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Blushing Beauty. Characterizing Blushes in Chariton's *Callirhoe*

K. de Temmerman¹⁾

*Stanford University, Classics Department, Building 20,
MC: 2080, Main Quad, Stanford, CA 94305-2080, USA
koendt@stanford.edu*

Abstract

This paper contributes to the study of the characterization of Callirhoe, the heroine in Chariton of Aphrodisias' ancient Greek novel of the same name (first/second century AD). By proposing a new reading of Callirhoe's character, I suggest that it is time to revise some of the widely-held views on the characterization of Greek novel protagonists. Starting from the assumption that both invariable and variable physical features of a literary character's appearance were likely to be understood by the ancient readers as indices of its character, I briefly deal with the absence of invariable physical features in Callirhoe's representation. Subsequently, I focus on one variable physical feature, namely blushing, and argue that Chariton uses this feature to construct an evolution in Callirhoe's character.

Keywords

Chariton, Greek novel, physiognomy, characterization, body language

1. Greek Novel Heroines and Their Characterization

Ancient Greek novel heroines have received ever increasing scholarly attention over the past two decades. Especially studies in the fields of gender and sexuality—many of them triggered by the observation that, unlike their male counterparts, the heroines in the novels display a surprising

¹⁾ The author is Research Assistant of the Fund for Scientific Research—Flanders (Belgium) (F.W.O.-Vlaanderen).

strength and prominence—have enhanced our understanding of how gender dynamics are constructed in this genre.²⁾ However, less attention has been paid to the technical aspects of the heroines' characterization.³⁾ This lack of attention to characterization *as such* is all the more surprising since it was, among others, the alleged lack of characterization which justified for some scholars the banishment of the 'Greek novel' texts to the category of 'romance',⁴⁾ "a term reserved for a certain low section of the bookstore appealing to women only".⁵⁾ Realistic characterization has often been put forward as an essential prerequisite for any text to be worthy of the title 'novel'.⁶⁾

In the secondary literature about the Greek novel, the protagonists are often treated as 'character types', without much attention being paid to the question if (let alone the way in which) these characters are individualized in different novels.⁷⁾ Consequently, the character of the protagonists is usually mapped out along some stereotyped lines. The protagonists' passionate

²⁾ Secondary literature on this topic is extensive. Haynes (2003, 44-5) singles out three main lines of thought in recent scholarship on the issue of the prominence of Greek novel heroines: (1) a socio-historical approach (arguing that the heroine's representation is mimetic of the improved status of women in contemporary reality); (2) the 'female readership' hypothesis (postulating a primarily female readership, of which identification with the heroines is invited by their representation); (3) as a third approach, she lists contributions which attribute a "deeper significance" to the heroines' representation (both religious and secular). Haynes herself (2001 & 2003) reads the (chaste and strong) novel heroine as a symbol of the (cultural integrity and superiority of the) Greek elite under the Roman empire.

³⁾ An exception is Hägg (1972), who focusses on the introduction of characters in Chariton (547-50), their denomination (550-3) and the effect of denomination in character text on characterization (553-6). On the naming of characters in X.Eph., cf. Hägg 1971.

⁴⁾ Cf. Selden 1994, 45-7 on literary critics' expectations about the concept of 'character' in their discussion of genre. Concerning characterization in the ancient novel, he remarks: "In general, studies of this aspect of the Greco-Roman novel tend to be not descriptive, but judgmental" (45).

⁵⁾ Doody 1996, 15.

⁶⁾ Cf. the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (7th ed., 1982): a novel is a "fictitious prose narrative of book length portraying *characters* and actions *credibly representative of real life* in continuous plot" (my italics).

⁷⁾ Reardon speaks of "romance types" (1991, 26) and observes, in an Aristotelian analysis of the plot of the Greek novels, that the μίμησις of (especially the protagonists') ἦθος is limited (1991, 81-2).

love-at-first-sight, their chastity, their beauty, and their εὐγένεια are characteristics referred to time and again.⁸⁾

Regarding *the way in which* Greek novelists represent their protagonists' character, a number of (no less stereotypical) assertions have been made. One of the points most frequently addressed in this respect, is the static (not evolving) nature of the protagonists' character.⁹⁾ An illustration of this view (as well as of my third point below) may be found in Sandy's statement that "Two aspects of characterization not to be expected in any ancient romance are development and subtle delineation".¹⁰⁾ If the possibility of character evolution is touched upon at all, it is presented as a consequence of the protagonists' misfortunes¹¹⁾ or implied by the changing of the protagonists' social status.¹²⁾ In neither of both cases, the nature of this evolution is worked out in any detail.

A second central claim about protagonists in Greek novel research is about the idealization of the protagonists. Here, their beauty and their εὐγένεια are determining factors.¹³⁾ Although Lesky already pointed out

⁸⁾ E.g. Billault (1991, 178), according to whom beauty and εὐγένεια are the two elements which define "le héros page blanche": "Les héros, jeunes filles et jeunes gens, se ressemblent tous. Ils sont jeunes, beaux, de bonne famille. Leur jeunesse implique l'ardeur et l'inexpérience, leur beauté suscite toutes les convoitises et rend plus pathétiques les mauvais traitements qu'ils endurent, leur brillante origine sociale donne plus de relief à leur infortune" (151).

⁹⁾ However, for a (limited) number of other characters, character evolution has been dealt with in considerable detail, e.g. Alvares 1995, 393-4, 399-404 and Watanabe 2003 on Hippothous in X.Eph.

¹⁰⁾ Sandy 1982, 56.

