦ πάθους) and suffering (πάσχω), in a manner reminiscent of Phaedra's illness.²⁷⁷ The word πάσχω is used throughout Greek tragedy to emphasize that a character has suffered unbearable misfortunes and the novels have a similar approach, including Anthia's claim that her troubles are the same as Habrocomes, Callirhoe's lament that she cannot see Chaereas and Melite suffering from love.²⁷⁸ Demainete even describes herself as acting like a wild beast (ἡ θηριώδης ἐγὼ καὶ ἀνήμερος ὥσπερ), which could link to Phaedra's desire to hunt animals and Hippolytus' role as a hunter.²⁷⁹ Thisbe promises to help her mistress, lying in the process, and advises her that after sleeping with

²⁷⁵ Eur.*Hipp.*288-361. See 70n267 for examples of Phaedra and her Nurse using maternal imagery. See Karydas (1998), 115-80 on their relationship in Euripides' *Hippolytus*.

²⁷⁶ Eur.*Hipp.*589-97.

²⁷⁷ Heliod.1.15.3; 1.15.5.

²⁷⁸ Xen.4.6.6; Charit.6.7.9; Ach.Tat.5.26.3. Tragic examples of πάσχω include Aesch.*Eum.*790; Eur.*Andr.*1179; Eur.*Hipp.*598.

²⁷⁹ Heliod.1.15.5; Eur.*Hipp.*215-222.

Cnemon the urge would fade, similar to Phaedra's Nurse.²⁸⁰ There are more direct connections between *Hippolytus* and the Athenian Novella: from the stepmother's infatuation for her stepson, to tricking the father into taking "revenge" on his son for a crime not committed, to the suicide and the lies written on the tablet.²⁸¹ Demainete herself refers to Cnemon as "my young Hippolytus" (ὁ νέος Ἴππόλυτος).²⁸²

Therefore, it is not unreasonable to place Thisbe in the role of Phaedra's Nurse. However, whilst Phaedra's Nurse does care for her mistress and unsuccessfully tried to prevent Phaedra from committing suicide, Thisbe acts to cause Demainete's downfall and benefit only herself. This immoral twist on the Phaedra myth is not inconsistent with the rest of the Athenian Novella. In Euripides' version, Phaedra resolved to die rather than reveal her infatuation for her stepson, but Demainete made her desire so obvious that Cnemon tried to avoid her before she propositioned him.²⁸³ Like Phaedra, Demainete commits suicide, however not out of any noble reason but to avoid humiliation, which Aristotle claims is the mark of a coward.²⁸⁴ This suggests that the Athenian Novella is a parody of *Hippolytus*, which contrasts with Cnemon's eventual happy ending and the protagonists' love for each other.²⁸⁵

²⁸⁰ Heliod.1.15.8; Eur.*Hipp.*490-7; 500-2.

²⁸¹ Heliod.1.11.1-2; 1.12.3-13.3; 1.17.5-6; 2.10.1-4.

²⁸² Heliod.1.10.2.

²⁸³ Eur.*Hipp.*400-30; Heliod.1.9.3; Haynes (2003), 111. In other versions (including Seneca's tragedy (Sen.*Phaed.*592-718) and Euripides' first version of the play) Phaedra is not as modest and propositions Hippolytus.

²⁸⁴ Arist.*Eth.Nic.*3.7.15; MacAlister (1996), 65.

²⁸⁵ Webb (2013), 293.

Phaedra's Nurse and Thisbe persuade their mistresses to trust them and then betray them, but Thisbe's intention to endanger her mistress offers a more harmful exploitation of the mistress-slave bond between female slaves. In doing so, Thisbe represents the dangers of trusting disloyal slaves.

Cybele and Plangon offer dark variations of the idealised nurse-child bond by strategically portraying themselves as maternal figures. This is part of a wider pattern with Demainete also serving as a "false" mother using a pseudo-maternal bond to seduce her stepson.²⁸⁶ Plangon calls Callirhoe her "child" (ὄ τέκνον) and Cybele addresses Arsace as "my sweetest child" (ὄ γλυκύτερον ἐμοὶ παιδίον) and later the protagonists along similar terms.²⁸⁷ This suggests a pattern of novelistic slaves using a pseudo-maternal bond as a strategy to gain trust rather than as a genuine bond between mistress and slave.²⁸⁸ The success can be demonstrated by Callirhoe's belief that Plangon considers the heroine to be a daughter and Arsace frequently addresses Cybele as "mother" (ὄ μητέρα; ὄ μητέριον; μαμμίδιον) throughout her first conversation.²⁸⁹ The use of maternal imagery to create a false impression of perceived closeness to deceive is not an anomaly in Graeco-Roman literature. In Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, Charite addresses her elderly jailor as *mi parens* when begging for forgiveness.²⁹⁰ On Eurycleia's bond with Odysseus, Karydas argues

²⁸⁶ Morales (2022), 25. Morales argues that this represents a distortion of the stoic concept *oikeiosis*.

²⁸⁷ Charit.2.2.1; Helioid.7.9.5; 7.12.3; 7.12.4; 7.17.2; 7.20.6; 7.21.2.

²⁸⁸ Haynes (2003), 129.

²⁸⁹ Charit.2.7.5; Helioid.7.10.1; 7.10.3; 7.10.5.

²⁹⁰ Apul. *Met.*4.26.

the Nurse attempts to use her maternal authority over the hero but is met with initial resistance from Odysseus, signifying the master reclaiming control of the household.²⁹¹ Whilst this resistance to Eurycleia's suggestions, Karydas claims, weakens over time, Odysseus remains in control, giving orders and deciding if and when he will follow his nurse's advice. As the faithful servant, Eurycleia immediately obeys her master. In contrast, Plangon heavily influences Callirhoe in the pregnancy decision and Arsace cannot control her slave by immediately agreeing to all of Cybele's suggestions without considering alternative plans and not reprimanding the slave for chastising her mistress.²⁹²

However, whilst Cybele successfully persuades the temple sacristan of her "motherly" attentions, both Charicleia and Theagenes see through Cybele's attempts.²⁹³ Whilst this is not entirely due to this maternal strategy, the protagonists show an awareness of it by playing along and addressing Cybele in similar terms.²⁹⁴ Initially, this tactic succeeds and Cybele is unable to see through the ruse and the claim that the protagonists are siblings.²⁹⁵ Therefore, instead of Cybele taking control over the protagonists, Charicleia and Theagenes manipulate the slave, using her own strategy against her by playing along. This suggests that the slave's maternal strategy is only effective if there is a long-term bond established or if their victims are caught off-guard

²⁹¹ Karydas (1998), 38-43.

²⁹² Heliod.8.5.9-10; 8.5.11.

²⁹³ Heliod.7.11.10.

²⁹⁴ Heliod.7.13.1; 7.17.3.

²⁹⁵ Heliod.7.14.1.

in a vulnerable position, as Callirhoe, Charicleia and Theagenes are when they first meet Plangon and Cybele respectively.

Whilst Cybele and Plangon ultimately remain loyal to their mistresses, their “maternal” bonds are clearly not formed solely out of affection. Cybele openly disobeys a direct order from her mistress when she disagrees with Arsace and stays silent about her son’s betrayal.²⁹⁶ Cybele gains influence over Arsace by using the imagery of a maternal bond, by creating the pretence of authority and affections, but she ultimately prioritises her own interests instead of acting out of love for her charge, casting doubt on the sincerity of this bond. This fits into the wider pattern of maternal figures within the *Aethiopica*. The underlying plot of this novel revolves around the protagonists’ journey to find Charicleia’s true parentage. Whilst the heroine has several father figures along the way (in the form of Charicles and Calasiris), she has no mother equivalent until she reunites with Persinna.²⁹⁷ There is no mention of Nausicles having a spouse and Charicles’ wife (and daughter) died before Charicleia entered his household. Scholars have long argued that this genre does not portray mother figures positively and the *Aethiopica* offers the most harmful examples (such as Demainete, the Necromancer).²⁹⁸ Although Persinna offers a more sympathetic example, arguably she still is a negative model by sending away her daughter and not

²⁹⁶ Helioid.8.6.5; 8.5.7-9.

²⁹⁷ Helioid.10.13.1-16.1.

²⁹⁸ Egger (1999), 120; Johne (1996), 187, 202-3; Haynes (2003), 115-23.

telling her husband.²⁹⁹ Cybele is a mother herself and the only novelistic household slave to have children (with the only other notable slave parents being Daphnis and Chloe's adopted mothers and fathers).³⁰⁰ Whilst she defends her son's interests, Cybele could also be viewed as a bad mother through her relationships with her charges.³⁰¹ She helps Arsace in her pursuits, but also encourages her more sadistic traits; and then goes against a direct order.³⁰² She acts friendly to the protagonists, whilst seeking to ruin them behind their backs.³⁰³ Therefore, Cybele represents a warning of maternal figures: of manipulative slaves serving other agendas and of mothers in general.

Likewise, Plangon is not initially loyal to Callirhoe and uses her authoritative position to exploit the heroine's naivety. Her deceitfulness is demonstrated when Plangon uses Callirhoe's maternal feelings for her unborn child to manipulate her into agreeing to the marriage. Egger commented that this scene fits into the wider ancient literary convention of a slave helping to substitute a child or arrange a marriage, but the difference here is that Plangon does not do so to benefit Callirhoe.³⁰⁴ After pointing out Callirhoe's pregnancy, the slave realises immediately the heroine will keep her child,

²⁹⁹ Helioid.4.8.1-6; Haynes (2003), 116, 119.

³⁰⁰ Cybele's relationship with her son is prominent in the narrative. However, due to this thesis' focus on female relationships, Cybele's relationship with her son is not covered here. Instead see Morgan (2018), 639-41, 43-4; and Morgan and Repath (2019), 144-6.

³⁰¹ See pp.20-1 for difficulties in categorising novelistic female characters.

³⁰² Helioid.8.6.5.

³⁰³ Helioid.7.12.3-5; 7.14.1-2; 7.17.2; 7.20.6; 7.21.2; 8.6.3; 8.7.4-5.

³⁰⁴ Egger (1999), 123n49.

even before Callirhoe herself.³⁰⁵ Plangon is not sympathetic but gleeful that the pregnancy could secure a favourable outcome for Dionysius and herself. By using Callirhoe's own maternal feelings against her, Plangon lacks compassion. This is ironic as the slave's approach relies on her being perceived as a close companion to the heroine and viewed as a maternal figure herself.³⁰⁶ This shows that Plangon does not value Callirhoe above her own interests and willingly uses unethical methods to further her personal agenda, making her own "motherly" affections somewhat insincere. Like Cybele, this implies that this was a method primarily used to manipulate and deceive instead of being caused by affection. Through this strategy, the novelistic mistress-slave relationships again presents a warning to Roman slave owners of the dangers of trusting their property and stresses the importance of not giving slaves authority over their owners.

2.3.4 Understanding Mindsets

For slaves to effectively manipulate their victims, they need to understand their victims' mindsets and the qualities people would expect them to possess based on their social positions. This enables novelistic cunning slaves to adapt their plans to better appeal to their intended victims and increase their chances of success. For instance, Thisbe foresees the danger Demainete poses

³⁰⁵ Charit.2.9.1. As Egger ((1999), 120-1) demonstrated, the idea of "natural motherliness" plays a recurring role in this genre, including when Nape adopts Chloe (Long.1.1.60) and Charicleia's trust in Persinna's instincts (Helioid.9.24.8).

³⁰⁶ There is also irony when Plangon stresses her "betrayal" of Dionysius is because of her "fondness" (τὴν εὐνοίαν) for Callirhoe (Charit.2.10.4).

to her safety and successfully acts by understanding her mistress's priorities and how Demainete will subsequently react.³⁰⁷ The slave is proved to be an expert manipulator through her complex plan, which required Thisbe to deceive several characters and is dependent on Demainete believing that she would be meeting Cnemon for an affair.³⁰⁸ Haynes argues that unlike Charicleia, Thisbe is unable to control her situation.³⁰⁹ However, both women take decisive action throughout the novel instead of being passive victims of circumstances. Fusillo claimed that it is an error to assume characters in this genre are "mere puppets manipulated by capricious fate" and Thisbe demonstrates this by effectively planning and pulling off the betrayal of Demainete and the subsequent aftermath.³¹⁰ Whilst Thisbe is eventually undone by Arsinoe's betrayal and an unfortunate case of mistaken identity, she succeeds in her plots and controls events, like Demainete in the first plot. The text draws attention to Demainete's cleverness and so by outwitting her, Thisbe proves herself a greater manipulator.³¹¹ Both women effectively manipulate others and in doing so demonstrate they can predict the reactions of other characters and use this knowledge to their advantage, implying that this trait is not exclusive to female slaves but can be applied to other novelistic women.

³⁰⁷ Heliod.1.15.2.

³⁰⁸ Haynes (2003), 128.

³⁰⁹ Haynes (2003), 127.

³¹⁰ Fusillo (1999), 63.

³¹¹ Johne (1996), 193-4; Lefteratou (2018), 157.

Both Cybele and Plangon deliberately appeal to values that are important to their victims. The novelistic heroines usually are pious and the slaves use oaths to gain the trust of Charicleia and Callirhoe respectively.³¹² In both cases, the slaves successfully achieve their desired outcome: Callirhoe agrees to marry Dionysius and Charicleia drinks the “poison”. It is the situation in the *Aethiopica* that arguably is more remarkable as it marks a (brief) turning point in the portrayal of Cybele. As discussed elsewhere, the slave struggles to understand and manipulate the protagonists throughout most of the narrative.³¹³ Instead, Charicleia sees through Cybele and her mistress and quickly realises the precarious position the protagonists are in, even warning Theagenes to play along with Cybele’s ploy and give in to Arsace’s advances.³¹⁴ Yet, Cybele’s oath to the gods marks a change in tactics from her earlier strategy of pretending to be an ally and she is then ultimately able to fool Charicleia because she appeals to values important to her victim. This almost results in the heroine being poisoned and only fails due to chance rather than any mistake of Cybele’s. The effectiveness of this strategy is emphasised by the following passage describing Charicleia as “accustomed to looking suspiciously at deceptions” (τὸ μὲν ἀπατηλὸν συνήθως ὑφορωμένη) and, given her ability to see through Cybele’s previous manipulations until this point, it is surprising that the heroine lets her guard down here.³¹⁵ Unlike Plangon, who is somewhat sincere in her desire to help Callirhoe, Cybele

³¹² Helioid.8.7.5; Charit.2.11.6.

³¹³ Pp.107-8.

³¹⁴ Helioid.7.12.7; 7.21.3-4; 7.25.6; De Temmerman (2014), 274.

³¹⁵ Helioid.8.7.6. Haynes ((2003), 129) argues that Cybele is dangerous by fooling Charicleia, since the latter beats orators in debates.

herself swears the oath with the intention of harming the heroine, which demonstrates her impiety and lack of morals in contrast to the heroine's own virtues.³¹⁶ Whilst the use of oaths as part of Cybele's last resort suggests that the slave does not value their effectiveness and still does not understand the heroine's mindset, Cybele achieves some success by appealing to a value important to her victim.

The novelistic female slave that best understands an elitist mindset is Plangon, both through her manipulation of Callirhoe and in her report to Dionysius. As Elson convincingly argues, Plangon uses Callirhoe's own noble heritage against her in the pregnancy decision.³¹⁷ Whilst Callirhoe tries to assume the mindset of a slave after being enslaved, she cannot fully leave behind her aristocratic lineage.³¹⁸ Having been enslaved, Callirhoe claims her previous life is irrelevant when Dionysius initially questions her.³¹⁹ Yet she continues to be linked to aristocratic ideas and values, such as when Callirhoe considers the shame of having Hermocrates' grandchild be born a slave.³²⁰ Despite the threats posed by people in positions of power over them, the protagonists in the surviving novels always regain their status and position in society by the conclusion, unlike other characters sold into slavery including

³¹⁶ Although technically Cybele does not lie to the heroine by promising her an end to her misfortunes (Heliod.8.7.5.).

³¹⁷ Elson (1992), 222.

³¹⁸ Other novelistic heroines are also unable to leave their heritage behind whilst enslaved: Anthia continually prioritises her chastity (Xen.2.1.6; 2.9.4; 2.13.8; 3.7.6-7; 4.5.3; 5.4.6; 5.7.2) even above her own life and Leucippe's rebuke of Thersander (Ach.Tat.6.22.1-4) similarly values this virtue whilst ignoring his legal right to sleep with her as her master.

³¹⁹ Charit.2.5.7.

³²⁰ Charit.2.9.2.

Cybele.³²¹ Plangon is aware that Callirhoe will be returned to her rightful status, even if she herself is not. As part of her reverse psychology tactic, Plangon argues that aborting the child would result in Callirhoe truly becoming a slave: “renounce all memories of your noble birth, leave no hope of returning to your fatherland, adjust to your present lot and truly become a slave” (μηδ’ ἐλπίς ἔστω σοι πατρίδος. συνάρμοσαι τῇ παρούσῃ τύχῃ καὶ ἀκριβῶς γενοῦ δούλη).³²² The idea of leaving behind the past to assume the mantle of a slave has a large effect on Callirhoe. In the “vote” soon afterwards, Callirhoe continues to refer to her aristocratic values by applying them to her unborn child’s future: his two fathers being foremost men in their respective cities, his return on a Milesian trireme and Hermocrates making his grandson a general.³²³ Callirhoe views her unborn child as a freeborn male rather than a slave. Plangon again recognises this and uses it to manipulate her. In keeping with her naïve portrayal in the early stages of their “friendship”, Callirhoe remains unsuspecting of her slave’s ulterior motives, demonstrated by her instructing Plangon to do whatever she thinks is best and when she later prays to Aphrodite and considers herself a committed accomplice and not a victim.³²⁴ In doing so, Callirhoe demonstrates unwarranted trust in Plangon, since the slave has not been working in her interests during the pregnancy decision. This evidences that successful

³²¹ Perkins (1995), 55; Heliod.7.12.6.

³²² Charit.2.10.6-7; Owens (2020), 64.

³²³ Charit.2.11.2-3.

³²⁴ Charit.2.11.5; 3.2.13.

manipulative slaves understand the mindsets of their masters and adjust accordingly.

This is also demonstrated when Plangon alters Callirhoe's words in her report to Dionysius, in which she understands not only expectations for noble women but also Callirhoe's mindset, as reflected by Plangon using similar ideas to Callirhoe's own thoughts. For instance, Plangon's claim that Callirhoe retains her *φρόνημα* reflects the heroine's revulsion to remarrying due to her belief that she will lose her *σωφροσύνης*.³²⁵ Callirhoe places Chaereas over her parents and homeland (*γονέων; πατρίδος*) whilst Plangon uses similar language to remind Dionysius of what the heroine has already lost and both women focus on providing Hermocrates with descendants (*Ερμοκράτης ἔκγονον; τὸ Ἐρμοκράτους γένος*).³²⁶ Although some of these words and traits are used differently, their similarities make Plangon's image of Callirhoe convincing and ultimately persuade Dionysius that the slave is reporting Callirhoe's exact words. There are multiple examples of characters or authors (particularly historians) in antiquity who report the words spoken by another character, despite not being present at the time.³²⁷ It is more likely that their words are altered, embellished or invented to suit the writer/speaker's purpose. Thucydides addresses the issue in his history by stating that it is

³²⁵ Ach.Tat.2.10.8; 2.11.5; 3.1.6.

³²⁶ Ach.Tat.2.11.2; 2.11.3; 3.1.6.

³²⁷ Examples in the novels include Clitophon's first-person narration (Ach.Tat.5.22.1-8; 6.3.3-4.4; 6.6.1-13.4; 6.15.1-22.4) and Cnemon's continued narration of the *Athenian Novella* after he is exiled (Helioid.1.14.4-17.6; 2.8.3-9.5). Both contain examples of direct speech not witnessed by the main character and therefore are unlikely to be the exact words.

difficult to recall exact words spoken when even eye-witnesses give different reports, leading him to report speeches using language that he believed the original speakers would have used.³²⁸ This draws connections with the rhetorical technique *prosopopoeia*, which revolved around writing speeches in character and often was a popular exercise in *progymnasmata*, such as those of Aelius Theon.³²⁹ Examples of ancient rhetors using this technique include the works of Lysias and Cicero's *Pro Caelio* (when he imitates Clodia's ancestors and relatives), but they can also be found in more fictional works such as Ovid's *Heroides*, Plutarch's *Gryllus* and Lucian's *Dialogues*.³³⁰

Whilst Plangon earlier used her knowledge of ancient expectations of noblewomen to manipulate the heroine, she uses it here in the heroine's favour by creating a convincing portrayal of a proud aristocratic woman. For instance, the final line of Plangon's report helps create the illusion that Callirhoe can refuse Dionysius, which links into the heroine's concern that she will be merely a concubine. Although the "idealistic" novels promote the concept of mutual consent regardless of status, in reality slaves could not refuse. All of Callirhoe's main suitors are portrayed sympathetically due to them seeking her consent. For example, Artaxerxes is physically affected by his desire for Callirhoe but instructs Artaxates that she must be willing.³³¹ It is

³²⁸ Thucy.1.22.1-4.

³²⁹ See De Temmerman (2010) on characterisation in rhetoric.

³³⁰ Cic.*Cael.*34; 36.

³³¹ Charit.6.4.8.

the eunuch who threatens violence, against his direct orders.³³² Whilst Dionysius had nobly expressed contempt for forcing himself on a slave, he would have been legally within his right to take Callirhoe, regardless of her willingness.³³³ This would also be without the shame (καταισχυνεῖς) that Plangon, aware of her master's views on the matter, implies would occur if Dionysius were to have children with a slave.³³⁴ By creating the image of a proud aristocratic woman, Plangon works in Callirhoe's favour. As the end of her speech stresses the urgency of children, Plangon cleverly opens with Callirhoe's heritage: "I am part of the leading family in Syracuse" (ἐγὼ φηοῖν οἰκίας οὔσα τῆς πρώτης ἐν Σικελ).³³⁵ This is significant as it sets out her lineage from the start and makes it central to Plangon's argument.

In particular, Plangon emphasises the identity of Callirhoe's father: Hermocrates. Callirhoe previously argued that since she was now a slave, her previous life was irrelevant.³³⁶ However she eventually reveals her heritage and consequently Dionysius immediately believes her, due to her divine-like beauty, and not only promises to help Callirhoe but also rebukes Leonas for not only buying a noblewoman but the daughter of Hermocrates.³³⁷ The

³³² Charit.6.7.7. Admittedly it could be argued Artaxerxes was ambiguously advocating the threats by being easily persuaded by Artaxates that it would not be adultery. See Jones (2012), 48-50; and Montiglio (2009), 28-9 on the dubious morality of Artaxerxes in his pursuit of Callirhoe.

³³³ Charit.2.6.3.

³³⁴ Charit.3.1.7.

³³⁵ Charit.3.1.6.

³³⁶ Charit.2.5.7; 2.5.9.

³³⁷ Charit.2.3.5; 2.3.7-8; 2.5.12; 2.6.3. Physical beauty was often considered a mark of the elite, with Dionysius earlier telling Leonas that it was impossible (ἀδύνατον) for "someone not freeborn to be beautiful" (καλὸν εἶναι σῶμα μὴ πεφυκὸς ἐλεύθερον) (Charit.2.1.5).

significance of Hermocrates does not end here - Artaxerxes publicly argues that on account of her father's actions against the Athenians it is his duty to look after Callirhoe.³³⁸ Unlike her mistress, Plangon is conscious of the power behind Hermocrates' name and foregrounds it through her expression of Callirhoe's desire to make him a grandfather to remind Dionysius of Callirhoe's heritage and add leverage to her justification for legal marriage. It is interesting that Plangon brings up Hermocrates here, given her earlier reliance on manipulating Callirhoe's natural maternal feelings for her unborn child. The debate over whether maternal or paternal affections was more important was a popular topic in ancient thoughts and literature.³³⁹ Aeschylus (*Libation Bearers*, *Eumenides*) and Euripides (*Electra*) even made this debate an integral part of their plays on the Orestes myth. Arguably, Chariton brings up this debate when Callirhoe gives Chaereas the decisive vote during the pregnancy debate.³⁴⁰ By effectively changing between the two sides, Plangon demonstrates a flexibility to adapt according to the circumstances and again an understanding of the mindset of the elites.

This use of the patriarchal system supports Elson's claims that "Callirhoe's" desire to become a mother for Hermocrates' benefit demonstrates women are objects under a "system of male propriety".³⁴¹ Despite mistaking Plangon's reworded and embellished speech for Callirhoe's actual words,

³³⁸ Charit.5.8.8.

³³⁹ See Challet (2012), 11-4; Lape (2010), 108-15, 124-8, 135-6; and Segal (1981), 183-6.

³⁴⁰ Charit.2.11.3.

³⁴¹ Elson (1992), 222.

Elson raises an important point about the status of women in these novels. Whilst all of the heroines are resourceful and proactive, they remain subservient to male characters. For instance, the protagonists are portrayed as having a mutual love and desire to marry, yet the heroine is never consulted by her parents over this. There are exceptions in *L&C* and *D&C*, with the protagonists arguably initially just seeking a desire for sexual gratification and only deciding to marry later, respectively after Leucippe and Clitophon's dreams warning of premarital sex and Lycaenion's caution.³⁴² Regardless, in both cases marriage eventually is sought and the daughters are not consulted when their fathers approve the matches.³⁴³ In Callirhoe's own case, she was unaware that she had married Chaereas until her wedding night.³⁴⁴ Even when the heroines use their skills to defuse threats to their chastity, their success is dependent on male whims. Anthia successfully outwits her owners when enslaved, yet relies on their goodwill and superstitions.³⁴⁵ Whilst Thersander attempts to force himself on Leucippe, he ultimately stops his assault, despite his physical ability and legal right (as her master) to do so.³⁴⁶ Callirhoe thinks often of Hermocrates when deciding what to do about her pregnancy (ἀλλ' ἐγὼ τέκω δεσπότην τὸν Ἑρμοκράτους ἔκγονον; ἡδέως δὲ Ἑρμοκράτης ἔκγονον ἀπολήψεται), which demonstrates

³⁴² Ach.Tat.4.1.4-8; Long.3.19.1-3.

³⁴³ Unusually Clitophon, along with Calligone and Leucippe, is also not consulted on both proposed marriages.

³⁴⁴ Charit.1.1.14-5.

³⁴⁵ Including Psammis' superstitious beliefs (Xen.3.11.4-5), Polyides abiding by his oath to Isis (Xen.5.4.7) and the brothel-keeper's sympathy to her "epilepsy" (Xen.5.7.8).

³⁴⁶ Ach.Tat.6.18.4-7.1.1.

that Plangon's word choice is similar to Callirhoe's own thoughts, making her characterisation of the heroine more convincing.³⁴⁷

Plangon's report not only reflects Callirhoe's thoughts but also depicts the heroine according to aristocratic expectations of her status, including Plangon's claim that the heroine would rather hang herself than become Dionysius' concubine.³⁴⁸ Callirhoe, in her original speech, made no mention of killing herself and does not contemplate suicide, unlike Chaereas or Dionysius.³⁴⁹ Through the addition of the suicide threat, Plangon emphasises the necessity of legal marriage and gives greater significance to Callirhoe's perceived character. MacAlister notes that Plangon's claim contrasts other novelistic suicide threats by threatening to kill herself out of honour instead of love.³⁵⁰ In general, the ancient elite had a negative view of excessive emotions, particularly in women. Whilst some mythological women like Lucretia were praised for prioritising honour, most ancient works focused on women driven by excessive feelings.³⁵¹ This stereotype formed the plot of many works by tragedians, including Aeschylus (*Clytemnestra (Agamemnon; Eumenides)*), Sophocles (*Deianeira (Trachiniae)*) and Euripides (*Hermione (Andromache)*; *Phaedra (Hippolytus)*; *Electra (Electra)*; *Hecuba (Hecuba)*);

³⁴⁷ Charit.2.9.2; 2.11.3.

³⁴⁸ Charit.3.1.6.

³⁴⁹ Charit.1.4.7; 1.5.2, 3.1.1; 3.3.1; 4.2.1.

³⁵⁰ MacAlister (1996), 57. There is a long mythological history of women and suicide in order to protect their honour or out of social shame, such as Dido, Jocasta, Phaedra and Lucretia.

³⁵¹ Examples include Medea, Phaedra and Deianira. The *Aeneid* perhaps offers the best example of the difference in genders: Aeneas reluctantly places duty before love whereas Dido does the opposite by ignoring her obligations as queen (Virg.*Aen.*4.331-2; 4.86-9).

Medea (*Medea*)). Aristotle's *History of Animals* describes wives as naturally more susceptible to emotions than their husbands, including being more tearful, jealous and fond of reproach.³⁵² Several categories of women in Semonides 7 describe the women as having changing emotions, especially the ones resembling "vixens" and "the sea".³⁵³ This stereotype of women is also present in the novels: from mothers who force their children to take drastic actions as a result of their own deeds, to hostile antagonists driven by disgraceful passions.³⁵⁴ It is interesting that Plangon presents Callirhoe as the rational protagonist placing her duty and honour above emotion when the male characters are excessively driven by their love. Chariton is not unique in having his male characters contemplate suicide through love or suffer excessive erotic emotions. The difference between the *Callirhoe* and the other novels is that there are no equivalent female characters driven by the same emotions: even Statira, whilst jealous, acts in a restrained manner.³⁵⁵ Whilst Callirhoe also suffers from her love in the novel's early stages and is sympathetically distraught over her pregnancy, she is never driven to the same extremes as Chaereas and Dionysius and she later restrains herself from her initial impulse to attack Artaxates because she is "an educated and rational woman" (οἷα δὲ γυνὴ πεπαιδευμένη καὶ φρενήρης).³⁵⁶ She therefore

³⁵² Arist.*Hist.An.*8.608b.9-16.

³⁵³ Semon.*fr.*7.11; 26-42.

³⁵⁴ Examples of mothers include Pantheia in *L&C* and Chaereas' mother in the *Callirhoe*. Female antagonists driven by love include Manto (Xen.), Cyno (Xen.), Demainete (Heliod.) and Arsace (Heliod.).

³⁵⁵ Pp.182-5.

³⁵⁶ Charit.1.1.8; 6.5.8.

lives up to Plangon's image and subsequently proves the slave's attitude is consistent with expectations placed on the elite.

Through her claim that Callirhoe would commit suicide to defend her honour, Plangon creates the impression of a proud, powerful and virtuous aristocratic woman similar to ancient "ideal" female role models, such as Andromache, Lucretia and Penelope. This contributes to the sense of necessity that Plangon has created, of Dionysius marrying Callirhoe instead of taking her as a concubine, as was his legal right. The success of this characterisation is highlighted by Dionysius immediately accepting that "Callirhoe" said those words, ironic when contrasted with Callirhoe's earlier fear. Plangon (a slave) can effectively mimic the mindset and manners aristocrats were expected to have, yet Callirhoe (a noble) lacks this behaviour. Wrenhaven has argued that in Greek literature eloquence was not a trait looked for or expected in slaves.³⁵⁷ This not the case in all genres: the *servus callidus* in New and Roman Comedy often successfully manipulates the other characters and controls the events of their plays to result in a happy outcome at the end. Eurycleia and Eumaeus in the *Odyssey* are eloquent at times and again their advice is often sensible and successful, in contrast to Wrenhaven's main example of Phaedra's Nurse in Euripides' *Hippolytus*. However, it is significant that Plangon understands what traits aristocrats were expected to have and alter Callirhoe's words to fit this ideal. Plangon is proved to be a "skilled

³⁵⁷ Wrenhaven (2012), 29.

literary technician”, able to alter outcomes in her favour through words and intelligence, like Satyrus and the clever comic slaves.³⁵⁸ By understanding Callirhoe’s “natural” qualities, Plangon presents a convincing portrayal of the heroine to Dionysius, making him accept this speech without questioning if Callirhoe had another motive. Through the variety of rhetorical techniques and her understanding of both Callirhoe and Dionysius, Plangon effectively controls the narrative through her manipulations. This demonstrates the dangers of deceptive slaves being able to understand and subsequently exploit their masters by using their own values against them.

2.3.5 Coaxing/Flattery

Whilst novelistic manipulative slaves draw on the *servus callidus*, they also adapt other literary stereotypes to succeed. Several slaves draw on the “flatterer” stereotype, which has associations with the Middle East and was a popular comic stereotype with their compliments, fawning and grovelling exaggerated to the point of ridicule.³⁵⁹ Comic examples include the Paphlagonian (Aristophanes’ *Knights*), Gnatho (Terence’s *Eunuch*) and the titular character of Menander’s lost play *Kolax* and flatters in other works include Philiades and Demeas in Lucian’s *Timon the Misanthrope*.³⁶⁰ Attitudes towards flatterers in the ancient world were harsh, with Plutarch writing a

³⁵⁸ Smith (2007), 158.

³⁵⁹ See pp.109-12 on Graeco-Roman literary stereotypes of the East.

³⁶⁰ König (2012), 242-4 offers an overview of the frequency of this trope in literature under the Roman Empire, ranging from elegy to rhetoric to satire.

work on how to distinguish one from a friend.³⁶¹ Tacitus begins his *Histories* by claiming that flattery is prone to servility and Plato describes a flatterer as “a terrible creature that causes great harm”.³⁶² Flatterers are effective (for a short time) when they prey upon vulnerable or weak minded people, and are more successful when they understand their victim’s mindsets. This is reflected by the novels. Plangon successfully uses flattery and coaxing against Callirhoe because the slave recognises that the heroine is naïve and uses these techniques subtly, in combination with other methods.³⁶³ Artaxates best represents the flatterer stereotype in the *Callirhoe*, but unlike with Plangon, Callirhoe is immune to his praise. As this incident occurs later in the narrative, the heroine is not as naïve and becomes aware of the dangers presented by slaves.

The female slave that most heavily relies on these methods is Cybele, with coaxing and flattery established in her characterisation from her introduction, with Cybele described as prostrating (προσκυζωμένη), fawning (κολακείαις) and impelling (ἐπαγομένη) Arsace to reveal her pains.³⁶⁴ These traits link to her oriental characterisation and these methods are effective against Arsace (a non-Greek) because she is weak-willed, demonstrated by her needing constant validation and immediately agreeing to Cybele’s “suggestions”.³⁶⁵ Owens claimed that Cybele has a greater effect in influencing events than

³⁶¹ Plut.*Mor.Adulator*.

³⁶² Tac.*Hist*.1.1; Pl.*Phdr*.240b.

³⁶³ Charit.2.10.1-8; Smith (2007), 158.

³⁶⁴ Helioid.7.10.1; Johne (1996), 194. See pp.110-2 on *proskynesis*.

³⁶⁵ Helioid.7.9.5-10.1. See pp.109-13 on Cybele and Arsace’s oriental connotations.

Thisbe, and Zeitlin argues that Cybele is more cunning than her fellow slave.³⁶⁶ These arguments are questionable, as Thisbe deceives several characters and plays a critical role both in Cnemon's backstory and moving the narrative forward after her death. In contrast, although an important accessory in demonstrating Arsace's immorality, Cybele is not as central to the narrative and is unable to manipulate the protagonists. Regardless, these scholarly arguments recognise that Cybele has some power over Arsace and manipulative qualities, like Thisbe. In both cases, the slaves successfully manipulate their mistress into taking an immoral path, resulting in their eventual suicides. This again implies that Thisbe and Cybele are a warning to slave-owners of the dangers of trusting cunning slaves.

Comparisons can be drawn with other female literary role models, notably Euripides' second *Hippolytus*, and Arsace and Cybele's relationship is directly connected to that text.³⁶⁷ Like Cybele and the other female slaves in this genre, the Nurse uses coaxing to successfully persuade her mistress to follow her wishes.³⁶⁸ This model is perhaps the closest parallel, yet it is adapted to create a darker story. Both slaves fit the role of an older nurse figure and attempt to help their mistress by coaxing them into revealing their immoral lusts. They also ultimately lead to the downfall of their mistresses through their own actions. However, there is a notable difference. In the *Hippolytus*,

³⁶⁶ Owens (2020), 197; Zeitlin (2022), 191.

³⁶⁷ Lefteratou (2018), 162-70 offers a detailed reading into the parallels between Phaedra and Arsace. See pp.72-4 for *Hippolytus* being a model for Demainete and Thisbe's relationship.

³⁶⁸ Eur.*Hipp.*288-352.

the Nurse is described as fond of moderation and horrified by Phaedra's desires, and even initially attempts to dissuade her from her immoral actions.³⁶⁹ In contrast, Cybele encourages Arsace in her immoral lust from the start, not only with Theagenes, but also with her previous suitors.³⁷⁰ Instead of attempting to guide Arsace towards a more moral path, she uses Arsace's weakness and self-interest to lead her into further extremes.³⁷¹ This adaptation of the Phaedra myth serves as a warning to citizens about manipulative slaves.³⁷² In the original version, Phaedra resists her slave's temptations to reveal the truth to Hippolytus.³⁷³ In the *Aethiopica*, Arsace willingly agrees to Cybele's suggestions because they appeal to her desires. This parallel brings out Arsace's inability to restrain her inclinations and by being guided by her impure slave's suggestions, her immorality is shown. This contrasts with the protagonists, who are not taken in by Cybele's attempts to portray herself as a friend.

Some scholars have suggested that the influence Cybele has over her mistress reflects contemporary elitist attitudes towards the increasing power of freedmen in the Roman imperial court.³⁷⁴ Owens suggested that Arsace's strong reliance on Cybele could echo the relationships "bad" emperors had with their freedmen.³⁷⁵ This argument has merit. The aristocratic elite feared

³⁶⁹ Eur.*Hipp.*264-6; 353-61.

³⁷⁰ Heliod.7.9.4.

³⁷¹ Haynes (2003), 127. Heliod.7.10.4-5; 7.15.5; 8.5.9-12; 8.6.8-9; 8.7.1-2.

³⁷² Pp.72-4.

³⁷³ Eur.*Hipp.*373-432; 486-9; 498-506.

³⁷⁴ Lye (2016), 237, 252; Owens (2020), 198n47; Scarcella (1996), 263.

³⁷⁵ Owens (2020), 198n47.

the rise of freedmen in the imperial courts, considered scandalous given their former status as slaves.³⁷⁶ Pliny the Younger in his *Panegyricus* wrote “the majority of emperors, whilst masters of the citizens, were slaves (*servi*) to their freedmen”, before praising Trajan for taking the opposite approach.³⁷⁷ The *Historia Augusta* has a similar approach, with the senate decreeing after Commodus’ death “we have been slaves to slaves”.³⁷⁸ Hadrian adapted Vitellius’ policy of appointing *Equites* as secretaries of the Imperial Household, a role previously reserved for freedmen, to limit freedmen’s power and authority.³⁷⁹ Cassius Dio describes the robber Bulla Felix as having several imperial freedmen amongst his brigand who had been underpaid.³⁸⁰

Emperors were heavily criticised by ancient writers for having freedmen as their closest advisors and being perceived to be controlled by those men of a lower social status. Perhaps the most infamous example is Suetonius’ criticism of Claudius, claiming he was a servant to his wives and freedmen rather than a *princeps*.³⁸¹ Both freedmen and women are included in this criticism, with both groups supposed to be towards the bottom of Roman society. As a woman and slave, Cybele could be viewed as representing the dangers in bestowing too much power on those meant to be subordinates. Another emperor criticised for relying on his freedmen was Commodus. In the

³⁷⁶ See Mouritsen (2011), 93-109; and Saller (1982), 65-8 on these views.

³⁷⁷ Plin.*Pan.*88.1.

³⁷⁸ *Hist.Aug.*7.19.5. Whilst not the most historically accurate text, the *Historia Augusta* is still useful in understanding contemporary attitudes.

³⁷⁹ Marshall (1921), 360.

³⁸⁰ Cass.Dio.77.5-6.

³⁸¹ Suet.*Claud.*29.1.

Historia Augusta's portrayal of him, some of Commodus' closest advisors encouraged degeneracy and sex to assume power. This includes Saoterus kissing Commodus during his triumphal procession and at the theatre, Perennis gaining control of the government through persuading the emperor to dedicate himself to pleasure and Cleander getting the emperor's brother-in-law sentenced to death due to Commodus' "depravity".³⁸² Cybele similarly gains control through encouraging Arsace's perversions. It is interesting that many of Commodus' advisors were former slaves, suggesting her portrayal reflects them in method. Although her loyalties are with her mistress, Cybele consistently gives immoral advice, through flattery and appealing to her lust. Therefore, the novelistic slaves' use of flattery and coaxing is limited, but effective when applied to the right person. This represents the dangers of listening to false advice from slaves and serves as a warning to nobles to act according to expectations of their status.

2.3.6 Other Rhetorical Techniques: False Delays and Reverse Psychology

The manipulation techniques used by slaves discussed throughout this section are by no means exhaustive. Each relationship differs and the novels reflect a variety of persuasive techniques drawn from other genres. Two worth mentioning are false delays, where vital information is deliberately held back to be revealed at a later date, and reverse psychology. Both are used by

³⁸² *Hist. Aug.* 7.3.6; 5.2-3; 6.11.

Plangon when she manipulates Callirhoe during the pregnancy decision, although neither is exclusive to Plangon or this genre.³⁸³ False delays were often used by authors to increase anticipation for later events, such as in the *Odyssey* when Eurycleia immediately recognises Odysseus but his reunion with Penelope is delayed.³⁸⁴ Myrrhine in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* repeatedly teases then delays having sex with her husband to frustrate him and make him desperate to end the war.³⁸⁵

Likewise Plangon's use of reverse psychology, in claiming that it would be impossible for Callirhoe to raise a child and advising abortion whilst perceiving the heroine would reject this option, is not a new topic in Graeco-Roman literature.³⁸⁶ Although reverse psychology is a modern term, there are other instances in ancient works where one character intentionally encourages a behaviour by advocating for its opposite, notably Agamemnon's address to his troops in the *Iliad* book 2, which was discussed by many ancient scholars.³⁸⁷ Despite the speech's apparent failure, several scholiasts defended Agamemnon's intentions, arguing that it showed great rhetorical skill, and Aristotle and other commentators claimed it was necessary for Agamemnon to test his troops.³⁸⁸ The pseudo-Plutarchan *On Homer* argues

³⁸³ Charit.2.10.1-8; Smith (2007), 158.

³⁸⁴ Hom.*Od.*19.379-475; 23.231-87.

³⁸⁵ Ar.*Lys.*910-58.

³⁸⁶ Charit.2.10.1-2.

³⁸⁷ Hom.*Il.*2.110-41. See Hunter (2015), 692-700, 703-5 on ancient reactions to Agamemnon's speech.

³⁸⁸ Aristotle fr.366. See Huxley (1979), 76-7 for an interpretation of Aristotle's defence of Agamemnon.

that Agamemnon tells his troops what they wished to hear to displace the blame for the continued war onto his generals.³⁸⁹ Pseudo-Dionysius claims that Agamemnon's speech was necessary to draw the hostile feelings of the army out to control them better.³⁹⁰ The large number of ancient critics willing to defend Agamemnon's speech suggests some approval for his use of reverse psychology or at least widespread acknowledgement of this being a valid rhetorical trope. Unlike Agamemnon, Plangon's success in this scene is undeniable and demonstrates her rhetorical skill. This wide variety of techniques depicts Plangon as an expert manipulator and skilled rhetorician and also further demonstrates the novels are shaped by other Graeco-Roman genres. This highlights the importance of looking at slave deceptions and why they should not be ignored or downplayed in future readings and studies of the novels.

2.4 Similarities Between Mistresses and Slaves

Beyond their intelligence and ability to manipulate, mistresses and slaves often share further resemblances. These range from Thisbe copying Demainete's plot to mistresses and slaves in the *Aethiopica* failing to understand other characters and lacking self-control, to Plangon and Callirhoe withholding vital information from Dionysius. These similarities not only reflect ancient views of slaves resembling their masters, but also suggest all

³⁸⁹ [Plutarch] *On Homer* 2.166 (translated and quoted in Hunter (2015), 698).

³⁹⁰ [Dionysius] 2.327.19-330.25 (translated and quoted in Hunter (2015), 695).

women resemble each other, regardless of their social status. This suggests that the women can be loosely grouped into base stereotypes, removing some of their individuality. Despite the women in the *Aethiopica* being skilled manipulators, the failure of Demainete and Thisbe to understand their female *confidantes* and Arsace and Cybele's inability to apprehend the protagonists' mindsets offer different takes on the same similarity. This is likewise the case when comparing their immorality and how both bonds offer unique subversions to expectations that aristocratic women must display self-control. Finally, the theme of secrecy and withholding of information is focused on.

2.4.1 Schemes

Despite cunning novelistic slaves deceiving their mistresses, both women are often intelligent and successfully manipulate several characters. This serves as a warning to the ancient male elite of the dangers of trusting not only slaves but women in general, regardless of their status. Thisbe in the *Aethiopica* goes further than other novelistic cunning slaves by adapting her mistress' plan. As demonstrated, it is not uncommon for slaves in this genre to reuse the same strategies, including Plangon's appeals to aristocratic expectations when she manipulates Callirhoe and Dionysius and Cybele's attempts to establish herself as a pseudo-mother figure to Arsace and the protagonists.³⁹¹ Yet Thisbe's plan, described by Winkler as an "involved but carefully planned

³⁹¹ Pp.81-91; pp.74-7.

web”, takes inspiration from Demainete’s second plot against Cnemon.³⁹²

Both rely on Thisbe falsely claiming Demainete is having an affair, leading Cnemon/ Aristippos into a dark room and then letting circumstantial evidence trap the victim.³⁹³ Schwartz notes that both these scenes play on the common ‘catching an adulterer’ trope, with similar recurring features: the darkened bedroom with the closed door, the “adulteress” caught in bed with a man by a lawful intruder, and the family’s servant acting as a witness.³⁹⁴ Both plots in the novel turn these elements into a mocking parody. Thisbe is neither a reliable witness nor made to testify in either “trial” as a result of her escapes, leaving both Cnemon and Aristippos to suffer instead.³⁹⁵ The seducer is absent: replaced by the lawful husband in the first plot and invented by Thisbe in the second instance.³⁹⁶ Ironically, no adultery takes place in either instance, especially in Thisbe’s plot when Demainete is lured to Arsinoe’s house with the intention to do so.

Lefteratou notes the similarities between both plots but argues that Thisbe’s plot operates “at a lower register” comparable with mime and comedy.³⁹⁷

However, both scenes could take inspiration from these genres, especially considering the Athenian Novella and Cnemon have strong links with New

³⁹² Winkler (1999), 301n20.

³⁹³ Heliod.1.11.4-5; 1.16.2-3; 1.12.2; 1.17.3.

³⁹⁴ Schwartz (2012b), 166-71. Morales ((2022), 27-9) also discusses the bedtrick motif. Similar scenes occur in the *Odyssey* (Hom.*Od.*8.266-366) and Lysias’ *On the Murder of Eratosthenes* (Lys.1.23-6).

³⁹⁵ Heliod.1.12.3; 2.9.4.

³⁹⁶ Heliod.1.12.3; 1.16.1.

³⁹⁷ Lefteratou (2018), 158.

Comedy.³⁹⁸ Like other novelistic slaves, Thisbe can trace her literary origins to the *servus callidus* stereotype and has many traits in common, such as her ability to adapt, her perceptiveness and her cunning.³⁹⁹ However, like Plangon, Thisbe represents a new type of cunning slave through her gender and willingness to go against her primary master. What differentiates Thisbe is that she separates couples. The comic slaves and other novelistic slaves attempt to bring couples together, whether by the lovers' mutual consent or due to one's lust. In contrast, Thisbe actively works to harm would-be lovers: assisting Demainete in her revenge plot instead of helping her obtain Cnemon's love and betraying him in the process by manipulating his feelings for herself, then causing Demainete's downfall by tricking her into believing she had a tryst with Cnemon. This sets her up as an almost reverse New Comedy slave.⁴⁰⁰ Thisbe's clever lies are central to both plots and therefore there is a connection between these schemes and New Comedy. Thisbe's plot, however, is more complex than Demainete's as it relies on several lies and multiple inventions.

For instance, whilst both plots involve the idea of seduction to manipulate, it is only in the first plot that Thisbe sleeps with Cnemon.⁴⁰¹ In Demainete's plot, although Cnemon does not find the adultery situation he was expecting, Aristippos is present in bed with Demainete in a parody of the "other man" in

³⁹⁸ Bowie (1995), 271; Morgan (2008), 226.

³⁹⁹ Grethlein (2022), 39; Johne (1996), 194; Montiglio (2013), 109.

⁴⁰⁰ Grethlein (2022), 40; Montiglio (2013), 109-10.

⁴⁰¹ Heliod.1.11.4.

the common adultery trope.⁴⁰² Yet in Thisbe's plan, no actual seduction or lover is present, instead only many fictions and substitutions. Thisbe falsely claims to Arsinoe to be meeting a lover familiar to both, yet he does not appear in the text.⁴⁰³ Aristippos is told his wife is committing adultery with an anonymous lover, when no man is actually present.⁴⁰⁴ The changes of the lover's identity not only fit in with the recurring theme of mistaken identity in this genre, particularly in false death situations, but also demonstrate Thisbe's cleverness, with multiple falsehoods being told to lure the other characters into the right positions. What makes the final situation more convincing is that Thisbe tells Aristippos of Cnemon's innocence and her own role in the scheme, but replaces Demainete's infatuation for her stepson with an ongoing affair.⁴⁰⁵ This adds credit to her story and secures a promise for her freedom if she succeeds in proving the "affair", similar to Plangon.⁴⁰⁶ Subsequently, Aristippos quickly accepts Thisbe's words and immediately seizes his wife due to the position he finds her in, despite the lack of evidence in the absence of her "lover".⁴⁰⁷

Whilst the false lover's identity changes according to each person in Thisbe's plot, the woman in the bed is also substituted. Firstly, Demainete is falsely told that Arsinoe is Cnemon's mistress and that the women will trade places

⁴⁰² Helioid.1.12.3.

⁴⁰³ Helioid.1.15.1. Arsinoe and Thisbe's relationship is discussed in the next chapter.

⁴⁰⁴ Helioid.1.16.2-3.

⁴⁰⁵ Helioid.1.16.2-3.

⁴⁰⁶ Helioid.1.16.5; Charit.2.8.2.

⁴⁰⁷ Helioid.1.17.3-4.

for one night, when no mistress exists.⁴⁰⁸ Arsinoe is informed that Thisbe will use the room for her own affair, but Demainete switches places with her.⁴⁰⁹ This is notable because in Demainete's plot, Thisbe is a surrogate for her mistress in seducing Cnemon. Referring to Doniger's study on when maidservants are used as surrogates in bed for their mistress in literature, Schwartz claims that this instance goes against the traditional formula by aiming to punish the "lover" for avoidance, instead of winning an unfaithful husband's affection.⁴¹⁰ This fits in with this genre's tendency to push boundaries and "norms". Furthermore, in the first plot, Thisbe compares the punishment for a married woman's affair, cryptically referring to Demainete, with the penalty for sleeping with a slave.⁴¹¹ This ironically sets up the later situation when Demainete takes Thisbe's place to commit adultery.⁴¹² This further links the two plots together and demonstrates their similarities. Thisbe therefore takes Demainete's original plot and improves it instead of inventing a new plot.⁴¹³ This demonstrates Thisbe's adaptability and suggests that cunning slaves can deceive even the cleverest of masters by using their own tools and expectations against them.

⁴⁰⁸ Heliod.1.15.2.

⁴⁰⁹ Heliod.1.15.1.

⁴¹⁰ Doniger (2000), 237-82; Schwartz (2012b), 172. Switching a slave in bed exists elsewhere in ancient literature, notably Plautus' *Casina* where Cleostrata substitutes a male slave for the titular character to get revenge on her husband for attempting to have an affair.

⁴¹¹ Heliod.1.11.4; Schwartz (2012b), 173.

⁴¹² Irony is prevalent in this genre, such as Pantheia's dream setting up Leucippe's later false death (Ach.Tat.2.23.4-5). On irony and premonitions in this genre, see Anderson (1982); and MacAlister (1996), 70-83.

⁴¹³ Grethlein (2022), 51.

2.4.2 Failure to Understand Mindsets

Although most novelistic mistresses and maidservants are successful manipulators because they understand their victims, the unequal relationships in the *Aethiopica* also depict the women as failing to understand certain mindsets. Arsace, Cybele, Demainete and Thisbe all misjudge other characters and these failures often lead to disastrous consequences for the female characters. The two bonds take different approaches yet in both instances the slave makes the same misunderstanding as their mistress. This suggests a recurring pattern within the narrative with women serving as parallels of each other, despite their social statuses. This reflects ancient ideas of slaves resembling their masters in virtue and suggests the women are similarly stereotyped.

Demainete and Thisbe are both portrayed as effective manipulators, yet both fail to fully recognise the danger their *confidantes* present and subsequently end up being betrayed. Both women initially succeed in their schemes, with Thisbe remarkably escaping punishment for a long time afterwards and even benefiting by renting out her musical skills and herself and appropriating Nausicles from Arsinoe.⁴¹⁴ Whilst Thisbe ultimately is killed, this is due to Arsinoe's betrayal and Thyamis accidentally mistaking Thisbe for Charicleia, since he does not understand Greek, rather than through any mistake of her

⁴¹⁴ Heliod.2.8.4-5. Thisbe's status as a *hetaira* is discussed in the next chapter (pp.218-29).

own.⁴¹⁵ Despite Demainete and Thisbe's intelligence, both are betrayed by a trusted female *confidante* who was essential to their plots. This eventually leads to their schemes being revealed and indirectly their eventual deaths. There are some differences between the situations: Thisbe lies to Arsinoe whereas she herself is a full *confidante* in Demainete's plot and Thisbe finds out about the betrayal and escapes before she could be caught and brought to justice. Again, this demonstrates Thisbe's perceptiveness, especially in contrast to her mistress, and suggests that she does not trust even those closest to her with her loyalty being only to herself.

Despite this, both Thisbe and Arsinoe betray because they find themselves in an unfavourable position due to the behaviour of the plotters - Demainete's hostility towards her slave and Thisbe's appropriation of Nausicles from Arsinoe. Despite their intelligence and success, both plotters make a grave mistake in creating enemies through their actions. This not only questions their success as manipulators, but also suggests that there is no loyalty between women in the Athenian Novella, even former allies. Thisbe's re-emergence in the plot as a corpse after her betrayal could be considered a shock, especially her integration from the subplot into the main narrative.⁴¹⁶ But her re-entry is important not only because it eventually causes the

⁴¹⁵ Heliod.2.9.1. Kuch ((1996), 213) notes that novelistic minor characters often do not escape the dangers like the protagonist and suffer in the hero/ heroine's place. On how the language barrier leads to Thisbe's death, see Montiglio (2013), 108; Slater (2005), 114; and Winkler (1999), 297. For a general reference to language problems within the *Aethiopica* see Slater (2005).

⁴¹⁶ Grethlein (2016), 321; Keyes (1922), 49; Morgan (1999), 263; Sandy (1982), 34.

separation of the main couple but also because she is finally punished for her previous actions.⁴¹⁷ She dies a fittingly violent death for her crimes and as an unwilling substitute for the virtuous heroine in the dark.⁴¹⁸ Again this can be linked to Demainete's ignominious death.⁴¹⁹ Despite the number of attempted suicides in the genre, there is nothing heroic about Demainete's death in either justification or through her chosen suicide method, which MacAlister claims, along with Arsace's hanging, was a method for the desperate.⁴²⁰ Demainete and Thisbe to some extent escape justice by evading public trials for their crimes, so it is fitting both meet violent ends.⁴²¹ Yet, these only occur because both women fail to understand their *confidantes'* mindsets and actively provoke Thisbe and Arsinoe respectively so that their former allies turn against them. Thisbe's failure to learn from her mistress's mistake suggests the novelistic female characters are intelligent but vulnerable to betrayals from the women closest to them.

Cybele and Arsace's bond takes a different approach, with both failing to understand the mindset of the Greek, aristocratic protagonists. Whilst Cybele successfully influences her mistress, ultimately her methods fail to work on

⁴¹⁷ Montiglio (2013), 109; Papadimitropoulos (2013), 104.

⁴¹⁸ Helioid.1.30.7. See Morgan (1999), 280-11 for the significance of light/dark symbolism in the caves.

⁴¹⁹ Helioid.1.17.5-6. Links could be drawn between Demainete's death and the Tarpeian rock in Rome, where traitors were shamefully executed by being thrown off.

⁴²⁰ MacAlister (1996), 65-6. MacAlister contrasts these suicides with those attempted by the novelistic protagonists, who she argues attempt to kill themselves using swords. This is not always the case. Anthia attempts to drink poison (Xen.3.5.7-6.5) and Charicleia (Helioid.8.8.4-5; 8.9.8) and Clitophon (Ach.Tat.7.6.4; 7.7.1-6) try to be executed by admitting to false crimes.

⁴²¹ Helioid.1.17.5; 2.9.3-4.

the protagonists, who see through her attempts and gain the upper hand through their own deceptions.⁴²² In doing so, they prove themselves better manipulators and demonstrate their superiority over Cybele and her mistress. Admittedly Cybele is in an almost impossible position, with her mistress expecting results soon whilst Theagenes' love for Charicleia presents a serious obstacle to Arsace's desires. However, instead of analysing the situation, Cybele moves too quickly and makes Theagenes suspicious of her intentions.⁴²³ She then immediately accepts the couple's false backstory as the truth and subsequently makes her own position worse by fanning Arsace's lust.⁴²⁴ If Cybele had not rushed her approach and ingratiated herself further with the protagonists, she may have been in a better position to influence their opinions and actions.

Cybele attempts to analyse the protagonists by identifying them as nobles and Greeks, but ultimately does not know what values are associated with these traits.⁴²⁵ This differs from Plangon and Thisbe, who can normally predict how the other characters think and will react.⁴²⁶ Therefore, despite her gender, Cybele does not fit the same category as the two slaves, but still contains "cunning slave attributes" that separate her from Artaxates and Sosthenes. Cybele is not completely fooled by the protagonists' reactions and

⁴²² Pp.75-6.

⁴²³ Helioid.7.12.7.

⁴²⁴ Helioid.7.14.1; 7.15.4-5.

⁴²⁵ Helioid.7.12.4; Owens (2020) 198.

⁴²⁶ See pp.78-9 and pp.81-91.

recognises their resistance to her attempted schemes.⁴²⁷ She realises that her plan is failing and attempts new methods, but these are also unsuccessful.⁴²⁸ In this respect, Cybele can be linked to her mistress who also fails repeatedly to understand the protagonists' mindset, including when she orders Charicleia to be tortured in the same cell as Theagenes.⁴²⁹ Although Arsace intended the protagonists to suffer from seeing each other in pain, her plan backfires as the protagonists are pleased to be near each other and share the same fate.⁴³⁰

In contrast, Charicleia and Theagenes understand their captor's intentions, demonstrating their superior intelligence and perceptiveness. Owens suggested that through their rhetorical skills Charicleia and Theagenes assume the behaviour of stereotypical manipulative slaves, whilst retaining their nobility through using calculated honesty, not only deception, as was associated with slaves.⁴³¹ Owens notes that Theagenes eventually reveals the truth about his relationship with Charicleia to Arsace to manipulate her and Achaemenes.⁴³² However, this only occurs when the sibling ruse is no longer effective in protecting Charicleia, showing that Theagenes can react quickly and in a calculated manner to further his own interests. The revelation of the truth here succeeds because Theagenes understands how Arsace and

⁴²⁷ Charit.6.5.10; 6.6.10; Ach.Tat.6.12.1; 6.13.2.

⁴²⁸ Helioid.7.19.7-8, 8.6.6.

⁴²⁹ Helioid.8.9.22; Owens (2020), 202.

⁴³⁰ Helioid.8.9.21-3.

⁴³¹ Owens (2020), 200.

⁴³² Helioid.7.26.5; 7.26.8-9.

Achaemenes will react and manipulates them against each other. By being able to get the upper hand over Cybele and Arsace, Charicleia and Theagenes prove to be equal in this respect. This parallel sets them up as an ideal pair in contrast to the mistress and slave and demonstrates their superiority.

Cybele and Arsace's mutual lack of understanding of the protagonists and the overall portrayal of their bond is partly due to their stereotypification as barbarians. Ancient Greeks believed themselves to be superior to other "races" and similar attitudes are found in Roman thought.⁴³³ Graeco-Roman literature frequently depicted people from the East as effeminate, overly fond of luxury and servile, due to their ruler holding absolute power.⁴³⁴ This portrayed them as both physically weaker and morally inferior than their western counterparts. Scholars noted that the negative vices of these eastern stereotypes directly contrast the virtues valued by the Greeks and Romans, such as *sophrosyne*, masculinity and freedom.⁴³⁵ As Hall and Jensen argued, through defining "barbarians", the Greeks and Romans also define themselves and praise their own values as being superior.⁴³⁶ This attitude is reflected in ancient literature, particularly works from the Classical period. In Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Iphigenia claimed that the Greeks had the

⁴³³ Hardie ((2007), 133) claimed that the continued use of Greek stereotypes of the East under the Roman Empire was due to contemporary anxieties that Emperors could aspire to resemble Persian rulers. See Gruen (2011), 343-51; Hardie (2007); Isaac (2004), 304-23, 371-80; and Makhlayuk (2015).

⁴³⁴ Hall (1989), 100; Isaac (2004) 264, 290-3, 297, 308; Rhodes (2007), 36-7.

⁴³⁵ Hall (1989), 100; Hardie (2007), 133; Isaac (2004), 308; Jensen (2018), 16.

⁴³⁶ Hall (1989), 100; Jensen (2018), 9, 55.

natural right to enslave barbarians.⁴³⁷ The final book of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* discusses the moral and physical decline of the Persians after the death of Cyrus and argues they now can only wage war with the help of Greek mercenaries.⁴³⁸

With their pseudo-historical setting in a world outside the Roman Empire, this idea of cultural supremacy is prominent in the novels.⁴³⁹ Cybele might initially be Greek, but she has been assimilated into the Persian court before her introduction in the narrative and has taken on features consistent with this oriental stereotype.⁴⁴⁰ Significantly, Cybele comes from Lesbos: Morgan claims that the island was associated with promiscuity and Lefteratou notes that Lesbos bordered the East and contained many oriental practices.⁴⁴¹ Cybele's oriental connections are shown when she advises the protagonists to be servants to Arsace's wishes and prostrate (*προσκύνει*) themselves before her.⁴⁴² *Proskynesis* has connotations with the Persian court and the Greeks were suspicious of the act. Callisthenes argued that *proskynesis* should be reserved for the Gods alone and not mortal men when Alexander the Great tried to introduce this custom and it was met with resistance from the Macedonians.⁴⁴³ Scholars writing on this episode note that it was

⁴³⁷ Eur.*IA*.1400-1.

⁴³⁸ Xen.*Cyr*.8.8.2-27; 8.8.26.

⁴³⁹ Including the idealisation of the Ethiopians after the battle in the *Callirhoe* (Lefteratou (2018), 89). Haynes ((2003), 74) claims that women in this genre may be reduced to epitomize a cultural integrity of a social group.

⁴⁴⁰ Johne (1996), 194.

⁴⁴¹ Lefteratou (2018), 83; Morgan (2018), 637.

⁴⁴² Helioid.7.17.2-4; Owens (2020), 198.

⁴⁴³ Arr.*Anab*.4.11.2-9.

controversial to his contemporaries because the act had religious connotations and was considered to be demeaning and slavish behaviour, making it inappropriate to the Macedonians who viewed their king as both a superior and companion.⁴⁴⁴ This attitude is reflected in the *Aethiopica* by Theagenes' refusal to prostrate himself before Arsace and he thus retains his Greek traits and is not forced into submission under her.⁴⁴⁵ In advising *proskynesis*, Cybele not only demonstrates her submissiveness to her mistress but also that she has rejected her Greek heritage in favour of Persian values. Scholars argue that Cybele's name has connections with the Anatolian goddess Cybele.⁴⁴⁶ Although this cult was brought over to Rome, there were still suspicions of Cybele, especially due to her eunuch priests, the *galli*.⁴⁴⁷ It is ironic that the novelistic Cybele has Eastern connotations because she attempts to use her Greek origins to manipulate the protagonists: to gain their trust and attempt to portray Arsace favourably.⁴⁴⁸ Whilst Cnemon earlier became the protagonists' companion through their mutual Greek heritage, Cybele's attempt backfires, partly because she has adopted oriental

⁴⁴⁴ Anson (2013), 110-1; 113; Bowden (2013), 55, 60-1; Heckel (2008), 106-7. Bowden (2013) questioned whether the introduction of *proskynesis* was considered controversial by the Macedonians, concluding it was more an issue for Roman Imperial authors using the episode to reflect contemporary attitudes towards Emperors and the concept of divinity (2013, 77). Whilst the Macedonian outrage may have been exaggerated by later authors, there still would have been resistance to Alexander's attempt to introduce the act.

⁴⁴⁵ Heliod.7.19.2. Hall ((1989), 101) argued that after the number of slaves grew in Athens in the 5th century B.C., servility became a term associated with barbarians while freedom was linked with Hellenic.

⁴⁴⁶ Lefteratou (2018), 162; Lye (2016), 244n25; Morgan (2018), 636. Morgan ((2018), 636) suggested that Cybele's name could be a pun reflecting her dog-like servility and devotion to her mistress.

⁴⁴⁷ Dionysius of Halicarnassus (Dion.Hal.Ant.Rom.2.19.5) claims that Roman citizens were initially banned from participating in certain parts of her ritual and poets, including Catullus (Catull.63) and Ovid (Ov.Ars Am.1.505-9), connect the *Galli* with effeminacy. See Latham (2012) on Roman suspicions of the *Galli*.

⁴⁴⁸ Heliod.7.12.4-6; 7.14.2.

characteristics. Arsace also tries to portray herself as sympathetic to the Greeks, through excusing Theagenes' behaviour, but ultimately her "Eastern" characterisation is demonstrated by her willingness to abuse the law to satisfy her own passions.⁴⁴⁹ Barbarians were frequently portrayed in ancient Greece and Rome as lacking restraint and having excessive emotions. Lye compares Arsace with Medea, another foreign woman with excessive emotions.⁴⁵⁰ In the novels themselves, this attitude can be seen elsewhere, such as the portrayal of Psammis in *Ephesian Tale*.⁴⁵¹

Through their characterisations as barbarians and lack of understanding of the Greek protagonists, Arsace and Cybele resemble each other. By characterising both negatively as having barbarian traits, a contrast is set up with Charicleia. The heroine comes across as more virtuous in her ethical code and restrained, by keeping control of her emotions and not resorting to violence. She proves herself superior in intelligence by understanding what the other two women intend and outmanoeuvring them. In contrast, Arsace is dependent on luxury and excess, traits associated with Graeco-Roman stereotypes of Persians, and unable to acquire chastity and modesty which a Greek heroine must possess.⁴⁵² Lye argues that whilst both Charicleia and Arsace are born as foreigners and receive a Greek education, only Charicleia is fully assimilated into this culture setting up her as a representation of the

⁴⁴⁹ Johne (1996), 198; Lefteratou (2018), 166.

⁴⁵⁰ Lye (2016), 245.

⁴⁵¹ Xen.3.11.4.

⁴⁵² Lye (2016), 243.

West against Arsace's symbolism of the East.⁴⁵³ This suggests a more fluid boundary between barbarians and Greeks in birth and also demonstrates that Arsace could have adopted the virtues that Charicleia possesses, had she not rejected them in favour of her upbringing. Therefore, although both Arsace and Cybele attempt to portray themselves as possessing Greek qualities, their oriental traits prevent them from fully embracing these characteristics like Charicleia and consequently they are viewed as inferior to the heroine.

2.4.3 Immorality and Lack of Self-Restraint

Mistresses and slaves further resemble each other in the *Aethiopica* through their lack of self-control and immorality. This genre is concerned with people behaving according to their stations and roles.⁴⁵⁴ Slaves are characterised similarly to previous literary slaves and if the protagonists initially lack any traits expected of their status, their character growth throughout their respective novels enables them to possess these traits by the conclusion. Some scholars claimed that stereotypes are abundant in this genre and it is rare to find characters that do not fit into one.⁴⁵⁵ Although, as discussed, many characters do not fit into just one box and variations exist, there are definite influences from long established stereotypes including cunning slaves, parasites and the helpful female seductress.⁴⁵⁶ Consequently, most

⁴⁵³ Lye (2016), 237, 244, 251-3.

⁴⁵⁴ De Temmerman and Demoen (2011), 1-3; De Temmerman (2014), 194; Morgan (1993), 228.

⁴⁵⁵ Morgan (1993), 228; Whitmarsh (2008), 85.

⁴⁵⁶ See pp.30-1, pg.60, pp.91-2 and pp.431-2.

novelistic characters contain attributes expected of their social class.

Aristocratic female characters are expected to show *sophrosyne* and Blondell argues that self-restraint was the most important requirement.⁴⁵⁷ In contrast, slaves were often stereotyped as incapable of self-restraint and morally inferior to their owners, who therefore had the “natural” right to own them. Aristotle in his *Politics* claimed that some people become slaves through their natures not circumstances and for these people “slavery is both useful and just”.⁴⁵⁸ The mistress-slave relationships in the *Aethiopica* offer different subversions of these expectations.

Thisbe and Demainete’s relationship arguably reverses social expectations by having the slave demonstrate self-restraint. Both women are alike in morality by being motivated by self-interest, with Thisbe serving as a counterpart to her mistress to emphasise Demainete’s “undesirable characteristics”.⁴⁵⁹ However, Demainete differs from her slave through her inability to control her actions, like other female antagonists in this genre including Arsace, Cyno and Manto.⁴⁶⁰ She makes her immoral desires obvious from the outset, requires Cnemon to suffer further out of spite for his rejection and is then so blinded by lust that her trusted slave fears for her own safety. Whilst Thisbe’s actions ultimately cause her mistress’s death, they are calculated and impassive and she has no malicious or vengeful thoughts against

⁴⁵⁷ Blondell (2013), 11. See pg.182 on *sophrosyne*.

⁴⁵⁸ Arist.*Pol.*1255a3-4

⁴⁵⁹ Haynes (2003), 125.

⁴⁶⁰ Xen.2.5.5; 2.9.1; 2.11.2-3; 3.12.3. Arsace’s lack of restraint is discussed in this section.

Demainete.⁴⁶¹ Thisbe was probably motivated by fear like other novelistic slaves, including Clio, Cybele and Sosthenes, but there is no explicit mention of her being fearful, only of her acting to protect herself from her mistress's clearly hostile intentions.⁴⁶² Achaimenes, the other novelistic slave to plot against his mistress, has a similar plan to Thisbe: the slaves reveal to their masters that their mistresses behaved inappropriately with other men and these revelations eventually lead to their mistresses committing suicide to escape the humiliation of a public trial.⁴⁶³ Unlike Thisbe, Achaimenes is motivated by a range of emotions: anger, jealousy, love and failure.⁴⁶⁴ His betrayal is not entirely his own idea, but part of Theagenes' plan to enrage Achaimenes so he would act in anger against Arsace and the slave behaves exactly how the hero predicted.⁴⁶⁵ In contrast, Thisbe operates on her own initiative and takes matters into her own hands. This is ironic as the slave displays self-control whilst the mistress cannot control her emotions. This bond therefore goes against social expectations.

Cybele and Arsace's relationship also subverts social expectations by having the slave influence her mistress into taking an immoral path against expectations of Arsace's status as a royal, demonstrated through Cybele's lust for torture and violence and how she persuades her mistress to take an

⁴⁶¹ The only time Thisbe's voice is heard without being retold by Cnemon is through her letter (Helioid.2.10.1-4).

⁴⁶² Helioid.1.15.1-2; Ach.Tat.2.26.3; 7.10.4-5; 7.23.3; 8.6.6.

⁴⁶³ Helioid.8.1.5-8; 1.17.5; 8.15.2.

⁴⁶⁴ Helioid.7.29.1.

⁴⁶⁵ Helioid.7.26.10.1.

increasingly violent path. After her initial attempts to obtain Theagenes' affections fail and under pressure from Arsace, Cybele repeatedly advocates for violence including the torture of Theagenes and poisoning of Charicleia.⁴⁶⁶ It is not unusual for novelistic women to be portrayed as excessively angry, particularly against former or unrequited love interests.⁴⁶⁷ Throughout the *Aethiopica* and *Ephesian Tale*, there are examples of violent women: from Demainete to Cyno and Manto. Cybele differs from these women through her status as a slave. Konstan argued that cunning slaves in Greek comedy were not usually associated with violence or anger.⁴⁶⁸ Although the novels may adopt and adapt New Comedy stereotypes, they are a different genre written much later under the Roman Empire, where slave uprisings and murders of masters occurred more frequently. Cybele's desire for violence reflects fears of contemporary slave-owners.⁴⁶⁹

There are differences between Cybele and other novelistic slaves, notably her personal desire for violence, initiation of torture and continued dominance over the situation. Other slaves in this genre work under a variety of motives, but often act immorally either because of direct orders from their master and/or necessity and/or self-interest. Although established as a villainess, Arsace does not assertively pursue brutality against the protagonists until after Cybele's death, with the slave's demise serving as the catalyst for it.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁶ Heliod.8.5.9-12; 8.6.9-7.2.

⁴⁶⁷ Konstan (1994), 31. See Harris (2004) on female anger in ancient literature.

⁴⁶⁸ Konstan (2013), 148.

⁴⁶⁹ Pp.47-8.

⁴⁷⁰ Heliod.7.7.7-8.3; Lye (2016), 237; 243n24.

She consents to Cybele's advice as it suits her own purposes but does not initiate this policy herself.⁴⁷¹ Despite Arsace's status as a female antagonist, this suggests that Cybele is the woman more naturally inclined to violence. Haynes claimed that Thisbe and Cybele emphasise their mistresses' "undesirable characteristics", but it is arguable that the opposite occurs in Cybele's case, with Arsace adopting her slave's personality by gradually turning to violence, including agreeing to Theagenes' torture and consenting to Charicleia's murder.⁴⁷² The early Christian author Salvian claimed that all slaves were either similar to their owners or worse.⁴⁷³ Arsace and Cybele are alike in their violent tendencies, but Cybele is the leading instigator behind their brutal approach towards the protagonists.

As a noblewoman and competent ruler, Arsace should have been morally strong and in control of her slave.⁴⁷⁴ Artaxerxes, in the *Callirhoe*, offers a comparative model for a foreign ruler lusting over one of the protagonists. Although he is persuaded by Artaxates' claims that Callirhoe has no husband at the time as it suits his own interests, Artaxerxes still insists Callirhoe must willingly submit to him and does not explicitly advocate force.⁴⁷⁵ By not lowering himself to his slave's threats of force against the heroine,

⁴⁷¹ Heliod.8.6.1; 8.7.1-2.

⁴⁷² Haynes (2003), 125; Heliod.8.6.1; 8.7.2.

⁴⁷³ Salvian, *De Gubernatione Dei*, 8.3.14.

⁴⁷⁴ Arsace's skills are demonstrated when she skilfully deals with the two opposing armies (Heliod.7.3.1-2) and handles the tension between Thyamis and Petosiris (Heliod.7.4.3-5.1), with the crowds' approval both times. John (1996), 198.

⁴⁷⁵ Charit.6.4.7-8; 6.4.8; Schwartz (2003a), 389.

Artaxerxes's noble portrayal remains, despite his lust and barbarianism.⁴⁷⁶

Instead of providing an example for her slave, Arsace lowers her behaviour by adopting tendencies similar to slaves in showing a lack of restraint and control.⁴⁷⁷ Cybele herself accuses Arsace of acting as Theagenes' slave instead of as his mistress, highlighting her failure to fulfil the role she should be playing.⁴⁷⁸ The concept of *servitium amoris* was a frequent theme in Roman elegy, where the male lover portrays himself as a slave to his mistress and therefore subservient to her every wish.⁴⁷⁹ With freeborn men expected to be the dominant partners in any liaison and the elegiac mistresses presumably often being from a lower social class, this represents a perversion of ancient attitudes towards masculinity and status, placing the poet in an allegedly humiliating position.⁴⁸⁰ As Theagenes' literal mistress, Arsace should not have been deferential to him, despite her gender. In being accused of being a slave to her own slave by another of her slaves, Arsace is depicted as weak-willed and dominated by her own property. Notably, she is not the only master in this genre to be accused of behaving in a manner more resembling a slave: Leucippe accuses Thersander of imitating Sosthenes in his attempt to force

⁴⁷⁶ Charit.6.7.7; 6.8.13; Alvares (2001), 124-6; (2002), 110, 112; Schwartz (2003a), 385.

⁴⁷⁷ Xenophon argued that the character of the master had an influence on the behaviour of their slaves (Xen.Oec.12.18-9).

⁴⁷⁸ Heliod.8.5.10.

⁴⁷⁹ Ovid uses the imagery of a Roman triumph (Ov.Am.1.2.19-52) to describe his inability to resist Cupid, stretching out his hands passively to be bound "having been subdued" (*victas*) (Ov.Am.1.2.20), and describes himself as Corinna's slave (Ov.Am.1.3.5; 2.17.1-2; 3.11a.12). Propertius mocked a man for no longer being free upon falling in love, claiming he was now not only subservient to his mistress but also had to obey a newly purchased slave (Prop.1.9.1-4). On the *servitium amoris* in Latin elegy see Fitzgerald (2000), 72-7; Greene (2000); Lyne (1979); and McCarthy (1998).

⁴⁸⁰ Greene (2000), 241; Hallett (2012), 377; Hallett and Hindermann (2014), 301; Lyne (1979), 118, 123.

himself on her.⁴⁸¹ Again, the connotations are not positive, with the heroine implying Thersander behaves in a way inferior to his status. Therefore, by being influenced by Cybele into pursuing immoral decisions, Arsace is portrayed negatively.

However, whilst Cybele has success in influencing her mistress, she is unable to do the same with Charicleia. To some extent, this is not entirely Cybele's fault- Arsace acted with a visible lack of modesty which revealed her immoral intentions before Cybele even met the protagonist.⁴⁸² However, after Cybele's first speech, Theagenes links her words to those of her mistress, suggesting a lack of subtlety.⁴⁸³ With this failure to manipulate, a contrast is established between the heroine and Arsace, which demonstrates the heroine's superiority in intelligence and nobility. This is further demonstrated by Charicleia's restrained reactions to Cybele's attempts. Whilst Arsace follows her slave in increasingly resorting to violence, Charicleia remains calm throughout and behaves rationally, demonstrated when Charicleia puts her own feelings aside and advises Theagenes to give in to Arsace's propositions.⁴⁸⁴ In doing so, she shows great emotional control, similar to Leucippe and Callirhoe with Sosthenes and Artaxates' propositions respectively, contrasting Cybele's violent traits and those of her mistress by

⁴⁸¹ Ach.Tat.6.18.6.

⁴⁸² Helioid.7.4.2; 7.8.6; 7.12.7.

⁴⁸³ Helioid.7.12.7.

⁴⁸⁴ Helioid.7.21.3; 7.25.6.

extension.⁴⁸⁵ In not being influenced by Cybele, Charicleia is portrayed as more virtuous and superior to the other women.

Thisbe and Demainete also serve as contrasts to the heroine, with scholars arguing the slave is set up as a reverse Charicleia figure, especially with the two women being mistaken for each other at several key moments.⁴⁸⁶

Papadimitropoulos notes that the theme of chastity separates the heroine from antagonists in this text.⁴⁸⁷ Both mistress and slave are described as beautiful and willingly use their sexuality to manipulate men: Demainete in seducing Aristippos and Thisbe with Cnemon.⁴⁸⁸ This led Morgan to argue that the Athenian Novella devalues the idea of love the novels supposedly promote.⁴⁸⁹ In having the mistresses and slaves resemble each other in immorality, the heroine is positioned as the “superior” aristocratic woman reflecting expectations of her role, in contrast to the subversions demonstrated by the other women.

2.4.4 Silence

⁴⁸⁵ Charit.6.5.6; 5.8-10; Ach.Tat.6.12.1.

⁴⁸⁶ Hunter (2008), 807; Lefteratou (2018), 162, Montiglio (2013), 109; Morales (2022), 21, 31-2; Morgan (1999), 281; Schwartz (2012b), 175-7.

⁴⁸⁷ Papadimitropoulos (2013), 102; Morgan (1999), 278. This does not apply to all women in the other novels as Melite (4.6.2) and Lycaenion have affairs with their heroes, yet are portrayed somewhat favourably.

⁴⁸⁸ Heliod.1.9.1; 1.11.2. Haynes ((2003), 127) argues that Demainete and Thisbe’s beauty is downplayed by them being described as only “pretty” (*ἀστεῖον*; Heliod.1.9.1) and “not ugly” (*οὐκ ἄωρον*; Heliod.1.11.2).

⁴⁸⁹ Morgan (1999), 273, 279. However, as discussed at 3.2.4, Nausicleia’s presence at the end of this side-plot suggests a happy end to Cnemon’s story.

As novelistic slaves often serve as valuable allies to their mistresses, they are consequently privy to the other women's secrets. As discussed, mistresses become subsequently dependent on their slaves keeping silent over their secrets, making the women co-conspirators. The idea of withholding valuable information and keeping secrets is associated with women in other Graeco-Roman literature, notably Greek tragedy.⁴⁹⁰ In Sophocles' *Antigone*, Ismene agrees to not reveal the titular character's plan to Creon.⁴⁹¹ Creusa keeps silent about her previous rape until halfway through Euripides' *Ion*.⁴⁹² Medea and Phaedra make the female choruses swear vows of silence before making them unwilling conspirators to their plans in Euripides' plays.⁴⁹³ In most cases, both the secret-revealer and their *confidantes* are women, who rely on the bounds of female solidarity to coax out and preserve secrets, which often causes tragic events in their respective plays. The novels adopt this viewpoint. Cybele lies to Arsace about her son's betrayal which eventually leads to her mistress's downfall.⁴⁹⁴ The novel's most prominent example of female secrecy causing misfortune is in the *Callirhoe*, where the heroine and Plangon's silence is directly responsible for the conflict in the rest of the novel and the ultimate unhappiness of Dionysius. With the women both withholding information, the slave and mistress resemble each other and reflect ancient male fears of female secrecy.

⁴⁹⁰ On female concealment and silence in Greek tragedy see Chong-Gossard (2008), 134-48, 150-4, 155-75, 181-2; and Fletcher (2003), 35-6, 38, 39, 42-3.

⁴⁹¹ *Soph.Ant.*84-5.

⁴⁹² *Eur.Ion.*859-922.

⁴⁹³ *Eur.Med.*259-68; *Hipp.*710-14.

⁴⁹⁴ *Helioid.*8.5.7-9; Morgan (2018), 644.

Plangon's omission of Callirhoe's status in her report is a greater violation of Dionysius' trust than the slave's embellishment of the heroine's words, and one that has severe repercussions for the rest of the novel. As discussed, Plangon used Callirhoe's maternal feelings to get her to agree to the marriage. Whilst Plangon reassures her that Dionysius would not find out the baby was Chaereas', she is under no obligation to keep her promise to Callirhoe. Plangon would not be the first slave in ancient literature to betray her promise to her mistress by revealing their secrets. The Nurse in Euripides' *Hippolytus* implies that she will keep Phaedra's infatuation for her stepson secret then immediately reveals it to the same man.⁴⁹⁵ Like Plangon, the Nurse serves as a *confidante* for her mistress and discovers her shameful secret. Both slaves use the information against their mistresses' wishes and thereby influence the rest of the plot in their respective texts. The similarities between the situations mean that Plangon could easily have revealed Callirhoe's pregnancy, especially as she initially discovered it, unlike the Nurse who has to cajoling the secret from a reluctant Phaedra. Furthermore, Dionysius is Plangon's master, not Callirhoe, and she served him faithfully throughout his courtship until this point. Therefore Plangon, like the comic cunning slaves, should have remained primarily loyal to him throughout the rest of the novel.

⁴⁹⁵ Eur.*Hipp.*520-4; 565-668. Her characterisation reflects the contrasting ancient belief that women were natural gossipers and incapable of keeping secrets, seen in works including Herodas VI.

Whilst it could be argued that by not informing Dionysius of Callirhoe's marriage and existing pregnancy Plangon acts in her master's interests to ensure the wedding goes ahead (which is supported by Dionysius supposedly wasting away out of love for Callirhoe and his belief that he could not possess her), there are harmful implications of her silence.⁴⁹⁶ Concealed or retained information throughout the *Callirhoe* leads to a number of misfortunes, for instance, when Chaereas violently assaults Callirhoe for supposedly having an affair without knowing all the facts or when Dionysius accepts Photius' report of Chaereas' death despite rebuking him for not finding Chaereas' body to confirm.⁴⁹⁷ Plangon is not the only character who hides knowledge from Dionysius - Callirhoe earlier concealed her marriage out of fear that Dionysius would react from jealousy.⁴⁹⁸ These concealed bits of information set up the conflict in the rest of the novel as Dionysius then marries Callirhoe. Since Dionysius is consistently characterised as a man of great nobility (despite his status as a love rival), if the truth had immediately been revealed to him it is unlikely that the marriage would have proceeded.

Due to Callirhoe and Plangon's deliberate silence, Dionysius suffers: losing his beloved wife and rearing a child alone that is not his. Callirhoe's willingness to abandon her child is not unusual for this genre: mothers often have distant relationships from their daughters. Pantheia has a strained relationship with Leucippe and Persinna and Rhode abandon their daughters at birth and only

⁴⁹⁶ Charit.3.1.1.

⁴⁹⁷ Charit.1.4.12; 3.9.12.

⁴⁹⁸ Charit.2.5.11; Owens (2019), 44; (2020), 66.

reunite with them in the final stages of their respective novels.⁴⁹⁹ By unknowingly raising another man's child as his own, Dionysius is cast as the literary stereotype of the duped husband (as can be found in works like Euripides' *Ion*). Dionysius ironically states in this passage that if he has any children with Callirhoe he would be "happier than the Great King" (μακαριώτερος δόξω τοῦ μεγάλου βασιλέω).⁵⁰⁰ This sets up not only Artaxerxes' infatuation with Callirhoe but also the final stages of the novel. Ultimately, neither suitor could be said to be "happy". Artaxerxes, despite having his beautiful wife back, remains jealous because Chaereas has Callirhoe and claims Chaereas is "luckier" (εὐτυχέστερος) than himself.⁵⁰¹

Dionysius is undoubtedly unhappier with little to comfort him except for Callirhoe's letter. In it she leaves instructions for Dionysius to rear "their" child alone without a stepmother, marry him to his "sister" and then send him to Chaereas and her when he is old enough.⁵⁰² Egger draws parallels with the novelistic female antagonists when examining Callirhoe's request for Dionysius to remain unmarried.⁵⁰³ She argues that whilst Callirhoe takes another husband, she selfishly keeps Dionysius tied to her alone. Whilst I would argue that Callirhoe was prioritising her son's interests (especially with

⁴⁹⁹ Helioid.10.13.1-16; Long.4.36.3. Under Roman law fathers had complete custodial rights over any children including in the case of a divorce so this would not have seemed strange to a Roman reader. On Roman father rights see Rawson (1991), 26-7; and Treggiari (1991), 323, 467-9.

⁵⁰⁰ Charit.3.1.8.

⁵⁰¹ Charit.8.5.8. On *Tyche* within the *Callirhoe* see Edwards (1996), 60-1; Tilg (2010), 182-6; and Van Steen (1998), 203-7. See 3.6.1 for Statira's jealousy.

⁵⁰² Charit.8.4.5.

⁵⁰³ Egger (1994), 41.

the large number of “wicked” stepmothers within the novels and in similar fictional works, including the *Aethiopica* and *Apollonius King of Tyre*), the idea of Callirhoe as the unparalleled woman and ultimate male prize is further enhanced by having Dionysius remain faithful to her memory.⁵⁰⁴ Dionysius is prepared to do so, acknowledging that he “will live alone” (ἐγὼ δὲ ἔρημος βιώσομαι) in the future.⁵⁰⁵ Dionysius not only commits to raising a child that is not his, but the child’s true parentage is made public. Chaereas publicly announces his son’s true parentage in the Syracuse assembly and that he will eventually inherit Dionysius’ wealth.⁵⁰⁶ In doing so, Chaereas openly mocks Dionysius’ ignorance and asserts his claim over his rival’s lineage and wealth, having already taken his wife. Therefore, whilst Plangon may help her master in the short-term, she unintentionally hurts him by the novel’s conclusion through her actions, whilst benefitting Callirhoe. In this manner of keeping silent, both women are portrayed similarly and their combined actions cause Dionysius’ pain. In not revealing the pregnancy, Plangon’s allegiance is transferred to Callirhoe and this continues until the novel’s ending. This relationship reflects ancient male fears of female secrecy and suggests that all women, regardless of their social status, present a potential danger through their withholding of information.

⁵⁰⁴ The list of ‘wicked’ stepmothers in ancient mythology includes Dirce, Hera, Hermione (Euripides’ *Andromache*), Ino and Phaedra. For more information see Watson (1995), 20-49. Kanavou ((2015), 943 draws parallels between Callirhoe’s request and Euripides’ Alcestis (Eur.*Alc.*304-5). See Schmeling (2005) for how the novel embellishes Callirhoe’s beauty through crafting her as a “celebrity”.

⁵⁰⁵ Charit.8.5.15. Parallels can be drawn with Dionysius’ previous grieving for his dead wife (Charit.2.1-2).

⁵⁰⁶ Charit.8.7.12.

2.5 Marginalisation

Whilst some mistress-slave relationships are foregrounded in their respective narratives, others are relegated to the backdrop. This is primarily because certain female slaves lack character development, individuality or agency, which marginalises and results in them being slaves primarily viewed as “assets” to their mistress or other characters, in the case of Clio. The novelistic maidservants that are marginalised are Clio, Rhode and Thisbe (in Demainete’s first plot against Cnemon). Even when these slaves are described as close companions to their mistresses, this “affection” is not really demonstrated and the women rarely directly interact with each other. This section looks at how female slaves are marginalised by the male novelists and the impact on their relationships with their mistresses. This includes the distancing of some mistresses and slaves, primarily framing Clio and Thisbe as assets rather than co-conspirators in other characters’ plots, and stereotyping the slaves according to established Graeco-Roman literary stereotypes, including the “good” slave and the maidservant seduced by an outsider. In marginalising the maidservants, the slaves are objectified and defined by their usefulness to other characters.

2.5.1 Distancing of Women

Whilst the *Aethiopica* and *Callirhoe* foreground mistress-slave bonds, the *Ephesian Tale* and *L&C* relegate these relationships to the background. Whilst the female slaves within the latter novels are allegedly close *confidantes* to their novels' protagonists, the women do not directly interact with each other. This suggests that these bonds and female solidarity are not a priority for either novel and their inclusion is primarily for narrative purposes. Instead, Clio and Rhode are defined by their usefulness to the protagonists, stripping them of individuality and agency and reducing them to assets. Although Rhode is initially a household slave, she later is described as a *σύντροφον* (close companion) which suggests a more intimate connection between her and Anthia as it can describe relationships where people were brought up together as foster siblings.⁵⁰⁷ As the women are the same age and set up as close companions, the reader might expect them to interact with each other. However, this closeness is not demonstrated in practice. There is a general lack of contact between the women and they do not privately interact or speak with each other. Rhode only speaks to Anthia in the final stages of the novel when Leucon is present, which prevents the women from having a direct bond.⁵⁰⁸ This casts doubt on the supposed closeness of the women, marginalises their relationship by not fully developing it, and suggests that the supposed close bond only exists to stress Rhode's allegiance to Anthia, which is necessary for narrative purposes.

⁵⁰⁷ Xen.2.2.3; 2.3.3; Owens (2020), 89. Other ancient texts using this word in this context include Herodotus' *Histories* (Hdt.1.99) and Polybius' *Histories* (Polyb.15.33.11). See Savalli-Lestrade (2017), 104-5 on this term within the Hellenistic courts.

⁵⁰⁸ Xen.5.12.5. Discussed further at 2.5.4 below.

Clio is similarly distanced from Leucippe, mainly due to the way *L&C* is narrated which prioritises male relationships. Unlike other ancient novelists, Achilles Tatius uses a first-person narrator in the form of Clitophon. This means that all female relationships in this novel are not only seen through a male gaze, but by a character portrayed as self-absorbed and narcissistic.⁵⁰⁹ Clitophon as a narrator only focuses on things of interest to him and devices necessary for moving the plot forward, which creates a divergence between how he addresses female and male friendships.⁵¹⁰ Out of the surviving novel heroes, Clitophon has the largest number of close friends with three: his cousin Clinias, Menelaus and slave Satyrus.⁵¹¹ These friendships are described in detail. Clinias and Menelaus are given backstories and there are multiple examples of all three men interacting with Clitophon, which not only furthers the narrative but adds emotional depth to their characterisation. There are witty conversations, amusement and the men comforting each other after tragedies, in addition to the male companions helping Clitophon throughout.⁵¹² In contrast to the male friendships, little attention is given to female friendships. With the exception of Longus, the other surviving novelists do not isolate their heroine as much as Achilles Tatius.⁵¹³ Even the

⁵⁰⁹ Kauffman (2015), 46; Marinčič (2007), 170; Owens (2020), 154.

⁵¹⁰ On Clitophon as a narrator see Bowie (1999), 2-3; De Temmerman (2014), 152-204; Kauffman (2015), 45-6, 55-7, 62-3; Marinčič (2007), especially 171-2, 176-7, 182-6, 188, 195-6; Morgan (2004); Owens (2020), 153-78; and Reardon (1999a), especially 244-54.

⁵¹¹ The other heroes have as follows: Habrocomes 2 (Hippothon, Leucon), Chaereas 1 (Polycharmus), Theagenes 1 (Cnemon), Daphnis 0. This list includes slaves who, whilst subservient, serve as close companions and advisers to their masters.

⁵¹² Such as the debate about whether women or boys make better lovers (Ach.Tat.2.35.2-38.5) and Satyrus laughing at Clitophon getting caught flirting with Leucippe (Ach.Tat.2.10.5).

⁵¹³ Pg.17.

Aethiopica, which arguably contains the most hostile examples of female friendships in this genre, displays mutual affection between Charicleia and Nausicleia.⁵¹⁴

In comparison, Leucippe barely interacts with other female characters resulting in her being “heavily isolated” and lacking any meaningful female *confidante*.⁵¹⁵ Calligone and Clio, women whom the heroine could have formed a meaningful bond with, do not interact directly with Leucippe, despite being with the heroine at the same time on multiple occasions in her house.⁵¹⁶ Both are swiftly removed from the narrative. Unlike with Calligone, Leucippe has some interactions with Clio but, due to the limited focus on their relationship, it is difficult to uncover much about it. The most prominent example is when Leucippe heals Clio after she has been stung by a bee.⁵¹⁷ On Clio’s part, little is revealed of her relationship with her mistress apart from that she was sitting next to Leucippe.⁵¹⁸ But more is revealed of the heroine here. Leucippe tends to her maid herself whilst “comforting” Clio and offering reassurances.⁵¹⁹ In doing so, Leucippe demonstrates both her healing abilities and concern for her maidservant.⁵²⁰ As Baker notes, there is no suggestion to

⁵¹⁴ See pp.159-63. Although admittedly, as later discussed (pp.252-3) there is also a lack of focus on Nausicleia and Charicleia’s relationship that makes this affection minimal.

⁵¹⁵ Egger (1999), 124. The exceptions are with her mother and Melite (before she discovers Laecaena’s true identity (4.3.1; 4.3.2)).

⁵¹⁶ See pp.292-3 for Calligone.

⁵¹⁷ Ach.Tat.2.7.1-3.

⁵¹⁸ Ach.Tat.2.7.1.

⁵¹⁹ Ach.Tat.2.7.2.

⁵²⁰ See Baker (2016) on magic in this novel, particularly 103-8, 118-126 on Leucippe’s connection with magic.

doubt the sincerity of Leucippe's actions.⁵²¹ This incident indicates a small but genuine sign of affection on Leucippe's part, but this is not developed further and there are no other scenes where she expresses a similar concern. Even this scene is framed by the narrative as a stage in Clitophon's seduction of Leucippe, rather than as a moment of tenderness between the women, and is mainly included to demonstrate Clitophon's resourcefulness in adapting to obtain kisses from the heroine.⁵²² Therefore, Clio and Leucippe's friendship is not expanded on beyond how it affects Clitophon, like the slave's own portrayal.

By distancing slaves from their mistresses, the slaves are relegated to the background of their novels, undeveloped and defined by their usefulness to other characters. This suggests that these texts prioritise "aristocratic" friendships over master/mistress-slave bonds, which are depicted as one-sided. This inequality can be demonstrated by comparing slave character entrances with those of the male aristocratic companions. Clio, Rhode, Leucon and Satyrus are abruptly introduced into the narrative when their presence is necessary to move forward the plot.⁵²³ Little information is provided about the slaves themselves and their backgrounds. This contrasts Clinias, Hippothous and Menelaus who have detailed backstories and the latter two even narrate their own histories.⁵²⁴ In both novels, the slaves can

⁵²¹ Baker (2016), 105n2.

⁵²² Ach.Tat.2.7.3-7.

⁵²³ Ach.Tat.1.16.1; Xen.2.2.3.

⁵²⁴ Xen.3.1.4-2.15; Ach.Tat.2.34.1-7

be considered major supporting characters, but the lack of their backgrounds and their appearances occurring only when they are important to drive the narrative forward frames them as existing only to serve their masters.⁵²⁵

Clinias, Hippothous and Menelaus all have lives outside of the protagonists, in contrast to the major slave companions in those two novels. This suggests that Xenophon and Achilles Tatius prioritise equal friendships between the elite over those between a master and slave, no matter how sympathetic their attitudes towards slaves were. For instance, Habrocomes' dream accurately predicted the attack on the ship, yet is seemingly incorrect in predicting that all the others would die apart from himself and Anthia.⁵²⁶ However, this dream could still be viewed as accurate if Leucon, Rhode and their fellow slaves were excluded from the survivors due to their low status making them not important enough to be incorporated.

Ancient literature often portrayed slaves as hidden in their texts, with their presence only being noted when they are of use to their masters.⁵²⁷ For instance, at the start of one of Horace's *Satires* the poet seemingly walks alone down the Via Sacra contemplating matters in a scholarly manner.⁵²⁸ Yet it is soon revealed that a slave accompanies him.⁵²⁹ The initial exclusion of his slave's presence suggests he does not qualify as a companion or person but as

⁵²⁵ See pp.137-40 for how Clio is framed by her novel's narrative into being a tool for male plots.

⁵²⁶ Xen.1.12.4; Oikonomou (2011), 50-1.

⁵²⁷ DuBois ((2003), 30) notes that slaves were "both ubiquitous and invisible".

⁵²⁸ Hor.*Sat.*1.9.1-2; O'Sullivan (2011), 7.

⁵²⁹ Hor.*Sat.*1.9.9-10.

property relegated to the background until of use to his master.⁵³⁰ Writing on Pliny the Younger's relationship with his slaves in his *Letters*, Joshel argues that it is difficult to separate the author from "the depiction of slaves' agency" and that in certain letters, not on the subject of paternalism, the slaves "disappear" to portray their master in a better light.⁵³¹ Again, this suggests that the literary presence of slaves was dependent on how the authors wished to portray themselves or their protagonists, with slaves only in attendance when useful to furthering these goals. Both surviving Roman novels contain incidents of "invisible" servants whose presence is not noted by the texts but implied through their deeds carried out, which Joshel and Hackwell Petersen argue demonstrates that they are not as important as their duties.⁵³²

This idea of slaves being invisible in ancient literature until useful to their masters fits in with the novelistic slaves' introductions. Satyrus is introduced when his master needs his help and Clio's first appearance similarly sets up her role as a potential asset.⁵³³ Rhode and Leucon are introduced to reveal Manto's lust for Habrocomes before she sends her letter. This enables Leucon to offer a warning to the protagonists and Habrocomes' dismissive response

⁵³⁰ Veyne (1987), 73.

⁵³¹ Joshel (2011), 234-239, particularly 235 and 237-8; Plin.*Ep.*1.3, 1.6, 1.9, 2.17, 3.1, 3.5, 5.6, 6.20, 9.36.

⁵³² Joshel and Hackwell Petersen (2015), 38. Examples include: Apul.*Met.*2.19; Petron.*Sat.*31.8; 32.1; 33.3. Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* literally includes invisible servants in the story of Cupid and Psyche (Apul.*Met.*5.3). See Joshel and Hackwell Peterson (2015), 37-8 for slave invisibility in the *Satyricon* and Sabnis (2012) for the same in the *Metamorphoses*.

⁵³³ Ach.*Tat.*1.16.1.

helps define him as an aristocratic hero, whose mindset contrasts with that of the slaves advising submission.⁵³⁴ The slaves here are useful in moving the narrative forward and portraying their master positively, but then abruptly disappear from the text.⁵³⁵ They are only brought back in the latter stages of the novel and the readers are informed of what happened to them after they were sold.⁵³⁶ This sets up the slaves' role in reuniting the protagonists and restoring them to their former status, again implying slaves only exist in the novel when they are useful to their masters.⁵³⁷ Likewise, Clio is quickly removed from the narrative when her usefulness expires, yet Satyrus continues to accompany his master because he remains useful to Clitophon, due to his cunningness and ability to come up with plans on the spot.⁵³⁸ Despite Gasset's claim that Anthia owes her success to her loyal servants, Leucon and Rhode lack Satyrus' craftiness, preventing them from influencing the narrative and being of any further use to their masters.⁵³⁹ Therefore, the distancing of mistresses from their slaves in these novels prevents any affection developing between the women. When compared with the depictions of male aristocratic friends, Achilles Tatius and Xenophon viewed master-slave relationships as inferior and one-sided. In turn, this isolates the heroines from other female characters within their respective novels by defining their supposedly "close" companions by their usefulness as assets.

⁵³⁴ Xen.2.4.1-4; Owens (2020), 30-1, 33.

⁵³⁵ Xen.2.9.1-2.

⁵³⁶ Xen.5.6.3-4.

⁵³⁷ Xen.5.10.6-11.1; 5.12.1-13.1.

⁵³⁸ Ach.Tat.2.27.3; 1.17.1; 2.4.1-6; 2.9.1-10.2; 2.10.5; 2.19.6; 2.20.2; 2.23.1-3; 2.25.3; 2.31.1-3; 3.20.1-22.6; 5.11.4-6; 5.20.1-4.

⁵³⁹ Gasset (2017), 29.

2.5.2 Slaves as Assets

In certain mistress-slave bonds, the slaves are primarily depicted as “assets” to plots organised by other characters. This comes at a cost to their roles as *confidantes* to their mistresses, with the slaves usually having little agency or characterisation and no insight offered into their mindsets. This objectifies these characters and defines them solely by their usefulness, reinforcing their status as property. This suggests an “ideal” slave, from a Roman slaveowner perspective, has no individual agency but serves as a tool for their owner’s plans, best demonstrated by Thisbe (in Demainete’s second scheme against Cnemon) and Clio (in Clitophon and Satyrus’ attempted seduction of Leucippe).⁵⁴⁰

Whilst Thisbe has agency in the *Aethiopica* and can influence the narrative, this only occurs in the second half of the Athenian Novella. Initially, Thisbe serves as an asset to Demainete’s second plot against Cnemon, playing no part in the planning process and seemingly only obeying the orders given by her mistress. Demainete is clearly the mastermind of this scheme and her ability to successfully plan and initiate this manoeuvre is set out from her introduction. She is described as attractive (ἀστεῖον) but also as “the

⁵⁴⁰ Ironically, the slaves discussed in this section threaten their own households by obediently assisting plans. Clio’s role is to protect Leucippe’s virtue through accompanying her and guarding her bedchamber and this is threatened by Clitophon’s attempted seduction. Thisbe’s role in Demainete’s plan directly causes Cnemon’s exile (Heliod.1.14.1).

beginning of evils” (ἀρχέκακον), with the *Iliad* notably describing the ships that carried Paris to seduce Helen in a similar fashion.⁵⁴¹ This suggests that the *Aethiopica* reframes and reverses the gender roles of the scene in the *Iliad* to set up the reader for Demainete’s attempted seduction of Cnemon and the disastrous consequences that occur. Attention is also drawn to Demainete’s skills as a manipulator using the “art (τέχνην) of seduction” and how she gets Aristippos completely under her power.⁵⁴² This is further established by Demainete’s first plot against Cnemon, after he rejects her advances, which leads to Cnemon being flogged.⁵⁴³ Whilst this offers no insight into the personal relationship between Thisbe and Demainete, its success demonstrates that the mistress can successfully enact plots by herself. This reinforces the idea that Thisbe serves primarily as an asset in the second, more elaborate plot, which ultimately succeeds and results in Cnemon’s exile.⁵⁴⁴

Thisbe’s role in this particular scheme is vital, but she is not in control and merely functions as a tool for her mistress. She displays some intelligence in convincingly deceiving Cnemon, but her reaction to his arrest and trial is not shown. Instead, Thisbe disappears from the first section of the Athenian

⁵⁴¹ Helioid.1.9.1; Hom.*Il.*5.63. The word ἀστεῖος can also be translated as “witty” (Pl.*Resp.*5.452d; Pl.*Phdr.*227d; Ar.*Nub.*204; Eq.539).

⁵⁴² Helioid.1.9.2; 1.10.4. In Lysias 1, τέχνην is also used in connection with a dishonourable seduction (Lys.1.17). Morales ((2022), 25) argues that this word had connotations with sex workers instead of loving wives.

⁵⁴³ Helioid.1.10.3; 1.11.1. Demainete is not the only stepmother in ancient literature to turn on their stepson after being rejected by him, examples including Phaedra (particularly in Seneca’s play of the same name) and the stepmother in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* (Apul.*Met.*10.2-12).

⁵⁴⁴ Helioid.1.11.3; 1.14.1.

Novella after the deception, suggesting that her sole purpose here is to further her mistress's plan.⁵⁴⁵ There is no direct interaction between Thisbe and her mistress, making it difficult to read into the dynamics and determine to what extent Thisbe acts on her own initiative. Although this represents the only time in the novel where the two women work together as allies, not much can be discerned about Thisbe and Demainete's personal relationship in the first section of the Athenian Novella. Their relationship appears to be merely that of a loyal slave and mistress, with Thisbe obediently following orders and assisting Demainete. Although Thisbe claims to Cnemon that Demainete had mistreated her out of jealousy, her words are not a reliable source of evidence because she still leads Cnemon into the trap and seduces him under her mistress' orders.⁵⁴⁶ The focus is on Demainete's cunning and immorality, with Thisbe serving as a dutiful accomplice when her mistress requires her aid. This suggests that Thisbe is viewed primarily as an asset rather than as a *confidante* to her mistress.

Yet whilst Thisbe eventually is given agency and subsequently can manipulate other characters in the *Aethiopica*, Clio is consistently defined by her role as a male asset in *L&C*. Owens surprisingly claims she plays a "significant supporting" role, yet Clio only appears briefly towards the start of the narrative and is mainly a background character, with little insight given into

⁵⁴⁵ This resembles Clio's relationship with Satyrus (Ach.Tat.2.6.2; 2.7.2), although Thisbe is aware of Demainete's intentions.

⁵⁴⁶ Heliod.1.11.5.

her thoughts and feelings.⁵⁴⁷ Although Clio is supposedly a close *confidante* to her mistress in the narrative, her actions serve to further the male agenda after Satyrus manipulates her into helping Clitophon with his seduction plot.⁵⁴⁸ This does not mean that Clio plots behind Leucippe's back and against her wishes, especially as she allegedly hands over the keys to the bedchamber with her mistress's knowledge, portraying her as the go-between.⁵⁴⁹ Due to the lack of narrative focus on this relationship, it is difficult to read further into the dynamics between the women and to what extent Leucippe persuaded Clio to hand over the keys or vice versa. Clio therefore must be defined by her usefulness to the male characters and not her mistress, presenting her as an asset that has been corrupted by outside influences. Clio did not have to be portrayed this way. As Leucippe's frequent escort and guard of her bedchamber, she should have been defending her mistress' virtue and therefore could have presented an obstacle to Clitophon and Satyrus.⁵⁵⁰

Yet this threat is not acknowledged, with Clio defined as a male asset from her introduction. When Clitophon asks for help, Satyrus notifies him that Clio is his existing lover and announces his plan to continue to coax her so she will "cooperate with their plan" (ὡς καὶ συναίρεσθαι πρὸς τὸ ἔργον.).⁵⁵¹ This

⁵⁴⁷ Owens (2020), 155.

⁵⁴⁸ Ach.Tat.2.4.3; 2.19.6.

⁵⁴⁹ Ach.Tat.2.19.6; 2.19.2. This novel plays into this tradition, including Pantheia assuming that Clio had knowledge of the failed tryst before questioning her (Ach.Tat.2.24.1).

⁵⁵⁰ Whitmarsh ((2010), 335) notes the potential pun in Clio's name and role in guarding the bedchamber.

⁵⁵¹ Ach.Tat.2.4.3.

immediately sets her up as a tool in Satyrus' plan and the lack of interest from the novel's egocentric male narrator prevents Clio being defined as more. With one notable exception, Clio is a silent character and her thoughts and actions are always reported by male narrators, in the form of Satyrus and Clitophon.⁵⁵² This prevents Clio from having any agency of her own, instead presenting her more as a useful object than as an individualised person to the male characters. For instance, although in a relationship with Clio, Satyrus seduces her replacement and drugs her when she also outlives her usefulness to him.⁵⁵³ It is not clear if this maidservant was seduced after Clio left or at a similar time, but in either case Satyrus' quickness to ensnare both suggests a lack of feeling on his part. The use of *προσεπεποίητο* ("had pretended") proves that Satyrus has no real feelings of love for this maidservant but uses her to accomplish his own goals, which is applicable to his relationship with Clio.⁵⁵⁴

Furthermore, after Clio's pleas to flee Athens with the group, Satyrus does not object to Clinias' plan to put her on a different ship.⁵⁵⁵ This demonstrates that Satyrus has no feelings for Clio and is quick to discard her when her usefulness is over and subsequently most of her actions are viewed in relation to the plan of the male plotters.⁵⁵⁶ Clio may have caused a slight annoyance by catching Clitophon just after his embrace with Leucippe, but this is

⁵⁵² Ach.Tat.2.26.3.

⁵⁵³ Ach.Tat.2.31.1-4.

⁵⁵⁴ Ach.Tat.2.31.2.

⁵⁵⁵ Ach.Tat.2.27.1-3; 2.31.1-4.

⁵⁵⁶ Haynes (2003), 126.

portrayed as a minor setback because she has already been framed as an asset and does not present a serious threat at this stage.⁵⁵⁷ As soon as she poses a threat after the plot fails, due to the knowledge she possesses, she is swiftly removed from the narrative by the men, neutralising the danger.⁵⁵⁸ The ease with which Clio is discarded demonstrates her disposability to the male characters and their belief that she is no longer useful to them. This would not have happened if she had played a significant role in helping the plot, which suggests that she was just a temporary useful tool for the men. Notably, Clio does not appear in the narrative again and her eventual fate is left uncertain. This is in contrast to another supporting character towards the start of the novel, Calligone, who reappears towards its end.⁵⁵⁹ Owens argues that Clitophon (as the narrator) loses interest in Clio due to her losing her status as an asset and her status as a slave.⁵⁶⁰ This is supported by Clitophon later failing to recognise Leucippe under the guise of Lacaena, suggesting that he is only interested in elite characters or slaves who are important assets/threats to his goals.⁵⁶¹ Even when Clio eventually agrees to allow Clitophon access to the bedchamber, the novel frames this as Satyrus' achievement, following his earlier plot to gradually manipulate her into helping.⁵⁶² Therefore, Clio is not even presented as a co-conspirator in this plan by Satyrus, but as a victim

⁵⁵⁷ Ach.Tat.2.8.1. The text might not be referring to Clio as it mentions no name just her "handmaid" (*τὴν θεράπαιναν*).

⁵⁵⁸ Ach.Tat.2.27.1-3

⁵⁵⁹ See pp.315-6.

⁵⁶⁰ Owens (2020), 158.

⁵⁶¹ Ach.Tat.5.17.7. Clitophon also demonstrates a lack of gratitude towards his slave for saving Leucippe in only thanking Menelaus (Ach.Tat.3.23.1), despite Satyrus playing a critical role in planning and executing the scheme (Ach.Tat.3.20.1-22.6).

⁵⁶² Ach.Tat.2.19.6; 2.4.3.

manipulated into becoming a useful asset.⁵⁶³ By primarily defining these slaves by their roles as “assets” rather than as “*confidantes*”, the women are objectified and stripped of any agency, reflecting the wider portrayal of female slaves in Graeco-Roman literature.

2.5.3 Literary Slave Stereotypes

All the novelistic slaves reflect earlier Graeco-Roman literary stereotypes, demonstrating that the novels take inspiration from and adapt other genres. As discussed, Cybele, Plangon and Thisbe offer different interpretations of the comic *servus callidus*.⁵⁶⁴ Anthia and Clio respectively draw on alternative models: the “good” literary slave and the maidservant “corrupted” by an outsider to harm the household. Whilst these stereotypes may offer a more “positive” portrayal of mistress-slave bonds than those with a manipulative slave, there are still many flaws in how Anthia and Clio are depicted. Owens argues that stereotyping slaves as “good” can be equally degrading as those who fit the “bad” mould.⁵⁶⁵ In reducing the slaves to base stereotypes, Anthia and Clio are stripped of their individuality and personal agency. Consequently, the women’s characterisations and actions are defined by their relationships with the protagonists and this primarily casts them as assets rather than as *confidantes*, as discussed.⁵⁶⁶ Clio fits into a long literary history of

⁵⁶³ Owens (2020), 157.

⁵⁶⁴ Pp.30-1; pg.58-9.

⁵⁶⁵ Owens (2020), 6-7, 39.

⁵⁶⁶ 2.5.2.

maidservants being seduced in order to be used against their masters. In the *Odyssey*, the disloyal maidservants and Eumaeus' nurse are persuaded by their lovers to turn against their masters and are presented as victims of the males' plots.⁵⁶⁷ Ovid in his *Amores* hints at an affair with Corinna's hairdresser and uses this information to blackmail her into further liaisons.⁵⁶⁸ Photius in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* is seduced into revealing her mistress' secret and Callirhoe's maidservant in Chariton is used to trick Chaereas into thinking his wife is having an affair.⁵⁶⁹ There are variations between these versions, including the level of "betrayal", but "love" is used in all to gain the slave's compliance and there is no genuine love on the part of the seducer. These literary slave characters are mostly undeveloped, nameless and quickly dropped from their respective narratives after they have helped their male seducers. Like previous literary role models, Clío's role and characterisation is mainly defined by her usefulness to her male lover and his associates. As with the other women, she consequently lacks individuality and serves primarily as a male asset instead of as a *confidante* to Leucippe.

Likewise, Rhode's devotion to her masters defines her as a typical "good" slave, along with Leucon who shares this aspect. In contrast to the portrayal of "bad" slaves in literature, the "good" slaves were portrayed as obedient, hardworking and useful to their masters.⁵⁷⁰ They were also depicted as

⁵⁶⁷ *Od.*15.417-81; 18.321-5; 22.37; 22.417-64.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ov.Am.*1.8.

⁵⁶⁹ *Apul.Met.*3.15; *Charit.*1.4.1-2; 4.9-10.

⁵⁷⁰ On "good" and "bad" stereotypes of slaves in Latin literature see Joshel (2011), 216-23.

completely loyal to their owners and devoted to furthering their agenda, without showing any personal selfishness. Throughout the narrative, Rhode demonstrates her concern for her masters/owners instead of focusing on her own agenda and the text itself explicitly states her affection (*φιλοῦσα*) for her mistress.⁵⁷¹ As with Clio, there are many “good” slaves in ancient literature who match Rhode and Leucon’s devotion. In the *Odyssey*, Eumaeus, Eurycleia and Philoetius counter the disloyalty of Melanthius, Melanthe and the other unfaithful maidservants by working to help their master.⁵⁷² In his work *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, Valerius Maximus wrote a section on the fidelity of slaves, with examples including M. Antonius’ slave urging his reluctant master to hand him over for torture to testify on his master’s behalf, Pontius Plancus’ slaves consciously refusing to betray their master’s whereabouts under torture and Urbinius Panapio’s slave disguising himself as his master to be killed in his place.⁵⁷³

In his chapter on the *Ephesian Tale*, Owens argues that Xenophon offers a sympathetic view towards the slaves partly through his portrayals of Leucon and Rhode as “kind and humane” whilst offering valuable assistance and having a “close relationship” with their young masters.⁵⁷⁴ Although Owens’

⁵⁷¹ Xen.2.3.5; 2.3.5-7

⁵⁷² *Od.*19.482-98; 21.188-244; 21.378-93; 22.162-204; 22.391-430. For general discussions of slaves in the *Odyssey* see Fulkerson (2002); Karydas (1998), 8-63; Olson (1992); Roisman (1990), 215-36; and Thalmann (1998).

⁵⁷³ Val.Max.6.8.1; 6.8.5; 6.8.6. See Joshel (2011), 219; and Lawrence (2016), 251-60 on slaves in Valerius Maximus book 6. See Parker (1998), 161-8 on examples of loyal slaves in Roman literature.

⁵⁷⁴ Owens (2020), 27. This is surprising given his previous warning of overlooking the degradation of “good” slave stereotypes (Owens (2020), 6-7).

approach is plausible when applied to the hardships suffered by the protagonists and the different iterations of slave types that Anthia goes through, it does not consider the complete subservience these “natural” slaves show to their former master and mistress throughout.⁵⁷⁵ Graeco-Roman literary “good” slaves are so defined by their devotion to their masters and furthering their interests, despite the potential personal costs to themselves, that they lack any agency of their own. Parker convincingly argues that these literary stereotypes not only reassure readers of their own slaves’ loyalty towards themselves, but also serve as reflections of their master’s great moral character in inspiring such devotion, especially given ancient beliefs on slaves’ selfish “natures”.⁵⁷⁶ The emphasis is on how these slaves characterise their owners’ righteousness and serve as useful assets to their masters. Rhode fits this model by being defined by her one-sided devoutness to Anthia and, subsequently, her role is limited to her loyalty and ability to help the protagonists. Even her name (“rose”) seemingly serves to emphasise the beauty of the heroine, especially when combined with the meaning of Leucon’s name (“white”).⁵⁷⁷ This makes this relationship one-sided in the heroine’s favour and prevents the slave from developing a unique personality or having any personal agency. Therefore, the use of ancient stereotypes not only shows how this genre draws from earlier literary depictions but also demonstrates that the novel’s portrayal of female slaves

⁵⁷⁵ Owens (2020), 34-9.

⁵⁷⁶ Parker (1998), 161-2, 166-8.

⁵⁷⁷ Anderson ((2000)), 51) argues that these names help make a strong connection between Anthia and the Snow-White motif.

fit into wider beliefs about this group. These stereotypes suggest that literary maidservants should remain in the background of their respective novels and be viewed as assets and not *confidantes* for other characters, lacking individuality and agency.

2.5.4 Lack of Individuality: Rhode and Leucon

The *Ephesian Tale* offers a different mistress-slave bond from other novels, partly because Rhode and Anthia do not have an exclusive bond, with many of the slave's roles being inseparable from her partner Leucon. Their relationship is somewhat of a mystery within the text as slaves, being the property of their owners, were not able to legally marry.⁵⁷⁸ If a master wished to marry his slave, as Dionysius does in the *Callirhoe*, he would first have to free the woman. Yet, Rhode and Leucon's relationship is counted amongst the couples in the novel's "happy" ending. Jacobs has speculated that the slaves may not have necessarily been in a relationship at the start of the novel, having only a "special relationship".⁵⁷⁹ Whilst this would add a level of depth to their characterisation, nothing suggests that Rhode and Leucon gradually develop romantic feelings for each other. Instead, the two characters are consistently grouped together by the narrative and presented as a pair: sharing the same views and concerns and working together to help the protagonists. Their roles and personalities are so intertwined that it is

⁵⁷⁸ Ulp.5.5; Buckland (1970/2010), 76-7; Perry (2013), 40. However, slaves were allowed to have romantic relationships with their owner's permission (Perry (2013), 40-1).

⁵⁷⁹ Jacobs (1999), 121-2; Xen.2.3.6.

difficult to split them apart into two unique characters and this affects how Anthia and Rhode's relationship can be viewed. There are few if any moments of female solidarity between the women and they are never alone together or talk to each other without Leucon. The narrative does not set up a relationship between Rhode and Anthia or Leucon and Habrocomes, but between each of the protagonists and both of their slaves. This is partly because Rhode and Leucon represent the only long-term relationship between "natural" slaves in this genre and therefore that their actions are linked.⁵⁸⁰ Anthia and Rhode's relationship cannot be read as a female exclusive relationship in contrast to other novelistic mistress-slave relationships in spite of their supposedly close relationship. There is also another consequence of having the two slaves be indistinguishable in so many aspects- not fully developing them into fully individual characters implies that they are marginalised by the narrative and not considered important enough to have their own roles and duties.

The only time Rhode has some individuality from Leucon is when Manto confesses her attraction for Habrocomes and asks for her help.⁵⁸¹ This is a fairly common pattern in ancient literature particularly in New and Roman Comedy, where the young masters ask their cunning slaves to interfere on their behalf.⁵⁸² The novels follow this trend with several prominent slave

⁵⁸⁰ The other major slaves in this genre in a relationship are Clio and Satyrus, but their relationship is one-sided and driven by Satyrus' manipulations (pp.137-40).

⁵⁸¹ Xen.2.3.3-5.

⁵⁸² Plaut.*Pseud.*1-110; Ter.*Eun.*307-63. Works, including Lysias 1, Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* (Ov.*Ars.Am.*1.351-74) and Seneca's *Controversiae* (Sen.*Controv.*6.6), demonstrate slave

characters not only placed in a similar position but also bearing resemblance to the *servus callidus* stereotype.⁵⁸³ Billault argues that the traits of these comic slaves are their loyalty to their primary master and ability to cleverly help with love affairs.⁵⁸⁴ Other novelistic female slaves have flexible loyalties but are able to skilfully deceive and manipulate to achieve their goals like the cunning comic slaves. Although Rhode's position is comparable to some slaves in comedy being torn between two masters, such as Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus*, she is unable to come up with a cunning plan to save the protagonists or influence the narrative. She does not directly tell the protagonists of Manto's request but instead confides in Leucon.⁵⁸⁵ This not only prevents any scenes of female solidarity between Rhode and Anthia, but also strips away her sense of agency and reduces her to a mere spectator of the upcoming events. By telling Leucon, her motivations and role are again linked with him with both slaves sharing the same concerns and inability to affect events. Owens argues that the slaves are used here to counter the protagonists' elite idealism with their own experience of the limits of slavery.⁵⁸⁶ Whilst the slaves and Habrocomes' attitudes contrast, Leucon and Rhode's inability to use this knowledge to find a solution limits their effect on the narrative and results in them leaving it until the closing stages.⁵⁸⁷ By

confidantes were often placed in similar situations outside of literature in helping facilitate affairs.

⁵⁸³ The exception is *D&C*, which has many slaves that are only revealed as such by the novel's final book.

⁵⁸⁴ Billault (1996), 117.

⁵⁸⁵ Xen.2.3.6-8.

⁵⁸⁶ Owens (2020), 30-1.

⁵⁸⁷ Xen.2.9.2.

preventing Rhode from having an exclusive relationship with Anthia, both the slave and the bond between the women are marginalised and lack depth.

2.6 Conclusion

There is variety in the unequal female relationships within the novel genre, but common traits can be found. All of these relationships have some level of closeness between mistresses and their slaves, with the women working together to achieve a common goal, often successfully. However, these bonds are marginalised by the novelists either relegating them to the background or portraying them as manipulative and driven by self-interest. The *Ephesian Tale* portrays Rhode as the ideal “good” servant, predominantly defined by her devotion and usefulness to her mistress. She subsequently lacks personal agency, individuality and character development, and her stereotypification calls into question her supposed close relationship with Anthia since there is no solidarity between the women. Clio is also marginalised in *L&C*, but this is due to her being primarily framed as a useful asset to Clitophon and Satyrus by the male elite narrator. Consequently, her relationship with Leucippe is not fully developed and is relegated to the background of the novel, with the two women not showing any solidarity or concern for each other, before Clio is swiftly removed from the narrative when her usefulness to the men expires. These novels are therefore similar in the way that they marginalise female slaves.

The *Callirhoe* and the *Aethiopica* are also alike in their portrayal of unequal female friendships, with these bonds being full of manipulations, mutual self-interest and betrayals. They rely heavily on the *servus callidus* stereotype in their portrayal of the slaves as expert manipulators but suggest that the slaves could easily turn on their primary masters if their own interests are threatened. They are also similar in how these relationships are used to either emphasise the heroines' virtue or the immorality of the antagonists. Yet, there are notable differences between the novels, with the *Callirhoe* ultimately offering a more positive portrayal of this type of female friendship. Plangon aims to deceive the heroine from nearly the start of their acquaintance and succeeds through her manipulative skills, her understanding of an elite mindset, and exploitation of Callirhoe's trust. However, she changes allegiances from Dionysius to the heroine, by concealing the pregnancy and disobeying a direct order, making the two women allies for the remainder of the novel. Their relationship changes again when both women are freed to become a mutually dependent one, with Plangon now indebted to Callirhoe and the heroine needing the ex-slave to remain silent.

This contrasts Thisbe's relationship with Demainete in the *Aethiopica*, where the slave initially loyally serves her mistress, similar to Rhode with Anthia. Again, this is a mutually dependent relationship, with Thisbe dependent on her mistress for safety and Demainete needing her slave to keep silent. The fragility of this bond is exposed when Demainete poses a potential threat to

the slave, leading to Thisbe deliberately betraying her by using an improved version of Demainete's own plot. Both women are portrayed as intelligent, but end up betrayed by a trusted female *confidante*, which suggests these female friendships of utility are tenuous and easily broken if one party feels their own interests have been threatened by the other. The other unequal friendships in the *Aethiopica* are those Cybele has with Arsace and Charicleia, although only the former is genuine. Cybele displays characteristics of a good manipulator like Plangon and Thisbe by being able to effectively influence, understand and lie/disobey direct orders from her mistress. As a result of being heavily influenced by her slave, despite not fully trusting Cybele, Arsace is portrayed as morally weak. Cybele's subsequent attempts to understand and manipulate the protagonists are mainly unsuccessful like those of her mistress, with the protagonists getting the upper hand instead and being portrayed as superior to Arsace and Cybele. Therefore, this novel offers a darker portrayal of unequal female friendships, reflecting fears ancient slave owners had of being manipulated/ betrayed by their slaves.

Overall, the unequal female friendships in the novels are primarily portrayed as friendships of utility, based on mutual need. Even in the "best" circumstances, the novel's focus is on the slaves' roles as assets for their owners rather than as *confidantes* to their mistresses, thereby stripping them of agency and resulting in a lack of character depth. Rhode, Clio and even Thisbe, to some extent, are distanced from their mistresses through a lack of direct interaction, despite the texts stating they were close companions. This

suggests, from a male elitist perspective, slaves were “ideally” supposed to remain in the background and devotedly serve their master’s interests, playing into wider ideas about slaves.

Ancient slave-owner fears of slave betrayals are also reflected in how precarious the mistress-slave bonds are depicted. The mutual dependency element, barring Rhode and Anthia’s relationship, forces the women to depend on each other for safety, assistance with plots and keeping silent about misdeeds. Yet, there is also the underlying threat of betrayal or switching sides, if circumstances should no longer suit either participant’s best interests. The novelistic “cunning” slaves successfully manipulate their mistresses through their deceptive skills, knowledge and exploitation of their mistresses’ trust in them. These reflect the wider context in which the novels were written, concerns about the growing influence of slaves and freedmen under the Empire, and perceived dangers in trusting slaves. These bonds also reflect Graeco-Roman fears of trusting women in general, with both mistresses and slaves portrayed as talented manipulators who by working together form a credible threat to the male characters. The similarities between mistresses and their slaves, despite their differing social statuses, suggests all women can be stereotyped together to some degree, reducing them of individuality and agency. Therefore, whilst some sort of friendship between mistresses and their slaves exists, their overall portrayal is defined by self-interest, deception and usefulness. In being depicted this way, these unequal relationships are marginalised by the male novelists.

Chapter 3: The Equal Friendships

3.1 Introduction

Scholars traditionally have been sceptical about the existence of female friendships within the Greek novels, especially those between women of a similar social status. Johne and Haynes note that most female *confidantes* are slaves and argue that this represents a male debasement of female friendships.⁵⁸⁸ However, when it comes to friendships between women of a similar status, both scholars claim that heroines and other aristocratic female characters are isolated.⁵⁸⁹ Morales argued that the only close female friendship in the surviving novels is Plangon and Callirhoe's bond, subsequently dismissing the notion of friendships between women of a similar status.⁵⁹⁰ This line of thought seems harsh and unjustified. In Graeco-Roman literature, on the whole, there are few female friendships between aristocratic women who are unrelated to each other, although there are many featuring women of lower social classes. Examples exist, including Fortuna and Scintilla's bond in the *Satyricon*, but aristocratic women are usually either portrayed as rivals or lacking bonds with other females of a similar status.⁵⁹¹ The "lack" of novelistic female friendships between women of a similar status therefore reflects a wider ancient reluctance to focus on

⁵⁸⁸ Haynes (2003), 124; Johne (1996), 202.

⁵⁸⁹ Haynes (2003), 150; Johne (1996), 201.

⁵⁹⁰ Morales (2008), 49.

⁵⁹¹ Petron.*Sat.*67.5-6; 67.11-13; 74.12; 75.2.

these relationships. The novels contain several examples where the female characters' affection for each other is made explicit. Whilst these bonds are different from the novelistic male friendships, often being marginalised and containing some form of tension between the participants, they are still friendships and should be viewed as such.

In the surviving novels, there are four significant female relationships that can be classed as "equal" friendships: Arsinoe and Thisbe, Charicleia and Nausicleia in the *Aethiopica* and Callirhoe's bonds with Statira and Rhodogune in the *Callirhoe*. The latter three are between aristocratic women; the first is between courtesans. Whilst there is a slight power imbalance in some of these cases, such as Thisbe's status as a slave in comparison to Arsinoe and when Statira and Callirhoe are in a position of authority over the other, these women are still of a similar social class. The women involved also have direct and personal bonds with each other, which contrasts the relationships discussed in the "missed opportunity" chapter of this thesis where the female characters are distanced from each other.⁵⁹² Notably, these bonds explicitly depict amicability between the women, or at least some solidarity in the case of Arsinoe and Thisbe.⁵⁹³ Callirhoe refers to Rhodogune as her "first friend" (πρώτη μοι φίλη) in the Persian Court, Statira and Callirhoe have a fully developed friendship after they were both captured, Charicleia is upset at her upcoming loss of Nausicleia and the other woman insists on seeing off the

⁵⁹² See next chapter (particularly 4.5.2).

⁵⁹³ See 3.2.

heroine.⁵⁹⁴ This contrasts with the “unequal” friendships, based primarily on mutual benefit.⁵⁹⁵ Whilst these “equal” relationships are not entirely positive, often marginalised and sometimes underdeveloped, particularly the bonds between Callirhoe and Rhodogune and Charicleia and Nausicleia, it is clear that the female characters themselves view these relationships as friendships.

Aristotle argued that “complete” friendship depended on equality and similarity in virtue.⁵⁹⁶ The women involved in the bonds discussed in this chapter have more in common than just their social statuses. Rhodogune and Callirhoe serve as the embodiments of Persia and Greece respectively in the *Callirhoe’s* public beauty contest due to their exceptional beauty.⁵⁹⁷ Statira and Callirhoe become friends at the ending of the same novel partly because they undergo a similar suffering, making them equals through their hardship. In all these bonds, the women resemble each other through their natures and according to ancient expectations of their class. The similarities imply that the female characters are viewed mainly as types rather than as individuals. Reflective of their statuses as *hetairai*, Arsinoe and Thisbe both demonstrate a lack of self-restraint and a willingness to betray each other.⁵⁹⁸ However, in the aristocratic friendships the women are portrayed in a more virtuous

⁵⁹⁴ Charit.8.3.8; Heliod.6.8.4; 6.11.1.

⁵⁹⁵ Smith Pangle ((2002), 47), on Aristotle’s friendships of utility, argued that whilst affection is present in this type of relationship it is not the driving force.

⁵⁹⁶ Arist.*Nic.Eth.*1159b2-7. Plato (*Pl.Leg.*837a-b) also argued that genuine friendship only occurs between equals, which Baltzly and Eliopoulos have interpreted as equality in social status ((2009), 18).

⁵⁹⁷ See 3.4.3.

⁵⁹⁸ See pp.216-7.

manner and do not give in to any jealousy or envy, enabling them to form more positive bonds with each other. Commenting on Aristotle, McCoy concludes that friendships of virtue appeared to have long-term stability when compared to friendships of utility.⁵⁹⁹ This is reflected in the novels. Whilst most unequal female friendships result in betrayal, the aristocratic friendships remain strong, with Statira and Callirhoe's bond even surpassing the novel's conclusion through their promise to write to each other and the heroine's entrustment of her son to the queen.⁶⁰⁰ In contrast to how male characters in this genre define women by their usefulness and physical beauty, the female characters appear to value each other's personalities. However, despite the overall positive portrayal of most of these friendships, some tension always exists between the women. Writing on the portrayal of sisterhood in Greek tragedy, Coo argues that it is "rarely a straightforward relationship of female solidarity, and as well as intimacy and loyalty it can encompass jealousy, rivalry, betrayal and the fractious negotiation of power".⁶⁰¹ This tragic model could also be applied to the equal female friendships within the surviving novels. Although Chariton and Heliodorus depict positive friendships between women, the narratives primarily define the women according to their bonds with male characters and their subsequent usefulness and desirability to these men. Unlike the unequal friendships, there is a sense of rivalry in these relationships, with women frequently competing against each other. This can cause personal friction and

⁵⁹⁹ McCoy (2013), 147. See 2.2.

⁶⁰⁰ Charit.8.3.13; 8.4.8.

⁶⁰¹ Coo (2020), 42.

jealousy between the women, especially when they are love rivals for the same man.⁶⁰² In most contests, the women are judged solely by their physical beauty, ignoring the other virtues they possess.⁶⁰³ This strips the women of agency and portrays them, from a male point of view, as possessions to be viewed, owned and fought over by the men surrounding them. Even when the women are unwilling to participate in the contests, such as Statira and Callirhoe's mutual opposition to Artaxerxes' lust for the heroine, they are still forced to compete, suggesting they lack power to influence the narrative. Therefore, these female "exclusive" relationships are heavily influenced by men and male values, despite most offering an overall positive portrayal of female friendships.

This chapter looks at the "equal" friendships between women of a similar status and argues that these bonds were clearly intended to be viewed as friendships, despite their marginalisations within their novels. Within a female exclusive sphere, heroines and the aristocratic *confidantes* share similar values, are described as feeling reciprocal affection and consider themselves to be friends, even in the marginalised friendships between Nausicleia and Charicleia and Rhodogune and Callirhoe. However, the women are also constantly set up as rivals and set against each other in competitions that are often set up and/or influenced by men. The emphasis on physical

⁶⁰² See 3.6.1.

⁶⁰³ Examples of other qualities that the women possess include Arsinoe's generosity in letting Thisbe use her house (Heliod.1.16.1), Statira and Rhodogune's kindness in comforting a distressed Callirhoe (Charit.5.9.6; 7.5.5), Nausicleia's dutifulness in obeying her father's wishes and marrying Cnemon (Heliod.6.8.1-3).

beauty within these competitions suggests, from a male perspective, this was the only trait that mattered for women to possess. This objectifies the women by stripping them of agency and portraying them as items of male lust, whilst simultaneously implying women cannot coexist without having some form of tension between them and this is mainly caused by men, with the male gaze ultimately defining these relationships and the female characters involved in them.

3.2 Mutual Affection

For a relationship to classify as a friendship and not just goodwill, Aristotle argued there must be mutual affection.⁶⁰⁴ Furthermore, both participants had to feel that this affection was returned and that each was aware of the other's goodwill.⁶⁰⁵ Within the equal female friendships, the women clearly display fondness towards each other and this is depicted as reciprocal. This ranges from Statira, Rhodogune and Callirhoe providing comfort to each other, when one character is distressed, to Charicleia's distress at being parted from her companion to Nausicleia's determination to see off the heroine, despite her modesty.⁶⁰⁶ Statira's bond with Callirhoe is one of few novelistic friendships formed on the protagonists' travels that goes beyond the narrative, demonstrated by the heroine's entrustment of her son to the

⁶⁰⁴ Arist.*Eth.Nic.*8.2.1155b33-4; Konstan (1996), 74; Stern-Gillett (1995), 37-8.

⁶⁰⁵ Arist.*Eth.Nic.*8.2.1155b34-1156a1.

⁶⁰⁶ Charit.5.9.6-5.9.7; 7.5.5; 7.6.5; Heliod.6.8.4; 6.11.1

queen and both women agreeing to write to each other.⁶⁰⁷ Alpern, writing on friendship in Aristotle, argues that friends only display concern for each other's sake in the friendships of virtue, said to be the best form of friendship.⁶⁰⁸ Callirhoe and Charicleia also make it clear that they see their bonds with the other women as friendships.⁶⁰⁹ This section looks at how the novels display mutual affection between aristocratic women. Even when these relationships are undeveloped, they should not be overlooked or excluded from friendship discussions when the novelists make it clear that the women reciprocate one another's affection. It then looks at the necessity of equality between the women, focusing on the lasting relationship between Callirhoe and Statira, through their statuses, similar moral values and shared experiences. This is further reflected by Charicleia and Nausicleia's relationships both being presented as love matches.

3.2.1 The "Marginalised" Friendships

The relationships between Nausicleia and Charicleia and Statira and Callirhoe are frequently overlooked by scholarship and not counted as friendships. De Temmerman notes the long-standing prejudice scholars have towards female friendships in this genre and demonstrates this is not the case in relation to Callirhoe's bond with Statira and, to a lesser extent, Rhodogune.⁶¹⁰ He reveals

⁶⁰⁷ Charit.8.3.13; 8.4.8.

⁶⁰⁸ Alpern (1983), 303; Arist.*Eth.Nic.*3.1156b6-7.

⁶⁰⁹ Charit.8.3.7; 8.3.8; Helioid.6.8.4.

⁶¹⁰ De Temmerman (2019a).

that even scholars who mention these women in their studies of novelistic female do not fully examine them.⁶¹¹ Whilst this criticism might be slightly harsh (for instance Haynes, one of the scholars singled out, focuses on all the other female characters apart from the heroine), De Temmerman raises an important point about the lack of attention paid to female aristocratic *confidantes*.⁶¹² Whilst the bonds between Nausicleia and Rhodogune and their respective heroines are undeveloped, they are set up as friendships and the texts make it clear that there is mutual affection between the women.

For instance, Callirhoe addresses Rhodogune as “my first friend among the Persians” (πρώτη μοι φίλη Περσίδων).⁶¹³ In addition to confirming her status with the heroine, by noting her as her first friend in the Persian court Callirhoe indicates that the two women have been friends for a while. This display of closeness is not an isolated incident, as the heroine also singles out and names Rhodogune when questioning Chaereas on his intentions for his female captives.⁶¹⁴ These scenes imply that the women have a strong bond in the text and Callirhoe considers Rhodogune to be a close friend. Furthermore, Rhodogune comforts Callirhoe when she is distressed on Aradus.⁶¹⁵ Although Chariton devotes more lines to her heritage and confirming she is the same woman who competed against Callirhoe earlier, Rhodogune’s action depicts her as a friend instead of competitor for the first time in the text through her

⁶¹¹ De Temmerman (2019a), 89.

⁶¹² Haynes (2003), 101-36.

⁶¹³ Charit.8.3.8.

⁶¹⁴ Charit.8.3.1.

⁶¹⁵ Charit.7.5.5.

display of concern and empathy for her former rival. Whilst Rhodogune refers to Callirhoe as her “sister” (τὴν ἀδελφὴν) earlier, this is due to the heroine’s status as the wife of her brother’s friend and not because of any closeness, since the women had never met before and were informally competing in a beauty contest.⁶¹⁶ Callirhoe claimed that she could ask nobody about Chaereas as “all are strangers, all are barbarians, they envy me, they hate me” (πάντες ἀλλότριοι, πάντες βάρβαροι, φθονοῦντες, μισοῦντες).⁶¹⁷ At this point in the novel, the heroine has been forced to adapt to a number of changing circumstances in being removed from her homeland and having to undergo a number of changes to her social status. This is reflective of contemporary events at the time the novels were written, with the expanding Roman Empire leading to more people being displaced and a greater sense of social mobility.⁶¹⁸ Callirhoe has been cut off from her previous life and network of associates, creating the necessity for her to form new bonds. By comforting Callirhoe after this speech, Rhodogune demonstrates that the heroine is not surrounded by enemies in the Persian court and in doing so sets herself up as an ally. This makes the women’s affection for each other mutual and not one-sided.

Likewise, Nausicleia and Charicleia display affection for each other.

Nausicleia’s fondness for Charicleia is demonstrated in her final appearance

⁶¹⁶ Charit.5.3.8.

⁶¹⁷ Charit.7.5.5.

⁶¹⁸ Reinhold ((2002), 25) has claimed that this period represented the greatest degree of social mobility, until modern times. See Reinhold (2002), 25-44 for further discussion.

when she along with the rest of Nausicles' household goes to see Charicleia depart. After this scene, along with Cnemon, Nausicleia's eventual fate is left unclear and she is not mentioned again. In this episode, Heliodorus draws attention to Nausicleia's presence in the crowd, stating she begged to be allowed to attend because of "her love for Charicleia that prevailed over her maidenly shame" (τῆς νυμφικῆς αἰδοῦς ὑπὸ φίλτρου τοῦ περὶ τὴν Χαρίκλειαν ἐκνικηθείσης).⁶¹⁹ This is significant as this is the sole time in the novel that her feelings are revealed. Bowie argues that in this genre nearly all the emotions of women are "seen in relation to men".⁶²⁰ Yet, the only insight given into Nausicleia's thoughts and feelings is in connection with Charicleia. In contrast, her thoughts and feelings on Cnemon and her marriage are never revealed to the readers, surprising when considering the *Aethiopica's* generally hostile attitude towards its female characters and Nausicleia being primarily depicted according to ancient male values of an "ideal" women, both as a prospective bride and daughter.⁶²¹ Although this scene continues to depict her according to the standards of the Roman patriarchy, with her seeking her father's permission and through the reference to "her maidenly shame" (τῆς νυμφικῆς αἰδοῦς), it is clear that she feels affection towards Charicleia.⁶²² In doing so, Heliodorus establishes a personal bond between the women, despite the text never showing the two characters directly interacting with

⁶¹⁹ Heliod.6.11.1. As φίλτρον was often translated as "love potion" (e.g. Antiph.1.9; Arist. *Mag.mor.*1188b32; Eur. *Hipp.*509; *Phoen.*1260), this could imply that Nausicleia was more in awe of Charicleia's presence, similar to the effect that Callirhoe's beauty has on the people around her (pp.188-90; pp.193-4; pg.200; pg.210), rather than acting out of affection.

⁶²⁰ Bowie (1999), 125.

⁶²¹ Haynes (2003), 132; Johne (1996), 192.

⁶²² Heliod.6.11.1.

each other, which suggests that Nausicleia's role as a *confidante* is important symbolically but not narratologically to the plot.

This affection is not one-sided: Charicleia also demonstrates fondness for Nausicleia, surprisingly in the middle of her unhappiness at the wedding: "Nausicleia is a bride and my bed companion until now has parted from me, Charicleia is alone and isolated" (Ναυσίκλεια νυμφεύεται κάμοῦ διέζευκται ἢ μέχρι τῆς παρελθούσης ὁμόκοιτος, Χαρίκλεια δὲ μόνη καὶ ἔρημος).⁶²³ This is vital: whilst the two women had earlier been in the same places, including sharing a bed, no particular closeness had been shown between them until this point.⁶²⁴ Although Charicleia claims to be close here with Nausicleia, similar to Rhode in *Ephesian Tale*, Heliodorus does not develop this friendship in detail.⁶²⁵ The reader is expected to accept the closeness from this single statement, even though hardly any glimpses into the relationship are given. It is interesting that Charicleia expresses affection for Nausicleia here, whilst indulging in her own self-pity for her misfortunes, suggesting that she considers her a friend rather than a threat. Significantly, Charicleia expresses no sadness over the upcoming absence of Cnemon, suggesting that she values Nausicleia more despite not knowing her for long. Whilst this is the only insight offered into Charicleia's personal thoughts and true feelings about Nausicleia, in my opinion, it is significant enough to confirm that Charicleia considers her to be a friend. Despite the lack of attention given to their

⁶²³ Heliod.6.8.4.

⁶²⁴ Heliod.5.13.1; 5.34.2.

⁶²⁵ Refer to pg.127.

relationship, these two scenes demonstrate that the two women have mutual fondness for each other, similar to other aristocratic *confidantes* in this genre. If Nausicleia's sole purpose in the text was to remove Cnemon from the narrative, there would be no need for the women to have a relationship at all. Yet, Heliodorus deliberately shows the women's fondness for each other through these brief moments, which should not be ignored or dismissed by scholars.

This female comradeship is especially significant as it appears in the *Aethiopica*, which out of the surviving novels is considered, along with *Ephesian Tale*, to be one of the most hostile in regards to supporting female characters.⁶²⁶ Whilst *L&C* and *D&C* contain female antagonists in the forms of Melite and Lycaenion, these are ultimately more sympathetic than the large number of hostile females found in Heliodorus and Xenophon's novels, partly because they are already married and not virgins.⁶²⁷ Out of these two novelists, Heliodorus has the more antagonistic attitude to female characters outside of the heroines. As Johne notes, in the *Ephesian Tale* there is a fairly even gender split between the antagonists, whilst the leading opponents in the *Aethiopica* are mainly female.⁶²⁸ This hostility is not exclusively reserved for the female antagonists: mothers, such as Persinna and the Witch of Bessa, and female slaves are also portrayed unflatteringly. With so many negative

⁶²⁶ Haynes (2003), 113; Johne (1996), 201.

⁶²⁷ For Melite's sympathetic characterisation see pg.273; pg.279; pp.317-8; pg.330.

⁶²⁸ Johne (1996), 186. Johne ((1996), 192) notes that Heliodorus' hostile attitude occurs despite the high number of female characters described in detail in the *Aethiopica* (ten out of thirty-seven).

examples of women in this novel, Nausicleia's positive portrayal and bond with Charicleia is striking. As the only other example of a positive female role model besides Charicleia, Nausicleia's presence goes against the novel's trend of using adverse women to make the heroine stand out through her exceptionality.⁶²⁹ This is more remarkable because Charicleia, in contrast with the heroines in the other surviving novels, has no other close female friends or role models until she is reunited with her mother in the final stages of the novel.⁶³⁰ Anthia and Callirhoe have their slaves as companions and Leucippe and Chloe have mother figures, in Pantheia and Nape. Whilst these may not be the best examples of positive female relationships, they contrast with Charicleia, who lacks any favourable female confidante or mother figure, other than Nausicleia. Given the marginalisation of Nausicleia as a character, it would have been easy for the novel to not show any solidarity between the women and instead distance them, as Achilles Tatius does in his novel.⁶³¹ The mutual affection between the women suggests not only that the *Aethiopica* is not the most hostile of the surviving novels regarding its attitudes towards female friendships but also that female comradeship is important to the novel.⁶³² Therefore, the novelistic female friendships should not be

⁶²⁹ Johne (1996), 202. It is arguable whether Persinna is a completely unsympathetic character: she abandons her daughter but under difficult and arguably justifiable circumstances. See Johne (1996), 193; and Winkler (1999), 312.

⁶³⁰ See Haynes (2003), 115 for missing mothers in this genre. On the strained relations between novelistic mothers and their children see Egger (1999), 120-2; and Johne (1996), 187, 202-3.

⁶³¹ See 4.4.1.

⁶³² *L&C* deliberately distances the women. *D&C* contains no female friendships.

overlooked, regardless of how marginal they might appear to be as their inclusion suggests that female unity is important to the novels.

3.2.2 A Lasting Friendship: Statira and Callirhoe

Statira and Callirhoe have one of the strongest female friendships within this genre. Their relationship is the only significant female bond formed on the protagonists' journey that is confirmed to extend beyond the timeframe of the novel, excluding reunions between long-lost mothers and their children in the *Aethiopica* and *D&C*.⁶³³ Other female relationships either pre-exist the adventures or seemingly end before the conclusions. Within the *Callirhoe*, there is no mention of the heroine intending to maintain contact with Plangon or Rhodogune after her return to Syracuse, despite being close to both of them. In contrast, the novel makes the longevity of Callirhoe and Statira's relationship explicit through their agreement to write to each other in the future and the heroine's entrustment of her son to the queen, keeping the women tied to each other beyond the novel.⁶³⁴ This is therefore one of the strongest female friendships in the genre and further promotes the idea of equality playing a vital role in female bonds. After their capture Statira and Callirhoe become equals in status through their suffering and share similar

⁶³³ Lycaenion's relationship with Chloe arguably also serves as an exception, as the former appears at the latter's wedding at the end of the novel (Long.4.38.2). However, as discussed elsewhere (pg.17), Lycaenion does not have a direct relationship with the other woman and I do not consider their personal connection "significant".

⁶³⁴ Charit.8.3.13; 8.4.8.

traits.⁶³⁵ Although the heroine was also close to Plangon, Callirhoe only wishes her farewell in her letter to Dionysius without making any further promises to keep in touch.⁶³⁶ This could be because of practical reasons, with the ex-slave without access to the resources the queen had and presumably illiterate. Culham has argued there was a small “literate elite among female slaves” whose duties included administrative tasks and Plangon’s role as a housekeeper could theoretically place her in this category.⁶³⁷ However, the text offers no evidence to support this and it is more likely that she was unable to read due to her social class and gender, with female literacy primarily reserved for women from the wealthiest families. Through their agreement to keep in contact, Chariton clearly implies that Callirhoe and Statira received a similar level of education befitting their statuses which promotes the idea of mutual equality between female friendships.

The novel insinuates that the women’s relationship will surpass its conclusion through Statira’s agreement to write to Callirhoe in the future.⁶³⁸ Konstan notes that this serves as proof of a female communication network that can operate across states.⁶³⁹ Although few letters written by women have

⁶³⁵ Discussed in 3.2.3. Rhodogune also could fit this pattern as a social equal to the heroine who undergoes the same experience of being captured and separated from her husband. However, as discussed elsewhere (pp.251-2), this relationship serves as a secondary bond to the main one between Statira and Callirhoe. Any mention here of the heroine intending to keep in touch with Rhodogune would lessen the insignificance of her commitment to Statira.

⁶³⁶ Charit.8.4.5-6.

⁶³⁷ Culham (2014), 140. A rare example of a literate female slave is referred to in Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities*, when Herod receives a letter sent by one of Livia’s slaves (Joseph.AJ.17.5.7 134-41).

⁶³⁸ Charit.8.4.8.

⁶³⁹ Konstan (1994), 78.

survived, women of the upper class did frequently write and receive letters.⁶⁴⁰ Hemelrijk argued that it is possible letters between women could “have formed the bulk of their correspondence” and there is some evidence to support this.⁶⁴¹ Ovid’s *Amores* makes a reference to a daughter receiving a letter from her “mother” and Cyprus in Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities* sent a letter to her husband’s sister.⁶⁴² The letters between Claudia Severa and Sulpicia Lepidina suggest that women also used letters to frequently communicate with other females not related to them.⁶⁴³ Therefore, Callirhoe and Statira’s communication method could be said to be an accurate representation of how women kept in touch with each other in the Roman Empire. The mutual agreement to keep in touch suggests that both women enjoy conversing with each other, further supported by the text noting that they would have continued talking if the signals to leave had not been given, forcing Callirhoe to depart.⁶⁴⁴ Although the readers do not see any proof of the women remaining in contact after Callirhoe’s departure, their eagerness to talk to each other adds a weight of sincerity to their promise to write to each other and suggests a mutual affection between the women.

⁶⁴⁰ Hemelrijk (1994/2004), 203. Hemelrijk (1994/2004), 203-6 offers an overview of potential reasons why most female letters have not been preserved.

⁶⁴¹ Hemelrijk (1994/2004), 204.

⁶⁴² *Ov.Am.*2.2.19; *Joseph.AJ.*18.6.2 148.

⁶⁴³ See Williams (2012), 70-3 regarding the letters between Claudia Severa and Sulpica.

⁶⁴⁴ *Charit.*8.9.10. Anderson ((1982), 113n52) claims that Chaereas was prevented from leaving due to the conversation between the women. However, there is no evidence in the text to suggest that the hero was forced to wait to depart.

This is further cemented when Callirhoe places her son in Statira's care.⁶⁴⁵ Entrusting the queen with the protection of her son demonstrates that the heroine trusts Statira and provides another reason for the two women to keep in touch beyond the conclusion of the novel. However, De Temmerman has claimed that there are hints of exploitation and manipulation in Callirhoe's decision to entrust her son, despite their friendship. He claims that this is a tactical political decision to strengthen the bonds between Persia and Syracuse.⁶⁴⁶ This could make the women's relationship similar to the manipulative friendships of utility between mistresses and slaves. Callirhoe has to rely on Statira to deliver her letter to Dionysius, as De Temmerman also notes, demonstrating that she takes advantage of the queen's friendship to further her own aims.⁶⁴⁷ However, the heroine's blushing in handing over the letter suggests that she is embarrassed by having to ask Statira to pass it on and that Callirhoe is reluctant to utilise their friendship unless she has to, implying that she is primarily motivated by factors other than her own interests.⁶⁴⁸ Whilst Callirhoe becomes a tactical manipulator throughout the narrative, as demonstrated by her freeing Plangon to protect herself and skilfully deflecting Artaxates by feigning ignorance, when it comes to the decision to free Statira, it is Chaereas that focuses on the political advantages.⁶⁴⁹ Whilst Callirhoe serves as a representation of Greek culture in the beauty contest against Rhodogune, her focus is on the ethical morality of

⁶⁴⁵ Charit.8.4.8.

⁶⁴⁶ De Temmerman (2019a), 98-9.

⁶⁴⁷ Charit.8.4.10; De Temmerman (2019a), 98-9.

⁶⁴⁸ Charit.8.4.9.

⁶⁴⁹ Charit.3.8.1; 6.5.6; 6.6.9-10.

keeping the queen prisoner and her fondness for Statira. Therefore, although there possibly is some political manoeuvring in trying to strengthen ties between nations, it is more likely that Callirhoe entrusts her son to Statira primarily because of her friendship with the queen. With the women having a lasting connection beyond the conclusion of the novel, this relationship is set up as one of the strongest female bonds within this genre and promotes equality and mutual affection as key requirements for female friendships.

3.2.3 Equality in Status and Experience

The idea of equality being necessary for “ideal” friendships also extends to the participant’s backgrounds, with some of the closest female bonds occurring between women of the same social status who have undergone similar experiences. This is best demonstrated when considering how Callirhoe and Statira’s relationship grows throughout the *Callirhoe* and how it evolves into a friendship only when the two women are on an equal level. Initially, the bond between the women is not a friendship but a host-guest relationship, with both behaving towards each other according to ancient expectations of *xenia* and *hospitium*. Hosts were expected to fully welcome strangers into their house and take good care of them. This could be through looking after their physical needs (food, sleep, rest), providing gifts and/or through offering some sort of assistance to them.⁶⁵⁰ In return, guests were

⁶⁵⁰ Herman (1998/2004/2014), 317-8; Nicols (2011), 432; Tracy (2014), 1.

expected to return the favour in the future and show respect towards their hosts.⁶⁵¹ As scholars have noted, this system required hosts to blindly trust strangers, leaving open the possibility of betrayal.⁶⁵² For instance, Paris' abduction of Helen was portrayed as despicable because of his violation of *xenia*, with examples including the *Iliad*, Herodotus' *Histories* and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*.⁶⁵³ These works imply that the subsequent destruction of Troy was required by the gods and Zeus to avenge this transgression. As discussed elsewhere, there are multiple situations within the novels where one woman in a supposedly equal friendship is in a position of power over the other.⁶⁵⁴ Statira and Callirhoe notably hold positions of power over the other at certain points of the *Callirhoe*, and each is vulnerable to being betrayed or harmed by the other. Neither woman ultimately abuses their power, with both demonstrating self-control and adhering to ancient expectations of *xenia/hospitium* and their social classes. However, this slight inequality prevents the women from forming a friendship until the latter stages of their relationship, when the two are on an equal social level.⁶⁵⁵ Up until the women's capture, there are examples of friendliness and solidarity between them, but arguably these do not surpass the boundaries of a good host-guest relationship. Whilst there is amicability between Callirhoe and Statira at the Persian court, the women do not show any explicit fondness towards each

⁶⁵¹ Nicols (2011), 423.

⁶⁵² Herman (1998/2004/2014), 314; Tracy (2014), 1; 4.

⁶⁵³ Vander (2012), 148-50; Hom.//.3.351-5; Hdt.2.114-5; 120; Aesch.Ag.56-71.

⁶⁵⁴ For instance, Thisbe and Arsinoe (pp.219-225).

⁶⁵⁵ De Temmerman (2019a), 89.

other. However, significantly this host-guest relationship is portrayed positively, enabling the women to eventually form a friendship.

Statira is entrusted with the heroine's care from their first meeting and the queen fulfils her obligations as a hostess for a good *xenia/hospitium* relationship.⁶⁵⁶ Despite Statira's previous dismissal of the rumours of Callirhoe's beauty, she quickly puts aside any envy towards her guest and welcomes the heroine into the household.⁶⁵⁷ Whilst this arguably is caused by selfish reasons, with the queen believing herself to be honoured, she displays friendliness towards her guest by reassuring her and advising her to go to bed.⁶⁵⁸ In doing so, Statira demonstrates concern for her guest's welfare and a desire to make her feel at ease. Notably, Plangon and Callirhoe's first meeting earlier in the novel follows the same pattern.⁶⁵⁹ Although these bonds usually took place between social equals, both Statira and Plangon are initially in a position of authority over the heroine as the women with the most power in their respective households.⁶⁶⁰ However, at the time of their initial meetings, Callirhoe's class is similar to her hostess's, enabling her to have a *xenia/ hospitium* bond with the queen and slave. There are other examples of Statira looking after Callirhoe which demonstrates their introduction is not a one-off event. Despite growing tensions between the women, Statira turns away the crowds of people to offer the heroine privacy

⁶⁵⁶ Charit.5.9.1-4.

⁶⁵⁷ Charit.5.3.2.

⁶⁵⁸ Charit.5.9.2-3.

⁶⁵⁹ Charit.2.2.1-2.

⁶⁶⁰ Herman (1998/2004/2018), 214; Nicols (2011), 422.

and asking Callirhoe's opinion on which man she would prefer as a husband.⁶⁶¹ The latter is important as it takes place during the ongoing trial to determine which man Callirhoe belongs to. Neither the male judge nor the men claiming to be her rightful husband ask the heroine's opinion on the matter and Callirhoe is framed as property, with her thoughts deemed irrelevant by the men. In asking Callirhoe, Statira demonstrates an interest in hearing the heroine's beliefs and getting to know her better. This suggests that she values Callirhoe's individuality more than the men who claim to love her and that Statira does not view the heroine as a possession to be fought over. Instead, she seems concerned for her guest's wellbeing and attempts to make the other woman feel comfortable. Mitchell notes that *xenia* is a Greek concept and caused problems in the ancient world when foreigners did not fully understand the responsibilities they had towards their guests.⁶⁶² Statira's respectful and considerate treatment of Callirhoe goes against expectations of her status as a barbarian by presenting her as a good hostess, drawing comparisons with the Greek heroines.⁶⁶³

In return, the heroine shows mutual respect for her hostess by not overstepping any boundaries through her refusal of Artaxerxes' propositions. It is clear that Callirhoe's own love for Chaereas and virtuous characterisation serve as the main reasons for her rejection rather than any sense of duty to Statira. Yet, Callirhoe's actions could be interpreted as partly occurring

⁶⁶¹ Charit.5.9.6; 5.9.7.

⁶⁶² Mitchell (1997), 21.

⁶⁶³ See 3.7 regarding how Statira is characterised as a Greek heroine.

because of her respect of her hostess. When being propositioned by Artaxates on behalf of his master, Callirhoe casts Statira as her indirect protector: using the excuse of her potentially hearing harmful rumours to stop talking to Artaxates and her presence as a deterrent for the eunuch.⁶⁶⁴ The double use of φυλάσσω in the latter incident makes their respective roles as the “protector” and “protectee” clear.⁶⁶⁵ Additionally, Callirhoe later claims to Chaereas that Statira had protected her as if she was a brother’s wife. In using Statira openly as a bodyguard, it could be argued that Callirhoe desires to be transparent with her about her unwillingness to give in to Artaxerxes’ advances, displaying respect for Statira and her role as hostess.⁶⁶⁶ The heroine’s claim to Artaxates, that Artaxerxes could not possibly be interested in herself when he has Statira, could be read not only as a compliment to the queen, but also as an acknowledgement that Statira has the rightful claim to her husband’s affections.⁶⁶⁷ In not actively crossing any boundaries, Callirhoe fulfils her obligations as a guest. With both women practicing good *xenia* and *hospitium*, they form an amicable relationship, despite the tension between them.

Yet, their guest-host relationship only develops into a friendship after Callirhoe and Statira become captives, with both women displaying affection and concern towards the other. This is demonstrated when Statira is

⁶⁶⁴ Charit.6.6.10; 6.7.3-4.

⁶⁶⁵ Charit.8.3.2.

⁶⁶⁶ This idea must be viewed with some caution as there is no mention of Callirhoe acting out of respect to Statira nor the queen acknowledging the heroine’s unwillingness.

⁶⁶⁷ Charit.6.6.10.

described as crying with her head lying in the heroine's lap.⁶⁶⁸ As Statira is surrounded by her female attendants in this moment of vulnerability, her choice of Callirhoe suggests that she trusts and feels close to her.⁶⁶⁹ In return, Callirhoe shows empathy in comforting Statira.⁶⁷⁰ Chariton offers explanations for Statira and the heroine's actions by arguing Callirhoe was the best person to console the queen as an educated Greek and someone who has previously experienced misfortune, which downplays the women's actions. However, this does not imply that there are no signs of affection here as well, with the heroine being under no obligation to comfort the queen. The reference to Callirhoe's previous suffering could also be interpreted as bringing the women closer together through their shared experiences, with both De Temmerman and Jones arguing that their mutual suffering is the primary factor that enables the women to form a friendship.⁶⁷¹ I disagree with De Temmerman's conclusion that social class is not as important to this friendship, as Callirhoe's relationships with Statira and Rhodogune are different from her bond with Plangon.⁶⁷² Instead it is a combination of Statira and Callirhoe's mutual suffering and relatively equal social statuses that enables the women to form a meaningful friendship. Callirhoe's comforting of Statira could be seen as a parallel to when the queen earlier allowed the

⁶⁶⁸ Charit.7.6.5.

⁶⁶⁹ Charit.7.6.4.

⁶⁷⁰ Charit.7.6.5.

⁶⁷¹ Charit.7.6.5; De Temmerman (2019a), 95; Jones (2012), 38. This is reflected elsewhere, such as in *Apollonius King of Tyre* when Tarsia gives the other prostitutes the money they earned from the pimp claiming that because they were bound together with her, they are now all free (*Apollonius King of Tyre* 46).

⁶⁷² De Temmerman (2019a), 95.

heroine privacy to break down, making the two equals through their sufferings.⁶⁷³

However, the later comforting scene differs from the earlier episode, with both women believing themselves to be of an equal status after their capture. Earlier, Statira's status as the Persian queen and role as hostess gave her power over the heroine. However, initially the women are unaware that Chaereas is their captor and that their statuses have switched places. Therefore, from the women's perspective, both are on an equal level with neither being in a position of authority over the other. Even when Callirhoe becomes aware of Chaereas' identity and his plans to make Statira her servant, in an ironic reversal of positions, she is insistent on maintaining the status quo between the two women.⁶⁷⁴ The heroine instantly rejects Chaereas' proposal and successfully requests for Statira to be returned to her husband.⁶⁷⁵ In doing so, she keeps the women on an equal social status. Yet her words here imply that she wishes to return the queen out of duty not affection, citing that it is improper to keep her due to her royal status and for the hospitality she had shown. When Chaereas later claims credit for this decision, he focuses on the practical aspects of returning Statira to her husband, whilst Callirhoe focuses on the moral aspects.⁶⁷⁶ This portrays Callirhoe as the more empathetic out of the two protagonists and highlights

⁶⁷³ Charit.5.9.6.

⁶⁷⁴ Charit.8.3.2; De Temmerman (2019a), 90.

⁶⁷⁵ Charit.8.3.2.

⁶⁷⁶ Charit.8.8.10; Scourfield (2004), 183n89.

her positive characteristics and nobility.⁶⁷⁷ However, it also implies that the heroine is mainly motivated by other factors than her affection for the queen.

Yet, when Callirhoe breaks the news to Statira, she demonstrates fondness for the other woman: embracing her, reassuring her that she will retain her status and will be safely returned to Artaxerxes along with her attendants.⁶⁷⁸

In doing so, De Temmerman notes, Callirhoe grants the queen and other women a similar happy ending to herself, presenting Statira as an almost novelistic heroine.⁶⁷⁹ This draws attention to Callirhoe's virtues and also reaffirms the similarities between the two women, suggesting that they could form a close bond. Furthermore, Callirhoe uses φίλτατος twice in her speech: the first in reference to herself, the second when addressing Statira.⁶⁸⁰ This implies that Callirhoe considers Statira to be a close friend and believes these feelings to be mutual. The heroine's actions and words indicate that her friendship with the queen is one of her main motivations in restoring Statira back to her status. This could mean that Callirhoe's earlier focus on the immorality of keeping Statira as a servant without mentioning her affection for the queen was because she was appealing to Chaereas and believed these would be values that he could relate to, instead of the unfamiliar notion of female friendship. Although Chariton offers a positive portrayal of friendships between women, in the other surviving novels, as demonstrated elsewhere in

⁶⁷⁷ Jones (2012), 38n62.

⁶⁷⁸ Charit.8.3.7-8.

⁶⁷⁹ De Temmerman (2019a), 95.

⁶⁸⁰ Charit.8.3.7.

this work, female solidarity is frequently downplayed and suppressed.⁶⁸¹

When both the heroine's appeal to Chaereas and this scene with Statira are viewed together, this suggests that Callirhoe's true motivations in restoring Statira's status is a combination of moral duty and personal affection for her.

The queen herself also seemingly considers the heroine to be a friend, making their bond mutual. Upon hearing she will be released, the novel describes Statira as torn between belief and disbelief, but aware that Callirhoe would not lie in serious situations.⁶⁸² This suggests that Statira trusts the heroine, and also understands her nature, offering a contrast to the male characters who judge the women purely on their looks. Furthermore, Statira refuses to let the heroine return the royal clothing, claiming not only that the heroine's beauty deserves them, but that Callirhoe's personality matches her exterior.⁶⁸³ As later discussed, the heroine is mainly defined by her physical beauty, which often acts as the sole reason that draws people to her throughout the novel.⁶⁸⁴ Despite her virtuous nature, there is a general lack of appreciation from the other characters of this aspect of her characterisation. Statira's appreciation of Callirhoe's personality equally with her physical beauty and understanding of the heroine's nature suggests that, unlike the

⁶⁸¹ This is especially the case in *L&C*, where the male narrator prioritises the female characters' usefulness and connections with himself over their ties with each other. See 4.4.2.

⁶⁸² Charit.8.3.9.

⁶⁸³ Charit.8.3.13. Popović ((2007), 85-6) notes many different genres in Graeco-Roman literature use the concept of physiognomy, including philosophy, rhetorical texts, medical works, history, biography, drama and satire. He concludes that this demonstrates the idea of someone's physical appearance reflecting their personality was "widespread and influential" (88-9).

⁶⁸⁴ Pp.189-90.

other characters, she sees past Callirhoe's exterior and feels affection for her as a person. Both Statira and Callirhoe are depicted according to Graeco-Roman expectations of aristocratic women and subsequently share similarities. The queen's ability to recognise and appreciate Callirhoe's qualities is, in part, because she has the same traits, setting the queen up as almost a secondary heroine within the text. It is notable that the other character in this novel that sees the value of the heroine's personality in addition to her beauty is Plangon, who expertly uses her knowledge of Callirhoe's nature to manipulate her.⁶⁸⁵ This suggests that whilst the men in this novel focus mostly on physical beauty when judging the desirability of women, in female bonds personality and a mutual understanding of the other participant's nature matter more.⁶⁸⁶ With Callirhoe and Statira having one of the best novelistic female relationships, this implies that these traits are essential for women to form positive friendships with each other. Therefore, Callirhoe and Statira form a friendship in the latter stages of their relationship based on the equality between them. By the novel's conclusion, both women have a similar social status, undergo shared suffering and have mutual affection towards each other. This resembles Aristotle's theories on friendships, with Stern-Gillett arguing that his "best" type of friendship requires both participants to have knowledge of the other's character and circumstances.⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸⁵ Pp.81-3.

⁶⁸⁶ 3.4.2, especially pp.199-201.

⁶⁸⁷ Stern-Gillett (1995), 47.

3.2.4 Equality in Love?

Equality and similarity also play important roles in creating parallels between women, highlighting their shared positive characteristics and turning *confidantes* into “secondary” heroines. This can be seen with Nausicleia’s marriage to Cnemon being presented as motivated by love similar to that of the protagonists.⁶⁸⁸ The novels often advocate the idea of “one mate for life” which applies not only to protagonists but also to their companions, such as Callisthenes, Hippothous and Polycharmus.⁶⁸⁹ Although Nausicleia mainly serves as the “reward” for Cnemon, her personal bond with Charicleia also casts her as a *confidante* being rewarded for her friendship and loyalty. In primarily portraying the marriage as happening because of love, and not because of Nausicles’ manipulations, parallels can be drawn between this relationship and that of the protagonists.⁶⁹⁰ Notably, Charicleia instantly identifies Cnemon’s attraction because “a lover is swift to discover another seized by equal sufferings” (ὁξύς γὰρ ὁ ἐρῶν φωράσαι τὸν ἀπὸ τῶν ἴσων παθῶν κεκρατημένον).⁶⁹¹ The use of “ἴσων” means that Charicleia views his attraction as equivalent to her own love for Theagenes, adding a guarantee to the genuineness of Cnemon’s affections and placing the couple on the same level.⁶⁹² To some extent, this portrays Nausicleia as a secondary heroine

⁶⁸⁸ Heliod.6.8.1-3.

⁶⁸⁹ Alvares (2002), 112.

⁶⁹⁰ Admittedly there are other benefits to Cnemon through the marriage besides Nausicleia, including Nausicles’ promise to help restore his family (Heliod.6.8.1) and the large dowry offered (Heliod.6.8.1).

⁶⁹¹ Heliod.6.7.8.

⁶⁹² Papadimitropoulos (2013), 105.

within the text and aligns her with Charicleia against the immoral one-sided lust of Arsace, Demainete and Rhodopis. Nausicleia's fate also contrasts sharply with the violent end of Thisbe, who used Cnemon's lust to serve her own self-interest.⁶⁹³ Through their shared qualities and the way that their marriages are presented, Charicleia and Nausicleia form a strong bond, promoting Aristotle's idea that true friendship requires similarity between the characters.⁶⁹⁴

However, there is a danger of reading too far into the similarities between the couples as Nausicleia's relationship is viewed solely through a male gaze. The protagonists feel mutual and equal love for each other. Charicleia even actively attempts to die after she believes Theagenes to be dead.⁶⁹⁵ In contrast, although Cnemon shows desire towards Nausicleia, this is depicted as a one-sided love. As no insight is given into Nausicleia's thoughts on her marriage, it is difficult to determine whether she has any personal desire for the match or if she merely complies with her father's wishes as a dutiful daughter. This strips her of agency and relegates her role to being a prop for the men around her. This relationship, therefore, is not equal to Charicleia's mutual bond with Cnemon. The one-sided depiction of "true" love is similar to the other novelistic male helpers, where their lovers are often introduced suddenly and no insight is offered into their emotions.⁶⁹⁶ This is also similar to

⁶⁹³ Heliod.1.30.7.

⁶⁹⁴ Pg.153.

⁶⁹⁵ Heliod.8.8.4-5; 8.9.7-8; 8.9.13.

⁶⁹⁶ Further discussed at pg.298.

Clitophon falling in love with Leucippe, with his feelings only revealed due to the ego-centric narration of the novel.⁶⁹⁷ Cox notes that in Menander's plays romance is often viewed as a one-sided male attraction, again demonstrating that Cnemon's one-sided portrayal of love is not unique in ancient Greek literature; rather, Nausicleia's marriage fits into the wider ancient literary culture of depicting women as silent prizes for men and stripping them of their freewill.⁶⁹⁸ As with Statira and Rhodogune, this suggests that female characters lack agency and the ability to control situations regarding male lust, however one-sided this desire may be. Nausicleia's relationship is presented as one of love which aligns her with Charicleia. However, ultimately this "love" is one-sided, stripping her of willpower and making her relationship unequal in contrast to the protagonists' mutual love. By depicting female characters similarly and according to ancient elitist expectations of "ideal" women, the aristocratic women form stable and secure bonds through their mutual virtue. However, the women are consequently stripped of agency and portrayed passively to fit these expectations.

3.3 Similarities: *Sophrosyne* and Self-Restraint

⁶⁹⁷ Ach.Tat.1.4.2-5. Admittedly this could be interpreted another way due to Achilles Tatius pushing the boundaries of the genre, through Clitophon's multiple affairs and openly ambiguous ending.

⁶⁹⁸ Cox (2012), 280-1.

Aristotle stressed that the best type of friendship occurred between two people who were both “good”, with them bonding over this shared trait.⁶⁹⁹ The novelistic aristocratic friendships reflect his friendships of virtue by depicting female characters according to the concept of *sophrosyne*. This was an idealistic virtue associated with qualities such as self-control, self-knowledge and moderation.⁷⁰⁰ Whilst Arsinoe and Thisbe are unable to demonstrate this quality due to their lower social status, the aristocratic confidantes and heroines all show self-restraint, which Blondell argues was the main requisite virtue for *sophrosyne*.⁷⁰¹ Bird similarly defines it as a “rationalized response to an irrational passion” and Kanavou notes that it can be viewed as exhibiting moral behaviour rather than simply erotic self-restraint.⁷⁰² This enables the women to form strong positive bonds and prevents them from turning on each other from jealousy or envy. For instance, Rhodogune accepts her defeat in the contest gracefully and does not bear any ill-will towards Callirhoe.⁷⁰³ Charicleia also seemingly bears no ill-will towards Nausicleia for taking Cnemon away from her.⁷⁰⁴ In contrast, Arsinoe immediately seeks vengeance on her rival, demonstrating a lack of emotional self-restraint and making her the only novelistic female *confidante* to act on her envy, reflecting ancient elitist attitudes towards class. Statira’s self-restraint arguably offers the biggest surprise as she could easily have fit

⁶⁹⁹ Arist.*Eth.Nic.* 8.4.1157b1-5; 8.5.1157b25-28; Alpern (1983), 308; Smith Pangle (2002), 44-5.

⁷⁰⁰ Blondell (2013), 11, 11n3.

⁷⁰¹ Blondell (2013), 11. Bird ((2021), 36) argues that this quality was linked to status.

⁷⁰² Bird (2021), 37; Kanavou (2015), 945.

⁷⁰³ Charit.5.4.9.

⁷⁰⁴ Pg.250.

into negative Graeco-Roman literary stereotypes, such as the jealous wife or the hostile barbarian. The novel hints at Statira potentially getting involved, as seen when Callirhoe warns Artaxates the queen could potentially misinterpret their conversation and when the eunuch fears a reprisal from the queen for helping Artaxerxes' advances.⁷⁰⁵ However, Statira never actively or directly interferes to stop Artaxerxes' pursuit of Callirhoe or punish the heroine, instead taking a passive and restrained approach, demonstrated when Statira leaves Callirhoe and Artaxates alone together when Artaxerxes calls for her, despite being suspicious of the eunuch's intentions.⁷⁰⁶ Scholars writing on *sophrosyne* in the ancient world argue that, although women were perceived as "naturally" unable to exercise restraint, they could gain virtue through submission to their husbands and other male relatives.⁷⁰⁷ In his *Politics*, Aristotle made the differentiation between male and female *sophrosyne*, assigning the former leadership and the latter sub-ordination (ὑπηρετικός).⁷⁰⁸ This sets up Statira as an "ideal wife" and portrays her similarly to Callirhoe, who also demonstrates emotional restraint in a manner befitting of her station when conversing with Artaxates.⁷⁰⁹ This similarity in characterisation enables the women to form a strong connection with each other and portrays the Persian queen as almost a secondary heroine.

⁷⁰⁵ Charit.6.6.10; 6.6.2.

⁷⁰⁶ Charit.6.7.5. Artaxates takes this as evidence of the queen's full compliance to her husband (Charit.6.7.6).

⁷⁰⁷ Blondell (2013), 11n3; Innes (2011/20), 63; Llewellyn-Jones (2003), 260-1. Rademaker ((2005), 98) defines female *sophrosyne* as the ability to control desires and a quality of a "good" wife who is not susceptible to her "natural vices".

⁷⁰⁸ Arist.Pol.1260a20-4.

⁷⁰⁹ Pg.38; pg.331n1278.

Additionally, the queen's control over her emotions differentiates her from traditional literary depictions of foreigners. In contrast to how Persians were usually portrayed in Graeco-Roman literature, Statira is portrayed sympathetically and in a similar manner to Callirhoe, most notably through their ability to control their emotions and display self-restraint.⁷¹⁰ This enables them to form an amicable bond and suggests that the queen's social status is more important than her ethnicity. Whilst the *Callirhoe* sets up a cultural battle between Greece and Persia, unlike several of the other novelists, Chariton portrays most non-Greek characters positively, including Statira.⁷¹¹ The novel's setting is orientalised and foreigners exhibit traits associated with barbarian stereotypes, yet the aristocratic non-Greeks show restraint and self-control.⁷¹² While Dionysius and Artaxerxes are driven by their passion for the heroine, both men are insistent that Callirhoe must be willing and neither personally behaves dishonourably, instead leaving the ignoble tasks to be carried out by their slaves.⁷¹³ In a similar fashion, Rhodogune is used as a substitute for Statira in order to spare the queen the public humiliation of losing to an outsider and Statira controls her jealousy of Callirhoe and does not act upon her emotions. In having these characters display restraint and be portrayed with dignity, Chariton prioritises their social

⁷¹⁰ Pg.38; pg.331n1278.

⁷¹¹ Haynes (2003), 103; 112-3.

⁷¹² Bowie (1999), 47; Schwartz (2003a), 385; 389; Smith (2007), 85.

⁷¹³ Charit.2.6.3; 2.8.1; 6.5.8. For example, when Artaxates propositions Callirhoe on his master's behalf (Charit.6.5.1-6.10; 6.7.6-13) and when Phocas orders the sinking of Chaereas' ship without Dionysius' knowledge (Charit.3.7.1-3). See 2.3.1 for Plangon's manipulation of a vulnerable Callirhoe to further her master's interests.

status over their ethnicity. Callirhoe herself expects Statira to treat her harshly because of their different cultures, but this is proved false as the queen is predominantly characterised as an aristocrat and not a barbarian.⁷¹⁴

It could be argued that this goes against ancient literary portrayals of foreign noblewomen, with most texts predominantly defining these characters by their “barbarian” traits and lack of emotional restraint. This distances them from the idealised Greek and Roman female characters, creating a contrast through their differing values and behaviour. An archetype for this is Medea in Euripides’ play of the same name. Throughout, multiple references are made to her status as a foreigner and non-Greek and she lacks self-restraint in giving in to her excessive emotions.⁷¹⁵ Her revenge is so savage that it alienates the initially sympathetic chorus of Greek women, removing the notion of female solidarity from the play and focussing on their differences. Mills compellingly argues that the Chorus sides with Medea throughout the entire play due to their shared gender, despite condemning her plans for infanticide.⁷¹⁶ However, although the Chorus continues to express sympathy for Medea after her plans are fully revealed and do not act against her, they no longer approve of her actions, making them silent bystanders. This adds distance between themselves and Medea, in contrast to their earlier closeness when the Chorus fully supports her, separating the women by their

⁷¹⁴ Charit.6.6.5; Jones (2012), 37n60; Scourfield (2004), 184n92

⁷¹⁵ On Medea’s non-Greek status see Griffiths (2006), 60-1, 82; Rehm (2002), 251-2, 259, 261-2; and Swift (2017), 80-2.

⁷¹⁶ Mills (2014), 105-8.

values. Notably, the play makes frequent contrasts between the expected behaviour of Greek women and Medea's actions, further alienating her from the other female characters and emphasising their different cultures over shared gender.⁷¹⁷ In the novels, the Greek heroines are usually displaced from their communities, families and friends and end up having to build new social networks with people from different cultural backgrounds. In contrast to the *Callirhoe*, other surviving novels prioritise ethnicity over gender and class when it comes to relationships between women. Non-Greek women in the *Aethiopica* and *Ephesian Tale* often lack self-control, setting them up as antagonists and leading to them to resort to unprovoked violence.⁷¹⁸ Arsace, one of those women, notably has some positive qualities that would be appropriate for her social status.⁷¹⁹ However, her lack of self-control leads her "barbarian" traits to ultimately define her characterisation over her rank, casting her and Charicleia as enemies.⁷²⁰ Therefore, Statira's depiction could be said to go against the traditional literary and novelistic stereotype of a foreigner who cannot exert self-control, blurring the boundaries between Greek and non-Greek characters within this novel.⁷²¹ In prioritising a shared

⁷¹⁷ For instance, Medea's sarcastic remarks that Jason has made her happy according to Greek women (Eur.Med.509-10) and his claim that no Greek woman would have committed her crimes at the play's conclusion (Eur.Med.1339-40).

⁷¹⁸ Examples include Arsace (Heliod.8.6.10; 8.7.1-2; 8.9.1; 8.9.16-22), Cyno (Xen.3.12.3-6), Demainete (Heliod.1.9.3-20.2; 1.11.2; 1.15.1-2), Manto (Xen.2.5.5; 2.9.1-3; 2.11.2-3) and Rhenaia (Xen.5.5.2-4).

⁷¹⁹ Such as her skills in diplomacy and intelligence (pg.117n474)

⁷²⁰ Pp.117-9; pp.109-13.

⁷²¹ Whilst most scholars date the *Callirhoe* as one of the earliest examples in this genre, there is debate over whether this text is the earliest of the surviving novels (e.g. Tilg (2010), 85-92) or if the *Ephesian Tale* was written before (e.g. O'Sullivan (1995), 145-70). Therefore, genre "norms" may not have been officially established at the time Chariton was writing. See pg.18 on dating the novels.

similarity between Statira and Callirhoe (social class) over their differences (ethnicity), the two women bond. This suggests both have to demonstrate self-restraint to have the best kind of friendship.

3.4 Competition, Rivalry and Beauty

Within all of the novelistic equal friendships, there is some element of rivalry/competition between the women. In the *Callirhoe*, this ranges from the formal public contest to the private competition between Statira and Callirhoe to the minor rivalries between the women of the Persian Court.⁷²² In the *Aethiopica*, these occurs with the love triangle between Nausicles, Arsinoe and Thisbe and Charicleia's resentment towards Nausicleia for the latter's marriage to Cnemon.⁷²³ In most cases, men serve as the instigators of these contests as well as the judges, with the women being forced into being reluctant rivals. This suggests that the novelists prioritised the female characters' desirability to the male characters over their relationships with each other. This strips the women of agency and frames them as objects for the male gaze. Furthermore, the women are solely judged on their physical beauty, suggesting that from a male perspective this was the most important quality for a woman to possess. This is reflective of a wider emphasis on female beauty (and consequently objectification of women) within Graeco-Roman literature and mythology, such as the depictions of Helen and

⁷²² Charit.5.3.3-10; 6.3.6-7; 5.3.3; 5.4.2.

⁷²³ Heliod.2.8.5; 6.8.3-9.1.

Nausicaa in Homer's *Odyssey* and the Judgement of Paris. The frequent comparisons of the women's beauty and the men's dismissals of one competitor over another suggest that the male characters desire to possess the "best" woman, decided solely based on physical attractiveness. The novelistic protagonists are depicted according to the classical concept of *kalokagathia*, an aristocratic ideal in which people's outward appearances reflect their inner virtues.⁷²⁴ This can be linked all the way back to the description of Thersites in the *Iliad* according to Wrenhaven.⁷²⁵ Yet, there is no mention of any other qualities impacting the male judges' decisions in determining the most "desirable" woman. This section explores the rivalry/competition element within the "equal" female friendships, focusing primarily on the public and private beauty contests. A key theme is how these rivalries objectify women by defining them solely by their physical beauty and how this consequently strips them of agency, setting them up as male prizes and as symbols of their respective cultures. Yet, there is a difference between how the patriarchal "public" sphere and the private, female exclusive sphere treated female relationships, with women being viewed as "natural" rivals in the public sphere and beauty not causing tension within the private sphere. This is reflected in the less hostile rivalry between Nausicleia and Charicleia, which differs from other novelistic contests as they do not directly compete over one man or for the sake of their respective communities.

⁷²⁴ Gosbell (2018), 59-66; Nikityuk, (2019), 430-1; Weiler (2002), 11, 15-6.

⁷²⁵ Wrenhaven (2012), 44; Hom.//.2.211-25.

3.4.1 Women as Prizes

There are many novelistic competitions where the female participants are judged solely on their beauty by a predominantly male audience. This objectifies the women and presents them as prizes to be fought over by men. The women are consequently defined by their desirability to the male characters and not by their relationships with other female characters. Blondell argued that beauty was considered the dominant trait for ancient Greek women and the most commonly sought quality when determining the “best”.⁷²⁶ The novels adapt this concept, with the heroes and several male antagonists falling in love when they behold the heroine’s beauty, rather than because of their dispositions.⁷²⁷ For instance, Callirhoe is defined by her divine-like attractiveness. Whilst no specific description is given of her physical features, there are around 60 separate references to her beauty throughout the narrative and men, such as Artaxerxes, Dionysius and Mithridates, fall instantly and passionately in love with her on first sight, with her personality seemingly irrelevant in the process.⁷²⁸ Even Chaereas is initially attracted to Callirhoe solely because of her looks.⁷²⁹ This supports the claim that, from an elite male perspective, beauty was the most important trait women required within this novel with their personalities less important.

⁷²⁶ Blondell (2013), 1.

⁷²⁷ Ach.Tat.1.4.2-5; 4.2.1; 4.3.1-2; 6.6.3-4; Helioid.3.5.4-6. Xen.1.3.1; 2.13.6; 3.11.3; 4.5.1. Montiglio ((2013), 29) argues that the novels generally promote sight over hearing when the protagonists fall in love with each other.

⁷²⁸ Charit.6.1.7-12; 2.3.5-8; 2.4.1-3;4.1.9-10; 4.2.4-5.

⁷²⁹ Charit.1.1.6.

Consequently, the women are stripped of any agency or power. Egger writes that only their sexual attractiveness allows the novelistic heroines to have power over men, but this same beauty leads to Callirhoe's troubles and prevents her from getting back to Chaereas as she frequently laments.⁷³⁰ Dionysius and Artaxerxes might respect Callirhoe because of her heritage and beauty, but both are reluctant to be parted from her, which limits the help they provide and creates further obstacles.⁷³¹ Throughout the narrative, the audience is reminded of Callirhoe's exceptional beauty which both helps and hinders her on an individual level and also by how the crowds of people react when they see her.⁷³² It is questionable how much "power" Callirhoe's beauty actually gives her as she appears powerless to significantly alter events within the narrative. This reduces the heroine to being a possession to be looked at and fought over by male viewers. Callirhoe is constantly looked at throughout the novel and often in an erotic manner.⁷³³ For instance, the unveiling of Callirhoe to Leonas casts her as both a kidnapping victim and a desirable object available for purchase.⁷³⁴ Scholars have also noted the connection between Callirhoe and works of art, made explicit by her description as "the most beautiful vision, which no painter has painted, nor sculptor formed, nor poet represented before now" (ὡφθη θέαμα κάλλιστον, οἷον οὔτε ζωγράφος

⁷³⁰ Egger (1999), 130; Charit.1.14.8; 5.5.3; 6.6.4; 7.5.3.

⁷³¹ For example, Dionysius' fear of Callirhoe's father taking her back to Syracuse (Charit.3.2.7-9) and Artaxerxes delaying making a judgement in the trial (Charit.6.1.8-12).

⁷³² Charit.3.2.15-7; 5.3.8-10. See Schmeling (2005), 37, 41 on Callirhoe's ability to affect the crowds.

⁷³³ Egger (1994), 36-7; Llewellyn-Jones (2013), 177.

⁷³⁴ Charit.1.14.1-2; Egger (1994), 37; Llewellyn-Jones (2013), 177.

ἔγραψεν οὔτε πλάστης ἔπλασεν οὔτε ποιητὴς ἰστόρησε μέχρι νῦν).⁷³⁵

Llewellyn-Jones argues that the frequent gazing at the heroine further portrays her as artwork and Egger, focusing on the bathing scene, claims that Callirhoe's depiction recalls the Aphrodite of Cnidos statue, known for its artistic beauty and as an exceedingly erotic portrayal of the goddess.⁷³⁶ The latter scene takes place in a supposedly exclusive female scene, but the maidservant's judgement of Callirhoe's beauty serves as a reminder aristocratic female characters are primarily framed to serve male desires.⁷³⁷ In objectifying Callirhoe as a work of art, she is stripped of agency and power, existing solely to be gazed at and admired.⁷³⁸ This is reflected in her lack of power to control her own situation in the narrative, with the male characters instead determining her fate.

To some extent, this can be applied to all women within the novel: Plangon only receives her freedom when Dionysius approves Callirhoe's request, the Persian women are returned to their husbands on Chaereas' orders and the hero betroths his sister to Polycharmus without consulting her.⁷³⁹ This could also apply to women in the other novels, such as Anthia, Calligone, Chloe, Clio, Leucippe, Melite and Nausicleia.⁷⁴⁰ For instance, whilst Nausicleia does not compete against Charicleia in a beauty contest, she is primarily portrayed

⁷³⁵ Charit.3.8.6.

⁷³⁶ Egger (1994), 37; Llewellyn-Jones (2013), 177; Charit.2.2.2-4.

⁷³⁷ Charit.2.2.2-4; Egger (1994), 38; Elson (1992), 221-2.

⁷³⁸ Egger ((1994), 37) claims the frequent male gaze throughout the narrative demotes Callirhoe to an object throughout the novel.

⁷³⁹ Charit.3.8.1-2; 8.3.3; 8.8.12.

⁷⁴⁰ Pp.136-40; pp.179-80; pp.297-9.

as a prize for Cnemon. Nausicleia is not involved in organising her own marriage and Heliodorus provides no insight into her feelings towards Cnemon or her betrothal. Instead, it is her father Nausicles who favours the match and proposes it to Cnemon according to “customary betrothal procedures”.⁷⁴¹ Nausicleia’s marriage serves to unite the two male characters, with her opinion irrelevant. Through her silence and obedience, Nausicleia is characterised as a dutiful daughter matching Roman expectations of an ideal daughter and as a silent prize for a man.⁷⁴² This is consistent with other portrayals of women in Roman literature, notably Lavinia in the *Aeneid* and the sister characters within this genre.⁷⁴³ Although Rhodogune and Statira are similarly portrayed as prizes for men, they have more agency and individuality than Nausicleia, whose personality is almost entirely defined by her connection to male characters. Even her name is connected to her father, with Nausicles being a suitable name for a merchant.⁷⁴⁴ Subsequently, she is stripped of any individuality or agency and defined by the men around her by being viewed through a male gaze.⁷⁴⁵ Therefore, Callirhoe’s portrayal fits into

⁷⁴¹ Lateiner (2005), 425.

⁷⁴² On the authority fathers had over their daughters’ betrothal see Blundell (1995), 67-8, 114, 120; Cox (2012), 284-6; Hersch (2010), 39-40; Pomeroy (1975), 62-4, 129, 154-7; (1997), 35-6; and Treggiari (1991), 90-4, 107-11, 125-34.

⁷⁴³ The issue of Lavinia’s silence is the main subject of Ursula Le Guin’s 2008 novel *Lavinia*. On the silent portrayal of Lavinia within Virgil’s *Aeneid* see Formicula (2006); Lyne (1983); Oliensis (1997), 307-8; and Suzuki (1989), 93, 123-34. See pp.298-9 on novelistic sisters serving as prizes for men within the novels.

⁷⁴⁴ This argument has merit, particularly as Charicleia is named after her adopted father Charicles.

⁷⁴⁵ Dio Chrysostom 61 involves a discussion with a female reader on the *Iliad* where he assigns the silent Chryseis much agency, even arguing that Chryses acted against his own interests because his daughter asked him to (Dio.Chrys.Or.61.3-5). This reading-between-the-lines approach implies that a Roman reader may not have seen silent female characters as lacking agency and instead viewed their male relatives as acting in accordance with the women’s wishes.

the wider objectification of women within the novels, primarily defined by their usefulness and desirability to men instead of through their bonds with each other.

This attitude fits into the wider Graeco-Roman literary portrayal of female beauty, with the contest between Rhodogune and Callirhoe resembling the Judgement of Paris, the most well-known mythological example of a beauty competition between women.⁷⁴⁶ The goddesses Hera, Athena and Aphrodite exhibited their divine beauty by parading nude in front of a male judge, with Aphrodite being declared the eventual winner. This contest differs from the one in the novel, as the winner was not solely determined by the goddesses' physical beauty but also through the bribes they offered. However, Paris' choice to accept Aphrodite's bribe of Helen over power and military prowess implies that, from an ancient male perspective, possession of a beautiful woman was considered a greater reward.⁷⁴⁷ Similar to the novelistic aristocratic women, Helen is positioned as a prize for men without being consulted. Multiple versions of this myth existed in antiquity, each assigning Helen a different level of agency over her "abduction" by Paris. The *agon* in

⁷⁴⁶ This myth may be reflective of actual beauty contests, described by authors including Alcaeus (Alc.Fr.130b.17-8) and Athenaeus (Ath.13.609e-f), occurring at places such as Basilis, Lesbos and Tenedos (Schmeling (2005), 46). There were also male only competitions in the form of the *euandria*. On these competitions see Crowther (1985); and Papakonstantinou (2014), 17.

⁷⁴⁷ Blondell ((2013), 2) noted that the Goddesses' choice to be judged on physical beauty, a quality that they all share but gives Aphrodite an advantage as the embodiment of erotic beauty, suggests that women were also thought to value this quality above others.

Euripides' *Trojan Women* even consists of a debate between Helen and Hecuba over the former's level of accountability.⁷⁴⁸

The versions that depict Helen sympathetically by portraying her as unwilling to leave Sparta and desert her husband, including the *Iliad*, Euripides' *Helen* and Ovid's *Heroides*, especially serve as relevant models for the contest in the *Callirhoe*. These renditions portray Helen as a powerless victim of Aphrodite and Paris' deal instead of being a consenting adulteress, stripping her of agency and freewill. As noted, this portrays Helen as a possession to be fought over and owned by men, with her own desires being irrelevant.⁷⁴⁹ This is comparable to Callirhoe's depiction and the novel has strong connotations to the myth throughout. Schmeling observed the connection between Callirhoe and Helen, the bribe offered by the victor in the immortal contest, in their exceptional beauty and suffering and the heroine is described as resembling Helen when she goes to the trial.⁷⁵⁰ Aphrodite is heavily featured within the *Callirhoe* and there is a direct link through the reference to Thetis' wedding and the discord created that subsequently caused the judgement.⁷⁵¹ Significantly, this is made when the novel discusses the problems caused by Chaereas winning Callirhoe as a bride, drawing links between the heroine and Helen in their roles as beautiful but powerless prizes. Both women are

⁷⁴⁸ Eur.*Tro.*911-1041.

⁷⁴⁹ Blondell (2013), 59; Henry (2011), 22; Roisman (2006), 2.

⁷⁵⁰ Schmeling (2005), 38; Charit.5.5.9.

⁷⁵¹ Charit.1.2.16. The heroine is also frequently compared to Aphrodite throughout the novel (Charit.1.1.2; 1.14.2 2.2.6; 2.3.6; 3.2.14; 3.3.17; 3.9.1; 3.9.5; 4.7.5; 5.9.1; 8.6.11); De Temmerman (2014), 47, 54; Kanavou (2015), 950; Lefteratou (2018), 205-6.

depicted as victims of Aphrodite and as instruments of the goddess' desires. Callirhoe is taken away from Chaereas because of the goddess' vengefulness and given to Dionysius and only returned to the hero when Aphrodite forgives him.⁷⁵² Both Helen and Callirhoe have no say in being taken away from their husband and gifted to another, stripping them of any freewill. Their exceptional beauty makes them the ultimate prizes for the men watching and judging and portrays them as bargaining tools.

Similarly, Artaxerxes' continued lust for Callirhoe in the final stages of the novel casts her as the ultimate prize. Alvares argues that by the novel's conclusion, Artaxerxes has grown from passionately lusting after the heroine to behaving properly as a king with a new respect for his wife.⁷⁵³ However, the Persian king still desires Callirhoe after Statira is returned to him. Although Artaxerxes is allegedly relieved and jubilant at having his wife returned to him, he has mixed feelings when hearing of Callirhoe's return to Syracuse.⁷⁵⁴ The king is joyful the heroine has left, but also upset he will no longer see her and envious of Chaereas for possessing her.⁷⁵⁵ This suggests that his infatuation with Callirhoe still exists, even in the midst of his triumphant reunion with Statira. Egger claimed that by asking Dionysius not to remarry, Callirhoe keeps him tied to her alone in the future.⁷⁵⁶ Whilst the

⁷⁵² Charit.2.3.8; 5.1.1; 8.1.3. However, as Tilg ((2010), 29) notes, Aphrodite's influence in the earlier events is only revealed in hindsight halfway through the novel.

⁷⁵³ Alvares (2002), 111-2.

⁷⁵⁴ Charit.8.5.5-6.

⁷⁵⁵ Charit.8.5.8.

⁷⁵⁶ Egger (1994), 41.

heroine does not actively encourage Artaxerxes' lust, Egger's argument could also apply to Artaxerxes, who still seemingly prefers Callirhoe over his own wife. Through Artaxerxes' envy of Chaereas, Callirhoe is stripped of her individuality and reduced to the status of a male possession to be fought over and won. There is a pre-existing literary history of women being included amongst the spoils of war, dating as far back as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.⁷⁵⁷ Additionally, Graeco-Roman mythology contains multiple wars that were allegedly caused by a male desire to possess or marry a woman (e.g. Helen of Troy or Lavinia in the *Aeneid*) or group of women (e.g. the Sabine women), casting these females as the ultimate prizes.⁷⁵⁸ Through her exceptional beauty and subsequent ability to retain the male characters' attentions after leaving them, Callirhoe is established as the top trophy for men. Chaereas is cast as the ultimate victor for possessing her.

From a male point of view, Statira could also be viewed as a possession and trophy in the final stages of the novel. Whilst Artaxerxes reacts with joy to his wife's return, his earlier lack of concern towards her feelings and continued infatuation with the heroine suggests that his delight at Statira's return is more a matter of pride rather than because he loves her.⁷⁵⁹ It would be viewed as an embarrassment for both Artaxerxes and the Empire if Statira

⁷⁵⁷ Henry (2011), 18. Roisman ((2006), 2) argues that women in the *Odyssey* were viewed as possessions worth fighting for, but not "free agents" regardless of their social status. See Henry (2011) for an overview and discussion of women as prizes in the *Iliad* (17-23) and *Odyssey* (24).

⁷⁵⁸ Livy.1.9.1-10.1; 1.11.5; 1.13.1; Vir.*Aen.*11.479-80; 12.14-7; 12.936-8.

⁷⁵⁹ Charit.8.5.5-6.

were to have been enslaved and forced to work as a handmaiden, as Chaereas originally intended.⁷⁶⁰ Looking at epic tradition, members of the losing side's royal family often served as the top prizes for the greatest heroes.⁷⁶¹ Henry argues that the Homeric poems promote a clear link between masculinity and the enslavement of foreign women through war.⁷⁶² This can apply to the ending of the *Callirhoe*, with Chaereas' possession of both Statira and Callirhoe, after winning the battle, casting him as a conquering victor and hero.⁷⁶³ Chaereas later claims in his letter to the Persian king that war served as the best judge of a man's strength and had awarded him both women.⁷⁶⁴ From a male point of view, Callirhoe and Statira serve as prizes to be fought over and won, their desirability solely defined by their beauty.⁷⁶⁵ With the women within the *Callirhoe* being portrayed as prizes for male viewers, they are subsequently objectified, stripped of any agency and defined solely by how the predominately male audience perceives their beauty in comparison to other women.

3.4.2 Beauty Competitions

⁷⁶⁰ Charit.8.3.2.

⁷⁶¹ Kapparis (2018), 99.

⁷⁶² Henry (2011), 16.

⁷⁶³ Schwartz ((2003b), 123) alternatively argues that the reclamation of his wife and military victory sets him up as an Alexander the Great figure.

⁷⁶⁴ Charit.8.4.2.

⁷⁶⁵ Blundell ((2013), 3) argues that the male fantasy of a beautiful wife (with matching virtues) served as an indicator of superiority.

As a result of the many beauty contests, the women's bonds with each other are marginalised in favour of their connections and desirability to the men around them. Within the novels, these competitions take two main forms: private competitions over the affections of a man, and the public beauty contest between Rhodogune and Callirhoe. In offering two different types of beauty contests, the novels suggest women constantly compete with each other and only the most physically attractive succeed in winning male affections. That this happens in two of the most positive novelistic female friendships only adds to the argument that women in this genre are unable to have a relationship that is not influenced by male values. Instead, women are primarily defined by their bonds with men and their subsequent usefulness to the male characters, setting the aristocratic women up as competing objects. Writing on the Pandora myth in Hesiod, Young-Eisendrath argued that the concept of "a woman being empowered by female beauty" instead objectified the woman in question.⁷⁶⁶ If a woman adopted this concept, she would be viewed as beautiful but "empty" by those around her, yet if she refused this connotation she would be presented as an outsider to other women and potentially to men.⁷⁶⁷ When applied to female bonds within the novels, I do not fully agree with this argument as physical beauty does not seem to play as great a role within a female exclusive sphere.⁷⁶⁸ Yet, the male obsession with female beauty within the genre strips the women of their

⁷⁶⁶ Young-Eisendrath (1997), 67.

⁷⁶⁷ Young-Eisendrath (1997), 68.

⁷⁶⁸ See 3.4.5.

individuality, freewill and agency and marginalises the women's bonds with each other.

The competitions between women overshadow the female aristocrats' roles as *confidantes*, suggesting that their roles as rivals are more important.

Rhodogune, for instance, is clearly depicted as a *confidante*, yet her main purpose in the narrative is as Callirhoe's rival in a public beauty competition, which Llewellyn-Jones describes as the "ultimate male voyeuristic fantasy".⁷⁶⁹

Rhodogune is mentioned several times, yet it is her role in the contest that is given the most attention by the novel and helps move the narrative forward.⁷⁷⁰ Whilst the competition may not formally be established, it is clear that a contest exists between the two with, as De Temmerman notes, words including τὸν ἀγῶνα (contest), νενικήκαμεν (we have won) and τῆς ἥττης (the loss) framing the passage.⁷⁷¹ The crowd viewing the spectacle also seemingly recognise this by declaring Rhodogune's victory before the heroine arrives.⁷⁷²

Likewise, Statira and Callirhoe have a predominantly amicable bond throughout the novel and avoid competing against each other in the public contest. Yet, the women are reluctantly forced to participate in a private, informal contest by Artaxerxes, who serves as both sole organiser and judge.⁷⁷³ Furthermore, it is arguable that Rhodogune serves as a necessary

⁷⁶⁹ Charit.5.3.3-10; Llewellyn-Jones (2013), 182.

⁷⁷⁰ 32 lines are dedicated to the beauty contest and Rhodogune's involvement in it compared to the combined 6 lines mentioning her thereafter.

⁷⁷¹ De Temmerman (2019a), 90; Charit.5.3.5; 5.3.7; 5.3.9.

⁷⁷² Charit.5.3.7.

⁷⁷³ Charit.6.3.6-7.

stand-in for Statira in the public contest because of her lower social status, with Llewellyn-Jones arguing that this reflects an understanding amongst Greek novelists and Roman Imperial historians that high-ranking Persian women emphasised their status by not appearing in public.⁷⁷⁴ This suggests that the women's opinions and wishes are irrelevant to the male characters, with only their physical beauty being valued.

This is enhanced by the “winner” in the contests being the woman perceived to be the most beautiful by a predominately male audience. There are many female qualities that could have been used as potential criteria, including their virtuousness, perceptiveness and self-control, but in all the contests, the women are judged solely on their looks. For instance, despite their contrasting moralities and statuses, Charicleia is only compared to Thisbe and Rhodopis through their physical appearances.⁷⁷⁵ Looking at the “private” and personal beauty contests between Statira and Callirhoe and Arsinoe and Thisbe, respectively, the men judging the contests both determine their existing partners are less desirable than their competitors on the basis of their looks, without considering other factors.⁷⁷⁶ Nausicles' decision particularly comes off as “superficial” as he switches lovers only because he did not find Arsinoe attractive when she plays the pipes.⁷⁷⁷ In Lucian's *Dialogues of the Courtesans*, a mother advises her courtesan daughter not to unattractively

⁷⁷⁴ Llewellyn-Jones (2013), 167; Haynes (2003), 103; Moyer (2010), 610.

⁷⁷⁵ Heliod.2.25.1; 5.10.2; Morales (2022), 36.

⁷⁷⁶ Charit.6.3.6-7; Heliod.2.8.5.

⁷⁷⁷ Heliod.2.8.5; Morgan (1999), 276.

puff out her cheeks.⁷⁷⁸ This adds justification to Nausicles' switch by suggesting that it was not abnormal for men to quickly switch between courtesans if the women were not consistently attractive. As with other women in this genre, this implies from a male perspective only female beauty matters, reducing the women to objects and taking away their ability to influence events.

In having the aristocratic confidantes directly compete against each other, the exceptional beauty of the novelistic heroines is enhanced, especially as the rivals are also considered exceptionally attractive. Rhodogune is selected by the local Persian noblewomen to be the most beautiful and is described as Asia's equivalent to the heroine.⁷⁷⁹ Statira lacks the quasi-divine beauty of Callirhoe, but is still attractive, with Artaxates singling her out from the women available to the king and declaring her the "most beautiful" (καλλίστη) woman and her attendants proclaiming that she should have represented them in the public contest.⁷⁸⁰ Yet, their beauty cannot compare to Callirhoe's and their defeat in the contests enhances the mythical aura

⁷⁷⁸ Luc.*Dial.Meret*.6.3.

⁷⁷⁹ Charit.5.3.4.

⁷⁸⁰ Charit.6.3.4; 5.3.3; Haynes (2003), 103. Artaxates is never described as feeling attraction towards any women and this is likely due to his status as an eunuch. Romans often associated eunuchs with effeminacy and unmanliness (Williams (1999/2010), 140, 183-4). Hawley ((2000), 128, 135, 137) notes the feminine traits assigned to eunuchs in Dio Chrysostom's works and Williams ((1999/2010), 141) and Tougher ((2021), 18) comments on the change of gender of the words in *Catullus* 63 after Attis castrates himself. Horace regarded the shame of Marc Antony for serving under a woman to be equal to the dishonour of serving under Cleopatra's eunuchs (Hor.*Epod*.9.11-4) and Martial also links eunuchs with emasculation (Mart.5.41). The association of eunuchs with femininity can be found within the novel genre, with Jolowicz ((2021), 181, 183) arguing Melite equates having a relationship with an eunuch with a non-sexual bond between two women (Ach.Tat.5.22.5; 5.25.7; 5.25.8). See Tougher (2021), particularly 18-9, 29, 34-5, 42, 62-3, on feminised eunuchs in Roman literature.

surrounding the heroine's beauty. Both the crowd and Rhodogune herself quickly acknowledge her defeat after first seeing the heroine.⁷⁸¹ Artaxerxes' astonishment that Artaxates could consider Statira the most beautiful woman after seeing Callirhoe again reinforces the heroine's exceptional beauty through her victory over a worthy rival.⁷⁸² This is reflected by the narrative focus being on Callirhoe and not Statira during Artaxerxes' speech, in which he makes no further comments about his wife. Instead, the emphasis is on his lust for Callirhoe and how he feels tortured by her presence.⁷⁸³ The complete dismissal of Statira's appearance demonstrates how much Callirhoe eclipses her rival in beauty and the affections of the king, making her a potential threat to Statira's position and authority within the Persian court and her own household.⁷⁸⁴ Artaxerxes' quick dismissal of his own wife, despite her own beauty and other desirable qualities, suggests a desire to possess the "most beautiful" and therefore the "best" woman. Therefore, through the public and private beauty contests in the *Callirhoe* and *Aethiopica*, to some extent, the female characters are stripped of their personalities and agency through having their desirability solely determined on their physical beauty. With these contests often set up and judged by men, even against the female participants' wills, the women are objectified and set up as male prizes to be

⁷⁸¹ Charit.5.4.9; 5.4.9-10.

⁷⁸² Charit.6.3.6-7.

⁷⁸³ Charit.6.3.5-7.

⁷⁸⁴ Moyer (2010), 610. With Artaxerxes passionately lusting after the heroine, there is some merit in his slave's boasts the king could give Callirhoe several nations (Charit.6.6.8). If Callirhoe had accepted the king's offer, she would gain even more influence over him, which could limit Statira's own authority within her own household and court.

admired and compared with others. Consequently, this marginalises the women's bonds with each other by creating tension.

3.4.3 Female Beauty as Representation of Cultures

Female beauty competitions take many forms within the *Callirhoe* and often intersect on a personal and public level.⁷⁸⁵ Callirhoe competes against her rivals on both an individual level and a communal level as the allegedly most beautiful Greek woman. For instance, whilst the heroine formally competes against Rhodogune in the contest, she also competes against all the Persian noblewomen, evidenced by a noblewoman announcing a Greek woman “makes war against our households” (ἐπιστρατεύεται ταῖς ἡμετέραις οἰκείαις) by threatening the reputation of the Persian women's beauty.⁷⁸⁶ Whilst Chaereas later wins a military battle against the Persians, the women combat each other through their beauty, reflecting the different ideals the ancient world had for men and women. Yet, this comment is also important as it sets up the contest as one between the East and the West. The emphasis is on Callirhoe's Greekness and how this positions her as a rival against the local Persian community. Throughout the public beauty contest further mentions are made of these two cultures, either in comparison or to draw out the rivalry.⁷⁸⁷ The crowd seemingly embrace Rhodogune as their champion by

⁷⁸⁵ Schmeling ((2005), 37) notes the effect Callirhoe's beauty has on captivating both individuals and crowds.

⁷⁸⁶ Charit.5.3.1.

⁷⁸⁷ Charit.5.3.2; 5.3.4; 5.3.7.

remarking “we have won (νενικήκαμεν)”, with the first person plural and the following remarks making it clear that they consider themselves on the same side as Rhodogune against the foreign outsider.⁷⁸⁸ As Morales argued, this seemingly re-enacts the Persian Wars through the beauty contest by having the two women embody their cultures.⁷⁸⁹ In winning the competition, Callirhoe proves both her own and, by extension, Greece’s superiority over the Persians by the crowd’s submission in kneeling to her and forgetting their own champion.⁷⁹⁰

Aristocratic female *confidantes* within the *Callirhoe* are therefore used to symbolise their respective societies through their beauty. Haynes argues that women may be used to “embody the cultural integrity of a particular social group”.⁷⁹¹ Both Rhodogune and Callirhoe were chosen to compete as the most beautiful women and therefore best representatives within their respective societies. Their respective names reflect this, with Callirhoe translated as “beautifully flowing” and Rhodogune as “rose woman”. Her name is important as roses were associated with the Persian Empire and several queens and princesses of the Achaemenid dynasty shared the same name. These connotations, therefore, set up Rhodogune as the “flower of Persia”, an equivalent to Callirhoe’s status as the most beautiful of the Greeks. Likewise, Statira’s beauty makes her a representative of Persia, with

⁷⁸⁸ Charit.5.3.7.

⁷⁸⁹ Morales (2004), 160; (2006), 94.

⁷⁹⁰ Charit.5.4.9; Morales (2006), 94.

⁷⁹¹ Haynes (2000), 74.

Artaxates declaring her to be the “most beautiful” (καλλίστη) woman and her attendants’ claims that she should have represented the Persian women in the public contest.⁷⁹² Both incidents single out Statira from her peers marking her as exemplary in beauty. This places her on a somewhat equal level with Callirhoe, with both considered the most beautiful woman within their respective cultures. Although the novel offers no evidence to contradict these claims, these words should be read with some caution: the attendants could have been merely flattering Statira and Artaxates has ulterior motives in trying to persuade Artaxerxes not to pursue Callirhoe.⁷⁹³ Yet, regardless of their sincerity, this demonstrates physical beauty was considered a form of honour and a desirable form of social capital for women. By reducing the women to symbols of their respective cultures, this takes away their agency and objectifies them. This suggests that women within the novels are “naturally” set up to compete with each other on several levels.

3.4.4 Natural Rivals?

The main significance of the aristocratic *confidantes* being set up as competitors to the heroines is that it suggests that, in this genre, women are consistently set up as rivals regardless of how positive their bonds with each other are. This can not only be seen when studying the prominent, named female characters but also applies to the unnamed women in the

⁷⁹² Charit.5.3.3; Charit.6.3.4.

⁷⁹³ This is further enhanced by the ancient Greeks and Romans stereotyping Persians as flatterers. Refer to pp.91-2.

backgrounds of these texts, such as the women in the Persian court. A modern study, carried out on collegiate women, concluded that the participants viewed female rivalry as “seemingly natural” due to social and media expectations of femininity.⁷⁹⁴ It argues that women view themselves through a male gaze, adopting male judgements when judging themselves and other women, leading to competitions and rivalry.⁷⁹⁵ This resembles the equal female friendships within the novels. Even when two women are supposedly of an equal status and set up as friends, a large proportion of their portrayal revolves around contention for the same man and/or their beauty. This is absent from the male aristocratic friendships in this genre, which lack the tension found in these female only relationships.⁷⁹⁶ For instance, Polycharmus constantly supports Chaereas throughout the *Callirhoe* and places his interests above his own, such as taking on double the amount of work to prevent the hero being further beaten, wishing to die alongside his friend and joining a dangerous war to get revenge on Artaxerxes over his supposed unjust ruling against Chaereas.⁷⁹⁷ His unselfishness contrasts the self-interest and rivalry in the heroine’s female friendships within the same novel. The idea of female competitiveness between women of comparable social status is not exclusive to friendships, but also exists in relationships between heroines and female antagonists, in the passive female rivals that

⁷⁹⁴ Koontz Anthony, Okorie and Norman (2016), 311, 319.

⁷⁹⁵ Koontz Anthony, Okorie and Norman (2016), 314.

⁷⁹⁶ Examples of such friendships include Clitophon, Clinias and Menelaus in *L&C*, Habrocomes and Hippothous in *Ephesian Tale* and Theagenes and Cnemon in the *Aethiopica*.

⁷⁹⁷ Charit.4.2.2-3; 4.2.14; 7.1.7-11; Hock (1997), 156. On Polycharmus and Chaereas’ friendship see Hock (1997), 150-6.

have no bond with the heroine (such as Calligone and Melite in *L&C*) and in the women in the background of their novels (including the women in the Persian court in the *Callirhoe*).⁷⁹⁸ In all these cases, the women are set up as opponents in beauty competitions and/or trying to win the affections of the same man. Instead of focusing on female unity and solidarity, the emphasis is on division and associating them with male values. In her study of the “Beauty Myth”, Wolf argues that this conception is all about male institutions and power over women and subsequently competition is always a recurring feature of the myth dividing women from each other.⁷⁹⁹

Morales claims that the ancient novels promote “female rivalry over friendship”, but this has flaws: mistress-slave bonds lack the competition element, rivalry does not dominate affection in most of the equal relationships, and there are more female *confidantes* than the singular one (Plangon) acknowledged by Morales.⁸⁰⁰ Yet, when it comes to relationships between women of a similar status, there is always some degree of rivalry. For instance, Rhodogune and Callirhoe have an amicable relationship in the later stages of the novel, but this pales by comparison to the amount of attention and detail given to the beauty contest, suggesting that their rivalry is more important and that male concepts and perceptions still influence positive female-only bonds. The same could be said of Callirhoe’s relationship with Statira and other female friendships within the *Callirhoe*. For instance,

⁷⁹⁸ Discussed further in the next chapter.

⁷⁹⁹ Wolf (1991/2002), 13-4.

⁸⁰⁰ Morales (2008), 50, 49.

there is much solidarity between the Persian women after they decide to challenge the outsider, with them democratically choosing a champion and then adorning her with the finest jewels.⁸⁰¹ However, the text also reveals arguments between the women over who to select as the most beautiful.⁸⁰² In short, a beauty contest in miniature. Unlike Callirhoe's competitions with Rhodogune and Statira, this occurs between women who know each other well and have the same goals and further demonstrates how this novel marginalises female relationships and distances women from each other, despite portraying multiple female friendships positively.

The long-standing idea that women are "naturally" jealous of each other and more suited to be rivals than friends is prominent in this genre.⁸⁰³ The noblewomen in the queen's court are those who first feel insulted and threatened by reports of Callirhoe and they arrange for the public contest to happen in the first place.⁸⁰⁴ Even after Rhodogune gracefully concedes victory to Callirhoe ending their rivalry, there is still bitterness from some women jealous of her beauty. This is referred to both by Callirhoe's comment on their hatred and by the text after the competition between Dionysius and Chaereas is made public.⁸⁰⁵ This implies that Callirhoe indirectly competes with every woman surrounding her. Notably, the crowd of women are divided in their

⁸⁰¹ Charit.5.3.4.

⁸⁰² Charit.5.3.3.

⁸⁰³ Pp.230-1.

⁸⁰⁴ Charit.5.3.1-3.

⁸⁰⁵ Charit.7.5.5; 5.4.2.

sympathies towards the heroine.⁸⁰⁶ Those envious of Callirhoe and proud of their own looks want her to be embarrassed; the others support her, but only due to their own envy of local competitors.⁸⁰⁷ This demonstrates that female rivalry is not solely linked with Callirhoe, but also occurs on a local level and between other female characters; on this model, all women are constantly obligated and expected to compete against each other, making them more suited to be rivals than friends. Therefore, although there are many examples of female friendships in the *Callirhoe*, there is also a deep rivalry between the women motivated by looks and envy. Rhodogune and Statira are clearly set up as friends to the heroine, yet the novel's prioritisation of their roles as competitors marginalises these bonds and suggests women in this novel are unable to form relationships without tension.

3.4.5 Beauty Within a Female Sphere

Whilst male characters view physical beauty as an essential trait for women, it seemingly does not play as great a role within a female exclusive sphere. It is only when external factors are introduced that it becomes an issue, causing tension between the women. For instance, Statira and Arsinoe only feel jealousy for their competitors after Artaxerxes and Nausicles respectively declare Callirhoe and Thisbe to be the victors of their contests.⁸⁰⁸ After Rhodogune gracefully accepts defeat, she bears no grudge towards Callirhoe

⁸⁰⁶ Anderson (2017), 18.

⁸⁰⁷ Charit.5.4.2-3.

⁸⁰⁸ Pp.227-9; pp.238-40.

and later befriends the heroine.⁸⁰⁹ This suggests that whilst the women's physical beauty is important in the context of the public sphere in front of a crowd, it has little effect on the private relationship between the women. In a similar manner, Statira is not negatively affected by Callirhoe's beauty until external influences become involved. Whilst the queen initially mistakes the heroine for Aphrodite, Statira is welcoming to Callirhoe when the latter's identity is revealed and displays no signs of hostility.⁸¹⁰ She believes herself to be honoured by being entrusted with the heroine's care instead of feeling envious of Callirhoe's beauty, suggesting physical appearances are not a source of tension within a female exclusive sphere.⁸¹¹ Statira only starts to feel resentment towards the heroine's beauty when her husband makes his desire for Callirhoe obvious. Artaxerxes is described as frequently glancing at Callirhoe whilst talking with his wife.⁸¹² In doing so, along with his frequent visits into the women's chambers, he makes it evident to Statira that he finds the heroine to be more attractive and therefore more desirable out of the two. This causes the heroine's beauty to become an issue in the women's relationship, with Statira described as feeling depressed that Callirhoe's presence means that their beauty could constantly be compared.⁸¹³ It does not seem a coincidence that this admission occurs just before the text brings up Statira's suspicions of Artaxerxes. This suggests that, in this novel, the constant eagerness of men to judge the desirability of women solely on their

⁸⁰⁹ Charit.5.4.9.

⁸¹⁰ Charit.5.9.1; 5.9.2-3.

⁸¹¹ Charit.5.9.2-3.

⁸¹² Charit.6.1.7.

⁸¹³ Charit.6.1.6.

physical beauty causes competitions between women and subsequent hostility in female relationships. Looks do not seem as important to the female characters in a private environment, enabling the women to form close personal bonds, but become a source of tension when competing for the affections of one man or the glory of their respective cultures. This turns the women against each other, despite having amicable bonds outside of their competitions. This suggests that the male obsession with possessing the most beautiful woman causes women to become envious of the heroine's looks.

The idea men are the cause of female envy in the novels is further enhanced by comparing the long-term impacts of Callirhoe's beauty on the genders, with female characters suffering less than their male equivalents.

Comparisons can be drawn between Statira and Dionysius' first impressions of Callirhoe, where both initially mistake her for Aphrodite and then promise to help the heroine when the truth is revealed.⁸¹⁴ Yet, Anderson claims that these reactions could be viewed as ironic, as the reader is aware Callirhoe's presence will later cause harm to those welcoming her and her beauty.⁸¹⁵ In the case of Dionysius, this statement is true, with readers familiar with the genre aware that the heroine will reunite with Chaereas by the novel's conclusion.⁸¹⁶ However, Statira's friendship with Callirhoe ultimately saves

⁸¹⁴ Charit.2.3.6; 5.9.1; 2.6.12; 5.9.3.

⁸¹⁵ Anderson (1982), 17.

⁸¹⁶ De Temmerman (2014), 156; Montiglio (2013), 164, 169.

her from servitude and leads to her reunion with Artaxerxes.⁸¹⁷ This suggests that Statira benefits in the long-term from her association with Callirhoe, despite being threatened by her presence and beauty. Instead, it is her husband that is discontented in the final stages of the novel, again from losing the woman he lusts over.⁸¹⁸ This suggests that whilst Callirhoe's beauty has the power to affect all people, it has the most devastating and long-lasting effect against men rather than her female rivals. Statira overcomes her initial jealousy to form a friendship with Callirhoe which benefits the queen in the long-term. This reaffirms the idea that Statira's resentment towards Callirhoe's looks develops from her husband comparing the two women rather than from vanity. Therefore, the obsession with female beauty in this novel is primarily a male trait and only becomes a female issue creating tension when men and male-related values force the women into competition with each other.

3.4.6 A Different Rivalry: Charicleia and Nausicleia

Although Charicleia and Nausicleia have a positive bond with other, there are still slight hints of tension between them. However, this seems subtler, less direct and not personal compared to the relationships in the *Callirhoe*. Charicleia shows signs of resentment or envy over Nausicleia's marriage by leaving the party during the wedding to return to her room, where she breaks

⁸¹⁷ Charit.8.5.5-8.

⁸¹⁸ Charit.8.5.8.

down into tears.⁸¹⁹ Calasiris even rebukes her for this, demonstrating how unjustified and unreasonable Charicleia's behaviour is.⁸²⁰ What is unusual here is that the envy comes from the heroine. This differs from the rest of the equal novelistic friendships where the hostility comes from the *confidante*: Statira is jealous of Artaxerxes' infatuation with Callirhoe and Arsinoe with Thisbe for appropriating her lover.⁸²¹ The only other heroine to show signs of jealousy towards a fellow female is Sinon in the *Babylonian Tale*, whose hostility towards the Farmer's daughter is extreme.⁸²² However, because Nausicleia and Charicleia are not competing sexually for the same man this is not as extreme as other cases. There is no love triangle between the women and Cnemon. Charicleia and Nausicleia are firmly established as the love interests of Theagenes and Cnemon respectively in this novel and at no point do their love interests interlock. Instead, the treacherous Thisbe takes the role of the other woman in Cnemon's love story, but she hardly fits the role of a serious love interest as she acts on behalf of her mistress.⁸²³ This overreaction to the marriage could imply that Charicleia disapproves of Nausicleia personally. Yet, the text clarifies the actual reason: she is jealous that Cnemon is happily married while she is still separated from Theagenes.⁸²⁴ Throughout her lament Charicleia contrasts the differences between the couples: Cnemon is married (Κνήμων γαμῆ) but Theagenes is wandering

⁸¹⁹ Helioid.6.8.3-9.1.

⁸²⁰ Helioid.6.9.3.

⁸²¹ Charit.6.1.6-8; 9.4; Helioid.2.8.4-9.1.

⁸²² See the next chapter (4.6.4) on the *Babyloniaca*.

⁸²³ See pp.134-6.

⁸²⁴ Helioid.6.8.3-5.

(Θεαγένες δὲ ἀλητεύει); Nausicleia is a bride (Ναυσίκλεια νυμφεύεται) but Charicleia is alone (Χαρίκλεια δὲ μόνη); fate has not treated the couples equally (τῶν δὲ καθ' ἡμᾶς ὅτι μὴ τούτοις ἡμῖν ἕξ ἴσου κέχρησθε).⁸²⁵ Whilst this suggests that Charicleia does not feel any personal enmity for Nausicleia, it still demonstrates that the heroine is thinking about her own position instead of feeling happiness for her friend. Consistent with other equal friendships in this genre, this implies that it is impossible for two females of an equal status to form a connection without envy, jealousy or self-interest, in the way that the male protagonists have with their companions.

Nausicleia's name could also hint at her being a rival to the heroine due to its similarity to Nausicaa in the *Odyssey*, with both women sharing the same primary roles as prospective brides and dutiful daughters.⁸²⁶ In general, I am sceptical of works on literary allusions of minor characters' names within this novel as most of the ancient sources are now lost. Some scholars appear determined to make potential links between different works despite the connections often being tenuous.⁸²⁷ For instance, Jones' argument that the name Cnemon could be inspired by Menander's *Dyscolos* is plausible, but her claims Cnemon will eventually end up as a misanthrope like in the comedy are speculative given the ambiguity surrounding his eventual fate.⁸²⁸ However, in this particular instance, the connection seems plausible. There has been

⁸²⁵ Heliod.6.8.4; 6.8.5.

⁸²⁶ Bowie (1995), 278; Keyes (1922), 44.

⁸²⁷ Bowie (1995); Jones (2006), 561.

⁸²⁸ Jones (2006), 557, 557n65.

significant scholarly interest in demonstrating that Heliodorus was influenced by Homer in plot and characterisation.⁸²⁹ It is perhaps not surprising, in light of this association, that characters in Cnemon's story may be said to resemble those in the *Odyssey*. In both texts, the women are portrayed as "ideal" young, prospective brides, with their fathers acting as good hosts for the protagonists and seeking to marry off their daughters respectively to Cnemon and Odysseus.⁸³⁰ What separates the women is the level of agency they are given. In contrast to Nausicleia, Nausicaa is a more prominent and developed character. She takes an active role in courting Odysseus and her opinion on potential marriage to him is made explicit.⁸³¹ She is still a pawn to external influences: Athena openly uses her divine powers to manipulate Nausicaa into helping Odysseus and it is clear that her father is the person who will ultimately determine who will marry her.⁸³² However, Alcinous' immediate realisation of his daughter's true motivation in washing her clothes and claim that he would not refuse her anything suggests that he was acting according to her wishes, especially as he had not previously betrothed Nausicaa to any of her suitors in Phaeacia.⁸³³ This gives her some degree of agency. On the other hand, Nausicleia is presented as a potential bride for Cnemon because her father wishes it and it is her father who takes an active role in the

⁸²⁹ On the connection between the *Aethiopica* and *The Odyssey* see Anderson (2017), 38; Keyes (1922); Lateiner (2005), 432, 435; Lefteratou (2018), 271-98; Montiglio (2013), 114-6, 125-6; Sandy (1982), 155-7; and Telò (2011).

⁸³⁰ For the characterisation of Nausicaa see Doherty (1995), 123-4; and Felson (1994), 46-9.

⁸³¹ Hom.*Od.*6.244-5. On Nausicaa's active role in courting see Gross (1976), 314; Katz (1991), 137; Pomeroy (1975), 19-20; and Van Nortwick (1979), 270.

⁸³² Hom.*Od.*6.25-40; 6.139-40; 6.229-35; 6.286-9; 7.311-15.

⁸³³ Hom.*Od.*6.66-8, 6.282-4.

courtship, such as when he dresses his daughter up and promises her in marriage.⁸³⁴ Therefore, whilst Nausicleia might imitate her namesake in her main purposes, her complete lack of agency objectifies her and prevents her from influencing the narrative. This implies that her wishes and opinions are irrelevant and she is defined by her usefulness and relationship to the men surrounding her, relegating her bond with Charicleia to the background of the novel.

Notably, Nausicaa served as a potential rival to Penelope for Odysseus' affections, despite both sharing many similarities through their portrayals as "ideal" women and conformation to ancient views on female virtue.⁸³⁵ Odysseus even excludes Nausicaa from his later retelling of his adventures to Penelope, placing her on the same level as Circe and Calypso despite the hero having full affairs with the other women.⁸³⁶ With Nausicleia having connections through her name to her literary predecessor, she could present a potentially serious threat to Charicleia. However, there are vital differences between the texts that prevents the women in the *Aethiopica* from becoming direct rivals. Unlike in the *Odyssey*, Nausicleia and Charicleia are in the same household at the same time and form some type of friendship because they are not love rivals.⁸³⁷ This is unusual for this genre. A key reason why

⁸³⁴ Heliod.6.6.1; 6.8.1.

⁸³⁵ On the connection between Nausicaa and Penelope see Doherty (1995), 85-6, 144; and Katz (1991), 86-7, 141.

⁸³⁶ Hom.*Od.*23.310-42.

⁸³⁷ Demonstrated by Charicleia's distress for her upcoming separation from Nausicleia (Heliod.6.8.4) and the other woman insisting on seeing off the heroine (Heliod.6.11.1).

aristocratic females are more prone to be enemies or have little contact with each other, instead of having anything resembling friendship, is because they often are set up as potential love interests for the same man.⁸³⁸ Even Statira, the most prominent aristocratic *confidante*, has a strained relationship with Callirhoe on account of Artaxerxes' one-sided infatuation with her.⁸³⁹ This means that unlike the other female characters, there is no rivalry regarding love between Nausicleia and Charicleia. Whilst some tension still exists between the women in the *Aethiopica*, their lack of competition over a male minimalizes the conflict and makes it less personal and direct than the female aristocratic friendships in the *Callirhoe*. Despite the male author marginalising this bond and relegating it to the background of the novel, Nausicleia and Charicleia's personal relationship is not directly influenced by a male character and their friendship is one of the most positive female bonds in the genre.⁸⁴⁰

3.5 A Different Model of Friendship: Arsinoe and Thisbe

Whilst most "equal" female friendships occur between aristocrats, the relationship between the *hetairai* Arsinoe and Thisbe represents a different model, being the only "equal" bond between women of a lower status. Subsequently, this relationship both resembles and contrasts the other

⁸³⁸ Discussed further in next chapter.

⁸³⁹ Refer to pp.227-31.

⁸⁴⁰ See pp.159-62.

friendships discussed in this chapter. For instance, rivalry and competition are still present, with the merchant Nausicles choosing Thisbe over her companion for her looks.⁸⁴¹ This causes tension between the women, with Arsinoe posing a potential threat to her companion. Unlike the aristocratic friendships, both Thisbe and Arsinoe lack self-control by acting on their base desires: the former appropriates Nausicles from the latter and Arsinoe takes revenge by revealing Thisbe's secrets.⁸⁴² In some aspects, this bond represents a friendship of utility, associated with mistress-slave relationships, but lacks the element of mutual dependency.⁸⁴³ It, therefore, represents a different model from other novelistic female friendships, resembling both the "unequal" and "equal" friendships. This reflects Roman elitist attitudes towards class and suggests that the best friendships can only occur between people of a higher class. There is some ambiguity over how "equal" Arsinoe and Thisbe are in terms of their social status. The women are clearly depicted as *hetairai* granting them some equality, but Thisbe's status as a slave creates a slight power imbalance that affects their motives and the risks they undertake. Heliodorus encourages readers to view Thisbe and Arsinoe as being of a comparable social status, portraying the women as having similar traits and skills to the point that they become rivals for the same man.⁸⁴⁴

⁸⁴¹ Heliod.2.8.5. See pp.199-200.

⁸⁴² Heliod.2.8.5; Heliod.2.9.1.

⁸⁴³ 2.2.

⁸⁴⁴ 3.6.3.

The women are initially portrayed as *hetairai*, known for their education, cultural talents and having greater independence than ordinary *pornai*.⁸⁴⁵ Heliodorus never uses this term, instead introducing Arsinoe as the “pipe girl” (αύλητρίδα).⁸⁴⁶ Whilst Goldman argued that there is often a lack of explicit evidence in ancient literature associating this word with prostitution, pipe players were frequently eroticised in Graeco-Roman literature and art and it is likely that many were hired for sexual favours in addition to their musical talents.⁸⁴⁷ However, there are certain features within the text which imply that the women were intended to be viewed as *hetairai*, including Thisbe’s intelligence, Arsinoe’s independence and both women seemingly having only one lover at a time. It is surprising that there are two named courtesans in this novel who are both successful; in the other novels prostitutes are usually anonymous and hardly feature in the texts.⁸⁴⁸ Arsinoe is “well described” for a marginal character and established as a courtesan with many lovers.⁸⁴⁹ She is set up as a successful *hetaira*, both through owning a house and by Thisbe assuming Demainete has heard of her.⁸⁵⁰ The text makes it clear, despite her initial status as a slave, that Thisbe possesses a similar status, through her

⁸⁴⁵ Whilst a “grey area” of overlap exists between the terms, most scholars acknowledge a difference between the two groups (Budin (2006), 36-7; Davidson (1997), 117, 120; Kurke (1999), 178; Miner (2003), 21n9). See Davidson (1997), 109-36; and Kurke (1999), 178-86 for further discussions on these differences and Miner (2003), 29-30 on how Apollodorus distinguishes between the terms in *Against Neaera* to cause insult.

⁸⁴⁶ Heliod.1.15.6.

⁸⁴⁷ Goldman (2015), 29n30, 30; Ar.Vesp.1345-85; Ath.13.587c; 13.607d-f; Men.PK.340-1; Theophr.Char.20.10; Goldman (2015), 29, 36-8; Kapparis (2011), 223; McClure (2003), 9-10, 21-2, 220n38.

⁸⁴⁸ Several scholars have cast doubts over Lycaenion’s marriage status in *D&C* and have speculated she may potentially be a concubine (Johne (1996), 191; Haynes (2003), 107).

⁸⁴⁹ John (1996), 194.

⁸⁵⁰ Heliod.1.15.6.

reference to Arsinoe as a “old professional acquaintance” (πάλαι γνωρίμην ἀπὸ τῆς τέχνης) and renting herself and her talents out after her betrayal of Demainete.⁸⁵¹ The use of “τέχνη” is important here as it can be interpreted as being skilled in a trade or craft, but also as being skilled in cunning and trickery.⁸⁵² Both interpretations can apply to Arsinoe and Thisbe. As scholars have noted, Thisbe possesses attributes desired in *hetairai* (such as the ability to write, play a musical instrument, beauty) and surprisingly takes a dominant role in approaching Cnemon to start their affair.⁸⁵³ Even in her initial manipulations of Demainete and Arsinoe, Thisbe uses her role as courtesan to lie to both women to set up her mistress’ downfall. In depicting Thisbe as a courtesan, she is placed on a relatively equal social status to Arsinoe.

Despite these connections between the pair as *hetairai*, there is one important difference between their statuses: Thisbe is a slave. As Budin and Kurke noted, *hetairai* could be either slaves, freedwomen or freeborn and also could be self-employed or under the service of a pimp.⁸⁵⁴ Therefore, Arsace and Thisbe can both be considered courtesans whilst having different freedom statuses. Although her false story to Arsinoe suggests that Thisbe has some freedom in choosing her lovers, she does not have complete

⁸⁵¹ Helioid.1.15.7; 2.8.4.

⁸⁵² LSJ 1785.

⁸⁵³ Haynes (2003), 126; Johne (1996), 194; Morgan (1999), 275-6, 278. Thisbe’s assertive approach is comparable to Palaestra in *The Ass* ([Lucian].Ass.6-10) and Photis in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* (Apul.Met. 2.6, 2.16-7; 2.18; 3.19-20; 3.22), where female slaves also take a dominant role in their liaisons with disastrous consequences for their male lovers (Apul.Met.3.24-5; [Lucian].Ass.13).

⁸⁵⁴ Budin (2006), 37; Kurke (1999), 178.

control.⁸⁵⁵ When Thisbe approaches Cnemon, it is because she has been ordered to do so by her mistress and not because Cnemon has suddenly become more attractive, as he initially thinks.⁸⁵⁶ If Thisbe had refused to follow instructions, she would have been punished by Demainete.⁸⁵⁷ Her lack of personal freedom is demonstrated by her previous refusals of Cnemon's advances, which changes as soon as she is told to pursue him.⁸⁵⁸ Although her refusal of these advances suggests Cnemon is setting her up as a *hetaira* with the right to choose her lovers, Thisbe, as a slave, is unable to act on her own free will without risking a penalty, unlike Arsinoe.⁸⁵⁹ As Haynes notes, the text does not address Thisbe's status and inability to refuse in Cnemon's narration.⁸⁶⁰ Although Arsinoe could previously have been a slave, she has certainly been successful enough to have some independence and own a house and there is no reference to her having a master.⁸⁶¹ Therefore, although the novel implies that their relationship is one between two women of a similar status, there is a slight imbalance in their social positions.

This becomes especially important when considering the later part of their relationship. Having gained her freedom after Demainete's suicide, Thisbe successfully rents herself and her skills out, whilst also gaining the affections

⁸⁵⁵ Helioid.1.15.7.

⁸⁵⁶ Helioid.1.11.3.

⁸⁵⁷ Johne (1996), 194. See pp.55-6 on Demainete presenting a threat to Thisbe.

⁸⁵⁸ Helioid.1.11.3.

⁸⁵⁹ Johne (1996), 194.

⁸⁶⁰ Haynes (2003), 126.

⁸⁶¹ Helioid.1.15.6.

of Nausicles from Arsinoe.⁸⁶² In revenge, Arsinoe reveals Thisbe's previous conspiracy to Demainete's family.⁸⁶³ There are notable differences in their betrayals. In her betrayal of Demainete, Thisbe has to set a subtle and elaborate trap for her mistress. Arsinoe does not have to resort to such measures and implicates Thisbe without having to lie. Although Schwartz has claimed that Arsinoe is another "expert manipulator", her betrayal is not as complex or ingenious as that of other females both in this novel and across the genre.⁸⁶⁴ In both cases, the women approach members of the aristocracy offering to reveal the "truth" about previous schemes caused by their female victims.⁸⁶⁵ However, Thisbe is forced to forge evidence of a false affair to convince her master to act, despite Aristippos supposedly having pre-existing suspicions of his wife, whilst Arsinoe's account is accepted immediately by Demainete's family.⁸⁶⁶

This is partly because of the social classes of their respective victims. As with other slaves in this genre, Thisbe acts against a person of vastly higher social status and in a direct position of power over her. Arsinoe does almost the opposite by revealing the truth that a slave plotted against her own mistress. The differences in approaches are not solely caused by social status. It is unsurprising that Demainete's family would want to believe Arsinoe's

⁸⁶² Heliod.2.8.5.

⁸⁶³ Heliod.2.9.1.

⁸⁶⁴ Schwartz (2016), 183. E.g. Plangon's manipulations of both Dionysius and Callirhoe to further her own agenda (2.3.3, 2.3.4, 2.4.1) and Cybele's ability to persuade Charicleia to drink the poison (pp.80-1).

⁸⁶⁵ Heliod.1.16.2-3; 2.9.1.

⁸⁶⁶ Heliod.1.16.5; 2.9.2.

statement and exonerate Demainete (and themselves by extension) from the shame of adultery.⁸⁶⁷ There is ancient evidence suggesting that a woman's infidelity brought shame upon her family. For instance, Seneca's *De Beneficiis* describes the Emperor Augustus' banishment of his daughter Julia and his subsequent regret for revealing the scandal to the public in his initial anger.⁸⁶⁸ Suetonius portrays the same event similarly, claiming that the emperor informed the senate of the scandal through a letter and refused for a long time to meet anyone in person out of *pudor* (shame).⁸⁶⁹ In his *Pro Caelio*, Cicero assumed the voice of one of Clodia's ancestors, Appius Claudius, to argue that she had shamed her family through her sexual misdeeds, with Clodia's behaviour contrasted with the previous virtues of both her male and female ancestors.⁸⁷⁰ Whilst Cicero has a political and personal motivation to discredit Clodia, having an existing feud with her brother, this still suggests that a woman's sexual integrity could be weaponised as a tool to dishonour her entire family. Therefore, it makes sense that Demainete's family would be eager to clear her name to protect their own reputation.

Aristippos, on the other hand, would need conclusive proof of his wife's adultery to act on the information provided by Thisbe, making it necessary for

⁸⁶⁷ Looking at anthropological studies of the modern Mediterranean after the Second World War, McGinn ((1998), 10) has theorized certain patterns could potentially apply to the Roman Empire, with family honour dependent on both men's ability to protect their relatives sexual honour and women's sexual integrity. This must be viewed with scepticism due to the time difference between the civilizations discussed. See McGinn (1998), 10-4 on this approach and his justification for using it.

⁸⁶⁸ *Sen.Ben.*32.1-2.

⁸⁶⁹ *Suet.Aug.*2.65.2.

⁸⁷⁰ *Cic.Cael.*33-4; Skinner (2011), 21, 62.

the slave to lure her mistress to Arsinoe's house. Female adultery was considered a great insult against a husband's masculinity and a source of shame, by suggesting he did not have control over his household and casting doubts on the paternity of any children.⁸⁷¹ Scholars have claimed that before the introduction of the *Lex Iulia* by Augustus, making adultery a state crime, most of these incidents were considered private matters and dealt within the private sphere to avoid making the husband's disgrace public knowledge.⁸⁷² Within the world of the novels, however, adultery plays a public role. In addition to Demainete being presumably escorted to the courts, Thersander also formally accuses his wife and Clitophon of adultery in *L&C*.⁸⁷³ These incidents reflect the contemporary reality in Rome after the introduction of the *Lex Iulia*, which also made it a crime for a husband to not immediately divorce his unfaithful wife or report her sin.⁸⁷⁴ Yet, false accusations of adultery could be considered harmful to the accuser and this is also reflected in this genre. Several examples within the texts can be found of husbands being publicly punished for acting on fabricated evidence and subsequently being proved wrong: Chaereas faces the death penalty in a public trial for "killing" Callirhoe, Thersander flees his trial after being proved to be a liar and Aristippos is exiled when he fails to produce Thisbe to testify.⁸⁷⁵ It is therefore necessary that Aristippos has conclusive proof of his wife's adultery

⁸⁷¹ See Edwards (2009), 48-57; and LaGuardia (2008), 22-6 for the connection between adultery and masculinity.

⁸⁷² McGuinn (1998), 141; Skinner (2021), 189.

⁸⁷³ Heliod.1.17.5-6; Ach.Tat.8.8.13-4.

⁸⁷⁴ See McGuinn (1998), 171-94 on the treatment of husbands viewed as accomplices to their unfaithful wives.

⁸⁷⁵ Charit.1.5.2-6.1; Ach.Tat.8.14.5-6; Heliod.2.9.3.

to keep her dowry and take public revenge on her. By catching Demainete “in the act” himself, Aristippos not only has the option of punishing his wife and her lover on the spot, but can also provide himself as a first-person witness (along with Thisbe’s presumably forthcoming testimony).⁸⁷⁶ However, because of the public shame he would endure and his wife’s powerful connections, Aristippos would only risk his own reputation on the word of his own slave if Thisbe could provide “incontestable” proof, making it necessary for her to come up with a complicated plan. In blaming a slave for Demainete’s misdemeanours, Arsinoe has no need to manipulate or deceive.

A similar pattern exists regarding the risks the women take through their betrayals and their motives. Thisbe undeniably is in a worse situation: as a slave, she was considered the property of her masters and liable to torture.⁸⁷⁷ Her situation is therefore volatile and she risks everything by plotting against Demainete, as is later reflected by Thisbe having to flee Athens in order to avoid the trial and possible torture to testify.⁸⁷⁸ Her actions only occur because Demainete posed a significant risk towards her slave and Thisbe arguably acted out of necessity. However, Arsinoe reacts out of jealousy and pettiness from losing Nausicles to her former friend. Whilst both women choose to betray each other’s trust, circumstances do not force Arsinoe to

⁸⁷⁶ Writing on Augustus’ *Lex Iulia*, Lendon (2011), 86 argues that the law restricted a male relative’s ability to enact physical vengeance on an adulteress and her lover from earlier laws and precedents. Nevertheless, he notes that this law still enabled a husband to kill the lover provided he caught them in the act and the adulterer was of a “degraded social category”.

⁸⁷⁷ See pg.44 for slaves being tortured in Athenian law courts for evidence.

⁸⁷⁸ Heliod.2.9.4.

betray Thisbe's confidences to protect herself and she acts out of free will not force. There is little personal risk involved in Arsinoe's accusations and this is reflected in her disappearance in the novel. After fulfilling her purpose in the plot by revealing Thisbe's schemes, Arsinoe abruptly disappears from the text with her eventual fate left unclear.⁸⁷⁹ There is no mention of her suffering any punishment or violent death, surprising as many courtesans and prostitutes in this genre end up dying as substitutes for the heroine.⁸⁸⁰ Therefore, whilst the *Aethiopica* sets up the women as contemporaries of a similar social class and portrays them as *hetairai*, Thisbe's role as a slave means there is a slight power imbalance between the women.

3.6 A Potential Threat

Whilst the equal friendships within this genre are not friendships of utility, there is still an element of dependency. Although the women have a similar "natural" social status, there are periods where one participant is in a slight position of power over the other: Thisbe is dependent on Arsinoe's silence and both Statira and Nausicleia act as hostesses to Callirhoe and Charicleia respectively. Because of the existing tensions between the women, caused by being set up as rivals, there is always the potential threat of one acting against the other because of their jealousy/envy. This draws from an

⁸⁷⁹ Schwartz (2016), 234; Heliod.2.9.1.

⁸⁸⁰ Examples include the prostitute substituted for Leucippe on the ship (Ach.Tat.8.1.3) and Thisbe herself. Explanations offered by scholars for these substitutions include a contrast between the virtuous heroine and a "woman of loose morals" (Lefteratou (2018), 81) and that, unlike the heroines, these women represent no man's individuality (Elson (1992), 217).

established Graeco-Roman trope of women being overly jealous and violent, both within this genre and as part of the wider culture. There is a wide range of models within the novel: the underlying threat of Statira potentially acting upon her jealousy and fitting in with the other novelistic “jealous wives”, the serious threat that Arsinoe poses to Thisbe caused by a personal betrayal and Nausicleia removing one of Charicleia’s closest allies from the narrative. This suggests an underlying possibility of betrayal even in the positive female friendships, whereas the male friendships within this genre lack this element.

3.6.1 Envy/Jealousy and the Potential for Violence

As novelistic women are constantly reluctantly forced to compete against each other, tension arises between the female characters, especially when there is envy and jealousy over the affections of one man. Statira and Callirhoe, and Arsinoe and Thisbe initially have positive relationships without any friction and this likely would have continued if Artaxerxes and Nausicles had not lusted over their lovers’ rivals. Consequently, Statira and Arsinoe represent a potential threat to their companions if either party should act upon their emotions. As *hetairai* were frequently stereotyped as greedy and selfish in Graeco-Roman literature, it is unsurprising that Thisbe and Arsinoe act in their own interests, leading both to betray each other.⁸⁸¹ In contrast, Statira does not act upon her emotions but that does not diminish the

⁸⁸¹ Alci.4.9; Luc.*Dial.Meret.*7; Mart.9.32; Men.*Dis.Exap.*91-102; Plaut.*Truc.*22-85; 533-45; 568-74; 901-12. Pp.231-8.

potential danger that she represents to Callirhoe. Whilst Statira is portrayed as feeling resentment towards Callirhoe, the text makes it clear that this is mainly caused by her suspicion of Artaxerxes' intentions towards the heroine, suggesting that she feels no personal dislike towards Callirhoe herself.⁸⁸² Notably, both women are opposed to Artaxerxes' advances, with the heroine rejecting Artaxerxes' indirect propositions through his eunuch multiple times.⁸⁸³ Despite this, the women still become unwilling rivals. This suggests that both are limited in their power to influence events in the patriarchal setting of the novel and subject to male desires. In contrast, the heroes' friendships with their male companions are never threatened by a woman in a similar manner. Clinias and Menelaus are only depicted as being attracted to men in *L&C* and Cnemon and Polycharmus are never described as feeling any erotic attraction towards the heroines of their respective novels, with them instead being romantically linked and betrothed to other women.⁸⁸⁴ Whilst Hippothous attempts to seduce Anthia, he loses interest when he realises she is the wife of his friend.⁸⁸⁵ Konstan claims that the male friendships serve to complement the romantic relationships between the protagonists.⁸⁸⁶ As Statira and Callirhoe's friendship is depicted positively, this

⁸⁸² Charit.6.1.6-8; 6.9.4.

⁸⁸³ Charit.6.5.6-10; 6.7.8-12.

⁸⁸⁴ Polycharmus is directly described as the "Patroclus" to Chaereas' "Achilles" (Charit.1.5.2), hinting at a potential erotic/romantic connection between the men. This is further hinted at by Callirhoe when she claims that their marriage has grieved Chaereas' ἐραστάς (male lovers) (Charit.1.3.2).

⁸⁸⁵ Xen.5.9.11-2; 5.19.13; Konstan (1997), 117.

⁸⁸⁶ Konstan (1997), 116.

suggests that female exclusive friendships are more tenuous than their male equivalents and these relationships are still under the control of men.

In having this relationship influenced by Artaxerxes' one-sided lust, Statira becomes a potential threat to the heroine due to her resentment towards Callirhoe.⁸⁸⁷ The Persian queen is described as feeling bitterness towards her rival on two occasions: when she becomes suspicious of Artaxerxes' frequent visits and when she does not want Callirhoe to travel with the army.⁸⁸⁸ This jealousy, whilst understandable, suggests that it is impossible for two women of a similar status to have a completely amicable relationship without tension caused by a man. This sets Statira up as a potentially serious threat to the heroine if she should act upon this jealousy. From the start of the women's acquaintance, the text subtly hints at the possibility of Statira turning against the heroine in the future. The queen is described as initially delighted to receive Callirhoe as a charge, with *ἀσμένῃ* (greatly pleased) and *ἠγάλλετο* (being honoured) used to express her pleasure and pride, and willing to put aside any jealousy.⁸⁸⁹ However, this is not caused by any desire to get to know the heroine, but because Statira believes being entrusted with Callirhoe demonstrates honour to herself.⁸⁹⁰ Having ulterior motives and placing her own interests first makes this relationship resemble a friendship of utility, with the constant threat of Statira potentially turning on the heroine if the

⁸⁸⁷ Reardon (1996), 310.

⁸⁸⁸ Charit.6.1.6-8; 6.9.4.

⁸⁸⁹ Charit.5.9.2-3.

⁸⁹⁰ Charit.5.9.2-3; De Temmerman (2019a), 91.

other women should threaten her own interests. In her chapter on minor female characters within the novels, Haynes classifies Statira as an antagonist.⁸⁹¹ This seems unfair as Statira does not act maliciously towards the heroine in any manner, unlike most of the women whom Haynes classifies as *confidantes*. Furthermore, Statira seems to suit the role of a friend more, having a close relationship with the heroine and both expressing affection towards the other in the final stages of the novel. Haynes' decision to classify Statira as an antagonist could, in part, be due to a desire to separate relationships between women of an equal status from mistress-slave relationships, with slaves making up Haynes' *confidante* category. However, this does not diminish the potential threat Statira poses to the heroine.

It would not be surprising for this genre if Statira were to submit to her jealousy and react against the heroine out of violence. As Jones rightly notes, the novels do not deviate from the traditional stereotype of jealous women.⁸⁹² The rules of *xenia* and *hospitium* should theoretically protect Callirhoe from any reprisal, especially as she rejects Artaxerxes advances.⁸⁹³ Yet this genre contains a number of women willing to violently act against their blameless guests when they become rivals for the same man and these relationships could serve as potential models for a hostile bond between Statira and Callirhoe. Like Statira, Arsace in the *Aethiopica* is a foreign ruler with the heroine under her control and she attempts to murder Charicleia out

⁸⁹¹ Haynes (2003), 102.

⁸⁹² Jones (2012), 80.

⁸⁹³ Charit.6.5.6-10; 6.7.8-13.

of envy of Theagenes' love for the other woman.⁸⁹⁴ Both Manto and Rhenea violently react against Anthia when they discover their husbands are attracted to her, despite these affections being unwanted on the heroine's part.⁸⁹⁵ Notably, the two women in the *Ephesian Tale* also escape punishment for their actions and arguably are portrayed as "sympathetic" by Xenophon, suggesting that their vengeance is justifiable to some extent, despite the heroine's innocence.⁸⁹⁶ The fragmentary *Babyloniaca* contains a reversed situation, with the heroine Sinonis attempting to punish the innocent farmer's daughter for receiving a kiss from the hero.⁸⁹⁷ This reflects a wider pattern in ancient mythology of wives taking revenge on their husband's mistresses and avoiding harsh punishment in doing so, such as Circe (Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), Hera (examples including Io, Lamia, Leto and Semele), Hermione (Euripides' *Andromache*) and Medea (Euripides' *Medea*).⁸⁹⁸ Whilst Arsace suffers, in having to commit suicide, this is primarily caused by other factors, such as avoiding future punishment at the hands of her husband for cheating on him and the loss of Theagenes, rather than out of retribution for her actions against Charicleia. This implies that Statira not only could lash out against Callirhoe without suffering any repercussions, but even that it might be expected of her to react with violence. In their first meeting, Chariton states that the queen puts aside all female jealousy due to the honour she

⁸⁹⁴ Helioid.8.7.1-2; 8.9.1-20. Refer to pp.115-9.

⁸⁹⁵ Xen.2.11.2-3; 5.5.1-7. Technically, Anthia serves as Manto's slave rather than her guest, but is still unjustly persecuted due to Habrocomes' love and Manto's husband's attraction to her.

⁸⁹⁶ Haynes (2003), 108.

⁸⁹⁷ See section 4.6.4.

⁸⁹⁸ Eur.*Andr.*27-47; 155-268; 518-27; 563-73; Eur.*Med.*373-5; 1136-1203; Ov.*Met.*14.24-69.

feels, suggesting that the “natural” predisposition of women is to turn on each other.⁸⁹⁹ Whilst Statira and Callirhoe generally have a positive relationship in the *Callirhoe*, tension is created between them because of Artaxerxes’ desire for the heroine. Although both women are opposed to his advances, Statira is set up as a potential threat to the heroine on account of her jealousy, but ultimately demonstrates enough self-restraint to not act upon it due to her aristocratic status.

3.6.2 Silence, Secrets and Dependency: Arsinoe and Thisbe

The relationship between Thisbe and Arsinoe is precarious and, as with other novelistic female friendships, contains an element of dependency, bearing some resemblance to the friendships of utility discussed in the previous chapter.⁹⁰⁰ In this instance, Arsinoe’s knowledge of Thisbe’s misdeeds makes her a potential threat to the slave, with Thisbe becoming dependent on the other woman’s silence to maintain her secret and lifestyle in Athens. Whilst Thisbe initially lied to Arsinoe about why she needed to borrow her house, Arsinoe subsequently pieces the truth together from what she was “suspecting” to have happened and what Thisbe told to her “companion”.⁹⁰¹ It is not clear from the later statement whether Arsinoe was referring to

⁸⁹⁹ Charit.5.9.2. As scholars (Allard and Montlahuc (2018), 28; Konstan (2003), 19; Watson (1995), 84-5) noted, jealousy was often considered a primarily feminine trait and responsible for several violent crimes committed by women (Arist.*Hist.An.*VIII.608b.8-11; Eur.*Andr.*181-2; Eur.*Med.*263-6).

⁹⁰⁰ See 2.2.

⁹⁰¹ Helioid.2.9.1.

Thisbe's lies or whether the slave had later confided in her, but regardless, her realisation of the truth places her in a position of power over Thisbe through her knowledge. This means that whilst this relationship resembles the unequal mistress-slave relationships in the genre, it is different because the dependency is not mutual. As discussed previously, Aristotle's "friendship of utility" theory relies on both participants benefitting and/or requiring something from the other.⁹⁰² Novelistic female relationships portrayed in this manner are often depicted as precarious and liable to betrayal, when one or both parties believe their own interests are threatened.⁹⁰³ Thisbe is dependent on Arsinoe, but clearly places her own interests first and demonstrates little affection towards the other woman. Thisbe lies to Arsinoe, manipulates her and places her in danger by making her an unknowing conspirator. There are no real signs of friendship from Thisbe to Arsinoe at any point during the novel. Even when Thisbe earlier speaks to Demainete she refers to Arsinoe as an "acquaintance" (γνωρίμην) instead of a friend and asks her directly for a favour without any pleasantries or signs of affection.⁹⁰⁴ This suggests that, as with Demainete, on her part Thisbe's relationship with Arsinoe is one of usefulness and necessity, not of affection.

In contrast, Arsinoe is not depicted as reliant on Thisbe and the other woman holds no leverage over her. Arsinoe appears willing to keep Thisbe's secret

⁹⁰² Refer to pp.28-9 for Aristotle's friendships of utility.

⁹⁰³ See 2.2.3.

⁹⁰⁴ Heliod.1.15.7. John (1996), 201) has noted the general absence of terms to describe a female friend in this genre especially when compared with the large variety of terms given to male friendships.

either to have future leverage over her or because she feels some loyalty towards the slave. There is certainly some female solidarity in Arsinoe and Thisbe's relationship, as demonstrated by Arsinoe leasing her house.⁹⁰⁵ Although this is under false pretences, Arsinoe quickly agrees to Thisbe's request without suspicion suggesting that there might have been a similar situation in the past and that she trusts Thisbe to some extent. Although the novel does not say exactly when Arsinoe discovered the deception, her immediate retaliation to Thisbe's appropriation suggests that she could have revealed the truth earlier, either in retaliation for being deceived or out of a moral obligation.⁹⁰⁶ Instead, Arsinoe chooses to become a willing conspirator by withholding this valuable knowledge, similar to Plangon concealing Callirhoe's existing pregnancy from Dionysius or the female choruses in some Greek tragedies, as previously discussed.⁹⁰⁷ Yet in many of those instances, some form of sworn oath or promise ensures the silence of the other women, whereas in this circumstance Arsinoe willingly chooses to keep the secret. Therefore, Arsinoe's silence suggests that she feels some loyalty towards Thisbe, despite the manipulative lie.

Scholars focusing on allusive nomenclature in this novel are keen to draw comparisons between Thisbe's name and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.⁹⁰⁸ Several parallels are offered for Arsinoe's name, such as Arsinoe being one of the

⁹⁰⁵ Heliod.1.16.1.

⁹⁰⁶ Heliod.1.15.1-17.5.

⁹⁰⁷ See 2.4.4 for female concealment in the *Callirhoe* and elsewhere in Greek literature.

⁹⁰⁸ Bowie (1995), 273-6; Jones (2006), 560.

three daughters of Minys in Plutarch's *Greek Questions*, yet curiously the unnamed narrator of Pyramus and Thisbe's story in the *Metamorphoses* has been named as Arsinoe by other sources.⁹⁰⁹ This is significant. Jones has argued that Thisbe in the *Aethiopica* represents a false love, with her manipulation and betrayal of Cnemon contrasting the faithfulness shown by the young lovers in Ovid and the novel's protagonists.⁹¹⁰ Bowie has claimed that this connection between the names presents a warning to the novel's protagonists that their love could lead to suicide.⁹¹¹ However, this is tenuous as the novel's protagonists do not try to directly commit suicide even when separated (unlike in the other novels) and there are no strong links between the pairs of lovers. A more plausible approach would be to contrast the circumstances surrounding Thisbe's suicide with that in the *Metamorphoses*, which would support Jones' argument.⁹¹² A similar perspective could also be applied to Thisbe's relationship with Arsinoe, as a deceitful, self-serving friendship with little female solidarity. However, this is not the only similarity that can be drawn between the texts. Arsinoe in the *Metamorphoses* serves as the narrator of the tale and therefore has control over how Thisbe is portrayed.⁹¹³ Whilst Cnemon narrates the Athenian Novella, Arsinoe still has control over Thisbe's story by possessing knowledge of her betrayal, and it is her choice whether to reveal it or keep silent. As previously discussed,

⁹⁰⁹ Plut.*Mor. Quaest. Graec.*299e-f(38); Ov.*Met.*4.55-166.

⁹¹⁰ Jones (2006), 560.

⁹¹¹ Bowie (1995), 276.

⁹¹² Jolowicz ((2021), 3) notes that there is strong evidence that Heliodorus engaged with Latin poetry.

⁹¹³ Grethlein ((2022), 47) argues that Thisbe is also presented as an "author" in the *Aethiopica*.

Plangon similarly has control over how Callirhoe is depicted in her report to Dionysius and the heroine is later reliant on her silence over her existing pregnancy.⁹¹⁴ However, unlike Thisbe, Callirhoe can use her higher social status to gain leverage over the other woman, making both characters reliant on each other.⁹¹⁵ As Arsinoe is not dependent on Thisbe, this relationship therefore is not exactly a friendship of utility since the women are not mutually reliant on each other.

A trait common to this relationship and other novelistic mistress-slave bonds is Arsinoe's swift betrayal of her former ally as soon as Thisbe threatens her former interests, fitting in with the genre's portrayal of clever women being vulnerable to female betrayals and manipulations.⁹¹⁶ Given her intelligence and natural ability to sense danger, it is somewhat surprising Thisbe makes a rare miscalculation by angering Arsinoe when she is dependent on the other woman's silence. Arsinoe did not represent a direct or present threat to Thisbe at this point in the narrative, which means the latter had no reason to act against her *confidante*. Comparisons can be drawn here with Demainete's mistake in alienating Thisbe, leading again to her downfall at the hands of her former ally, suggesting a pattern in female friendships in the Athenian Novella.⁹¹⁷ Whilst Callirhoe finds herself in a similar situation to Thisbe, she secures Plangon's loyalty and silence over her existing pregnancy by freeing

⁹¹⁴ Charit.3.1.6-8; 3.8.1. See pp.83-91 and pp.37-8.

⁹¹⁵ Charit.3.8.1.

⁹¹⁶ Johne (1996), 194.

⁹¹⁷ Helioid.1.15.1.

her former slave.⁹¹⁸ However, although Demainete and Thisbe are both characterised as intelligent and do not completely trust their allies, they are unaware of how great a threat these other women pose, despite being vulnerable.⁹¹⁹ Consequently, both their manipulations are publicly exposed and they are forced to take drastic action to avoid being brought to justice in the trial. Comparisons can also be drawn here with when Cybele almost tricks Charicleia into drinking poison.⁹²⁰ Like Demainete and Thisbe, Charicleia proves herself intelligent enough to manipulate men and even Cybele.⁹²¹ Yet again she is vulnerable in return to manipulations from a woman claiming to be on her side. Praxagora in Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae* claimed that women in power cannot be deceived "as they are accustomed to deceitfulness".⁹²² However in this particular novel, women are presented as expert manipulators, but still are deceived by their female accomplices pursuing their own selfish goals instead of working together.

Whilst not all female friendships in the *Aethiopica* are portrayed negatively, as evidenced by Charicleia's relationship with Nausicleia, there is a recurring pattern in this novel of women both using female bonds to take advantage of supposed comrades and also being betrayed by them.⁹²³ What sets Thisbe

⁹¹⁸ Charit.3.8.1.

⁹¹⁹ Thisbe is described as "unaware" (ἄλαθεν; Helioid.2.8.5) that she had attracted Arsinoe's jealousy. See pp.100-2.

⁹²⁰ Helioid.8.7.5-6. See pg.80.

⁹²¹ Helioid.7.12.7; 7.21.1-2. As can be seen in her handling of Thyamis at the start of the novel (Helioid.1.21.3-22.7).

⁹²² Ar.Ecc1.237-8.

⁹²³ Pp.159-63.

apart from Demainete is ultimately her foresight. Even when successful, Thisbe plans for the worst outcome and therefore can escape Athens quickly when the truth is revealed.⁹²⁴ Not only does this demonstrate Thisbe's cleverness and perception, it shows a refusal to trust her improved circumstances and those closest to her. This is partly due to her awareness that her dependency on Arsinoe is one-sided and that she is reliant on the other woman's goodwill. In many ways, this relationship resembles the friendships of utility found between mistresses and slaves, probably because of Arsinoe and Thisbe's lower social statuses. As discussed in the previous chapter, ancient male elitist ideas of social classes are reflected in the way the novels characterise and stereotype their female characters. With the exception of Rhode, the slaves are portrayed as untrustworthy, manipulative and willing to betray their former allies if it suits their own agenda. Even when freed, they remain a potential threat to their former masters, as seen with Plangon and Callirhoe.⁹²⁵ Whilst aristocratic women are also capable of carrying out skilful manipulations, often the heroines are forced to resort to these methods out of necessity to protect their own virtue or lives and their deceptions do not involve the betrayal of allies.⁹²⁶ In the aristocratic female friendships, there are moments when one woman is temporarily in a position of power over the other, which reflects the novelistic slaves' reliance on their mistresses' goodwill and Thisbe's lack of leverage over Arsinoe. Yet, the aristocratic women demonstrate self-restraint, preventing any betrayals from

⁹²⁴ Heliod.2.9.4.

⁹²⁵ See pp.37-8.

⁹²⁶ Ach.Tat.5.17.4-5; 5.22.7-8; Charit.6.5.8; Heliod.1.21.13; 7.12.7; Xen.3.11.4-5; 5.7.4-8.

occurring.⁹²⁷ Ward argues that qualities, such as wealth, beauty and being well born, that Aristotle associates with people involved in the best kind of friendship are indicative this relationship type was reserved for only one social class.⁹²⁸ Whilst Thisbe and Arsinoe's bond resembles the aristocratic friendships in some ways, their mutual lack of self-control displays their lower class and consequently leads to their friendship dissolving because of their betrayals.

3.6.3 Personal Rivalry and Betrayal: Arsinoe and Thisbe

Whilst no boundaries are ultimately crossed in the aristocratic friendships, the same cannot be said for the *hetairai* relationship. The *Aethiopica* indicates that Arsinoe betrays Thisbe out of envy and anger at being betrayed, adding a personal element to their relationship. Whilst Arsinoe's thoughts on Thisbe's betrayal of her mistress are never revealed by the text, it can be argued that initially there would be no personal benefit to Arsinoe by revealing this information. There is no mention of Arsinoe being later rewarded by Demainete's family and she risks being implicated as an accomplice. Therefore, it seems logical that Arsinoe mainly betrays Thisbe for revenge and not for reward, further evidenced by the narrative describing the courtesan as acting from "jealousy" (ζηλοτυπίαν; ζήλω) and a "swelling anger" (οίδουμένη τῷ χόλῳ).⁹²⁹ Her actions are not solely driven by Thisbe's "betrayal", as the

⁹²⁷ 3.7

⁹²⁸ Ward (2016), 30; Arist.*Nic.Eth.*1099a32-1099b8.

⁹²⁹ Heliod.2.8.5; 2.9.1.

novel argues that Arsinoe was already jealous of the other woman before Nausicles.⁹³⁰ However, Thisbe's appropriation of Nausicles represents a betrayal of female comradeship and somewhat justifies Arsinoe's subsequent retaliation against her former friend. This can be further defended by Thisbe not having a valid reason for taking Nausicles from her companion, other than a desire to increase her clientele. There is no mention of love and Thisbe quickly transfers her affections from Nausicles back to Cnemon when he becomes more useful to her.⁹³¹ This demonstrates her selfish nature and lack of loyalty to her friend. Aristotle argued that someone was justified to take action against an ex-friend if they had been deceived, which implies that Arsinoe's betrayal was reasonable.⁹³² Yet, nothing suggests that Thisbe actively encouraged or welcomed this switch of affections (although she is willing to use Nausicles to escape Athens), implying that she did not actually betray Arsinoe.⁹³³ Regardless, Thisbe previously exploited Arsinoe's trust to benefit herself and the other woman perceives the slave to be at least partly responsible for her loss of Nausicles.

This personal betrayal makes Arsinoe and Thisbe's bond different to other female relationships in this genre. There is jealousy and envy in other novelistic female friendships between women of a similar status, however there is no falseness or treachery. Callirhoe rejects Artaxerxes' advances,

⁹³⁰ Heliod.2.8.5.

⁹³¹ Heliod.2.10.1.

⁹³² Arist.*Nic.Eth.*1165b7-9.

⁹³³ Heliod.2.9.4.

unlike Thisbe with Nausicles, Rhodogune displays no personal resentment towards Callirhoe after losing the contest and Charicleia does not express any bitterness towards Nausicleia for taking away her traveling companion, Cnemon. There are examples of female antagonists seeking vengeance against the heroine, driven by envy or jealousy, but there is no personal betrayal or the heroine does not commit a transgression that would justify the retribution.⁹³⁴ As discussed in the previous chapter, there are multiple betrayals of aristocratic women by female slaves in this genre, yet these primarily occur out of fear or under the orders of their primary master and not from vengeance.⁹³⁵ This places Arsinoe and Thisbe's bond on a unique level compared to the other female friendships, with their friendship combining recurring elements found in other novelistic relationships. There is almost an unspoken code of honour between Thisbe and Arsinoe that fits in with other equal friendships, with both courtesans expected to adhere to certain social rules or face retribution. Yet, there is also duplicity and selfishness demonstrated by both women that reflect the unequal friendships and Arsinoe's anger resembles the female antagonists.

Although this relationship may be unique to this genre in containing the element of personal betrayal, there are other ancient literary models for this. Earlier, I compared Thisbe's betrayal of Demainete with Lysias' *On the Murder*

⁹³⁴ In Iamblichus' *Babyloniaca*, the status quo is reversed with the heroine persecuting the innocent Farmer's Daughter (4.6.4).

⁹³⁵ See section 2.2.3.

of *Eratosthenes*.⁹³⁶ Connections can also be drawn with Arsinoe and Thisbe's situation and their love triangle with Nausicles.⁹³⁷ In this case, Arsinoe corresponds with both the old woman and her anonymous mistress. In both cases, a woman is furious at losing her lover to another female and seeks to reveal the truth about their rival's crimes. Both Arsinoe and the Old Woman then conveniently disappear from their narratives, allowing focus to return to the scandal surrounding their victims.⁹³⁸ These divulgements of affairs occur as a result of a woman seeking revenge after the loss of their lover's affections, but Arsinoe's target here is the "other woman" and not her former lover. In *Lysias 1*, Euphiletos' wife suffers as a consequence of this revelation, but the disclosure was intended primarily to hurt Eratosthenes for his betrayal.⁹³⁹ A similar pattern can be found in Greek tragedy. Whilst women, such as Cassandra in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and Creon's daughter in Euripides' *Medea*, are targeted and punished for their relationships with married men by their jealous wives, they are secondary victims in a larger plot against a perceived betrayal of the unfaithful spouse.⁹⁴⁰ Arsinoe does not seek revenge on Nausicles but only Thisbe, suggesting that she blames her more for this transgression. While this is comparable to some extent with a few other female antagonists in this genre, this situation is different because Arsinoe

⁹³⁶ Pp.53-4.

⁹³⁷ Schwartz (2016), 183.

⁹³⁸ *Lys.*1.17.

⁹³⁹ This is supported by the Old Woman's claims she is not trying to stir up trouble but because Eratosthenes "is our enemy" (*Lys.*1.16).

⁹⁴⁰ *Aesch.Ag.*1323-6; 1438-47; *Eur.Med.*261-2; 803-6; 1347-50; 1354-7.

and Thisbe are presented as initially having a somewhat amicable relationship.⁹⁴¹

Thisbe and Arsinoe's relationship is consistent with the portrayal of friendships between courtesans in other ancient literary texts, particularly Lucian's *Dialogues of the Courtesans* and Alciphron's *Letters of the Courtesans*. It is possible that these texts influenced Heliodorus' portrayal of Thisbe and Arsinoe's relationship, although this cannot be definitively proven. Although it is difficult to precisely date these texts, the dates usually assigned to Alciphron (2nd century B.C.) and Lucian (2nd century A.D.) would make their works predate the *Aethiopica* (3rd-4th century A.D.). Furthermore, Tagliabue has made a strong argument that Heliodorus read Lucian's *Toxaris*, focusing on the similarities between names, phrases and characterisation, which gives weight to the argument that Heliodorus also read Lucian's *Dialogues*.⁹⁴² As with the *Aethiopica*, the bonds within these texts are fragile and liable to betrayal, with the courtesans placing their own interests first at the expense of their closest *confidantes*. Many dialogues in Lucian's *Dialogues of the Courtesans* offer a good basis for comparison with Thisbe and Arsinoe's bond through their portrayals of female betrayal and pettiness.

There are plenty of examples in Lucian of courtesans stealing each other's lovers, with *Dialogue 1* being of particular interest with Glycera complaining

⁹⁴¹ Examples include Manto and Rhenia in *Ephesian Tale*.

⁹⁴² Tagliabue (2016).

to a fellow courtesan that Gorgona has stolen her lover. Significantly, Glycera describes her rival as “pretending to be a friend” which suggests that, similar to Arsinoe and Thisbe, this is a personal betrayal and the relationship between the two women is one of falseness.⁹⁴³ Significantly, this duplicity can be considered two-sided due to Thais and Glycera’s willingness to gossip about Gorgona behind her back, similar to Tryphena in *Dialogue 11*.⁹⁴⁴ *Dialogue 11* is also relevant to the love triangle in the *Aethiopica* as Charmides, like Nausicles, also quickly changes preferences suggesting a lack of loyalty from male clients and increased sense of competition and rivalry in these relationships. This suggests that Arsinoe and Thisbe’s relationship is consistent with other literary portrayals of relationships between courtesans and these friendships are ultimately portrayed as superficial, with both participants clearly placing themselves and their own desires first, similar to the unequal relationships. This is not surprising as courtesans were often believed to be only interested in benefitting themselves, as seen in the portrayals of Bacchis in Terence’s *Heauton Timorumenos*, Lamia in Plutarch’s *Life of Demetrius* and Phiale in Juvenal’s *Satire 10*.⁹⁴⁵ What separates Arsinoe from the situation in *Dialogues 1* is her desire to seek revenge, whereas Thais advises Glycera not to take it personally or blame Gorgona as it is “usual” among courtesans.⁹⁴⁶ Whilst it suggests that Thisbe and Arsinoe’s situation was common among courtesan friendships, Arsinoe takes Thisbe’s betrayal

⁹⁴³ Luc.*Dial.Meret*.1.1.

⁹⁴⁴ Luc.*Dial.Meret*.11.2-3.

⁹⁴⁵ Juv.10.36-9; Plut.*Vit.Demetr*.12.1-2; 12.6; Ter.*Haut*.605-7; 723-4; 737-43; 908-31.

⁹⁴⁶ Luc.*Dial.Meret*.1.1. However, in *Dialogue 4*, Melitta is determined to win back her ex-lover by any means necessary instead of moving on.

personally and acts out of spite. This implies that their bond is more precarious than those in the *Dialogues* and also deeper, making Thisbe's betrayal and Arsinoe's subsequent rage greater than their literary counterparts. Gilhuly argues that Lucian's *Dialogues* took inspiration from courtesans in New Comedy whilst simultaneously adapting this earlier trope.⁹⁴⁷ The *Aethiopica* follows a similar pattern in drawing upon and remoulding prior literary depictions.

Alciphron's *Letters of Courtesans* can also be compared to Thisbe and Arsinoe's relationship, particularly *Letter 6*.⁹⁴⁸ In this, Thais complains to a fellow courtesan that a former friend (Euxippe) has been making fun of her, despite the two women previously being close and Thais' refusal to sleep with a man who was only casual with Euxippe.⁹⁴⁹ However, unlike Lucian's *Dialogue 1*, Alciphron's letter ends with Thais promising to get even.⁹⁵⁰ This letter therefore provides a model for Arsinoe's desire to seek revenge on Thisbe. Although these texts suggest that courtesans can be friends, these relationships are also self-serving and volatile, quickly leading to vengeance if either woman betrays the trust of the other. Both the *Letters* and *Dialogues* prove that Arsinoe and Thisbe's friendship is not unique in ancient literary

⁹⁴⁷ Gilhuly (2006), 277-8.

⁹⁴⁸ *Letter 10* also contains disloyalty with a lover switching to another courtesan, leading Myrrhina to vow to win him back with deception and hinting at a darker vengeance if this is unsuccessful (Alci.10.4-5). However, this letter lacks the personal betrayal found within the other works discussed here, as the focus throughout is on the lover's faithlessness not the courtesan's and Thettalê is not described as ever being a friend of Myrrhina.

⁹⁴⁹ Alci.4.6.1.

⁹⁵⁰ Alci.4.6.5.

depictions of bonds between courtesans, especially regarding betrayal and self-interest. The friendships between the courtesans are superficial and easily broken if one woman oversteps the boundaries leading to both participants placing themselves and their professions first. As the only significant relationship between courtesans in the novel genre, Thisbe and Arsinoe's bond both demonstrates the competitive, self-serving nature of *hetairai* and implies that the best type of friendship was reserved only for the aristocracy.⁹⁵¹

3.6.4 The Removal of Cnemon

Although Nausicleia is not a love rival to Charicleia, she still poses a potential threat to the heroine through her marriage as this removes her ally, Cnemon, from the narrative. Consequently, he is prevented from further helping the protagonists. Bowie argues that this text can be contrasted with the *Odyssey* through the differences between Odysseus' determination and Cnemon's lack of dedication by his choice not to help Charicleia until her quest is done.⁹⁵²

Other scholars take similar approaches: Grethlein believes that Cnemon takes the easy way out through his marriage and Jones argues that Cnemon abandoned the more virtuous Charicleia for Nausicleia "on a whim".⁹⁵³ Jones' argument seems harsh because Nausicleia is a virtuous character in her own

⁹⁵¹ Bird ((2021), 20) notes that *σωφρο* terms in Lucian's *Dialogues of the Courtesans* symbolise sexual indecency instead of the usual sexual restraint, a trait essential to the novelistic heroines and aristocratic *confidantes*.

⁹⁵² Bowie (1995), 278.

⁹⁵³ Grethlein (2016), 324; Jones (2006), 557n65.

right and Charicleia is not a potential lover for Cnemon, meaning that it is not a simple choice between the women but rather between fulfilling his duty or marrying for love and a restoration of status. Nevertheless, these criticisms raise an important point about Cnemon. In this genre, the idea of love extends to other helpers besides the protagonists with most companions also finding love before the final pages of their novels.⁹⁵⁴ However, significantly Cnemon is the only close companion in the novels to find his final partner before the hero and heroine have achieved their happy ending.⁹⁵⁵ This is notable because Cnemon's story is the most complex of all the novelistic companions, to the extent of dominating the first half of the novel.⁹⁵⁶ Whilst Cnemon makes no formal promise to help the protagonists complete their journey, Morgan suggests that Cnemon's use of language implies that he considers himself as bound by responsibilities as if he had made a formal oath, which would have been taken seriously in the ancient world.⁹⁵⁷ Cnemon himself acknowledges that it is immoral not to uphold his obligation and he has to ask for forgiveness from both Charicleia and the "gods of friendship" (θεῶν φίλων).⁹⁵⁸ In addition, some of his justifications (that Charicleia's

⁹⁵⁴ Alvares (2002), 107. Examples include Hippothous (*Ephesian Tale*) and Polycharmus (*Callirhoe*).

⁹⁵⁵ Papadimitropoulos (2013), 105. The possible exception is Leucon and Rhode's relationship, who were potentially already together before their first appearance in *Ephesian Tale*.

⁹⁵⁶ Anderson (2017), 33.

⁹⁵⁷ Morgan (1989/2008), n159. On oaths and the consequences of breaking them in the ancient world, see Carawan (2007); Carter (2007); Connolly (2007); Konstantinidou (2014); Plescia (1970), 3-4, 94-5, 101; and Torrance (2014).

⁹⁵⁸ Heliod.6.7.5-6.

fortunes are uncertain and he will have done his duty by leaving her safely with Calasiris) are weak.⁹⁵⁹

It is Cnemon's infatuation for Nausicleia which plays a leading role in causing him to abandon the protagonists' story and leave the novel. Charicleia immediately recognises this connection and decides it is better that Cnemon leaves the quest:

*καὶ πάλαι τοῦτο πραγματεύεται καὶ τὸν Κνήμωνα ἐμπορεύεται
ποικίλως ἐφελκόμενος καὶ ἅμα οὐδὲ εὐπρεπῆ λοιπὸν τῆς
ὁδοῦ κοινωνὸν οὐδὲ ἀνύποπτον ἡγουμένη.⁹⁶⁰*

Various translators have interpreted this passage differently, based on their own views of Cnemon, which has impacted on how Cnemon's decision to leave is portrayed and, subsequently, whether Nausicleia poses a threat to Charicleia's quest. Some translations suggest that Cnemon would have had to leave the heroine at this point of the narrative, regardless of Nausicleia's presence. However, other translations imply that his marriage to Nausicleia not only caused Cnemon to abandon Charicleia but also made him appear untrustworthy to the heroine, with Cnemon's loyalties being uncertain.

Within the former category, there are two main lines of thought: that

⁹⁵⁹ Heliod.6.7.5-7. However, some of Cnemon's other arguments including a desire to return to his homeland and return of his place in his family's succession (Heliod.6.7.6) are reasonable.

⁹⁶⁰ Heliod.6.7.8.

Cnemon was a “naturally unsuitable” companion for Charicleia and that Cnemon would have had to leave to protect the heroine’s virtue. The original English translation of the *Aethiopica* by Thomas Underdowne favours the argument that Cnemon was an unacceptable companion: “judging him also to bee no meete companion for their companie, and would breede suspition also”.⁹⁶¹ Papadimitropoulos also supports this argument.⁹⁶² This is supported by Cnemon’s characterisation up until this point in the novel as a spendthrift young man, similar to those found in New Comedy.⁹⁶³ Scholars have argued that Heliodorus took the name from Menander, particularly Jones who claims this connection makes Cnemon “unworthy of anything more than a small and temporary role” in the main plot.⁹⁶⁴ This argument is unconvincing, as Cnemon plays a large part in the first half of the novel and his characterisation could have continued to develop if he remained in the narrative. Furthermore, several characters in this genre that heavily resemble New Comedy stereotypes (such as the young heroes, clever slaves, etc) play important roles. Regardless, Jones’ interpretation implies that Cnemon would have been unable to continue on the quest irrespective of Nausicleia’s involvement. Hadas diverges from Underdowne in his interpretation of this passage: “furthermore she thought it was neither proper nor above suspicion to have Cnemon as a companion on her travels”.⁹⁶⁵ This translation implies that Cnemon would have had to leave the quest anyway to protect

⁹⁶¹ Underdowne (1587), 156.

⁹⁶² Papadimitropoulos (2013), 105.

⁹⁶³ Bowie (1995), 271; Jones (2006), 557; Lefteratou (2018), 156.

⁹⁶⁴ Jones (2006), 557; Lefteratou (2018), 156.

⁹⁶⁵ Hadas (1957), 148.

Charicleia's virtue because, unlike Calasiris, he is a young, unmarried man and could potentially threaten her upstanding reputation.⁹⁶⁶ Despite these differences, like Underdowne's original translation, it is implied that Cnemon would have been unable to continue on the quest for much longer. In my opinion, this seems the most logical interpretation as there is no mention of Charicleia feeling any strong personal resentment towards Cnemon or Nausicleia within the text.

However, Morgan translates the same passage differently: "in any case she thought that Cnemon was no longer a seemly or wholly trustworthy traveling companion".⁹⁶⁷ The difference in meaning between this particular translation and the other two is slight but has important implications. Here Morgan combines the *οὐδὲ εὐπρεπῆ* with *οὐδὲ ἀνύποπτον*, disregarding the suitability element and placing emphasis on Charicleia's doubt of Cnemon's loyalty. It is mainly the translation of the word *λοιπόν* that causes the biggest difference, with Morgan interpreting it as "no longer" in contrast to other scholars who omit the word. This is significant as it implies that before Cnemon falls in love with Nausicleia, he was considered by Charicleia to be a trustworthy companion.⁹⁶⁸ However, as soon as his allegiances become split, he no longer is considered as such, suggesting that Nausicleia does pose a threat to Charicleia's quest. This is a justifiable argument because of the

⁹⁶⁶ On ancient expectations of female virtues see Henry and James (2012), 89-94; Langlands (2006); and Riess (2012)

⁹⁶⁷ Morgan (1989/2008), 479.

⁹⁶⁸ It is important that Charicleia makes these observations herself rather than being told by any onlookers.

influence of Nausicles in arranging the marriage. Whilst no glimpse is offered into Nausicleia's intentions and feelings regarding the marriage, her father Nausicles is not "completely a sympathetic character".⁹⁶⁹ He has shown himself to be shrewd, interested in furthering his own interests and not above making immoral decisions, such as his help in Thisbe's escape and falsely claiming Charicleia to be Thisbe for his own profit.⁹⁷⁰ When told of Cnemon's decision, Charicleia immediately recognises Nausicles' influence, and so is justified in being wary of how this new connection through marriage could affect Cnemon's loyalty to herself and Theagenes.⁹⁷¹

Yet, in either case, Charicleia seemingly does not consider Cnemon's loss to be a great threat. As discussed earlier, she expresses sadness at losing Nausicleia but does not seem upset at being separated from Cnemon.⁹⁷² Charicleia shows no initial resentment over his departure or the upcoming relationship when she realises Cnemon is in love. She even gives her blessing to Cnemon, wishes him well for the future, and tells him he is under no obligation to stay.⁹⁷³ Even if Nausicleia's relationship with Cnemon poses a potential threat to the protagonists, Charicleia does not view it as significant enough to part with Cnemon on bad terms. This depicts Nausicleia in a more positive manner rather than as a hostile obstacle to the protagonists, and as a milder threat to Charicleia compared to other novelistic female friendships.

⁹⁶⁹ Slater (2005), 113.

⁹⁷⁰ Helioid.2.9.3; 5.8.3-4.

⁹⁷¹ Helioid.6.7.8.

⁹⁷² Pp.161-2.

⁹⁷³ Helioid.6.7.8.

This contrasts with the *Aethiopica's* generally harsh portrayal of its female supporting characters by presenting a female friendship that lacks tension, a rarity for this genre. By contrasting this milder threat to the ones presented, for example, by Arsinoe or Statira, this suggests that female jealousy and envy in the novels is primarily connected to competition for a man's affection, again defining the women and their actions by the male agenda.

3.7 Marginalisation

Rhodogune and Nausicleia are relegated to the background of their respective novels and subsequently lack character development. Their bonds with the heroines are marginalised and little insight is offered, with the narrative focus being placed on their primary roles as a rival to Callirhoe and a bride for Cnemon respectively. Consequently, modern scholarship tends to downplay or ignore these bonds. Yet the novels make it clear that these relationships should be viewed as friendships and raises the question of why these women are depicted as *confidantes* and included within these novels. For instance, Rhodogune is set up as a friend to Callirhoe, yet this bond serves as more of a supporting friendship to the principal one between the heroine and Statira. As De Temmerman writes, after the beauty contest “we get no more than a few tantalizing glimpses” of Rhodogune in the narrative and Rhodogune disappears from the text for a long period of time.⁹⁷⁴ Although

⁹⁷⁴ De Temmerman (2019a), 89, 90. Comparisons can be drawn with Plangon in this novel (2.2.5) who also only appears a few times after her main role in the narrative is complete.

more direct interactions between the two women are shown here than in some of the other novels, these glimpses are usually no more than a few lines. As the *Callirhoe* offers two compelling and substantial female *confidantes* in the form of Plangon and Statira, it is perhaps surprising that Rhodogune's characterisation or relationship with Callirhoe is not developed further. Rhodogune's name is mentioned three times after the beauty competition but her role in all three cases is either easily replaceable or surplus to requirements and adds little to the text from a narratological perspective.⁹⁷⁵ The only time she is not mentioned alongside Statira is when she comforts Callirhoe in Aradus, yet she could have been replaced by either an anonymous noblewoman or the queen.⁹⁷⁶ This scene might have worked better if Statira consoled the heroine instead as it would set up a reversal with Callirhoe comforting the queen later in the same book.⁹⁷⁷ In the other scenes in which she is mentioned, Rhodogune's presence in the text is seemingly superfluous with Statira not only fulfilling her role but having the full focus of the narrative on her. After questioning Chaereas on his intentions for the two women, Callirhoe focuses on the injustice of keeping Statira as her slave, making no mention of Rhodogune.⁹⁷⁸ When Callirhoe tells the two women she will return both to their husbands, only Statira's reaction is noted by the text.⁹⁷⁹ Likewise, only Statira's reunion with Artaxerxes is shown, with

⁹⁷⁵ Charit.7.5.5; 8.3.1; 8.3.8.

⁹⁷⁶ Charit.7.5.5.

⁹⁷⁷ Charit.7.6.5.

⁹⁷⁸ Charit.8.3.2.

⁹⁷⁹ Charit.8.3.9.

Rhodogune's happy ending assumed but not confirmed.⁹⁸⁰ Since the primary focus of the narrative is on Statira, Callirhoe's relationship with Rhodogune is consistently portrayed as a less important friendship and one that, at first glance, seemingly adds nothing consequential to the narrative.

Like Rhodogune, Nausicleia does not play a large role in the *Aethiopica* which is reflected through her lack of character development and the relegation of her relationship with Charicleia to the background of the novel. She barely features within the text and, during these few appearances, is primarily used as a tool to further male interests, with her marriage uniting her father and Cnemon. With one notable exception, Nausicleia remains a silent character throughout the text with readers offered no insight into her thoughts and feelings, framing her as a silent prop to be used by the men around her.⁹⁸¹ Most scholarship on the *Aethiopica* either completely omits her from discussions or briefly mentions her impact on Cnemon and his narrative.⁹⁸² Nausicleia, as a character, is not discussed in any depth. Consequently, her bond with Charicleia is also omitted from discussions of gender within the novels. Haynes' chapter on "Minor Female Characters" covers a range of female characters from the prominent antagonists to the characters that appear briefly in the novels.⁹⁸³ Yet, instead of including Nausicleia among the

⁹⁸⁰ Charit.8.5.5-8.

⁹⁸¹ Helioid.6.11.1.

⁹⁸² In Morgan's essay on Cnemon (1999) there is no mention of her with the exception of a solitary reference to Nausicles having a daughter at home (276); Grethlein (2016); Winkler (1999).

⁹⁸³ Haynes (2003).

confidantes or antagonists (like Statira), Haynes relegates her to the “marginal female characters” and briefly focuses on her role as a marriage commodity.⁹⁸⁴ Johne argues that there are no true female friendships in the *Aethiopica* to demonstrate the superiority of Charicleia.⁹⁸⁵ Egger goes further in claiming only Chariton, out of the Greek novelists, contains examples of these relationships.⁹⁸⁶ Despite this, Egger does acknowledge the presence of Nausicleia in a footnote, but considers her relationship with Charicleia does not count as a friendship because it is “not at all elaborately described”.⁹⁸⁷ In a footnote, Zeitlin likewise mentions Nausicleia as an exception to her claim that all women in the *Aethiopica* apart from Charicleia are “negatively represented”, but offers no reason for the omission.⁹⁸⁸ In my opinion, this is the wrong approach to take as Heliodorus makes it clear that the women have mutual affection for one other.⁹⁸⁹

Instead of marginalising or ignoring Rhodogune and Nausicleia and their bonds with the heroines of their respective novels, the focus of scholarship should be on why Chariton and Heliodorus deliberately included these characters. Nausicleia’s primary role is to serve as a bride for Cnemon, both as a reward for his previous help to the protagonists and as a way to remove him from the plot and conclude the Athenian Novella, which dominates the first

⁹⁸⁴ Haynes (2003), 132.

⁹⁸⁵ Johne (1996), 202

⁹⁸⁶ Egger (1999), 123-4.

⁹⁸⁷ Egger (1999), 124n54.

⁹⁸⁸ Zeitlin (2022), 193-4, 194n23.

⁹⁸⁹ Pp.159-63.

half of the *Aethiopica*.⁹⁹⁰ However, her friendship with Charicleia is significant as both women are depicted as “ideal” according to Graeco-Roman beliefs and serve as a contrast to the many hostile female antagonists within the text. Whilst the friendships based on utility within this novel (Cybele and Arsace, Thisbe and Demainete, Arsinoe and Thisbe) are characterised by mistrust, manipulations and betrayals, Nausicleia’s positive friendship with the heroine serves as a contrast.⁹⁹¹ Subsequently, Charicleia and Nausicleia are portrayed as being more virtuous than the other women within the novel, certifying their statuses as prizes for Theagenes and Cnemon respectively.

Similarly, Rhodogune’s continued presence in the narrative after her primary purpose is over is significant, despite her relationship with Callirhoe being undeveloped. Scholars acknowledge that Chariton offers the most sympathetic examples of female friendships in this genre and Rhodogune could simply serve as just another case.⁹⁹² This does not explain why she is brought up three times after the beauty contest and shown interacting directly with the heroine, when the text could have made a singular reference to state the women had become friends instead. In one sense Rhodogune’s continual presence might be attributed to the way the *Callirhoe* is written, being the only extant novel not broken into singular episodes and sub-

⁹⁹⁰ Anderson (2017), 14; Grethlein (2016), 317; Keyes (1922), 44.

⁹⁹¹ 2.2.

⁹⁹² Haynes (2003), 103; Johne (1996), 201. Egger ((1999), 123) argued that out of all the ancient novelists only Chariton developed a starting point of a friendship between women. This statement is problematic, as there are signs of female comradeship within the other novels, as this thesis demonstrates.

adventures. Subsequently, characters reappear in the narrative after their main purpose has reached its conclusion, as can be seen with Plangon.⁹⁹³ This text also attempts to tie up loose ends by providing insights into their fate, such as Chaereas' sister only being brought up in the conclusion of the novel to give Polycharmus a happy ending.⁹⁹⁴ It could be argued that Rhodogune's later presence in the novel serves a similar purpose. Yet, Rhodogune's fate is not confirmed at the end, with the focus on Statira's reunion. This argument also does not explain why a relatively minor character is again brought up in situations emphasizing the heroine's bond with Statira, instead of as a side note. As mentioned above, singling Rhodogune out as a special friend alongside the Persian queen attaches significance to her role. Despite the lack of focus on this friendship compared to others, there must have been a more meaningful reason for the inclusion of Rhodogune among the novel's *confidantes*.

I believe a main reason for her continual presence in the novel is that she has a truly equal status to the heroine from the start, which makes their relationship unique in comparison to the other female friendships. De Temmerman has convincingly argued that shared experiences and not social class unite Statira and Callirhoe and that both their individual positions change in the narrative.⁹⁹⁵ Although both women were born into aristocracy, Statira's position as the Persian queen means she outranks and holds power

⁹⁹³ Charit.3.8.1-2; 3.8.6; 3.9.3; 3.10.3; 5.1.4; 8.4.5.

⁹⁹⁴ Charit.8.8.12. Chaereas' sister is discussed further at pg.284 and pg.298.

⁹⁹⁵ De Temmerman (2019a), 90, 95. Jones ((2012), 38) makes a similar argument.

over Callirhoe in the initial stages of their relationship. In a reversal of fortunes, the heroine later holds power over Statira when she is revealed to be the wife of the commander of the men who captured the women and is placed in a position to determine the other women's fate.⁹⁹⁶ According to Aristotle, this would be classified as an unequal relationship with one party having some superiority over the other, meaning the benefits received and claimed are not equal.⁹⁹⁷ The women only gain an equal status when Callirhoe refuses to have Statira as her slave and persuades Chaereas to free her.⁹⁹⁸ As demonstrated earlier, whilst Plangon and Callirhoe theoretically hold the same status in the novel at times their relationship is never truly one of equals.⁹⁹⁹ This makes Rhodogune the only woman in the novel who is truly the social equal of Callirhoe at the start of their friendship, with both being the wives of Persian noblemen.¹⁰⁰⁰ As there are no changing power dynamics between the women, Rhodogune could be said to offer some stability to the heroine as Callirhoe attempts to adjust to new circumstances and statuses within the novel. This equality in status from the start adds another dimension to the portrayal of female friendships in the *Callirhoe* and something different to the heroine's relationships with Plangon and Statira. A significant aspect is the lack of personal friction and self-interest found in this

⁹⁹⁶ Charit.8.3.1-3.

⁹⁹⁷ Arist.*Nic.Eth.*1158b.27-8; 19-20.

⁹⁹⁸ Charit.8.3.2-3. Discussed further at pp.174-5.

⁹⁹⁹ See pp.35-8.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Jones (2012), 38. The same could apply across the genre, including with the other female friendships of a supposedly equal status. Nausicleia, as the daughter of Charicleia's captor, does not start at the same level as the heroine in the *Aethiopica* and Thisbe's status as a slave places her at greater risk than Arsinoe.

relationship. Although initially set up as a direct competitor in the beauty contest, Rhodogune's thoughts on the matter are not revealed and she immediately concedes defeat upon seeing Callirhoe.¹⁰⁰¹ Consequently, there is no source of tension between the two women or manipulation for their own benefit, which marks a contrast to the heroine's relationships with Statira and Plangon.¹⁰⁰² Rhodogune's lack of personal tension with Callirhoe can be said to reflect Aristotle's views on equality being a necessity for friendships and promotes the idea of social equality being ideal.¹⁰⁰³ This friendship is therefore symbolically important to the *Callirhoe*. Therefore, whilst female friendships do not always play a prominent role in the narratives, their inclusion is significant and symbolic and should not be ignored.

3.8 Conclusion

There are friendships between women of a similar social status within the *Callirhoe* and the *Aethiopica*. Yet, all of these bonds feature some tension between the women, usually caused by male characters. Women are frequently set up as rivals against each other in both public and private contests, with men often serving as the instigators and judges. Consequently,

¹⁰⁰¹ Charit.5.4.9-10.

¹⁰⁰² Plangon initially manipulates Callirhoe to benefit Dionysius and herself and the heroine frees her former slave to protect her own situation (see pp.37-8). While she does not act upon it, Statira is jealous of her husband's lust for the heroine (Charit.6.1.6-7; 6.9.4; pp.210-4).

¹⁰⁰³ Pg.154.

the women are primarily defined by their relationships and usefulness to the male characters within the novels and not by their roles as *confidantes*. Chariton and Heliodorus must have viewed female solidarity as reasonably important in so far as they include positive female relationships, yet ultimately these female bonds are marginalised and viewed as secondary priorities within their respective narratives. The women are framed through male expectations of their roles, and therefore lack agency and the ability to influence the narrative. This raises the question of how much power the novelistic female characters actually have, especially as the genre is considered to have depicted “strong” heroines.¹⁰⁰⁴ This is further enhanced by physical beauty usually being the sole determinant of the victor, with the women’s other virtues not considered. In doing so, Arsinoe, Callirhoe, Rhodogune, Statira and Thisbe are stripped of any power and are presented as objects to be gazed upon by the male viewers and judged by them. Along with Nausicleia being portrayed as part of Cnemon’s “happy ending”, this suggests the women are depicted as prizes for men, with the most desirable being the woman perceived to be the most physically attractive.¹⁰⁰⁵ Yet, within a private female exclusive sphere, beauty did not seem to play as great a role, along with jealousy and rivalry. That the women contain these emotions after being forced to compete or prioritise beauty in the public sphere suggests even positive female-only bonds are still heavily influenced by the men around them and male values. Examination of these relationships

¹⁰⁰⁴ Pg.1; pg.3.

¹⁰⁰⁵ 3.4.1.

has implications for wider studies into the male gaze, such as that the male characters view women and female friendships differently to the women themselves, or a general study of female agency in the novels, with the findings in this chapter indicating the female characters ultimately lack any authority or power, with their depictions defined by their desirability to the men around them.

As with the “unequal friendships”, even allegedly equal relationships threaten to reduce women to basic stereotypes. Ancient elitist views on social hierarchies are visible in these relationships: the women in the aristocratic friendships behave according to the principle of *sophrosyne*, while the *hetairai* demonstrate a lack of self-control and selfishness, leading to a mutual betrayal. Jealousy and envy are present in both novels, fitting in with ancient views of women “naturally” possessing these qualities. The vast number of hostile women seeking revenge on their rivals in the novels and other Graeco-Roman literature creates an underlying threat of betrayal, although this only occurs in the relationship between Thisbe and Nausicleia. This implies that even positive female bonds have some sort of tension, unlike the male friendships which lack this element. Future studies can explore the comparisons between the two types further.¹⁰⁰⁶ Grouping the women into “types” based on their social class and similarities risks stripping the women of their personalities and individuality. This is similar to the “unequal”

¹⁰⁰⁶ Pg.349.

friendships, but here it is mainly used to portray the women as “ideal” prizes for men instead of presenting them as a potential threat. This concept could be explored further with regards to social hierarchies within the novels.

Yet, despite the tension between the women and the marginalisation of these relationships, Chariton and Heliodorus make it clear that the women view themselves as friends, through their words and actions. Therefore, whilst the male characters and narratives do not place much value on female friendships, the women themselves seem to cherish these relationships. In an exclusively female sphere, more emphasis is placed on a woman’s actions and personality, in contrast to how women are solely defined by their beauty when viewed through a male gaze. Many of these relationships promote the model of friendship, as articulated by Aristotle, that suggests friendships depend on equality and similarity in natures: Arsinoe and Thisbe are portrayed as *hetairai*, Statira and Callirhoe demonstrate self-restraint and Nausicleia and Charicleia have their romantic relationships portrayed as “true love” matches. Consequently, with the exception of the one lower class bond, these friendships are personally portrayed as being ones of mutual affection, although there is still some level of self-interest present. This contrasts the novelistic mistress-slave relationships, which are mainly based on mutual necessity. This implies that the best friendships are based on equality in social status, circumstances and disposition.

Chapter 4: The Missed Opportunity

4.1 Introduction

Most aristocratic women in the novels are either portrayed as *confidantes*, antagonists or lacking any direct bond with the heroines. Melite in *L&C* serves as an exception. Scholars often classify Melite as an antagonist due to her affair with Clitophon, although albeit a helpful one similar to Lycaenion in *D&C*.¹⁰⁰⁷ However, whilst Lycaenion lacks any personal bond with Chloe, Melite directly interacts with Leucippe in the early stages of their relationship, when the heroine is disguised as “Lacaena”, and attempts to form some sort of friendship with her. Both women choose to appeal to the female bond in their pleas implying that they believe the other would be able to relate to their own situation on account of their shared gender.¹⁰⁰⁸ The women share qualities, such as intelligence and beauty, and Melite seemingly recognises their shared qualities when she identifies Leucippe’s nobility when even Clitophon is unable to recognise the heroine.¹⁰⁰⁹ This could have provided a basis for a friendship, similar to the equal friendships. However, ultimately their roles as rivals for Clitophon makes Melite’s attempts one-sided and prevents their bond from developing into a friendship. When Melite becomes aware of Leucippe’s true identity, the two women no longer have a

¹⁰⁰⁷ 4.6.3.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ach.Tat.5.17.3-6; 5.22.2-7.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Ach.Tat.5.17.3;4.5.1

connection within the text and are instead distanced and isolated from each other in favour of their connections with the male hero.¹⁰¹⁰ This is part of a wider picture within both *L&C*, with Clitophon's sister Calligone having no personal bond with Leucippe, and the novel genre.

As demonstrated throughout this thesis, the novels marginalise female-only relationships and frame them according to male ideals and perceptions of women, such as excessive jealousy of other women, rivalry with each other over the affections of men, or as objects for the male viewer. One way that Melite and Leucippe's relationship is marginalised is the manner in which they are portrayed as being interchangeable with each other, both in terms of their similar characterisation, the ambiguous nature of Clitophon's dream and Melite's marriage to the hero.¹⁰¹¹ Looking at the depictions of Calligone and the women in Iamblichus' *Babyloniaca*, this is clearly part of a wider pattern within the genre. Female characters are mistaken for each other by men in both *L&C* and the *Babyloniaca*, which contrasts Melite's recognition of Leucippe's true status and the Farmer's Daughter's realisation the corpse is not Sinonis.¹⁰¹² This strips the women of their individuality and challenges the idea of the novelistic heroines supposedly being without equal.

In other surviving novels, the heroines are supposedly superior to the other women, both in terms of beauty and through their characterisations. As

¹⁰¹⁰ 4.4.1

¹⁰¹¹ 4.5.3.

¹⁰¹² Ach.Tat.5.17.4; Phot.*Bibl.*77b18; 4.5.1; 4.5.2.

discussed previously, the *Callirhoe* best demonstrates the idea of the heroine's beauty being unsurpassable by having Callirhoe unanimously win beauty contests against other beautiful women.¹⁰¹³ Both Anthia and Charicleia are portrayed as morally superior to the hostile female antagonists in their novels, displaying emotional restraint and chastity throughout. Additionally, both women have the same resourceful cleverness as their enemies and Charicleia is ultimately portrayed as a better manipulator than Arsace and Cybele.¹⁰¹⁴ In contrast, Achilles Tatius blurs the boundaries between heroines and antagonists in their novels, challenging the concept of the heroines being superior. These strong, comparable challengers suggest that men desire to possess the woman perceived to be the best, regardless of whether or not this was actually the case. This goes against the "conventions" of the genre by implying the heroes are motivated by lust not love, which makes the women's personalities and distinctiveness irrelevant from a male perspective.

The lack of positive female bonds in *L&C* ultimately objectifies Leucippe, Melite and the other women, stripping them of their individuality and agency and portraying them through a male gaze. *L&C* deliberately distances its female characters from each other in favour of their connections to the male narrator, possibly making Leucippe the most isolated novelistic heroine in

¹⁰¹³ Pp.200-2.

¹⁰¹⁴ Pp.108-9.

terms of female comradeship.¹⁰¹⁵ This objectifies her, Calligone and Melite by primarily defining them by their desirability and usefulness to the male characters. The women in the *Babyloniaca* seemingly had more agency and direct bonds with each other, but Sinonis' jealousy and vengeance against the innocent Farmer's Daughter suggests that their relationship was still defined by male perceptions of women.

This chapter looks at the "missed opportunity" for a potential friendship between Melite and Leucippe in *L&C*. It argues that Melite made a clear, if one-sided, attempt to form some sort of friendship with Leucippe and looks at the potential models this could have taken. Ultimately, Leucippe's true identity prevents any friendship from forming and the two women become isolated from each other and are defined by their usefulness and desirability to Clitophon, consequently stripping them of agency and individuality. This fits into a wider pattern in *L&C* of women being distanced from each other as Clitophon's sister Calligone has no bond with the heroine. Calligone and the women in the *Babyloniaca*, particularly Sinonis and the Farmer's Daughter, are discussed throughout this chapter to demonstrate that Melite and Leucippe's relationship reflects wider patterns within the novel and genre.¹⁰¹⁶

¹⁰¹⁵ On the way this novel is narrated in the first person see Chew (2014), 98; De Temmerman (2014), 152-204; Montiglio (2013), 66-7; Reardon (1999a); and Whitmarsh (2003). Clitophon as a narrator is discussed at pp.128-9.

¹⁰¹⁶ It should be noted that these relationships do not quite classify as missed opportunities in their own right as Calligone lacks a bond with Leucippe and there does not appear to be a friendship between Sinonis and the Farmer's Daughter in the surviving material. However, the depictions of these women and the distancing of these rivals from their heroines bears a strong resemblance to Melite and her relationship with Leucippe.

The idea of women being interchangeable in *L&C* (and also in the *Babyloniaca*) is a key theme of this chapter, with female characters frequently misidentified by male characters, swapping “expected” roles and being similarly characterised. This presents a challenge to wider genre “conventions”, such as the idea of the heroine being beyond comparison and the idea of “true” love, with men seemingly more interested in the concept of loving the “most desirable woman” rather than the women themselves.

4.2 The Nature of the *Babyloniaca*

Whilst the main focus of this chapter is on Melite’s failed attempt to form a friendship with Leucippe and how it relates to the wider picture within the novels, Iamblichus’ *Babyloniaca* is discussed throughout this chapter as a basis for comparison. It is important to note that any readings of this text should be approached with caution, as most of the original novel has long been lost, although some fragments have survived.¹⁰¹⁷ Fortunately, Photius’ summary provides a rough outline of the plot, but this presents its own problems. Kanavou argued that it is difficult to reconstruct the novel from Photius’ summary.¹⁰¹⁸ By relying on someone else’s interpretation of the *Babyloniaca* instead of the original text, modern readers cannot fully understand Iamblichus’ intentions and are subject to Photius’ opinions. For

¹⁰¹⁷ Supposedly a copy did exist until 1671, when it was destroyed in a fire (Anthon (1853), 488).

¹⁰¹⁸ Kanavou (2019), 112.

instance, at the beginning of his *Babyloniaca* entry, Photius orders Achilles Tatius, Heliodorus and Iamblichus according to how moral he perceives their works to be.¹⁰¹⁹ His personal opinions are evident throughout the summary, making it difficult to determine how accurate a reading it is of the original text.¹⁰²⁰ Photius describes Berenice as having “savage and illicit affairs” (τῶν ἀγρίων αὐτῆς καὶ ἐκθέσμων ἐρώτων), which combined with her status as a foreign ruler could suggest that she was set up to be an antagonist in a similar manner to Arsace.¹⁰²¹ Yet the summary offers no further evidence to support this characterisation, which could imply this characterisation is due to Photius’ personal bias against the possible same-sex relationship Berenice has with Mesopotamia, a rare depiction of lesbianism in ancient literary sources, rather than because Iamblichus intended her to be viewed as an antagonist.¹⁰²² Consequently, it is impossible to fully understand the exact dynamics of the relationship between the Farmer’s Daughter and Sinonis in the text. A surviving fragment, which Habrich reasonably assigned to chapter 14 of Photius’ summary after Sinonis realises her rival and the hero have kissed, offers some insight into their bond.¹⁰²³ As discussed later, this fragment creates doubt as to whether the Farmer’s Daughter was as blameless in the liaison with Rhodanes as the summary suggests. This might

¹⁰¹⁹ Phot.*Bibl.*94.73b1.

¹⁰²⁰ Almagor ((2012), 15-8) discusses some of the problems in Photius’ summary of Ctesias’ works, including a lack of focus on certain types of material, removing original speeches or reporting them as indirect speech and inconsistencies when compared to Plutarch’s account of the same texts. These problems also apply to his summary of the *Babyloniaca*, including his reporting of 17 books in contrast to the *Suda*’s 39.

¹⁰²¹ Phot.*Bibl.*77a17.

¹⁰²² Phot.*Bibl.*77a17; Ormand (2009), 117; Pintatone (2002), 256.

¹⁰²³ Habrich (1960), 45-54. This fragment is from a badly damaged Vatican palimpsest (*Codex Vaticanus* 73). Any references to “Fragment 61” in this chapter refer to this text.

indicate that she was originally set up as a “helpful” antagonist, similar to Lycaenion and Melite.¹⁰²⁴ If she did play an active role in the seduction, this would offer some justification for Sinon’s obsessive vengeance. Despite its flaws, Photius’ summary is still integral in attempting to study the relationships between women, but has to be viewed with caution and an understanding of its limitations.¹⁰²⁵

4.3 Opportunity to form a Bond

Although there are aristocratic women in the novels who are depicted positively and are in the same place as the heroines at the same time, this does not necessarily mean that the women will form a friendship of some sorts. The clearest missed opportunity for a friendship occurs between Leucippe and Melite in *L&C*, with the latter clearly attempting to form some sort of bond when the former is disguised as “Lacaena”. The women directly interact with each other and Melite empathises with the disguised heroine because of their shared gender, although this is not reciprocated due to Leucippe’s knowledge that the women are rivals for the same man. Whilst Melite probably wished to adopt a different friendship model than one between equals, such as a friendship of utility or a patron-client relationship, this still implies that she intended to form a significant and mutually beneficial bond. In their pleas, both Leucippe and Melite directly appeal to the female

¹⁰²⁴ Pp.330-1.

¹⁰²⁵ Morales (2006), 79.

bond, suggesting that not only did they not trust Clitophon would listen to their appeals, but also that they believed their shared gender would enable the other woman to relate to themselves.¹⁰²⁶ Ultimately, Melite's attempt to form a friendship with Leucippe is one-sided and the women are subsequently isolated from each other, making Melite's initial approaches a missed opportunity for a friendship.¹⁰²⁷ This is part of a wider pattern within the novels, with Calligone, other novelistic sister characters and the Farmer's Daughter in the *Babyloniaca* being distanced from the novelistic heroines. Whilst the individual novelists take different approaches, they ultimately marginalise their female characters by distancing them from each other, implying that female friendships were not a priority for this genre.

4.3.1 Female Solidarity

Melite has a personal connection with Leucippe and attempts to form a friendship with the heroine in the early stages of their relationship, when the latter is disguised as "Lacaena" and her true identity is hidden from Melite. The women directly interact and converse with each other twice in the narrative: when Leucippe seeks protection from Sosthenes and when Melite unknowingly asks her rival for help in seducing Clitophon.¹⁰²⁸ In both situations, Melite displays signs of friendliness towards her rival, offering empathy in the first incident and confiding in "Lacaena" in the second. These

¹⁰²⁶ Ach.Tat.5.17.3; 5.22.6.

¹⁰²⁷ Pp.293-5.

¹⁰²⁸ Ach.Tat.5.17.3-6, 5.22.2-7.

actions imply that Melite attempts to form some sort of friendship with Leucippe. Admittedly, there is an element of self-interest in her attempts to get close to Leucippe, with Melite quickly requesting her help whilst citing her own previous aid.¹⁰²⁹ However, this does not necessarily mean that Melite does not attempt to form a friendship, just that she possibly intends for their bond to resemble a friendship of utility rather than one without conditions.¹⁰³⁰ Therefore, Melite's earlier relationship with Leucippe could be studied in regard to her intentions to make the heroine a *confidante* rather than being dismissed as "ironic", despite her attempt being one-sided due to Leucippe's awareness of their role as rivals.¹⁰³¹

There are hints of female solidarity within this relationship, particularly when Leucippe appeals to Melite for help. Whilst the heroine could have approached Clitophon, she chooses instead to rely on a stranger. Her actions could be interpreted as a mistrust of the hero, with Leucippe believing that Clitophon has betrayed her love and/or aware that his egotistical nature might make him unsympathetic to a slave.¹⁰³² However, the start of the plea makes it clear that Leucippe directly appeals to Melite because she believes their shared gender would make the other woman the most sympathetic to her situation: "for a woman to pity a woman, who was free... but now a slave." (Ἐλέησόν... γυνή γυναῖκα, ἐλευθέραν μὲν... δούλην δὲ νῦν)¹⁰³³ The

¹⁰²⁹ Ach.Tat.5.22.2.

¹⁰³⁰ 4.3.2.

¹⁰³¹ Reardon (1996), 252; Johne (1996), 201.

¹⁰³² Clitophon's inability to relate to slave was discussed at pp.130-3.

¹⁰³³ Ach.Tat.5.17.3.

repetition of *γυνή γυναῖκα* draws emphasis and implies that Leucippe deliberately appeals to the female bond, despite knowing Melite is her rival. The idea of women empathising with each other is not new, with Greek tragedy in particular serving as a model.¹⁰³⁴ There are many examples of commiseration between women: from Euripides' female choruses towards the main female characters to Deianeira unknowingly pitying her rival in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, in a situation similar to Leucippe's appeal.¹⁰³⁵ These scenes often occur when a female character is adapting to an unfavourable change in circumstances, including trying to cope with enslavement or a lover's betrayal, which resembles what Leucippe has undergone before her plea. This suggests that women successfully relate to each other through misfortune. This is reflected by Melite's immediate promise to free Leucippe without charge and return her to her family.¹⁰³⁶ In doing so, Melite restores Leucippe to her former status making the women social equals. Schwartz notes that by Melite ordering her slaves to bathe Leucippe and give her clothes, this scene fits into the recurring pattern of the protagonists being restored to their true status.¹⁰³⁷ In not asking for payment, despite Leucippe's offer, Melite demonstrates that she helps the heroine out of empathy and not purely self-interest.¹⁰³⁸ In a novel where the main focus is on male friendships with relationships between female characters either

¹⁰³⁴ Sophocles' *Ajax* claimed that women are susceptible to pity (Soph.Aj.540).

¹⁰³⁵ Eur.*Andr.*144; 421-2; *El.*1168; *Hipp.*680-1; 365-6; *Med.*136-7; 357-63; 1233-5; Soph.*Trach.*307-34.

¹⁰³⁶ Ach.*Tat.*5.17.7.

¹⁰³⁷ Schwartz (2012a), 187; Ach.*Tat.*5.17.10.

¹⁰³⁸ Ach.*Tat.*5.17.5-6

relegated to the background or portrayed as non-existent by the narrative, it is striking there is this successful moment of female solidarity. This reinforces the idea that women can understand and relate to each other, as was demonstrated by the aristocratic *confidantes* valuing each other's personalities and mistresses and slaves being aware of each other's natures.

Melite later appeals to "Lacaena" for help to obtain Clitophon's affections in a reflection of the earlier plea, but Leucippe does not empathise with her.¹⁰³⁹ Instead the heroine is described as interrupting "maliciously" (κακοήθως).¹⁰⁴⁰ Despite the rivalry between the two women, these are the first signs of personal animosity in the narrative. In her letter to Clitophon, Leucippe berates him for the marriage, reminding him of all she suffered for his sake whilst he married another woman (ἀλλ' ἐγὼ μὲν ἐπὶ τοσαύταις ἀνάγκαις διεκαρτέρησα· σὺ δὲ ἄπρατος, ἀμαστίγωτος γαμεῖς), whilst not blaming Melite.¹⁰⁴¹ Likewise, Melite previously displayed negative feelings towards her rival but was more frustrated at Clitophon's refusal to consummate their marriage due to his continued "love" for the presumed-dead Leucippe.¹⁰⁴² In both cases, the women blame the hero instead of each other, which makes Leucippe's use of κακοήθως, suggesting a strong hostility, an odd choice and indicating that the heroine feels some personal anger towards her rival.¹⁰⁴³ This one-sided antagonism is due to Leucippe's awareness that they are

¹⁰³⁹ Ach.Tat.5.22.1-8.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Ach.Tat.5.22.3.

¹⁰⁴¹ Ach.Tat.5.18.3-6.

¹⁰⁴² Ach.Tat.5.15.4; 5.22.4.

¹⁰⁴³ Ach.Tat.5.22.3.

competing for the same man, which created tension between Statira and Callirhoe when Artaxerxes set up a contest between them by comparing their beauty.¹⁰⁴⁴ Consequently, female solidarity is downplayed in favour of the women's desirability to men, distancing them from each other. Egger argued that solidarity between women in this genre is rare, and although there are more examples than most scholars acknowledge, in Melite and Leucippe's relationship their initial friendliness does not last long.¹⁰⁴⁵ Due to her emotions being defined by her connection to the male hero, Leucippe is unable to express sympathy for Melite upon hearing of her troubles with Clitophon, despite the other woman's kindness. Instead, the heroine is not only described as "delighted", but she also actively taunts her rival by falsely promising to help with a magical drug, despite having no knowledge of magic.¹⁰⁴⁶ There is some logic in Clitophon's argument that this is because Leucippe did not think she would be believed if she refused, which, due to the connection in this genre between violent women and rejection from their love interests, might indicate that Leucippe was protecting herself.¹⁰⁴⁷ However, with Melite's sympathetic portrayal, previous kindness and her immediate belief in Leucippe's false backstory, it seems unlikely that she would disbelieve and subsequently lash out against the heroine. Leucippe's agreement, therefore, comes across as mocking and cruel against her benefactor, even if it is to protect herself. When Melite later discovers the

¹⁰⁴⁴ Pg.209; pp.228-31.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Egger (1999), 124.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Ach.Tat.5.22.7. On the presentation of witchcraft and magic in this scene, see Baker (2016), 118-24.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Ach.Tat.5.22.6. See pp.229-30; 241; 293-4; 327-8.

truth about Leucippe's identity, she is mortified by both women's actions.¹⁰⁴⁸

The lack of sympathy here or acknowledgement for Melite's feelings portrays the women as rivals and separate, with the heroine only focused on her own interests.

However, there is little in this scene that suggests hostility or insincerity on Melite's part. Before summoning Leucippe, she checks with her maidservants that she has been looked after first.¹⁰⁴⁹ Whilst Melite probably does so to give herself further leverage over the heroine, it also implies some care for "Lacaena" by checking up on her instead of just sending for her directly.

Melite displays much trust in this scene revealing all of her personal troubles to the heroine, despite barely knowing her.¹⁰⁵⁰ This suggests that she naturally views "Lacaena" as an ally. Melite has other maidservants in whom she can and possibly has confided with in the novel, with one even being named, but it is surprising that she willingly entrusts her personal issues to a stranger.¹⁰⁵¹ Whilst this is probably due to her belief that "Lacaena" is the only person that can help with her "knowledge" of potions and her assumption that the heroine owes her for her previous kindness, these could have been satisfied with a brief explanation or just the appeal for the potion, without going into specifics.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Ach.Tat.5.25.3; Baker (2016), 123.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Ach.Tat.5.22.1.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Ach.Tat.5.22.3-6.

¹⁰⁵¹ Ach.Tat.6.1.2; 1.4-2.3.

Melite's willingness to open up to the other woman is comparable to other genres. McClure claims that female characters often lie and deceive male characters in Athenian drama, but speak truthfully to other women to gain their support.¹⁰⁵² Although most women in these plays are openly truthful about their plans and intentions to other women, this argument is slightly flawed as this model does not fit certain plays. Some female characters do not need to actively persuade other women to support them. Using Euripides' *Medea* as an example, the titular character has no need to win the female chorus over as she initially has their full support. Whilst Medea later candidly reveals her plans to the women, she only does so after making the Chorus vow to keep silent, forcing them to be unwilling accomplices.¹⁰⁵³ Additionally, some female characters are unwillingly compelled to confide in other women or deliberately choose not to reveal the whole truth. Phaedra, in Euripides' second *Hippolytus*, is obliged to confess her infatuation for her stepson due to her Nurse's supplication.¹⁰⁵⁴ Later in the play, Phaedra successfully asks the female chorus to swear a vow of silence, but critically does not inform them of her plan to frame Hippolytus for rape through her own suicide.¹⁰⁵⁵ In contrast, Melite openly and truthfully confides in "Lacaena" without imposing any pre-conditions, such as a vow to keep silent. This implies she trusts the heroine and desires to make her a willing *confidante*, instead of just using "Lacaena" to benefit her own interests.

¹⁰⁵² McClure (1999), 27.

¹⁰⁵³ Eur.*Med.*259-68.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Eur.*Hipp.*325-35.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Eur.*Hipp.*710-4.

To enhance her appeal, Melite reflects Leucippe's previous plea for "a woman to pity a woman" (γυναικὸς γυνή).¹⁰⁵⁶ In doing so, she appeals to the same female bond that the heroine does, suggesting that Melite believes their shared gender to be a powerful persuasive tool. In a novel that defines relationships by their relevance to the male narrator and distances women from each other, again this is a surprising concept here. Melite suggests that her problem and situation is one that Leucippe, as a woman, should naturally be able to relate to, drawing on the commonalities between them. This strategy fails here but is successful in Leucippe's earlier plea because the heroine is aware that she harms her own interests in helping Melite. Melite is unaware of Leucippe's true identity as her rival and therefore is unable at this stage to see the threat presented in offering aid. This suggests that whilst female unity is influential, self-interest presents a stronger motivation, consistent with other female friendships in this genre, especially when concerning women of lower social statuses.¹⁰⁵⁷ Both Leucippe and Melite deliberately appeal to the same female bond in an attempt to gain sympathy for their own pleas, implying an expectation that women will naturally empathise with each other. This strategy is effective on Melite, who immediately offers to help the heroine and later tries to make "Lacaena" into a close *confidante* through sharing her own troubles. This suggests there was a potential opportunity for a friendship to form between the women based

¹⁰⁵⁶ Ach.Tat.5.22.6; 5.17.3.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Refer to 2.2 above.

on their shared gender. However, Leucippe's awareness of the women's roles as rivals keeps her aligned to the male hero and prevents her from emphasizing with Melite. This makes Melite's attempts to form a meaningful bond with the heroine one-sided and subsequently prevents the relationship developing into a friendship, despite the opportunity.

4.3.2 The "Unequal" Friendship Opportunity

It could be argued that Melite tries to form an unequal friendship with Leucippe instead of one between equals, despite her recognition that "Lacaena" was born into a similar social position. Despite her friendliness to the heroine, there is an element of Melite using her power over Leucippe in her plea.¹⁰⁵⁸ Melite uses many imperatives (ἀπότισταί, πάρασχε, δός) in her appeal, which arguably makes her plea more of a demand than a request, when considering that Leucippe is in a vulnerable position with Melite in a direct position of authority over her.¹⁰⁵⁹ Furthermore, in reminding Leucippe of her previous kindness and unfortunate position, Melite implies that the heroine owes her a debt of gratitude which must be repaid.¹⁰⁶⁰ This suggests that Melite's actions are not solely out of kindness but to further her own interests. Leucippe earlier questions Melite's integrity in her letter. Despite Melite vowing to give Leucippe her freedom without ransom, the heroine asks Clitophon for coins to purchase her freedom and to remind Melite of her

¹⁰⁵⁸ Ach.Tat.5.22.1-8.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Ach.Tat.5.22.2; 5.22.3; 5.22.6.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Ach.Tat.5.22.2.

promises.¹⁰⁶¹ Doing so, combined with the short time between Leucippe's appeal and the delivery of the letter, suggests in part that the heroine does not trust Melite to free her. Whilst Leucippe supposedly was freed after her appeal, her treatment by Thersander and Sosthenes later in the novel suggests that the heroine remains a slave until the chastity test proves her heritage.¹⁰⁶² Thersander later claims that Leucippe was still his slave in court having been purchased by Sosthenes.¹⁰⁶³ Whilst the novel suggests his actions are to keep Leucippe unlawfully enslaved, the surviving text makes it unclear if the heroine is genuinely free at this stage or if Melite has not yet completed the correct procedure to free her.¹⁰⁶⁴ Therefore, this suggests Leucippe was right to be wary of Melite's offer and remains under her authority, enabling Melite to apply pressure on the heroine when asking for help.

This does not mean that Melite does not try to form some sort of friendship with the heroine, only a different type than one between equals. This relationship at this stage strongly resembles Aristotle's friendships of utility, especially the type based on equal need mixing elements from both friendships of utility and those of pleasure.¹⁰⁶⁵ Whilst not promoted as the ideal type of relationship, and its classification as a friendship is considered debatable by Aristotle, this notion might describe the kind of relationship

¹⁰⁶¹ Ach.Tat.5.17.7; 18.5-6.

¹⁰⁶² Ach.Tat.8.14.1-2.

¹⁰⁶³ Ach.Tat.7.11.4.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Ach.Tat.7.11.5. Billault ((2019), 104) argues that due to her situation Leucippe is forced to assume the role of a slave until she is able to demonstrate her virginity (Ach.Tat.8.14.1-2), with Thersander considering her to be his property until the novel's ending (102-3).

¹⁰⁶⁵ Arist.*Nic.Eth.*8.1158b.1-11.

Melite attempts to instigate with Leucippe. Aristotle claimed that a subordinate could become equal to their superior if they had similar morals and reinforced this concept by claiming that equality in virtue was the most important component of amity.¹⁰⁶⁶ As later discussed, both women share many similarities and Melite does not question if “Lacaena” is being deceitful to herself.¹⁰⁶⁷ This implies that even if Melite still considered Leucippe to be a slave and useful to her own interests, the women could still form a friendship consisting of more than just usefulness. As this thesis has demonstrated, a desire to further their own interests does not mean that mistresses and slaves are unable to be on amicable terms, especially if their interests align.

At this stage of the novel, Melite still has authority over Leucippe, yet seemingly desires to make the heroine a close *confidante*. Lefteratou claims that Melite follows literary conventions by asking her slave (Lacaena) for help in her love affairs.¹⁰⁶⁸ This attitude is seen elsewhere, notably with Dionysius ordering Plangon to help.¹⁰⁶⁹ As long as their interests align, all of the women benefit from this type of relationship: the mistresses have a valuable ally willing to work on their behalf and the slaves can use the trust placed in them to manipulate to their own advantage. This suggests by confiding in and asking “Lacaena” for help, Melite wishes to form a mutually beneficial relationship instead of just furthering her own self-interests by using her

¹⁰⁶⁶ Arist.*Nic.Eth.*8.1158a33-37; 1159b.2-3.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Pp.317-20.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Lefteratou (2018), 146.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Charit.2.6.4-5; 2.8.1-2.

authority over the heroine. Furthermore, whilst Melite is an antagonist and madly in love with Clitophon, she is portrayed sympathetically by the narrative and lacks the immorality and instability that Demainete and Arsace have, which eventually leads to the downfall of their relationships with their slaves. Therefore, if Leucippe was actually “Lacaena”, the two women probably would have formed a long-lasting and beneficial relationship reminiscent of one between a mistress and slave in status, and in the desire of each to safeguard their own interests by using the other.

Yet, there is perhaps a more appropriate model for the type of relationship Melite wishes to form with Leucippe. Schwartz claimed that Melite’s decision to free Leucippe without ransom makes their relationship resemble an agreement between a patron and a freedman.¹⁰⁷⁰ This idea has merit. Both women would seemingly gain from the relationship: Leucippe receives her freedom and Melite would have gained “Lacaena’s” assistance, if the heroine was not in disguise. This strongly resembles the patron-client relationship in Rome between a former master and their ex-slave. As discussed, freedmen were obliged to help their former master, such as being clients or campaigning for them in elections.¹⁰⁷¹ In exchange, the patrons offered protection and help. Therefore, both parties should theoretically benefit. In terms of their actions and what they offer, Melite and “Lacaena” would fit this pattern. At the start of her appeal, Melite reminds Leucippe of her

¹⁰⁷⁰ Schwartz (2012a), 186-7.

¹⁰⁷¹ Pp.35-8. On Roman freedmen and patron obligations, see Kirschenbaum (1987), 129-30; and Perry (2013), 69-95.

previous help and asks her to repay with an “equal” favour.¹⁰⁷² The notion of equality links to a patron-client relationship, with both expecting to contribute, suggesting this is a more of an appropriate model than a mistress-slave bond. If Melite still viewed the heroine as a slave at this stage, there would be no need for her to suggest that “Lacaena” owed her a debt, with slaves expected to carry out their masters’ wishes without question. Whilst Melite’s appeal is set up as a demand, in bringing up the past debt she suggests the heroine still has some freewill. In a corrupted part of the text, there is a reference to someone “preparing a carriage for Leucippe” (ἔμελλε τῇ Λευκιππῇ παρέξειν ὄχημα καὶ...)¹⁰⁷³ The person referred to is most likely Melite. This could suggest that Melite was preparing to keep her promise by returning the heroine to her family, suggesting at this stage she does not view her as a slave.

In addition, Leucippe’s letter could be interpreted as an attempt to prevent herself from becoming indebted to her rival.¹⁰⁷⁴ Unlike Melite, Leucippe is aware that both women are competing for the same man. If the heroine could buy her own freedom, she would not be obliged to help Melite, setting them on an equal level. However, if she were to be freed by her mistress without payment, Leucippe would hold the status of “freedwoman” rather than automatically regaining her former status. This could be problematic for Leucippe due to her role as Melite’s rival and inability to fulfil obligations,

¹⁰⁷² Ach.Tat.5.22.2.

¹⁰⁷³ Ach.Tat.5.23.2.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Ach.Tat.5.18.2-6.

including producing the potion. However, a patron-client relationship did not have to be strained. The latter half of Plangon and Callirhoe's relationship in the *Callirhoe* serves as a novelistic model for a positive female patron-client relationship within this genre.¹⁰⁷⁵ Although their bond becomes one of mutual dependency, after Plangon is freed, it still is presented as a friendship. Plangon continues to be a close *confidante* to the heroine, demonstrated by Callirhoe asking for her help to secretly search for Chaereas and mentioning Plangon in her letter at the end.¹⁰⁷⁶ With this bond being one of the more positive novelistic female relationships, this suggests it is possible to have a friendship between a patron and client. However, there is a notable difference between Leucippe and Plangon's "natural" statuses. Plangon was presumably born a slave and is depicted as having stereotypical slave traits, such as her natural manipulateness and focus on her own-interests.¹⁰⁷⁷ Although Melite did not know Leucippe's true status, she recognises "Lacaena" not only as a freeborn but also as someone born into nobility.¹⁰⁷⁸ This could suggest that Melite's actions towards the other woman were partly self-motivated in seeking to demote the heroine's true status and keep "Lacaena" dependent on her, justifying Leucippe's doubts over Melite's intentions. Whilst Melite attempts to form a friendship with Leucippe, unaware of her true identity, it therefore seems more likely that she wanted a patron-client relationship with the element of mutual dependency rather

¹⁰⁷⁵ Pp.35-8.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Charit.3.9.3; 8.4.5.

¹⁰⁷⁷ See particularly 2.2.1 and 2.3.1.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Ach.Tat.5.17.4.

than one between equals. As Leucippe only has Clio as a “close” companion and interacts with Melite when enslaved, this novel implies that female relationships could only occur when one woman was socially inferior and submissive to the other. When the women are of an equal social status, as Melite and Calligone are to Leucippe, they are prevented from having any sort of direct or personal bond, keeping them isolated from each other in the narrative.

4.3.3 The Suppressed Opportunities

Melite clearly attempts to form some sort of alliance with Leucippe and the women have a direct relationship. Their relationship therefore represents a missed opportunity for a friendship, with the women later distanced from each other due to the novel prioritising their bonds with Clitophon. This is part of a wider pattern within the genre of female bonds being marginalised in favour of their bonds with men. For instance, as demonstrated earlier, Rhodogune and Nausicleia’s roles as *confidantes* are secondary to their roles as male assets.¹⁰⁷⁹ There are multiple women throughout the surviving texts and fragments who are positively characterised but lack a bond with the heroines of their respective novels, despite both women being in the same place at the same time. This distances the women from each other instead of enabling them to form positive bonds.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Pp.190-2; pp.251-3.

For instance, Calligone and Leucippe potentially could have had a relationship similar to the one between Nausicleia and Charicleia, with the women presumably being frequently in close proximity with each other in the shared women's quarters. Heliodorus does not fully develop this relationship or Nausicleia's characterisation, but hints at the women interacting off-script and having some affection for each other.¹⁰⁸⁰ Like Calligone, other "sister" characters in novelistic type works, including Chaereas' sister in the *Callirhoe* and Philomusia in *Apollonius, King of Tyre*, do not interact with the heroines of their respective novels and their characterisations are undeveloped, with no insights offered into their thoughts and feelings.¹⁰⁸¹ Writing on Greek tragedy, Honig argues that the fundamental issue of sisters is not whether they speak to each other but how they do so.¹⁰⁸² In keeping the novelistic sister characters silenced, the women lack agency and are isolated from each other, reflecting a wider pattern in the novels. This raises the question of why certain ancient novelists chose to completely isolate these characters from their heroines and prevent them from having a direct bond, instead of taking an approach similar to how Heliodorus treats Nausicleia's bond with Charicleia: one that exists, but is relegated to the background.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Pp.157-8, pg.253.

¹⁰⁸¹ Charit.8.8.12-3; *Apollonius, King of Tyre* 31. There are no blood-related sisterly bonds within the novel (although Calligone and Leucippe are cousins), with the novelistic "sister" characters being related to the heroines through marriage. The origins and literary classification of *Apollonius, King of Tyre* are still debatable, but most scholars (including Konstan (1994), 103, 111; Kortekaas (2004), 37-41, 60-30; Panayotakis (2012), 6-7; and Schmeling (1996), 541) agree that *Apollonius, King of Tyre* at the very least appropriates the Greek novels, regardless of its classification, making it a suitable text for comparative purposes.

¹⁰⁸² Honig (2013), 182.

Likewise, from what remains of the *Babyloniaca*, the Farmer's Daughter could have served as a *confidante* for Sinonis, with both women supposedly on the same side in helping further the protagonist's aims. Given Sinonis's extreme hostility and the close proximity of the women within the surviving material, it is possible that the original text did involve some interactions and/or a direct connection between the women. The Farmer's Daughter assists the couple throughout the novel, including helping to sell the gold chain, preventing Rhodanes' suicide and tending to his wounds.¹⁰⁸³ As there is no suggestion in the surviving material that the Farmer's Daughter bears Sinonis any ill-will and her actions are mainly connected with the hero's agenda and not the heroine, this portrays her similarly to Melite.¹⁰⁸⁴ Kanavou notes that Achilles Tatius and Iamblichus depict their female rivals positively in comparison with other supporting female characters.¹⁰⁸⁵ In not villainising Melite and the Farmer's Daughter, the authors create the opportunity for these women to form an amicable bond with their competitors, similar to Callirhoe's friendships with Statira and Rhodogune and Charicleia's bond with Nausicleia.

In comparison to *L&C*, women seemingly have greater agency in the *Babyloniaca*, suggesting the authors had different motives in isolating their heroines from other women. Sinonis frequently places her own interests first and acts of her own accord and not to further the hero's agenda and Berenice

¹⁰⁸³ Phot.*Bibl.* 76b13; 77b18; 77b19.

¹⁰⁸⁴ 4.4.2; 4.6.3.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Kanavou (2019), 118.

threatens to start a war over Mesopotamia.¹⁰⁸⁶ Whilst Photius' summary does not go into too much detail about having the women act on their own initiatives, they are not solely limited by their bonds to men as the women are in *L&C*, where the women's word and actions are reported by male narrators. Subsequently, potentially Sinonis and the Farmer's Daughter could have interacted and formed some sort of direct relationship within the text, which would partly explain Sinonis' anger towards her rival if she felt that a personal betrayal had been committed.¹⁰⁸⁷ However, the surviving sources do not mention any direct interactions between Sinonis and the Farmer's Daughter, making this bond difficult to read into.

The other prominent female bond in Photius' summary, between Berenice and Mesopotamia, is portrayed positively and could have provided a model for a friendship between Sinonis and the Farmer's Daughter. As a subplot, this relationship is hardly focused on in the summary and is relegated to a few lines, making it difficult to reconstruct. Despite Photius' description of Berenice's affairs as "savage" (ἀγρίων) and "illicit" (ἐκθέσμων), the overall portrayal of this bond is seemingly positive.¹⁰⁸⁸ Although brief on the subject, Photius mentions the two women were associated with each other, before Mesopotamia's arrest.¹⁰⁸⁹ After being reunited, Berenice plays a valuable role

¹⁰⁸⁶ Phot.*Bibl.*77b20. For instance, Sinonis holds Rhodanes accountable for his betrayal by leaving him to marry Garmus (Phot.*Bibl.*77b19).

¹⁰⁸⁷ However, in Fragment 61, Sinonis focuses mostly on Rhodanes and how he has harmed her in her rebuke to Soraechus (Iamb.fr.61.73-85). This suggests that she considers him to have betrayed her and not the Farmer's Daughter.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Phot.*Bibl.*77a17.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Phot.*Bibl.*77a17.

in Mesopotamia's marriage and is described as threatening to start a war with Garmus over the other woman, presumably in retaliation for him sentencing Mesopotamia to death.¹⁰⁹⁰ All of these events suggest a close positive connection between the women, which could have potentially served as a model for a friendship between Sinonis and the Farmer's Daughter. This is further enhanced by Mesopotamia's resemblance to a novelistic heroine, making her arguably a substitute for Sinonis. It is possible that Berenice and Mesopotamia's relationship was of a romantic nature rather than a simple friendship, but either way this bond offers a positive example of a female-only relationship.¹⁰⁹¹ This serves as a contrast to Sinonis and the Farmer's Daughter, who are prevented from having an amicable bond due to the tension caused by their connections with Rhodanes.

Readers of the novels might have expected a reversal of how these relationships were presented, with the heroine having the positive female bond. As a foreign ruler, Berenice may have been set up as an antagonist, in a similar manner to Arsace.¹⁰⁹² Morales noted the use of συγγίνομαι in describing the relationship is problematic as it might suggest Mesopotamia was forced into it, in a similar way in which Arsace exerts pressure on Theagenes.¹⁰⁹³ As discussed, female antagonists in the *Aethiopica* have close

¹⁰⁹⁰ Phot.*Bibl.*77b20.

¹⁰⁹¹ Kanavou (2019), 122. Συγγίνομαι (Phot.*Bibl.*77a17) can be used both to indicate an association between two people and a sexual relationship. See Morales (2006) for further discussion.

¹⁰⁹² This cannot be proved due to the loss of the original text. See pp.109-13 on how Arsace's non-Greek heritage affects her portrayal.

¹⁰⁹³ Morales (2006), 80; Phot.*Bibl.*77a17; pg.108.

companions, but these relationships are driven by self-interest, deceit and betrayal. Furthermore, if Berenice and Mesopotamia did have a romantic relationship, this would be one of the few positive ancient literary depictions of a lesbian relationship. Under the Roman Empire, even Sappho suffered attempts to heteronormalize her works and herself, with Ovid's *Heroides XV* perhaps being the most prominent example by portraying Sappho as being driven to suicide after being rejected by a man.¹⁰⁹⁴ Iphis laments her love for Ianthe, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, claiming it is unnatural and is eventually transformed into a boy by the ending of the episode.¹⁰⁹⁵ The main issue Roman authors seemingly had with lesbian relationships was their belief that one partner would have to assume a dominant and active role, going against their "natural" female passivity and taking a male role.¹⁰⁹⁶ Martial initially praises Bassa for having no male lover, only to then call her a "fornicator" and accuse her genitals of "unnaturally imitating men" when he discovers she has had a female lover.¹⁰⁹⁷ A similar attitude appears in Lucian's *Dialogues of the Courtesans*, with Leaena calling her lover Megilla's love for her "unnatural" and describing her as behaving terribly (δεινῶς) like a man.¹⁰⁹⁸ Therefore, I argue that Iamblichus offers a reversal of expectations in having Berenice and Mesopotamia have the positive female bond instead of the heroine and the

¹⁰⁹⁴ Andreadis (2014), 18, 24; Greene (2002), 82; Ormand (2009), 46. For an overview of the attempts to heteronormalize Sappho, both ancient and modern see Andreadis (2014), 18-20; and Ormand (2009), 46-7.

¹⁰⁹⁵ *Ov.Met.*9.726-35; 9.786-91. On Iphis and Ianthe's relationship in Ovid see Ormand (2009), 279-92; and Pintatone (2002).

¹⁰⁹⁶ Pintatone (2002), 257-8; Rupp (2009), 35.

¹⁰⁹⁷ *Mart.*1.90; Ormand (2009), 364; Rupp (2009), 36.

¹⁰⁹⁸ *Lucian.Dial.Meret.*5.1.

virtuous Farmer's Daughter. Although Sinonis has agency in this text, unlike the women in *L&C*, and is not solely defined by her relationship to the male hero, her stereotyping as a jealous woman prevents her from forming a friendship with the Farmer's Daughter.

Whilst there are no valid bonds between the heroine and the other women discussed within this section, they indicate that the distancing of Melite from Leucippe is part of a wider trend within the novels, despite the former attempting to form a friendship with the latter. Female characters that are or could have potentially become *confidantes* to the novel's heroines are frequently marginalised, with their bonds and relevance to the male heroes being prioritised. The individual novelists took different approaches towards their female characters: Achilles Tatius distanced his female characters from each other to prioritise their ties to the male agenda, Iamblichus set Sinonis and the Farmer's Daughter up as rivals to subvert genre expectations of "heroines" and "antagonists", and Chariton and Heliodorus set up Rhodogune and Nausicleia respectively as *confidantes*, but prioritise their other roles and do not expand on their relationships with their heroines.¹⁰⁹⁹ Yet, despite the individual novelists having different attitudes towards women and female bonds, they all isolate their female characters from each other in some way, suggesting that female friendships was not a priority in the Greek novels.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Pp.325-8; 4.6.4; pp.190-2; pp.251-3.

4.4 The Isolation of Leucippe

In terms of female companionship, Leucippe is arguably the most isolated novelistic heroine, being distanced from other women. As discussed earlier, Leucippe does not have a close relationship with her slave, Clio, with both women prioritising their own safety.¹¹⁰⁰ Similarly, the heroine is distanced from other aristocratic women within the novel, including Calligone and Melite. There is a lack of direct interactions between the women and the novel offers barely any insights into their thoughts or feelings towards each other. The women display no envy/jealousy, despite their status as rivals for the same man. This presents them as indifferent towards each other and subsequently separates them. Earlier I discussed how Clitophon as a narrator only focuses on relationships that are useful/directly relevant to himself.¹¹⁰¹ The distancing of the female characters not only downplays the importance of female friendships but also frames the women by a male agenda, portraying them as male assets and as separate objects to be lusted over.

4.4.1 Distancing

Leucippe is arguably the most isolated novelistic heroine in terms of female companionship, distanced not only from potential aristocratic *confidantes* but also from all other female characters within the novel. There is a general lack

¹¹⁰⁰ Pp.128-30.

¹¹⁰¹ See pp.128-9.

of closeness and direct interactions between the heroine and other women. Despite Clio allegedly being a close companion of her mistress, the women seemingly lack concern for each other.¹¹⁰² With the exception of Chloe, the other novelistic heroines have at least one female *confidante* with whom they have a positive bond: Anthia has Rhode, Charicleia has Nausicleia and Callirhoe has Plangon, Statira and Rhodogune. Despite not having a close *confidante*, Chloe has a better relationship with maternal figures, in the form of Cleariste, Nape and Rhoda, than Leucippe has with her mother. Whilst Nape wishes to quickly marry Chloe off to benefit her own family, arguably she is looking out for the heroine as well in making her a mistress of a house.¹¹⁰³ Leucippe's relationship with her mother is more hostile, with Pantheia seemingly more interested in how her daughter's lack of virginity will affect the heroine's reputation than her daughter's welfare, and the heroine fleeing to escape her mother.¹¹⁰⁴ Whilst these relationships in the other novels are often relegated to the background of their texts, not fully developed and/or contain elements of tension, there is at least a clear mutually amicable bond between the women. In contrast, Achilles Tatius deliberately distances his heroine from other female characters, which potentially makes Leucippe and not Charicleia, as claimed by some scholars, the most isolated heroine in terms of female companionship.¹¹⁰⁵ The

¹¹⁰² Pp.128-30.

¹¹⁰³ Long.3.25.2.

¹¹⁰⁴ Ach.Tat.2.24.2-4; 2.30.1-2.

¹¹⁰⁵ See pp.253-4.

distancing of the women suggests that women-only bonds were not important to the novel's hero, in contrast to the relationships between men.

Calligone and Leucippe never interact directly with each other in the narrative and are rarely portrayed as physically present together. Furthermore, at no point does Achilles Tatius (through his narrator Clitophon) reveal either woman's thoughts or feelings towards each other. This is reflective of Clitophon as a narrator, whose ego-centric nature means he only focuses on relationships directly important or useful to himself.¹¹⁰⁶ The only time the two women are depicted as being in the same place is when they share a couch at dinner.¹¹⁰⁷ Yet, this is not to express closeness between the women but to emphasise Leucippe's beauty through indirect comparison, with Clitophon focusing only on her and not Calligone. This frames the women as objects for the male viewer, keeping them as separate works of art to be admired. Clitophon, as the novel's narrator, prioritises the women's connections to him, allowing them little agency outside of his agenda. This can be demonstrated in his portrayal of Calligone. Potentially, she could have developed into a rival on the protagonists' side, such as Melite in this novel or Lycaenion in *D&C*, but the lack of insight into her thoughts, the narrative focus and then her abduction prevents her from properly developing.¹¹⁰⁸ Readers are not offered any insight into what Calligone thinks about either Leucippe or Clitophon and her passive portrayal prevents her either aiding or

¹¹⁰⁶ Pp.128-9.

¹¹⁰⁷ Ach.Tat.1.5.2-4.

¹¹⁰⁸ Ach.Tat.2.18.2-6.

harming the protagonists. Until she is conveniently removed from the narrative, Calligone simply exists as a beautiful obstacle to Clitophon's pursuit of Leucippe, offering a threat through her status rather than through her actions. Whilst the lack of insight prevents Calligone from displaying any negative thoughts towards the heroine, particularly jealousy, it also prevents the women from bonding, keeping them separate.

Melite is also distanced from the heroine when Leucippe's true identity is revealed, despite the women interacting directly and the former attempting to form a friendship with the latter.¹¹⁰⁹ The women continue to play integral parts in the narrative, remain on the same side and appear in the same locations at the same time. However, they do not interact directly in the text again. Because of this loss of contact, their earlier interactions do not develop, either into a friendship or enmity. Instead, they are presented as separate rivals for the same man, having no personal connection with the exception of shared traits. For instance, whilst there may be no actual demonstrations of bitterness or jealousy towards Leucippe after Melite sleeps with Clitophon, she is set up as the heroine's murderer in the story reported to the hero as part of Thersander's plot, which Clitophon then repeats in court.¹¹¹⁰ Although this story is false, arguably it creates a more "normalised" portrayal of Melite according to the genre than her passivity and acceptance of the situation. Novelistic female antagonists frequently attempt to take

¹¹⁰⁹ See 4.3.2; 4.3.3.

¹¹¹⁰ Ach.Tat.7.1.4-9.14.

vengeance on their rivals: from Manto and Rhenaia in *Ephesian Tale* and Arsace and Arsinoe in the *Aethiopica*.¹¹¹¹ This is not exclusive to the novels with ancient mythology and literature full of women taking revenge on rivals, examples including Hera, Medea, Clytemnestra, Hermione and Circe.¹¹¹² Lefteratou claims that there are links between this false story and folklore when the loser of a beauty competition takes revenge on the victor.¹¹¹³ Therefore, according to the genre and ancient literary tradition, the story appears more probable than Melite's seeming lack of personal emotions towards Leucippe after the affair.

Even when she is informed of the allegations against her, Melite is only described as being "the most" (μάλιστα) shocked, with no reference made to either joy or distress at hearing of the heroine's supposed death.¹¹¹⁴ Although the allegations are against Melite herself, by only showcasing one of her emotions towards hearing the news of her rival's "demise", she is distanced from the heroine. The shock is mainly read as a reaction to being accused of murder, rather than Leucippe's demise. Furthermore, Anderson argues that whilst Leucippe is missing in the trial, when she reappears the reader is not invited to consider the consequences for Melite.¹¹¹⁵ The last appearance of Melite is during her truth test, after which her search party brings back

¹¹¹¹ Xen.2.9.2-4; 11.2-3; 5.5.1-8; Heliod.2.9.1; 8.7.1-2; 9.1; 9.5-6; 9.9-11; 9.14; 9.16-21.

¹¹¹² See pp.229-31.

¹¹¹³ Lefteratou (2018), 72.

¹¹¹⁴ Ach.Tat.7.8.1.

¹¹¹⁵ Anderson (2017), 28.

Sosthenes and her husband disappears.¹¹¹⁶ Having completed her purpose in the narrative, Melite is removed with her eventual fate left unknown. This uncertainty fits a wider pattern within the novel, with the futures of Clio and even Leucippe being similarly uncertain.¹¹¹⁷ This suggests that the women in this text are ultimately defined by their connections and usefulness to the male hero, which marginalises their bonds with each other and strips them of agency.¹¹¹⁸ Leucippe is deliberately isolated from the other women and has no close female *confidante*, despite there being several candidates. This suggests that Achilles Tatius did not consider female friendships to be important, unlike the relationships between men.

4.4.2 Connection to the Male Hero

The women in *L&C* are distanced from each other in favour of their connections with the hero. Throughout the novel, the young, female aristocratic characters are primarily portrayed as potential love interests for the hero. Whilst this makes Calligone and Melite passive rivals to the heroine, the lack of any direct or personal connection between them means they are defined by their desirability and usefulness to the male narrator. The absence of close female relationships contrasts with the male friendships in this novel. Of the novelistic heroes, Clitophon has the highest number of close

¹¹¹⁶ Ach.Tat.8.14.3-6.

¹¹¹⁷ Pp.138-9. Leucippe's absence from the novel's prelude (Ach.Tat.1.1.1-2.3) and Clitophon's hostile views on love call into doubt their "happy ending".

¹¹¹⁸ See subsection (4.4.2).

companions with three and has a direct relationship with each. Clinias, Satyrus and Menelaus accompany the hero throughout his adventures and play vital roles in the narrative, including saving Leucippe from being sacrificed, influencing Clitophon to marry Melite and defending the hero in the court case.¹¹¹⁹ Throughout the text, Clitophon frequently interacts with his companions and records their conversations in full. This contrasts with Leucippe's lack of direct interactions with other women, suggesting that interactions between female characters are not as important in this text as those between their male equivalents. Even the novel's male antagonist, Thersander, has his slave Sosthenes to conspire with and also frequently interacts with other male characters. The contrast in the novel's treatment of male and female exclusive relationships is primarily due to how this particular novel is narrated in the first person. I previously argued Clitophon's role as the novel's narrator means that he only focuses on things important to himself or that move the narrative forward.¹¹²⁰ The distancing of the women from each other defines the female characters by their desirability and usefulness to the male characters, suggesting their bonds with each other are not important to Clitophon or Achilles Tatius. Subsequently, the women are stripped of their agency and presented as potential assets and/or as objects of lust for the male characters.

¹¹¹⁹ Ach.Tat.3.17.4-22.6; 5.11.3-12.3; 7.9.1-10.1.

¹¹²⁰ Pp.128-9.

For instance, the concluding stages of the novel demonstrate Calligone's lack of agency and how she is defined through a male gaze. Having previously been abducted by Callisthenes, Calligone is later indirectly reintroduced into the narrative by Sostratus.¹¹²¹ Whilst Sostratus claims he is telling Calligone's story, his account is actually about Callisthenes' moral transformation.¹¹²² Calligone serves as the catalyst of this transformation, but the emphasis is on how this demonstrates Callisthenes' growth and shows off his assets. She is assigned no words and is framed as the passive object of his affections. The novel offers some insight into Calligone's feelings and how she is won over, but more lines are dedicated to how Callisthenes impresses Sostratus and obtains his approval of the match (15 compared with 37).¹¹²³ Therefore, "Calligone's" tale is actually the story of male transformation and the bonding of the two men, unsurprising given it is reported by three male narrators: Sostratus, Clitophon and Achilles Tatius. Having indirectly united the men through sparking Callisthenes' transformation, Calligone then becomes the reward for his change through their marriage.¹¹²⁴ Anderson claimed it seems strange for Calligone to reappear in the ending as most readers would have forgotten about her.¹¹²⁵ Yet this marriage is important as it fulfils the genre

¹¹²¹ Ach.Tat.2.18.2-6; 8.17.3-18.5.

¹¹²² Ach.Tat.8.17.1-2.

¹¹²³ Ach.Tat.8.17.4.

¹¹²⁴ Ach.Tat.8.19.2-3.

¹¹²⁵ Anderson (2017), 14. Reardon ((1994), 91; (1999a), 255) also argues that Callisthenes and Calligone follow the romantic code of the genre.

“requirements” of having virtuous supporting characters also being paired off to have a happy ending.¹¹²⁶

Other novelistic women are similarly portrayed, notably Chaereas’ sister in the *Callirhoe* and Nausicleia in the *Aethiopica*, whose primary roles are to marry Polycharmus and Cnemon. Of these women, Chaereas’ sister is the most marginalised in the narrative.¹¹²⁷ She does not physically appear in the text, is not mentioned until her betrothal is announced and is unnamed. She exists only to reward Polycharmus and, in doing so, is reduced to the role of an insentient object. Calligone and Nausicleia play bigger roles in their respective narratives and have an impactful influence on the heroine, through Calligone’s portrayal as a potential rival and Nausicleia’s depiction as a friend. However, they also serve as rewards for male characters and their lack of in-depth characterisation and attention given to them by the narrative implies this is their primary role. Even in this role, the women lack agency with their marriages being arranged by their male family members, without any explicit mention of consent on the women’s behalf. This is not only reflective of culture at the time when the novels were written, but also of an established trope in Graeco-Roman mythology and literature in which women were frequently offered in marriage as a reward for deeds carried out by male

¹¹²⁶ This does not apply to all of the “good” characters in this genre. Dionysius and Melite respectively end up wifeless and with an unfavourable husband. Yet, due to their primary statuses as rivals and their portrayals as threats to the relationships between the protagonists (by marrying Callirhoe and Clitophon), ancient readers would unlikely have been concerned by this.

¹¹²⁷ Charit.8.8.12-3; Haynes (2003), 130.

characters.¹¹²⁸ This could also be applied to Leucippe herself. The heroine has some agency in the text, as demonstrated when she defends herself against Thersander without male help.¹¹²⁹ Yet, like Calligone, she is offered in marriage to Clitophon by her father without consultation and before he knows that she has already eloped.¹¹³⁰ Leucippe is positioned as the ultimate prize for Clitophon throughout the text and even her character development results in her losing her initial rebelliousness and conforming to ancient ideas about women, similar to Chloe. Since Clitophon is the first-person narrator, it is unsurprising that Leucippe and the other women in this novel, are only defined in relation to men and male values. This prevents them from forming a personal bond and keeps them isolated from each other within the narrative.

Similarly, instead of bonding, Melite and Leucippe compete for Clitophon's affections and aim to further his agenda instead of helping each other. When the direct aspect of their relationship is lost, there is seemingly also a loss of personal connection between the women, demonstrated when Melite reads Leucippe's letter and confronts Clitophon about its contents.¹¹³¹ This indicates that Melite feels that she has been personally betrayed, but most of her anger is directed at Clitophon and the circumstances, rather than the heroine. Melite feels "shame and anger and love and jealousy" (αἰδοῖ καὶ ὀργῆ καὶ

¹¹²⁸ Examples include Jocasta (Soph.*OC*.525-6; 539-40), Hermione (Ov.*Her*.8.31) and Lavinia (Virg.*Aen*.8.267-73).

¹¹²⁹ Ach.*Tat*.6.18.6; 6.20.3-22.4.

¹¹³⁰ Ach.*Tat*.5.10.3.

¹¹³¹ Ach.*Tat*.5.24.1-25.4.

ἔρωτι καὶ ζηλοτυπία).¹¹³² Jealousy certainly applies to Leucippe, but nothing suggests that her anger is personally directed at the heroine, only at her letter and the situation.¹¹³³ Melite groups the protagonists together as working to ruin her, but whilst Clitophon is described as laughing at Melite, she only accuses Leucippe of bringing her a love potion.¹¹³⁴ This implies that Melite feels personally betrayed by Clitophon and manipulated by him, but sees no such betrayal from Leucippe, despite the previous solidarity they shared. Even when describing the potion, Melite is more ashamed and mournful that she asked her rival for a love potion than upset at the heroine for betraying her trust.¹¹³⁵ This suggests the female bond between Melite and Leucippe is not as important to her as her relationship with Clitophon. Melite later acknowledges the heroine “mocked” her in agreeing to gather herbs, but this is mentioned briefly to explain why Leucippe is absent from the house and the focus quickly shifts onto Melite’s laments for her own situation.¹¹³⁶

Perhaps the clearest evidence that Melite’s reaction is framed to prioritise her relationship with Clitophon over her bond with Leucippe is when the text claims her love was stronger than jealousy (τέλος ἐκράτησεν ὁ ἔρωρ).¹¹³⁷

Several novelistic female antagonists are depicted as guided by both love and jealousy and, as discussed, the equal female friendships have tensions caused

¹¹³² Ach.Tat.5.24.3.

¹¹³³ Ach.Tat.5.24.3.

¹¹³⁴ Ach.Tat.5.25.3.

¹¹³⁵ Ach.Tat.5.25.3.

¹¹³⁶ Ach.Tat.5.26.12.

¹¹³⁷ Ach.Tat.5.24.3; Fusillo (1999), 77. See pp.228-31 for the connection between women and jealousy.

by rivalries over men.¹¹³⁸ Melite's complete lack of hostility towards the heroine makes this relationship different to these other bonds and implies that the women no longer have a relationship with each other. The only other woman in a similar position is Lycaenion in *D&C*, but she does not have a close relationship with the heroine and does not directly interact with Chloe. Yet Montague speculated that Lycaenion may have warned Daphnis to delay Chloe losing her virginity, suggesting some personal vindictiveness towards her rival.¹¹³⁹ This is supported by Lycaenion's comment to the hero to remember that she "made him a man before Chloe" (σε ἄνδρα ἐγὼ πρὸ Χλόης πεποίηκα).¹¹⁴⁰ However, there is nothing in Melite's actions after the affair to indicate a desire to punish her rival, with her only comments about Leucippe being a reassurance to Clitophon that the heroine will be with him soon.¹¹⁴¹ It could be argued that Melite choosing love over jealousy is a positive sign for the women's bond, enabling them to have an amicable bond like Statira has with Callirhoe.¹¹⁴² However, Chariton ultimately prioritises the friendship between Callirhoe and Statira over the tension caused by Artaxerxes' lust for the heroine. The timing of the claim that Melite's love was stronger than her jealousy, which occurs after Melite and Leucippe have stopped interacting with each other in the narrative, suggests that this

¹¹³⁸ See pp.114-7, pp.238-42 and pp.208-10.

¹¹³⁹ Long.3.19.2-3; Montague (1992), 242. I disagree with this line of thought due to how Lycaenion is presented, her lack of contact with Chloe and absence of firm evidence.

¹¹⁴⁰ Long.3.19.3. Jones ((2012), 244) argued that Clitophon's earlier dismissal of his experience with prostitutes (Ach.Tat.2.37.5.) implies that these encounters do not count and therefore it is Melite to whom he loses his "true" virginity, which would reflect Lycaenion's situation with Daphnis.

¹¹⁴¹ Ach.Tat.6.1.3.

¹¹⁴² 3.3.

comment was not made to strengthen the women's bond but to promote Melite's sub-ordination to the male hero. Although scholars have written on how Melite takes a dominant position in seducing and sleeping with Clitophon, she is primarily presented as a useful helper to his agenda after her discovery of Leucippe's true identity.¹¹⁴³ Her subservience to the hero was hinted at from the start of her appearance by Satyrus' claim that she wanted Clitophon to be her master rather than just her husband.¹¹⁴⁴ This bears some resemblance to how Clio is depicted earlier in the narrative as a male asset, except Melite is a significantly more developed character and is able to influence events.¹¹⁴⁵ This suggests that women in this novel ultimately do not have agency, regardless of how they are characterised. Instead, they are presented as either useful assets and/or objects of male lust. Therefore, the bonds the female characters have with each other are irrelevant, unless they offer some benefit towards Clitophon.

Melite's allegiance is solely towards furthering Clitophon's interests, with Leucippe's wellbeing serving as a side-effect. There are signs of Melite showing concern for her former rival, but these incidents are all linked to the male agenda unlike her previous act in listening to Leucippe's plea.¹¹⁴⁶ For instance, she acknowledges that Clitophon will only marry the heroine and wishes that he never lose Leucippe again, even to a false death.¹¹⁴⁷ Although

¹¹⁴³ Haynes (2003), 105; Lefteratou (2018), 70-1.

¹¹⁴⁴ Ach.Tat.5.11.6.

¹¹⁴⁵ Pp.136-40.

¹¹⁴⁶ Ach.Tat.5.17.5-6; 5.17.7.

¹¹⁴⁷ Ach.Tat.5.26.5; 5.26.7-8.

Anderson notes that Melite recognises the heroine's position is untouchable, by not mentioning any well wishes for Leucippe personally, she associates with Clitophon's perspective.¹¹⁴⁸ Likewise, Melite seemingly shows concern for Leucippe by being distressed to hear of the heroine's disappearance and secretly planning to search for Leucippe whilst simultaneously lying to Thersander about her own knowledge of these events.¹¹⁴⁹ Again, Melite's actions can be linked to her bond with Clitophon: she hears of the disappearance after hearing of the hero's arrest and is immediately upset after her conversation with Thersander because she has been unable to fulfil her promise to Clitophon.¹¹⁵⁰ Melite's main motivation is, therefore, her desire to help the hero and not a sense of protectiveness or concern for Leucippe, suggesting her interests are primarily aligned with the male protagonist instead of the heroine. Defining the women within this text by their connections to the male hero instead of one another strips the female characters of agency and presents them as existing solely to further the male agenda.

4.5 Recognition, Misidentification, and Interchangeability

Although Melite is distanced from Leucippe, as with other women within the novel and genre, the women have an indirect connection through them being

¹¹⁴⁸ Anderson (1982), 27.

¹¹⁴⁹ Ach.Tat.6.8.3-4; 6.10.1.

¹¹⁵⁰ Ach.Tat.6.11.2.

perceived as “interchangeable” and “identical” to each other. This occurs from a primarily male perspective, with both Melite and the Farmer’s Daughter in the *Babyloniaca* respectively identifying Leucippe’s aristocratic heritage and that the corpse was not Sinonis’.¹¹⁵¹ This implies that novelistic women both value each other’s individuality and recognise their shared valued and traits. In contrast, there is a pattern within *L&C* and the *Babyloniaca*, to some extent, of men misrecognising women: Clitophon fails to recognise Leucippe, Callisthenes mistakes Calligone for Leucippe and Sinonis’ father and Rhodanes misidentifies the corpse as her body.¹¹⁵² This suggests that from a male perspective, all women are interchangeable with each other, which objectifies the women. This idea of women being interchangeable in *L&C* is further enhanced by the ambiguous wording of Clitophon’s dreams which could apply to both Leucippe and Melite or Calligone and the rivals arguably usurp the heroine’s position through their marriages.¹¹⁵³ These dreams call into question genre conventions about the supposed “exceptionality” of the heroines and the idea of “true” love.¹¹⁵⁴

4.5.1 Female Recognition

¹¹⁵¹ Ach.Tat.5.17.3; Phot.*Bibl.*77b18.

¹¹⁵² Ach.Tat.5.17.7; 2.16.2; Phot.*Bibl.*76b13; 77a18.

¹¹⁵³ Ach.Tat.4.1.5-8; 1.3.4.

¹¹⁵⁴ On how Achilles Tatius pushes the boundaries of the genre by playing with “conventions” see Bird (2019); Chew (2000); (2012); (2014), 96-104; and Repath (2005)

This chapter earlier discussed that Melite empathises with Leucippe’s unfortunate circumstances on account of their shared gender.¹¹⁵⁵ Importantly, Melite is able to correctly identify “Lacaena’s” true identity by recognising their shared qualities, which not only partly explains why she attempts to form a friendship with the other woman but also contrasts Clitophon’s misrecognition.¹¹⁵⁶ At this point in the narrative, Leucippe’s body has been reduced to that of a slave: her clothes and body are covered with dirt, she is bound with chains and her head is shaved.¹¹⁵⁷ Satyrus later claims that anyone would have failed to recognise her under these conditions, although it seems more likely that he aims to exonerate Clitophon here from his previous failure to recognise his beloved than to speak the truth.¹¹⁵⁸ The readers of the novel, used to the trope of false deaths, instantly recognise that the woman is Leucippe. Having not met the heroine before and believing her to be dead, Melite is unable to identify “Lacaena” as “Leucippe”, but recognises her nobility. The novelistic heroines never fully lose their aristocratic status, even when they are temporarily enslaved. Leucippe’s still evident beauty, eloquence and words here, in proclaiming that she was born free but now a slave by fortune (ἐλευθέραν μὲν, ὡς ἔφυν, δούλην δὲ νῦν, ὡς δοκεῖ τῇ Τύχῃ), demonstrate that she also has not lost her heritage. That Melite instantly recognises Leucippe’s true status on sight and immediately accepts her story could imply that she sees something of herself in her. In the

¹¹⁵⁵ Pp.270-2; pg.276.

¹¹⁵⁶ Ach.Tat.5.17.3.

¹¹⁵⁷ Ach.Tat.5.17.3; Schwartz (2012a), 185.

¹¹⁵⁸ Ach.Tat.5.19.2; Montiglio (2013), 71.

ancient world, there was a threat of being captured and sold into slavery, regardless of status.¹¹⁵⁹ This fear is prominently displayed throughout all of the surviving novels, with the protagonists being repeatedly kidnapped and enslaved. Melite's immediate and steadfast belief in Leucippe's story and subsequent sympathy for the heroine could imply that she recognises that she could have easily ended up in the other women's position instead.

This is part of a wider trend of how female characters were portrayed, both in the genre and other Graeco-Roman literature, with women often portrayed as perceptive in ancient literary recognition scenes. Examples include Eurycleia in the *Odyssey*, Electra in Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*, Chrysothemis in Sophocles' *Electra* and Creusa in Euripides' *Ion*.¹¹⁶⁰ Yet, most of these recognition scenes occur between characters that are familiar with each other or when a long-lost relative has identifying features that enables their kinswomen to identify them. In contrast, the novelistic heroines are ironically recognised by their rivals, despite barely being acquainted with them. Similar to Melite, the Farmer's Daughter in the *Babyloniaca* immediately realises that the corpse is not the heroine's body, unlike Sinonis' father and her beloved.¹¹⁶¹ This suggests that all novelistic women are characterised similarly from both a male and female perspective. As the novelistic female characters correctly recognise each other despite knowing their rival for less time than

¹¹⁵⁹ On fears of forced enslavement in the ancient world see Glaucy (2002), 79-80; and Tordoff (2013), 46-7.

¹¹⁶⁰ Hom.*Od.*19.392-3; 467-75; Aesch.*Cho.*68-211, Soph.*El.*893-915; Eur.*Ion.*1395-411.

¹¹⁶¹ Phot.*Bibl.*77b18.

their male counterparts, this suggests that they value each other's uniqueness and individuality. This contrasts their male counterparts, who strip the women of their uniqueness and view them as interchangeable with each other.

4.5.2 Male Misidentification

Melite and other novelistic female characters are able to recognise other women's virtues, in some cases even attempting to form friendships due to their shared traits.¹¹⁶² This contrasts Clitophon and other male characters in this genre who frequently mistake women for other female characters or misidentify them. Often, these misrecognitions are carried out by the men closest to the women including their "devoted" lovers. This suggests that from a male point of view, women are indistinguishable from each other and can be exchanged with each other. With the men unable to distinguish between women, this strips away the female character's individuality and uniqueness. The men's failure to correctly identify their supposed beloveds suggests that the male characters are primarily attracted by the idea of possessing the woman perceived to be the "best" rather than the women themselves, indicating that female beauty is mainly a constructed ideal. This challenges traditional perceptions of genre conventions, notably the ideas of having one "true" love and the heroine being beyond comparison in both

¹¹⁶² Pp.175-7; pp.178-9; 3.3; pg.255, pp.256-8.

physical beauty and morality. Examples of men mistaking female characters for each other include the anonymous prostitute being mistaken for Leucippe, both Thisbe and Charicleia for each other and Euphrates being forced to address Mesopotamia as “Sinonis” after the siblings are mistaken for the protagonists.¹¹⁶³ Some of these cases could be considered forgivable: Clitophon and his companions watch the prostitute being killed from a distance and the guards in the *Babyloniaca* had never met Sinonis before. The latter situation is similar to the goldsmith’s misidentification within the same text, who reasonably mistakes the Farmer’s Daughter for Sinonis on the basis of her beauty, shorn hair, and the protagonist’s chain that she carries.¹¹⁶⁴ Yet, when these situations are combined with the misidentifications carried out by lovers and family members, there is clearly a wider pattern in this genre of men being unable to distinguish between women.

On some level, these misidentifications occur on an individual basis rather than applying to all male characters, although there is still a pattern. In the *Babyloniaca*, Rhodanes, the heroine’s father and Soraechus, the men closest to Sinonis, misidentify Trophime’s corpse as that of the heroine.¹¹⁶⁵ This suggests a specifically male failure to distinguish between women, especially as the Farmer’s Daughter instantly recognises the body was not Sinonis.¹¹⁶⁶

¹¹⁶³ Ach.Tat.5.7.4-9; Heliod.1.30.7; 2.3.3-5.2; 5.3.3-4.2; Phot.*Bibl.*76a12. However, Nausicles does not misidentify Charicleia as Thisbe (Heliod.5.8.3-4) but recognises that it would be in his best interests if the heroine was believed to be the other woman.

¹¹⁶⁴ Phot.*Bibl.*76b13; Kanavou (2019), 116; Stephens (1996), 668.

¹¹⁶⁵ Phot.*Bibl.*77a18.

¹¹⁶⁶ Phot.*Bibl.*77b18.

However, in Photius' summary, Garmus recognises that Mesopotamia is not Sinonis and orders her execution to prevent other women from using the heroine's identity, proving not all men in the *Babyloniaca* are unable to correctly identify women.¹¹⁶⁷ Whilst the misidentification is not exclusive to the hero, Rhodanes' failure to recognise his beloved presents an ironic contrast to Garmus' recognition, which could suggest, to some extent, that the misrecognition occurs on an individual level. Similarly, Clitophon fails to recognise "Lacaena" as Leucippe, despite noting a resemblance, and Montiglio argues that Clitophon should have recognised the heroine here, despite her changed appearance, especially as Melite does so.¹¹⁶⁸ I disagree with her claim that the other novelistic heroes always successfully recognise the heroines as both Chaereas and Theagenes are initially unable to identify Callirhoe and Charicleia under similar circumstances in their respective novels.¹¹⁶⁹ However, Montiglio makes some compelling points to support her argument that Clitophon should have recognised Leucippe, notably that no explanation is given for why he fails to recognise the heroine's voice and that his attraction to Melite, supported by his elaborate description of her physical appearance, could have played a part in his failure to recognise his supposed beloved.¹¹⁷⁰ Unlike the other heroes, Clitophon can only "recognise" Leucippe upon receiving her letter informing him of the truth.¹¹⁷¹ This implies that

¹¹⁶⁷ Phot.*Bibl.*77b20.

¹¹⁶⁸ Ach.Tat.5.17.7; 5.17.4; Montiglio (2013), 67-73, 71. Melite's recognition is discussed at pp.305-6.

¹¹⁶⁹ Montiglio (2013), 67; Charit.8.1.7-8; Helioid.7.7.6.

¹¹⁷⁰ Montiglio (2013), 70, 70-1; Ach.Tat.5.13.1-3. Clitophon himself admits that it was "not unpleasant" to look at Melite (Ach.Tat.5.13.3).

¹¹⁷¹ Ach.Tat.5.18.3-6.

Clitophon's failure could be linked to his egotistical nature rather than occurring solely because of his gender. With Rhodanes and Clitophon both failing to recognise their supposed beloveds, this calls into question their supposed devotion to Sinonis and Leucippe, portraying a one-sided attachment instead of the mutual love pushed by the other surviving novels.

This fits into the wider topic of female beauty within the genre by suggesting that men are attracted by the idea of beauty rather than the actual women themselves. This challenges the concept of the heroines allegedly being without equals in their beauty by suggesting that they are interchangeable with other women, stripping them of their uniqueness. Kanavou has offered the intriguing idea that the resemblance between Sinonis and her rival could have played some part in Rhodanes' attraction to the Farmer's Daughter, although as she rightly notes the hero's motives are not revealed in Photius' summary and this idea is speculative.¹¹⁷² However, Fragment 63 suggests that the heroine notes the similarities in their physical appearances when Sinonis states "you have a short-haired girl like myself" (ἔχεις κόρην κεκαρμένην ὡς ἐγώ) and the goldsmith also misidentifies the women because of the beauty and shorn hair of the Farmer's Daughter.¹¹⁷³ The idea that the hero could be attracted to multiple women because of a shared physical feature threatens the idea of the heroine's beauty being without equal and the exclusivity of

¹¹⁷² Kanavou (2019), 118.

¹¹⁷³ Iamb.fr.61.10; Phot.*Bibl.*76b13

the protagonists' attraction towards each other.¹¹⁷⁴ In *L&C*, Clitophon, unusually for this genre, gives a large amount of detail on Leucippe's physical appearance in her introduction, which contrasts the other novel heroines.¹¹⁷⁵ They are only described as exceptionally beautiful and their attractiveness is seemingly accepted by everyone in the novels, with no information given about their exact physical features. Even on Calligone's wedding day within the same novel, the focus is on her necklace and dress rather than her own appearance.¹¹⁷⁶ Yet, despite the amount of detail given to the heroine, Clitophon later fails to recognise his beloved in the novel when she is in front of him, despite defining her portrayal.¹¹⁷⁷ As with the *Babyloniaca*, this suggests that Leucippe's distinct physical features are ultimately not important to him in comparison to her reputation for being beautiful.

Novelistic heroines are often known for their physical attractiveness and rumours of their beauty lead to the women being mistaken for each other. For instance, in the *Callirhoe* men are enamoured by rumours of the heroine's incomparable beauty before actually seeing her, including her initial suitors and Artaxerxes.¹¹⁷⁸ Whilst Callirhoe apparently lives up to her reputation, with even Statira and the other Persian women acknowledging her beauty to be superior, these men are intrigued foremost by Callirhoe's famed

¹¹⁷⁴ The idea of physical attraction being not exclusive is brought up by Soraechus within the same fragment (Iamb.fr.61.71); Kanavou (2019), 118.

¹¹⁷⁵ Ach.Tat.1.4.1-5; Kauffman (2015), 52-5. Morales ((2022), 33) notes that Charicleia's physical appearance is not described in detail.

¹¹⁷⁶ Ach.Tat.2.11.2-8.

¹¹⁷⁷ Ach.Tat.5.17.3.

¹¹⁷⁸ Charit.1.1.2-3; 4.6.7-8.

attractiveness, which again could suggest a yearning to possess the allegedly most beautiful woman in the world, regardless of whether this is the case.¹¹⁷⁹ The same could also apply to Leucippe, with Thersander and Callisthenes lusting over rumours of her beauty.¹¹⁸⁰ The latter incident leads to Callisthenes mistaking Calligone for Leucippe.¹¹⁸¹ Much work has been done on the senses in the novels, with the majority arguing that sight plays the dominant role when there is mutual love (which Montiglio implies is the opposite to most love rivals, who hear of the hero/heroine before they see them).¹¹⁸² Callisthenes goes wrong compared to the genre's "norms" by falling in love by hearing and through the presence of Pantheia.¹¹⁸³ Yet he partly misidentifies the two women because of Calligone's beauty and the lack of information Callisthenes has.¹¹⁸⁴ The text states that Callisthenes has never seen Leucippe before but has fallen in love with how he imagines her to look.¹¹⁸⁵ When Callisthenes sees Calligone, he is struck by the sight of her and consequently believes she has to be Leucippe.¹¹⁸⁶ As Morales convincingly argues, Callisthenes' *phantasia* of Leucippe is non-descriptive and could apply to both women.¹¹⁸⁷ With the women consistently viewed through a male

¹¹⁷⁹ Charit.5.3.9-10; 5.9.1.

¹¹⁸⁰ Ach.Tat.6.4.4; 2.13.1; Montiglio (2013), 73.

¹¹⁸¹ Ach.Tat.2.16.2.

¹¹⁸² Montiglio (2013), 29; (2014), 169-80. The importance of sight in the process of falling in love in this genre is discussed by Alvares (2012), 13-17, 19; Montiglio (2014), 167-9; and Morales (2004), 156-65.

¹¹⁸³ Anderson (2017), 34; Montiglio (2013), 73-4; Morales (2004), 88-9, 91. In *Ephesian Tale*, the protagonists hear of each other beforehand (Xen.1.2.9), but do not fall in love until they see each other (Xen.1.3.1). Clitophon himself pours scorn on those who fall in love by hearing over seeing (Ach.Tat.2.13.1).

¹¹⁸⁴ For mixed identities in this novel, see Kanavou (2019), 116; and Montiglio (2013), 65-86.

¹¹⁸⁵ Ach.Tat.2.13.1; 13.3; 16.2; Kauffman (2015), 51. On Leucippe's beauty, see Kauffman (2015).

¹¹⁸⁶ Ach.Tat.2.16.2.

¹¹⁸⁷ Morales (2004), 93.

gaze, this suggests that men are only concerned with possessing the woman considered to be the best rather than acting out of love, contrasting the female characters' recognitions.

4.5.3 Interchangeability

Within *L&C*, there are moments where the heroine is arguably interchangeable with her rivals, calling into question Leucippe's supposed uniqueness. This interchangeability occurs on two levels: when the text could metaphorically apply to either woman or when a rival appears in a position usually reserved for the novelistic protagonists. Both demonstrate that Achilles Tatius challenges genre "perceptions" about the heroines and their roles within the narratives. For instance, Clitophon's dream of Aphrodite, promising him rewards in the future if he delays sleeping with the heroine, is ambiguous in nature.¹¹⁸⁸ Morales argued that this dream refers to his encounter with Melite and not his marriage to Leucippe, as first implied, and the text seemingly supports this argument.¹¹⁸⁹ Satyrus describes Melite as a reward to the hero from Aphrodite, compared to the Goddess by Clitophon in his description of her beauty and she herself brings up the goddess several times in her attempted seduction of Clitophon.¹¹⁹⁰ Considering Clitophon's generally flippant attitude to love, the interchangeability of the women fits in

¹¹⁸⁸ Ach.Tat.4.1.5-8.

¹¹⁸⁹ Morales (2004), 221. Papadimitropoulos ((2015), 159) reaches a similar conclusion.

¹¹⁹⁰ Ach.Tat.5.11.5; 5.13.2; 5.15.6; 5.16.3-4; Lefteratou (2018), 144.

with the idea that this particular novel pushes the “boundaries” of the genre, which promotes having only one true love.¹¹⁹¹

The ambiguity surrounding the woman in the dream reflects an earlier dream of Clitophon, in which he joined bodies with a maiden before a fearful (φοβερά) and great (μεγάλη) woman cuts them apart with a sickle (ἄρπην).¹¹⁹² Often this has been interpreted as a warning (in line with the later omens) for Clitophon not to marry Calligone, which has led some translators to use her name or “sister” in this scene.¹¹⁹³ Yet, as Bartsch and MacAlister noted, no specific woman is actually named: they are referred to as the “maiden” (τῆ παρθένῳ) which could imply either Leucippe or Calligone.¹¹⁹⁴ Both argue that the dream could foreshadow Pantheia’s interruption of Clitophon and Leucippe, which makes sense given the large amount of irony in this particular novel.¹¹⁹⁵ For instance, the dream Pantheia has to warn her about Leucippe and Clitophon’s attempted liaison also serves as a foreshadowing of Leucippe’s later false death.¹¹⁹⁶ The ambiguous identities of the women in Clitophon’s dreams could imply that the heroine and the other aristocratic women in *L&C* are interchangeable and that Clitophon’s feelings for Leucippe may be more superficial than genuine.

¹¹⁹¹ Including his admittance to dallying with prostitutes (Ach.Tat.2.37.5) and affair with Melite (Ach.Tat.5.27.2-4).

¹¹⁹² Ach.Tat.1.3.4. This dream resembles Aristophanes’ speech in Plato’s *Symposium* (Pl.*Symp.*189e-193d) and Morales ((2001), XXI; (2004), 52-3) argued that the dream is a nightmarish version of this speech.

¹¹⁹³ Ach.Tat.2.11.1-2 2.12.2-3; Gaslee (1969); Winkler (1989).

¹¹⁹⁴ Bartsch (1989), 87; MacAlister (1996), 77. This argument is supported by Whitmarsh ((2020), 137) noting the similarities between “ἄρπην” (sickle) and “ἄρπαγή” (abduction).

¹¹⁹⁵ Ach.Tat.2.23.6. See Whitmarsh (2003) on irony in *L&C*.

¹¹⁹⁶ Ach.Tat.2.23.4-5; 3.15.1-6; MacAlister (1996), 76-7.

This is further demonstrated by the many examples of rivals usurping the heroine's "rightful" place within the novel. For instance, Melite could be said to usurp Leucippe's position by marrying Clitophon, despite not being the official heroine of the novel.¹¹⁹⁷ The connection is further emphasised by Melite's "joke" about her unconsummated marriage bed being like a coffin for someone whose body was never found.¹¹⁹⁸ Although this marriage ultimately ends up being invalid and thus does not cause a serious threat to the relationship between the protagonists, Melite still takes the heroine's rightful place in marrying and sleeping with the hero, challenging Leucippe's status as the heroine of the text. Melite's portrayal is used to set up a competition between the women: both through setting up Melite as a plausible opponent to Leucippe and by questioning the irreplaceability of the role of the heroine in the narrative.¹¹⁹⁹

Similar to Melite's marriage, the novel unusually finishes with Leucippe and Clitophon attending Calligone's wedding as usually it is the protagonists who marry in either the early (*Callirhoe, Ephesian Tale*) or concluding stages (*D&C, Aethiopica*) in the other surviving novels.¹²⁰⁰ Despite Anderson's claims that

¹¹⁹⁷ Ach.Tat.5.14.2-4.

¹¹⁹⁸ Ach.Tat.5.14.4.

¹¹⁹⁹ Anderson (2017), 4.

¹²⁰⁰ Ach.Tat.8.19.3; Charit.1.1.15-16; Xen.1.8.1; Long.4.37.1-38.4; Heliod.10.40.1-41.3. There are other marriages that take place in the novels in addition to the main wedding between the protagonists (e.g. Callirhoe and Dionysius (Charit.3.2.10-7); Melite and Clitophon (Ach.Tat.5.14.2-3); and Nausicleia and Cnemon (Heliod.6.8.1-3)). However, these take place in the middle stages of their novels.

the readers would have forgotten who Calligone was by the final stages of the novel, her marriage takes place in a location usually exclusively reserved for the protagonists.¹²⁰¹ Calligone and Melite not only being interchangeable with Leucippe throughout the novel but also usurping the heroine at points that are usually reserved for the novels' protagonists adds to the recurring sense of irony within this novel and its willingness to push boundaries. Therefore, the interchangeability of the women in *L&C* from a male perspective further challenges genre perceptions in addition to the male misidentifications.

4.6 Flexible Roles: Heroines or Antagonists?

Melite is not only interchangeable with Leucippe from a male perspective, but also switches expected roles with her. Again, this fits into a wider pattern within *L&C* and the *Babyloniaca*, in which the characterisations of the female characters blur the boundaries between antagonists and heroines/*confidantes*. Melite serves as a "reverse parallel" to Leucippe, mirroring certain traits and experiences that the heroine possesses and undergoes whilst Melite's sensuality simultaneously contrasts with Leucippe's chastity. This casts her as almost a secondary heroine within the text. Calligone and the Farmer's Daughter similarly respectively challenge Leucippe and Sinonis' roles within their novels through their chastity and virtue, making the rivals arguably better fulfil the role of a novelistic heroine than the heroines

¹²⁰¹ Anderson (2017), 14.

themselves. The idea of blurred boundaries can further be demonstrated when looking at how Melite is frequently classified as an antagonist by scholars, due to her rivalry with Leucippe and her affair with the hero.¹²⁰² This goes against her positive portrayal within the narrative and primarily defines her by connection to the heroine and not the hero, whose agenda Melite is primarily aligned to. Sinonis further blurs the boundaries by resembling an antagonist through her unjustified hostility towards the Farmer's Daughter and her lack of self-restraint in acting on her jealousy, despite serving as the heroine of the novel. The flexible roles of Melite and other women within the genre again questions the idea of the novelistic heroines supposedly being beyond comparison.

4.6.1 Reverse Parallel

Through their similar characterisations and shared experiences, Melite arguably serves as a reverse parallel to the heroine's chastity.¹²⁰³ Melite's sexuality prevents her from posing a serious challenge to Leucippe's position as the heroine, but her mirroring of the heroine suggests that the women are interchangeable and therefore that Leucippe's role is not "secure". In terms of characterisation and background, Melite is portrayed similarly to Leucippe. She is described as beautiful, wealthy and infatuated with the same man as the protagonist.¹²⁰⁴ Melite's characterisation is fully developed, unlike other

¹²⁰² Ach.Tat.5.27.1-4.

¹²⁰³ See pg.316.

¹²⁰⁴ Ach.Tat.5.11.5-6; 5.13.1-2.

novelistic female supporting characters, leading Haynes to argue that she is the only character to “rival the heroine in complexity and interest”.¹²⁰⁵ However, it is mainly the way Melite and Leucippe challenge expectations of their roles that makes them resemble each other. Melite serves more as an ally than an antagonist in the narrative and similarly Leucippe is not an entirely virtuous heroine. This blurs the boundaries of their respective statuses, making neither woman solely “good” or “bad” and creating a resemblance between the two.¹²⁰⁶ Therefore, the novel includes situations where the women undergo similar experiences, creating a parallel.

This parallelism is perhaps most prominent in the tests Melite and Leucippe undergo in the novel’s latter stages.¹²⁰⁷ Both women succeed only because of outside factors that prevented them from carrying out the offences they were accused of, not because they were ethically unwilling. Leucippe initially pushes the boundaries of the genre by agreeing to sleep with Clitophon before marriage, going against the convention requiring the heroine to remain chaste.¹²⁰⁸ Whilst the heroine passes the virginity test and is subsequently able to be with Clitophon, she only succeeds due to Pantheia’s interruption and not her own desire to remain chaste, making the test ironic.¹²⁰⁹ This creates a parallel with Melite’s truth test that she undergoes after Leucippe’s, which has the same comic atmosphere surrounding it.

¹²⁰⁵ Haynes (2003), 104.

¹²⁰⁶ Haynes (2003), 104.

¹²⁰⁷ Ach.Tat.8.13.1-14.2; 8.14.3-4.

¹²⁰⁸ Chew (2000), 57; Ach.Tat.2.19.1-2.

¹²⁰⁹ Ach.Tat.8.14.1-2; 2.23.4-6; Goldhill (2008), 197; Morales (2001), XXIX-XXX.

Melite ironically passes her trial by swearing that she had not slept with Clitophon while Thersander was away, because she had actually done so when her husband had already returned.¹²¹⁰ Therefore, both Melite and Leucippe's tests are not straightforward and were passed on technicalities, creating a parallel between the women in their roles in developing irony in the narrative. In this way Melite and Leucippe could be considered to be interchangeable with each other.

The women could also be said to mirror each other through their use of deceptive rhetoric. Both deliberately manipulate the truth at times to protect their own reputations. Melite openly lies when being questioned by Thersander, but uses some of the truth to make her story seem more credible.¹²¹¹ Leucippe also lies to her mother about not knowing the identity of her seducer, but truthfully stresses she is still a virgin.¹²¹² As mentioned, both women exploit technical loopholes in stating no adultery was committed when Thersander was away and that the heroine remained a virgin.¹²¹³ This demonstrates that Leucippe and Melite are both great manipulators, capable of controlling the narrative through their rhetorical skills. As this thesis has demonstrated, there are many other novelistic female characters that also possess this skill. Yet, when there is more than one female manipulator in a novel, usually one proves to be superior to the others, even if all the women

¹²¹⁰ Morales (2001), XXIX-XXX; Plepelits (1996), 397.

¹²¹¹ Ach.Tat.6.8.4; 6.9.2-7.

¹²¹² Ach.Tat.2.25.1-2; 2.28.2.

¹²¹³ Ach.Tat.8.11.3.

are intelligent and good at deceiving: Plangon manipulates Callirhoe in the early stages of the *Callirhoe*, Thisbe outplays Demainete by using her own plan against her and Charicleia deceives both Cybele and Arsace.¹²¹⁴ In contrast, Melite and Leucippe seem equally skilled at manipulating. Although the heroine seemingly gets the upper hand over her rival with her false identity, Melite still recognises Leucippe's nobility and gets immediate revenge through her seduction of Clitophon.¹²¹⁵ Baker argues that Melite reverses Leucippe's previous deception, her agreement to use magical herbs, to persuade Clitophon by directly referencing the failed incident to gain sympathy.¹²¹⁶ It is doubtful how effective this particular point is in Melite's overall argument but there are other moments in the narrative where Melite reflects Leucippe's earlier words and actions to persuade, notably in their appeals. Leucippe begs Melite for "a woman to pity a woman" (γυνὴ γυναικῶν), and the other woman mirrors this in her later appeal.¹²¹⁷ Reusing this phrase suggests that Melite initially found it to be rhetorically effective and she uses it here both in the hope that it will make her own plea more persuasive and to remind the heroine of her previous kindness. With the women being matched in their devious eloquence and mirroring each other with their strategies, they could be considered interchangeable. Melite herself seemingly identifies their similarities when she recognises the heroine's aristocratic heritage through her beauty.¹²¹⁸

¹²¹⁴ 2.3.1; pp.65-6; 2.4.1; pp.106-9.

¹²¹⁵ Ach.Tat.5.17.4.

¹²¹⁶ Baker (2016), 124; Ach.Tat.5.22.7; 5.26.12.

¹²¹⁷ Ach.Tat.5.17.3; 5.22.6. The appeals are discussed further at pp.270-1.

¹²¹⁸ Ach.Tat.5.17.4; Schwartz (2012a), 186.

Melite mirrors Leucippe in their similarities, but at the same time serves as a reverse parallel to the heroine's chastity through her sexuality.¹²¹⁹ Although the heroine's initial immorality and unconventionality is reflected by Melite's portrayal, Leucippe evolves throughout the narrative into a more "typical" novelistic heroine, determined to protect her virtue. Before Melite is introduced in the narrative, she is set up as the heroine's opposite through her sexuality. Leucippe's transformation, into a conventionally chaste heroine begins with her dream in which Artemis tells her to remain a virgin and she will be rewarded with Clitophon.¹²²⁰ Clitophon then immediately mentions he had a similar dream with Aphrodite asking him to wait on the premise of being rewarded in the future.¹²²¹ There is a strong link between Aphrodite and Melite.¹²²² As Callirhoe is associated with the goddess and mistaken for her several times within the text, it could be argued that the connection with the goddess in relation to Melite further sets her up as a secondary heroine within the text.¹²²³ Likewise, there is a strong correlation between Leucippe and Artemis, especially when she defends herself from Thersander's advances and appeals directly to the goddess.¹²²⁴ Placing the dreams beside each other, in combination with the later retelling of the conflict between Aphrodite and Artemis over Rhodopis, sets Leucippe and Melite up as rivals through their

¹²¹⁹ Fusillo (1999), 76. Refer to pg.316.

¹²²⁰ Ach.Tat.4.1.3-5.

¹²²¹ Ach.Tat.4.1.5-8.

¹²²² Pg.313.

¹²²³ Pg.200; pg.209; pg.210.

¹²²⁴ Ach.Tat.6.21.2.

associations with the opposing goddesses and their respective values.¹²²⁵ Subsequently, there is a reverse symmetry between the women's actions. Commenting on Athenian tragedy, McClure argues female characters use rhetoric either to defend feminine values or use deception to subvert status norms.¹²²⁶ This could be applied to Melite and Leucippe, with the heroine using it to defend her chastity in the latter stages of the novel and Melite using it to deceive and seduce. Both use the same imagery of "fire" but interpret it differently according to their respective values: Melite uses it as a metaphor for her love and Leucippe as a torture method she would endure to protect her virginity.¹²²⁷ With this reverse mirroring, it is arguable that Melite is set up as an alternative sexual version of the now-chaste Leucippe, similar to how Calligone serves as a more "conventional" virtuous heroine in the early stages of the narrative.

By having these women strongly resemble and mirror each other, Leucippe and Melite (and Calligone) are stripped of their individuality, agency and uniqueness. Instead, they are reduced to symbols of the values they represent. As an ego-centric narrator, Clitophon defines the female characters by their usefulness and desirability to himself. As *L&C* has two female rivals that are interchangeable with the heroine, this arguably implies that the hero does not actually consider Leucippe to be unique or

¹²²⁵ Ach.Tat.8.12.1-8. These goddesses are positioned as opponents in Euripides' second *Hippolytus*, where Aphrodite decides to take vengeance on the titular character after he rejects her values in favour of the chastity promoted by Artemis (Eur.*Hipp.*13-23; 73-104).

¹²²⁶ McClure (1999), 25-6.

¹²²⁷ Ach.Tat.5.15.5-6; 5.26.2; 5.26.10; 6.22.4.

irreplaceable, despite his claims that he loves only her.¹²²⁸ The general lack of direct interactions between women of a similar status in this novel further reduces them to symbolisms and sets them up as separate and passive rivals, instead of enabling the women to bond through their similarities.¹²²⁹

4.6.2 Chastity and Virtue

In contrast to Melite's sexuality mirroring Leucippe's chasteness, other novelistic rivals (including Callirhoe and the Farmer's Daughter) pose a threat to their respective heroine's positions through their chastity and virtue.

Although taking an opposite approach to Melite's portrayal, similar patterns can be seen regarding how these female characters suggest that genre roles are "flexible" and challenge the idea of the novelistic heroines serving as the "ideal" women. Leucippe and Sinonis display a willingness to lose their virginity before marriage and, at least in the case of Leucippe, have to change and grow throughout their narratives to better fulfil expectations of their roles.¹²³⁰ In contrast, Calligone and the Farmer's Daughter demonstrate this virtue throughout and their emphasis on chastity make the women arguably fit the role of a novelistic heroine better than the actual heroines.

¹²²⁸ After finding out Leucippe is alive, Clitophon claims he could not look at another woman (Ach.Tat.5.21.1). Yet shortly after he swears to the Gods that he wishes to return Melite's passion (Ach.Tat.5.21.6) and later sleeps with her without resistance (Ach.Tat.5.27.3-4), casting doubt on the validity of his previous declaration.

¹²²⁹ As discussed at 4.3.1, Melite interacts directly with Leucippe, but only when the heroine is under the guise of "Lacaena". When Melite discovers her true identity, the women do not interact again in the narrative.

¹²³⁰ Ach.Tat.2.19.2; Phot.*Bibl.*76b15. The *Babyloniaca's* fragmentary nature prevents us from knowing whether or not Sinonis had to undergo a similar change.

The “ideal” heroine would be expected to conform to the assumptions the ancient patriarchal world had of elite women, including that they remain chaste until marriage. The myths of Lucretia, Phaedra (Euripides’ second *Hippolytus*) and Verginia imply that it was better for a woman to die if it would preserve her honour.¹²³¹ After learning of his daughter’s adultery, the Emperor Augustus allegedly claimed that he would rather have been the father of Phoebe, his daughter’s freedwoman who hanged herself to escape punishment, than Julia.¹²³² In the *Odyssey*, Penelope remains faithful to her husband despite his absence for twenty years and serves as a model for the novelistic heroines.¹²³³ The idea of females protecting their virginity at all costs frequently occurs in the novels: from Anthia’s ingenious escape attempts in the *Ephesian Tale* to the virginity tests at the end of *L&C* and the *Aethiopica*.¹²³⁴

Although by the end of *L&C*, Leucippe becomes a staunch defender of her chastity similar to the other virtuous mythical women, in the early stages of the novel she behaves differently.¹²³⁵ Leucippe willingly goes along with Clitophon’s advances, including returning his kiss on the goblet, reflecting

¹²³¹ Eur.*Hipp.*400-30, Livy.1.58.10-2; 3.48.5-9.

¹²³² Cass.Dio.55.16; Suet.*Aug.*2.65.2-3.

¹²³³ For Penelope’s faithfulness, see Katz (1991), particularly 5-6, 52, 93, 100-1, 112, 119; Lefteratou (2018), 181-2, 186-8; and Van Nortwick (2008), 69-70.

¹²³⁴ Xen.3.5.5-6.5; 3.11.4-5; 4.5.1; 5.4.4-7; 5.7.4-8; Ach.Tat.8.13.1-14.2; Heliod.10.9.1-3.

¹²³⁵ For instance, when she defends herself against Thersander’s advances (Ach.Tat.6.18.6; 6.21.1-22.4).

elegiac tropes particularly those of Ovid.¹²³⁶ Yet, the most scandalous offence by ancient standards is that Leucippe eventually agrees to let Clitophon into her bedroom and only the timely entrance of her mother allows her to protect her reputation.¹²³⁷ The novel has been considered controversial and Leucippe’s willingness to sleep with Clitophon before marriage in the early stages contributes greatly to this.¹²³⁸ The protagonists only decide to wait until marriage to consummate their relationship after Leucippe’s dream of Artemis, having already eloped.¹²³⁹ Achilles Tatius is known for pushing the “boundaries” of the genre and the early stages of *L&C* reflect this by setting up Leucippe as an “unconventional” heroine, in contrast to her rival, Calligone, who better fits “traditional” novelistic expectations with regards to her virtue.¹²⁴⁰

The *Babyloniaca* goes further in pushing the “boundaries” by having Sinonis commit several controversial actions, including murder and deciding to willingly marry another man to spite the hero.¹²⁴¹ Although these actions

¹²³⁶ Ach.Tat.2.9.1-3; Jolowicz (2021), 177. Examples include *Ov.Am.*1.4.30-2; *Ars am.*1.575-6; *Her.*17.79-80.

¹²³⁷ Ach.Tat.2.19.2; 2.23.6.

¹²³⁸ Photius’ 9th century *Bibliotheca* praises the novel’s style and composition, but criticises its “exceedingly repellent and impure thoughts” (λίαν υπέραισχρον και ἀκάθαρτον τῶν ἐννοιῶν) and “abhorrent shamelessness” (τῆς μυσαρᾶς αἰσχρότητος) (*Phot.Bibl.*87.66a.16; 66a.21-2; 66a.26-7). Writing on the influence of mime on the novels, Webb ((2013), 297) has argued that Leucippe’s willingness casts her as an unfaithful wife figure from mime rather than as a violated virgin from comedy.

¹²³⁹ Ach.Tat.4.1.4-8. De Temmerman ((2014), 170) notes the irony of Leucippe being continually associated with Artemis throughout the novel, including when defending her chastity (Ach.Tat.6.21.2-3) and taking refuge in Artemis’ Sanctuary (Ach.Tat.7.13.2-4), given her initial willingness to sleep with Clitophon.

¹²⁴⁰ Including Clitophon’s open infidelity with Melite (see section 4.6.2) and confession to sleeping with prostitutes (Ach.Tat.2.37.5). See 1.3 for the fluidity of this genre.

¹²⁴¹ *Phot.Bibl.*76b15; 77b19.

would be more typical of an antagonist, the most unusual aspect is the disregard they show for the notions of chastity and devotion to their beloved, usually the dominant traits that the novelistic heroines possess.¹²⁴² Jones argued that in the case of Setapus' murder, Sinonis acts like a "typical" heroine in acting to preserve her chastity against a threat.¹²⁴³ However, this does not take into account that the heroine willingly consented to have sex and then violently reacts when she has a change of heart.¹²⁴⁴ Therefore, I agree with Kanavou that this murder does not occur to protect her chastity, unlike when Anthia kills to protect this value, taking away any moral justification for this action.¹²⁴⁵ Instead, Sinonis actively creates a threat to her chastity and relationship with Rhodanes, going against genre expectations for its heroine. Similarly, the marriage to Garmus represents a willing betrayal of genre norms and threatens the mutual love and devotion the protagonists are supposed to share. As Morales notes, this implies that Sinonis and Rhodanes end up partly together due to force rather than through their love.¹²⁴⁶ By rejecting the fundamental principle of the novelistic heroines, actively creating threats and acting immorally, Sinonis acts more like an antagonist than a protagonist.

¹²⁴² See 4.6.4 for Sinonis as an antagonist.

¹²⁴³ Jones (2012), 113n74.

¹²⁴⁴ Phot. *Bibl.* 76b15. The loss of the original text prevents readers from knowing the true motivations behind Sinonis' change of heart.

¹²⁴⁵ Kanavou (2019), 119.

¹²⁴⁶ Morales (2006), 87.

In contrast to Sinonis and Leucippe, the Farmer's Daughter and Calligone are virtuous and defend their chastity, with Stephens claiming that the Farmer's Daughter fits the expectations of a novelistic heroine more than the actual heroine of that novel.¹²⁴⁷ Throughout the fragments and summary of the *Babyloniaca*, the Farmer's Daughter is portrayed virtuously and is connected with chastity. Despite Photius introducing her as a widow, as Kanavou noted, she is strangely often described as "the maiden" (κόρη) within the text, which has connotations of virginity.¹²⁴⁸ These two statuses are seemingly contradictory, but are representative of her dual rival status as a potential competitor for the hero and as a threat to Sinonis' position. Describing the Farmer's Daughter as a maiden (κόρη), depicts her similarly to the novelistic heroines.¹²⁴⁹ This is further enhanced by her undergoing an attack on her chastity, when Sinonis forces her to sleep with the Executioner.¹²⁵⁰ The heroines in the canonical novels face challenges of a similar nature, with Anthia even being directly forced into these positions by her female rivals.¹²⁵¹ However, unlike Anthia, the Farmer's Daughter does not escape from the encounter with her chastity untouched, although she apparently consents to sleep with the Executioner.¹²⁵² This means that despite her strong character resemblance to the surviving heroines, the Farmer's Daughter is not afforded the same level of protection from threats the "true" heroines are given.

¹²⁴⁷ Stephens (1996), 668-9.

¹²⁴⁸ Phot.*Bibl.* 76a13; 76b13; 76b14; 76b15; 77b19; *LSJ* 980-1.

¹²⁴⁹ Bowie ((2003), 50) notes that this term is frequently used to describe Callirhoe, despite her not being a virgin for most of the novel.

¹²⁵⁰ Phot.*Bibl.* 78a20.

¹²⁵¹ Xen.2.9.3; 5.5.4.

¹²⁵² Phot.*Bibl.* 78a20.

Characterising the Farmer's Daughter as more virtuous than Sinonis, suggests that Iamblichus challenges the boundaries of the novels by questioning the untouchable position of his heroine and her supposed role as the "ideal" woman. This is further enhanced by the novel arguably presenting Mesopotamia as another challenger to Sinonis' status as the protagonist. As with other novelistic heroines, she is exceptionally beautiful.¹²⁵³

Mesopotamia gets married towards the final stages of the novel, like Chloe and Leucippe, and the quarrel between her initial suitors resembles both the mythical Judgement of Paris and the threat Callirhoe faces from her rejected suitors.¹²⁵⁴ In having two women arguably fit the novelistic heroine mould better than Sinonis, this narrative not only suggests the roles are fluid but also downplays the importance of the heroine's personality.

Likewise, in *L&C*, in contrast to the heroine's scandalous behaviour, Calligone is consistently portrayed as virtuous. Clitophon describes her as "beautiful" (καλήν), and although the narrator claims she is not as attractive as Leucippe, Callisthenes is still captured by the sight of her.¹²⁵⁵ Despite this, she is not shown to interact directly with Clitophon or display any unsuitable affections or behaviour. In contrast, as Lefteratou noted, Leucippe does not wait until her rival is out of the picture before starting to give in to Clitophon's

¹²⁵³ Phot.*Bibl.*75a8.

¹²⁵⁴ Phot.*Bibl.*77b20; 75b8.

¹²⁵⁵ Ach.Tat.1.11.2; 2.16.2.

advances.¹²⁵⁶ Even the women's names seem reflective of their contrasting virtues. Whilst "Calligone" has connotations with beauty, fitting in with other novelistic heroine names, Morales argues that "Leucippe" could be interpreted as a slang word for a part of the male anatomy and has connotations with prostitute names.¹²⁵⁷ Calligone's chastity, marital eligibility and her appearance in the text before Leucippe potentially sets up Calligone as the "intended" heroine of the novel and Leucippe as the mistress.¹²⁵⁸ Notably, an earlier Greek novel, with the earliest fragment dated to the 2nd century CE, had a character called "Calligone" as its heroine and titular character.¹²⁵⁹ Given Calligone's portrayal in *L&C*, it is possible Achilles Tatius may have deliberately tried to evoke the earlier novel to depict his Calligone as a secondary heroine in the text.¹²⁶⁰ Therefore, like the Farmer's Daughter, Calligone could also be said to better fulfil the "conventional" heroine role than the actual heroine, challenging genre conventions by suggesting that the novelistic heroines are not unique nor serve as the "ideal" women. When looking at these women in combination with Melite's mirroring of Leucippe and novelistic female friendships, this suggests a wider pattern in the genre of all women being similarly characterised from a male perspective.¹²⁶¹

¹²⁵⁶ Lefteratou (2018), 249.

¹²⁵⁷ Morales (2004), 66-7. Additionally, Whitmarsh ((2020), 19) notes that Callisthenes and Charicles also have names associated with beauty.

¹²⁵⁸ Pp.315-6.

¹²⁵⁹ Reardon ((1989/2008), 826-7) has translated a surviving fragment of *Calligone*.

¹²⁶⁰ Lefteratou (2018), 245; Whitmarsh (2020), 19.

¹²⁶¹ 4.6.1; 2.4; 3.2.3; 3.2.4; 3.3; 3.4.1. This even applies to women of different statuses that have no direct relationship, as Morales ((2022), 31-4) argues that Thisbe's lesser status is what ultimately separates her from Charicleia in the *Aethiopica*: the heroine is as deceitful as the slave, the women are comparable in beauty and are mistaken for each other.

4.6.3 Melite: Antagonist not Ally?

Melite is mainly classified as an antagonist by scholars, albeit a beneficial one similar to Lycaenion in *D&C*, with both women willing to help the protagonists in exchange for sleeping with the hero.¹²⁶² As this novel marginalises bonds between women in favour of their connections to the male characters, it is perhaps surprising that Melite is defined by her relationship with Leucippe. As previously discussed, Melite is primarily aligned with Clitophon and his agenda, putting aside any rivalry or bad feelings towards Leucippe to help him.¹²⁶³ Yet modern scholarship primarily defines her as an antagonist. A similar attitude can be found in how Lycaenion in *D&C* is categorised, despite her only indirectly interacting with Chloe when she orders the heroine to watch Daphnis' goats when talking to the hero.¹²⁶⁴ Both Melite and Lycaenion attempt to help the heroines in their relationships but only because it is part of their plans to aid the heroes, with Lycaenion teaching Daphnis how to have sex and Melite trying to unite Leucippe and Clitophon.¹²⁶⁵ In both cases, it is the women's connection with the man that is their underlying motivation and not their relationship to the heroine, with whom they barely have a close personal connection or from whom they are distanced from, in Melite and Leucippe's case. The closest male equivalent in this genre is probably Hippothous in *Ephesian Tale*, but unlike Lycaenion and Melite he presents a

¹²⁶² Long.3.15.5; 3.17.2-3; 3.18.3-19.3. For instance, Melite is classified as an antagonist by Egger (1999), 126-8; Haynes (2003), 104-6; and Johne (1996), 200-2.

¹²⁶³ See section 4.4.2.

¹²⁶⁴ Long.3.16.4.

¹²⁶⁵ Long.3.17.3-19.3; Ach.Tat.6.1.1-4; 8.1-4; 10.1-2.

real threat to Anthia when she is captured by his band, attempting to violently kill her twice.¹²⁶⁶ Unlike Melite and Lycaenion, his friendship with Habrocomes has led to him being classified as both antagonist and companion by scholars, despite posing a bigger threat to the heroine of his novel.¹²⁶⁷ This suggests a possible gender bias in modern scholarship by classifying Melite and Lycaenion according to their relationships with the heroines instead of with the heroes, with whom they interact and associate more.

In part, this is because both women go so far as to sleep with the male protagonist.¹²⁶⁸ Whilst men in the ancient world were able freely to be unfaithful to their wives, the novels promote the idea of exclusive reciprocal love between the protagonists. Throughout the narratives, the protagonists undergo multiple threats and obstacles to their relationship, proving themselves worthy of the other's affections. Three of the five surviving novels (*Callirhoe*, *D&C*, *L&C*) challenge the idea of the protagonists' relationship being exclusive, but Clitophon's relationship with Melite represents the greatest threat to the idea of the hero and heroine having mutual fidelity. As previously discussed, *Callirhoe* is forced to marry Dionysius due to the difficult circumstances she finds herself in and *Daphnis'* affair is presented as a mutually beneficial lesson.¹²⁶⁹ In both cases, their respected devotedness and

¹²⁶⁶ Xen.2.13.2-3; 4.6.3-7.

¹²⁶⁷ Haynes (2003) classifies Hippothous as both antagonist (140-2) and friend (151-2), whilst only classifying Melite as an antagonist (104-6).

¹²⁶⁸ Long.3.18.3-4; Ach.Tat.5.27.1-4.

¹²⁶⁹ Pp.61-3.

love for their partners is not questioned. Yet, Melite and Clitophon's affair is arguably more controversial, with the hero willingly marrying Melite and the two ironically sleeping together even after Clitophon discovers that Leucippe is alive.¹²⁷⁰ The marriage offers a potentially long-term threat to the protagonists' relationship, that is only neutralised by the news that Thersander is still alive, rendering it invalid.¹²⁷¹

Melite and Clitophon's affair is presented as a one-off payment for her help and most scholars agree it does not threaten the protagonists' relationship due to it occurring after they discover Melite is still married to Thersander.¹²⁷² Yet, it still could be read as Clitophon actively betraying Leucippe, after discovering that she is still alive. By his own admission, the male hero considers Melite attractive and offers little resistance to her proposal.¹²⁷³ Combined with his previous admission that he has slept with prostitutes, this demonstrates Clitophon is not solely attracted or loyal to Leucippe, calling into question his supposed devotion to her.¹²⁷⁴ Furthermore, Clitophon deliberately leaves out his affair with Melite in his rendition of the events to Leucippe and her father, despite previously assuring her of his continued faithfulness in claiming to have imitated her virginity.¹²⁷⁵ This affair challenges

¹²⁷⁰ Ach.Tat.5.14.2-3; 5.27.3-4; Anderson (1982), 24; Fusillo (1999), 76.

¹²⁷¹ Ach.Tat.5.23.3-4.

¹²⁷² Ach.Tat.5.26.10-13; 6.1.1; Alvares (2002), 113; Chew (2000), 60; De Temmerman (2014), 66; Konstan (1994), 53; Morales (2008), 43; Reardon (1996), 252.

¹²⁷³ Ach.Tat.5.13.1-3; 5.27.3.

¹²⁷⁴ Ach.Tat.2.37.5.

¹²⁷⁵ Ach.Tat.8.5.2-3; 5.20.5. Leucippe praises Clitophon for remaining faithful to her despite being married to Melite (Ach.Tat.6.16.3-4).

genre conventions on the protagonists supposedly having a reciprocal love and mutual fidelity, with Lefteratou even asserting that it is wrong to claim there is a rivalry between Calligone and Leucippe as the “real contest” is between the heroine and Melite.¹²⁷⁶ Whilst Leucippe is faithful to Clitophon throughout, his indiscretions imply that he does not return her love. Instead, the heroine is objectified as the ultimate prize for the hero and the main, but not exclusive, object of his lust. Due to the threat that she presents to the protagonists’ relationship, Melite is defined as an antagonist by most scholars and readers, despite spending more time in the narrative as an ally and only as a competitor to Leucippe in Book 5. This further demonstrates a blurring of boundaries between roles within *L&C* through the use of female rivals, just as Calligone is set up as a more “conventional” heroine within the text.

4.6.4 Sinonis: Further Blurring the Boundaries between Heroine and Antagonist

Melite is not the only novelistic character who blurs the line between the heroines and the antagonists. Iamblichus’ *Babyloniaca* takes a similar approach to *L&C* but goes further in having Sinonis and the Farmer’s Daughter swap expected roles. Sinonis arguably serves as the “conventional” antagonist through her vengeful hounding of her rival in a surprising reversal

¹²⁷⁶ Lefteratou (2018), 72n285. I do not personally agree as I believe that Calligone presents a stronger threat as she is eligible to marry Clitophon, unlike Melite, and is set up as his intended bride, with the novel repeatedly mentioning Clitophon’s father’s desire for a match between his children (Ach.Tat.1.3.2; 1.11.2-3; 2.11.1-2).

of the surviving novels. As Kanavou notes, the heroine is usually expected to be the blameless victim of unjust crimes and not the instigator.¹²⁷⁷ Through Sinonis, Iamblichus challenges genre conventions about the novelistic “heroine”. For example, the idea that they must demonstrate self-restraint, with the female antagonists usually failing to demonstrate self-control.¹²⁷⁸ In failing to control her anger and displaying a complete lack of restraint, Sinonis not only rejects a trait usually considered essential for novelistic heroines but also adopts qualities usually associated with antagonists, suggesting a reversal of “typical” genre roles and demonstrating that novelistic female stereotypes are not as fixed as some scholars have argued.¹²⁷⁹

Whilst Sinonis is furious with both Rhodanes and the Farmer’s Daughter, it is the latter who serves as the heroine’s main target, despite seemingly being innocent. Photius’ summary brings up two occasions in which the Farmer’s Daughter and Rhodanes are caught in a seemingly compromising position by Sinonis: when the heroine realises he has kissed her and when the Farmer’s Daughter tends his wound.¹²⁸⁰ Whilst the hero seemingly transgresses in showing attraction to another woman, the loss of the original text makes it

¹²⁷⁷ Kanavou (2019), 120.

¹²⁷⁸ Examples of heroines demonstrating self-restraint can be seen in Callirhoe and Leucippe’s initial reactions to Artaxerxes (Charit.6.5.6; 5.8-10) and Sosthenes’ (Ach.Tat.6.12.1) propositions respectively. The female antagonists in the *Ephesian Tale* (Xen.2.5.5-7; 11.2-3; 5.5.1-4; 3.12.3-6) and *Aethiopica* (see pp.238-40 and 2.4.3) particularly demonstrate a lack of self-control.

¹²⁷⁹ Egger (1999), 120; Johne (1996), 172; Haynes (2003), 101; 137; Morales (2001), XXVII.

¹²⁸⁰ Phot.*Bibl.*76b14; 77b19; Connors (2018), 40. Whilst the use of φιλῆι (Phot.*Bibl.*76b14) could suggest that the first affair was just a kiss as most scholars have translated, it also is possible that Rhodanes did sleep with the Farmer’s Daughter, although this is unlikely due to the context of him preparing to flee.

difficult to ascertain the context surrounding these scenes.¹²⁸¹ Photius mentions Rhodanes kissed the Farmer's Daughter and this could simply have been out of gratitude and misinterpreted by Sinonis.¹²⁸² Likewise, the culpability of the Farmer's Daughter cannot be definitely proven either way. For instance, in Fragment 61, Soraechus chides Sinonis after the kiss for expecting physical attraction to be exclusive, which would indicate that the Farmer's Daughter had some involvement in the affair.¹²⁸³ Yet for the most part, the summary and fragments imply her innocence. Photius reviews the incident by stating that "Rhodanes... kissed the Farmer's Daughter" (Ῥοδάνης... φιλεῖ τὴν κόρην τοῦ γεωργοῦ), with Rhodanes in the nominative and the Farmer's Daughter in the accusative casting the hero as the active instigator.¹²⁸⁴ This is backed up by Soraechus' speech when he tells Sinonis not to pursue vengeance on her female rival due to their present situation.¹²⁸⁵ Whilst he offers a variety of sympathetic explanations for the Farmer's Daughter's actions that seemingly absolve her of blame, such as her being deceived, he explicitly states that he does not entirely absolve Rhodanes of his role in the kiss.¹²⁸⁶ This goes against gender norms of the time, where men were free to have extra-marital affairs with slaves, non-citizens and young

¹²⁸¹ See Kanavou (2019), 118 on Rhodanes' transgression and how this compares with Clitophon and Daphnis' affairs.

¹²⁸² Phot.*Bibl.*76b14.

¹²⁸³ Iamb.fr.61.71. This could potentially be a similar situation to Melite promising help to Clitophon in return for him sleeping with her (Ach.Tat.5.26.10-12).

¹²⁸⁴ Phot.*Bibl.*76b14. φιλέω can also be translated as love including in a romantic/sexual sense, suggesting that Rhodanes' actions may not have been as innocent as a kiss out of gratitude.

¹²⁸⁵ Iamb.fr.61.66-71.

¹²⁸⁶ Iamb.fr.61.64-5; 70-1.

men, unlike their wives.¹²⁸⁷ This shifts the blame almost entirely onto Rhodanes and makes him accountable for the incident, portraying the Farmer's Daughter as innocent. In comparison with other novelistic affair scenes, this scene unusually depicts the male as the guilty party. Lycaenion and Melite both take an active role in seducing Daphnis and Clitophon and, to some extent, absolve the heroes of blame through framing their affairs as a "lesson" or a "cure" for lovesickness in the case of Melite.¹²⁸⁸ By unexpectedly placing the blame on Rhodanes for the kiss, Iamblichus sets up a contrast between the novelistic "helpful" antagonists and the Farmer's Daughter, who is absolved of all guilt.

Sinonis' decision to target the Farmer's Daughter instead of the hero suggests that jealousy towards her female rival is her main motivation, not a desire to seek vengeance for the betrayal. Sinonis takes some revenge on Rhodanes by deciding to marry another man, yet presumably ultimately forgives the hero towards the ending of the novel, as indicated by Photius' summary.¹²⁸⁹ In contrast, Sinonis continues to target the Farmer's Daughter, even after the other women no longer presents a threat to the heroine.¹²⁹⁰ This suggests that Sinonis feels a greater sense of anger towards the Farmer's Daughter and therefore, perhaps surprisingly, prioritises her rivalry with the other woman

¹²⁸⁷ Ormand (2009), 83. Taking Cicero's *Pro Caelio* as a specific study, Ormand ((2009), 233-4) notes the double gender standards in having a widow slandered by (presumably falsely) depicting her as having relations with slaves (Cic.*Cael.*23.57-8) and as a prostitute (Cic.*Cael.*20.49-50), due to her sleeping with an unmarried man.

¹²⁸⁸ Long.3.15.-5-18.4; Ach.Tat.5.25.1-27.3; Bird (2021) ,164-5.

¹²⁸⁹ Phot.*Bibl.*77b19; 78a22.

¹²⁹⁰ Phot.*Bibl.*77b19; 78a20.

over her relationship with the male hero. This reverses Achilles Tatius' portrayal of Melite and Leucippe's relationship, with the former putting aside her jealousy of the heroine due to the novel's prioritisation of her bond to Clitophon.¹²⁹¹ In having Sinonis prioritise her connection with another woman over her bond with Rhodanes, Iamblichus questions the idea of the protagonists being primarily devoted to each other. However, the heroine's prioritisation of her connection with her female rival is still ultimately a result of her relationship with Rhodanes. As with most of the other female relationships in this genre between women of a similar social status, competition over the affections of a man serves as the main source of tension between Sinonis and the Farmer's Daughter. This implies that the *Babyloniaca*, consistent with other novels, portrays female-only relationships as heavily influenced by the men around them. Sinonis is not the only novel heroine that feels jealousy for a supposed rival, which suggests Iamblichus builds off pre-existing genre conceptions and takes them to an extreme level.¹²⁹² What separates Sinonis from the other heroines and makes her resemble an antagonist is her willingness to act on these emotions and pursue them to such lengths that she becomes almost a parody. Other novelistic women display a similar obsession to punish an innocent woman for a man's lust, but these are all antagonists.¹²⁹³

¹²⁹¹ See section 4.4.2.

¹²⁹² Haynes ((2003), 103) notes that the heroines are also prone to jealousy but are able to control it, unlike the antagonists who act without moderation.

¹²⁹³ For instance, Manto and Rheneaea's actions against Anthia due to their husbands' one-sided infatuations with her (Xen.2.11.2-3; 5.5.1-4).

There is little doubt that Sinonis' vengeance against the Farmer's Daughter is extreme.¹²⁹⁴ Her actions against her rival include attempting to murder her twice, exiling her and then forcing her to sleep with the Executioner.¹²⁹⁵ The latter events seem vindictive as they occur after Sinonis has married Garmus and the Farmer's Daughter seemingly no longer poses a threat to her relationship with Rhodanes. This suggests that the heroine orders this not to protect herself but out of a desire to humiliate the other woman and due to an inability to let go of her previous hatred. As the Farmer's Daughter continues to help the protagonists after being caught kissing Rhodanes, this further emphasizes the unjustness of the heroine's actions.¹²⁹⁶ The one-sided level of bloodlust Sinonis shows is only comparable in this genre to how some antagonists behave towards the protagonists. Kanavou has questioned if Sinonis' aggression makes her a stereotype of the "typical" novel heroine.¹²⁹⁷ The heroines are typically set up as "ideal" women and serve as paragons of virtue, although this concept has been challenged by other ancient novelists.¹²⁹⁸ In having his heroine viciously pursue vengeance against the Farmer's Daughter, Iamblichus rejects the notion that people can be completely blameless. This can be seen elsewhere, such as when Soraechus refuses to absolve Rhodanes of blame for kissing the Farmer's Daughter.¹²⁹⁹ In giving into her rage, the heroine rejects one unrealistic stereotype in favour of

¹²⁹⁴ Kanavou (2019), 119; Stephens (1996), 668.

¹²⁹⁵ Phot.*Bibl.*76b14; 77b19; 78a20.

¹²⁹⁶ Kanavou (2019), 119.

¹²⁹⁷ Kanavou (2019), 123.

¹²⁹⁸ De Temmerman and Demoen (2011), 3. For instance, Chloe and Leucippe's willingness to engage in premarital sex and Callirhoe marrying another man.

¹²⁹⁹ Iamb.fr.61.64-5.

another, fitting in with ancient beliefs about women being unreasonably jealous and portraying Sinonis along a similar manner to novelistic antagonists, such as Arsace and Manto.¹³⁰⁰ Again, Sinonis' depiction fits into a wider pattern within the *Babyloniaca* and even *L&C* of female rivals seemingly switching expected roles with each other, subsequently suggesting their roles are not fixed. This implies that the women could be considered interchangeable with each other as the heroines are stripped of their exceptionality and uniqueness, suggesting they are replaceable along with the other novelistic female characters.

4.7 Conclusion

Melite and Leucippe had a basis to form a friendship similar to that of the equal friendships, with both women being of a comparable social status, depicted similarly and on the same side. Melite even makes a clear attempt to form a bond with "Lacaena" and empathises with her situation.¹³⁰¹ However, instead of the women bonding through their similarities and forming a friendship, the novel distances the women from each other when Leucippe's identity is revealed and they then lack a personal and direct bond. Calligone's similar isolation from Leucippe and the way that the women are set up as passive rivals demonstrates that the distancing of Melite from Leucippe is part of a wider pattern in *L&C*. Due to the way the novel is narrated by

¹³⁰⁰ Pg.114; pg.116; pp.229-31; pp.293-4.

¹³⁰¹ 4.3.1.

Clitophon, the women are viewed through a male gaze and the emphasis is on their connections with male characters. Melite closely resembles Leucippe and mirrors her experiences and rhetoric whilst simultaneously serving as a sexual parallel to the heroine's chastity. This strips the women of their individuality and reduces them to being symbols of their respective values. Calligone and the Farmer's Daughter have traits that the novelistic heroines often possess and, combined with Melite's mirroring of Leucippe, suggest that the novelistic heroines are not exceptional or unique. Leucippe and Melite use the notion of a female bond in their appeals for help. Yet, whilst Melite tries to use this bond to form a close relationship, the heroine's knowledge that the two are romantic rivals prevents her from empathizing with the other woman due to this novel's prioritisation of the connections that the female characters have to Clitophon. When Melite discovers Leucippe's true identity, the women become isolated from each other in the narrative, stripping them of agency outside of their usefulness to the male hero.

This is further enhanced by Melite and Leucippe arguably being interchangeable from a male perspective, which again is reflective of the wider genre. Throughout *L&C* and the *Babyloniaca* the boundaries between the heroines and the female antagonists are blurred, with rivals containing characteristics typically associated with the novelistic heroines and their marriages appearing in places usually reserved for the heroines. This suggests fluid role boundaries and challenges the supposed uniqueness and

incomparability of the heroines. Further studies on female interchangeability could be carried out on the other surviving novels, especially as this thesis as already demonstrated that women in the unequal and equal friendships resemble each other.¹³⁰² Whilst Melite and the Farmer's Daughter can recognise their rivals, the male characters closest to the heroines fail to recognise them suggesting the men view the women as exchangeable with each other, stripping them of individuality. This calls into question the genre's emphasis on the protagonists being mutually devoted to each other and suggests men were occupied with obtaining the woman *perceived* to be the best, regardless of whether this is actually the case or not. Whilst Melite attempts to form a friendship with Leucippe, ultimately the novel completely distances the women from each other in favour of their ties to the male narrator, representing a missed opportunity for a female friendship.

¹³⁰² See especially 2.4; 3.2.3; 3.2.4; 3.3.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Whilst modern scholarship on the novels often dismisses the idea of female friendships, this thesis has demonstrated that there are strong positive bonds between women. These relationships are not always portrayed in a positive manner and often contain some form of tension. These bonds are usually marginalised, undeveloped and relegated to the backdrop of their novels. Yet, it is clear that the female characters valued these relationships. Slaves successfully conspire and work with their mistresses to achieve common goals, betraying other characters in the process and trusting each other. In the aristocratic friendships, both participants express mutual affection and even describe each other as friends.¹³⁰³ Although physical beauty and rivalry has a major influence on how these relationships are depicted in the patriarchal public sphere, these traits only are important when men and male values are involved.¹³⁰⁴ Within an exclusively female sphere, the women themselves place greater emphasis on each other's personalities and can form tension-free bonds. Even in non-friendships, there are hints of female solidarity as evidenced by Leucippe and Melite's appeals to each other due to their shared gender.¹³⁰⁵ Therefore, scholars should not dispute the existence of female friendships within the genre as these relationships do exist. Instead, scholarly focus should be on what types of friendships can be found, if there

¹³⁰³ 3.2.

¹³⁰⁴ 3.4.1-3 and 3.4.5.

¹³⁰⁵ Pp.270-1; pg.320.

are any similarities and differences (e.g. between friendship types, relationships within the same categories, between each individual novel), how they can contribute to our understanding of the genre as a whole and how they fit into the wider depiction of women and their relationships with each other in Graeco-Roman literature.

The novelistic female friendships adopt and adapt earlier Graeco-Roman literary tropes. As demonstrated, there is no singular model for female friendships within the genre and each bond takes a different form. Even within the groupings I have used, there are variants. Most mistress-slave bonds reflect the friendships of utility defined by Aristotle, with women relying on each other until it no longer suits their own agendas. The cleverness and manipulateness of Plangon, Thisbe and Cybele offers a gender-flipped version of the “cunning” slave stereotype, except that these women place their own interests first and do not always remain loyal to their primary master, reflecting ancient elitist fears of slaves presenting a danger.¹³⁰⁶ Rhode represents the “ideal” devoted slave, defined by her loyalty to her masters and their interests.¹³⁰⁷ The relationship between Arsinoe and Thisbe reflects other literary depictions of *hetairai* bonds regarding the betrayal of friends and the desire to seek revenge.¹³⁰⁸ The “missed opportunity” between Melite and Leucippe is consistent with the wider concept of aristocratic women being isolated from each other in the novels

¹³⁰⁶ Pp.30-2; pp.59-60.

¹³⁰⁷ Pp.141-4.

¹³⁰⁸ Pp.242-5.

and other Graeco-Roman literature, instead presenting them as distant rivals.¹³⁰⁹ The aristocratic friendships contain the same competition element, but ultimately the women overcome their “natural” jealousy and form lasting friendships based on their shared *sophrosyne*.¹³¹⁰ This study therefore contributes to our understanding of how the novels relate to other Graeco-Roman literary genres and of the models of friendships found within the genre. The novels clearly draw from early literary genres and tropes, but these are adapted and shaped by contemporary events occurring under the Empire. Further studies could examine novelistic friendship types further, including male and political friendships, or include these relationships in wider discussions of Graeco-Roman friendship models, particularly Aristotle. Another area of interest would be a more expansive study on the social classes within the novels and how different friendship models reflect ancient elitist attitudes.

Despite the different models of friendships used across the genre, some regular commonalities can be found in how these women and their relationships are depicted. In many of these bonds, the women involved can be said to resemble each other in personality, such as their moral values, cleverness and self-control/ lack of restraint. This enables them to understand each other, usually more effectively than the male characters who either underestimate female characters or prioritise their physical beauty. Whilst

¹³⁰⁹ 4.4.

¹³¹⁰ 3.3.

this allows the women to form strong bonds with each other, it also presents a danger of the women being grouped into base stereotypes. This is further enhanced by their portrayals reflecting other ancient elitist cultural and social class expectations, with the “Greek” heroines and other aristocratic *confidantes* being portrayed more virtuously than the slaves, *hetairai* and non-Greek women. This would imply that the female characters lack individuality and subsequently agency within the text, which is reflective of the male characters being unable to distinguish between women.¹³¹¹ Future studies on female stereotypes and misrecognitions within the novels and other Graeco-Roman genres could benefit by expanding on this idea.

The similar portrayals of novelistic women and their friends/allies also represent a hidden threat to men, reflective of other ancient ideas about women being deceptive and secretive. Within the bonds discussed within this thesis, women of all social classes place their own self-interests first and are talented manipulators and/or have an awareness of potential threats towards themselves. This contrasts their male counterparts, who often cannot fully understand the women’s inner characters or see through their attempted deceptions. Whilst there is tension between the women and the underlying threat of betrayal due to there being some measure of dependency on one another, even in the more precarious friendships there is seemingly some code of loyalty between the women. The female characters seem to view

¹³¹¹ 4.5.2.

themselves as natural allies and co-conspirators, often choosing to work with each other instead of their male counterparts. The women choose to keep each other's secrets and effectively work together in elaborate schemes. Leucippe and Melite's appeals suggest that women can naturally relate to each other through their shared gender and other novelistic female friendships reflect this.¹³¹² Although this suggests that the women themselves place value on these relationships, many of their choices present a potential threat to male interests. The idea of female secrecy and co-operation could be again looked at with regards to wider Graeco-Roman beliefs about women, particularly how they represent potential threats to men and presenting a challenge to the idea that women are "natural" rivals.

Yet, although positive female relationships do exist in the surviving novels, they are also devalued by the male novelists and seen as secondary to other relationships and priorities. Most of these relationships are undeveloped and relegated to the background of the novels, dependent on a few lines to establish the relationship as a friendship. Consequently, this lack of development is reflected in the portrayal of female *confidantes*, including Rhode, Clio, Rhodogune and Nausicleia.¹³¹³ This suggests that whilst female friendships were considered to be important enough to be included by Achilles Tatius, Chariton, Heliodorus and Xenophon, they were not considered to be a priority, especially when compared to other types of relationships

¹³¹² Pp.270-1; pg.320.

¹³¹³ 2.5; 3.7.

within the novels. Even within supposedly female exclusive bonds, male perceptions and desires still play a dominant role. The women's roles as *confidantes* are secondary to their roles as potential wives, daughters, male assets and rivals to the protagonist, usually over a man. The novels frequently prioritise the female characters' connections to the male characters over female-only bonds, portraying them as male assets and possessions. This defines the women by their usefulness and desirability to the men around them. In the case of the former, the women are quickly removed from the narrative once they can no longer help the heroes. With the latter, as seen with aristocratic women, Arsinoe and Thisbe, the women are objectified by a male audience and valued solely due to their physical beauty, stripping them of agency and freewill. In *L&C* the aristocratic female characters are even deliberately distanced from each other making them solely viewed through a male gaze.¹³¹⁴ Longus does not include any direct female bonds outside of any family ties and Sinonis relentlessly persecutes the virtuous Farmer's Daughter in the *Babyloniaca*, despite the two women theoretically being on the same side.¹³¹⁵ This shows that the ancient novelists prioritise the male gaze in their depictions of female characters and their bonds with each other. In doing so, the women are presented as lacking power to dictate the narrative and instead are primarily defined by their relationships and usefulness to the men around them.

¹³¹⁴ 4.4.

¹³¹⁵ 4.6.4.

Most novelistic female friendships reveal some sort of tension between the women, which is not as prominent in the male friendships between the novelistic heroes and their companions. Although not all female supporting characters in this genre are portrayed in a hostile manner, even the more “favourable” *confidantes* display a willingness to place their own interests first. In the “unequal” friendships, mistresses and slaves work together only for as long as it suits their own agendas.¹³¹⁶ As soon as their own interests are threatened, the women are quick to turn on each other to protect themselves. In the “equal” friendships, the women are frequently pitted against each other in competition to determine their desirability, leading to envy and jealousy.¹³¹⁷ This ranges from the public competition between Callirhoe and Rhodogune to the private contests, where a single man serves as the judge. This promotes the idea that women are “natural” rivals and prone to jealousy, suggesting their friendships are secondary to their roles as competitors for male attention. This is reflected in the “equal” friendships and portrayals of certain female antagonists, such as Arsace and Manto, but also through the heroines’ lack of personal bonds with certain female characters, with whom they share similarities.¹³¹⁸ Melite and Leucippe could have potentially formed a friendship under different circumstances, but their roles as rivals for Clitophon makes Melite’s attempt one-sided. Instead, the women are distanced from each other when the heroine’s identity is revealed and they no longer have a direct bond, which fits into the wider isolation of

¹³¹⁶ 2.2.

¹³¹⁷ 3.4.

¹³¹⁸ 4.3.3; 4.4.2.

Leucippe within this novel and distancing of women from each other in the genre. The tension suggests that the female friendships are devalued by the male novelists and relegated to the backdrop of their respective narratives. The women themselves seemingly value these bonds, out of affection and/or usefulness, and are able to use them to great effect. However, ultimately these bonds are viewed through a male elitist gaze, stripping the female characters of agency and denying them the power to influence the narratives.

Although there have been many previous studies of women within the novels, these have only selectively looked at certain characters and bonds without gaining a full picture of the topic. The historic dismissal of the concept of novelistic female friendships has led to a mistaken understanding that most bonds between women are either hostile or lack depth. As this thesis has demonstrated, there are many benefits to studying these friendships and the insights they offer into areas including male perceptions of women, social hierarchies within the genre and how the novels relate to the wider Graeco-Roman literary culture. Whilst some of these bonds are undeveloped, they are still important for what they symbolise and why they were included. Going forward, this thesis could lead to a wider study of friendship models within the genre, especially through a comparison between female, male and missed gender friendships, or studies into other female bond types, such as mother-daughter relationships.

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