¹¹⁾ Thus, Billault (1996, 127-8) says that the heroes change through suffering ("The heroes change: they are not the same persons in the end as they were in the beginning of the story. The trials they have undergone, the deeds they have done have left their mark on them and shaped their nature. [...] Character development through suffering actually is a favourite theme") and mentions the examples of Chaereas (Chariton), Theagenes (Hld.), Cleitophon (Ach.Tat.) and Longus' protagonists. He does not, however, adduce any evidence to support his claim.

¹²⁾ Lalanne-Couraud (1999; 1998, 532-42) argues that the story follows the model of 'rites de passage' and, consequently, reads the novel as a story of *paideia*, which organizes the teaching of political, moral and social values around an evolution of status. Hunter (1994, 1072) argues that the denomination of Callirhoe (*parthenos, korè, gumè*) underlies her change of status.

¹³⁾ E.g. Napolitano 1983-4, 86: characters are "fortemente stilizzati" because of a "forte

that it could be worthwhile to look for psychological detail in the novels,¹⁴⁾ the common opinion is still that it is primarily in the characterization of the minor characters that realistic character depiction is—to a certain extent—to be looked for.¹⁵⁾ This holds true also for secondary literature on Chariton,¹⁶⁾ although it is generally accepted that realistic psychological detail plays a more important role in this novel than in the other extant novels.¹⁷⁾

Thirdly, and finally, the protagonists' characterization allegedly suffers from a lack of subtlety. In this connection, the claim has been made that the protagonists are characterized in a stereotyped way in the various novels.¹⁸⁾ The striking opposition between the heroes' passivity and the heroines' resourcefulness has been put forward to underscore this claim.¹⁹⁾

2. Appearance and Character

This paper focusses on Chariton and argues that the three claims mentioned in the first section do not hold true for the characterization of the heroine of the oldest extant Greek novel. Concerning Callirhoe, a number of characteristics have been listed. Most scholars focus on characteristics directly attributed to the heroine by the primary narrator or a character in

processo di idealizzazione" (with reference made to the beauty of the protagonists). Cf. also Del Corno 1989, 84: "Certo, la protagonista del romanzo greco è una figura ideale, per non dire irreal: come già la stessa eccezionalità dei suoi connotati fisici e anagrafici esplicitamente ammette".

¹⁴⁾ Lesky 1966, 859: the influence of the rhetorical schools on the novelists "must have led, at least for the more gifted, to a greater profundity of the intellectual processes and to a more refined elaboration of psychological details".

¹⁵⁾ Cf. Reardon 1991, 26, Holzberg 2001, 66.

¹⁶⁾ Cf. Reardon 1982, 13. Helms (1966) includes a small chapter on "realism in small details" in his book on characterization in Chariton (127-46). Although Chariton's heroine is credited with a couple of individual traits accentuated by the "use of realistic and picturesque details" (129), Helms traces realism "especially in the portrayal of the minor *dramatis personae*" (128).

¹⁷⁾ Schmeling 1974, 157-8, Billault 1981, 206.

¹⁸⁾ Del Corno 1989, 81, Fusillo 1989, 12.

¹⁹⁾ Cf. Reardon 1991, 81-2 and Alvares 1995, 395 (with reference to other secondary literature).

the story, or inferred by critics from her speech and actions.²⁰⁾ I propose to take Callirhoe's appearance as an index of her character.

It is generally agreed that, in antiquity, a person's appearance was an important index of his/her character. Physiognomical treatises systematically deal with inferring a person's character from physical characteristics.²¹⁾ Although most guidelines in these treatises deal with *invariable* physical features as sources for character, the first extant treatise on physiognomy, ps.-Aristotle's *Physiognomonica* (third century BC), already points out that also *variable* physical features were potential indices of character:

ἐξ ὧν δὲ γενῶν τὰ σημεῖα λαμβάνεται, νῦν ἐρῶ, καὶ ἔστιν ἅπαντα· ἕκ τε γὰρ τῶν κινήσεων φυσιογνωμονοῦσι, καὶ ἐκ τῶν σχημάτων, καὶ ἐκ τῶν χρωμάτων, καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἡθῶν τῶν ἐπὶ τοῦ προσώπου ἐμφαινομένων, καὶ ἐκ τῶν τριχομάτων, καὶ ἐκ τῆς λειότητος, καὶ ἐκ τῆς φωνῆς, καὶ ἐκ τῆς σαρκός, καὶ ἐκ τῶν μερῶν, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ τύπου ὅλου τοῦ σώματος. (Ps.-Arist. *Phgn.* 806a.26-33) (edition Hett 1955)

'I will now say from which elements signs are inferred. This is the complete list. The physiognomist deduces data from the movements, shapes and colours, features as appearing in the face, the hair, the smoothness of the skin, the voice, the condition of the flesh, the parts and the general character of the body.' (my translation)

Furthermore, I want to stress the social relevance of physiognomical practice during the first centuries AD. As has been pointed out repeatedly, physiognomical skills were powerful tools for an individual to function successfully in his political and social environment.²²⁾ In various contributions on physiognomy and self-fashioning in the imperial period, M. Gleason labels this society as a "face-to-face society",²³⁾ or: "a forest of eyes—a

²⁰⁾ Cf. Bowie 1985, 47. Helms 1966 is the only systematic study on characterization in Chariton (and in any of the Greek novels *tout court*). Regarding Callirhoe's characterization, however, he does nothing more than listing Callirhoe's directly attributed characteristics and inferring a number of characteristics from "character-revealing incidents" and speech (46-66).

²¹⁾ The only edition of all extant physiognomical treatises is still Förster's Teubner edition (1893).

²²⁾ Gleason 1995, 55-81, van Houdt 2000, 57-9.

²³⁾ Gleason 1989, 389; 1995, 55.

world in which the scrutiny of one's fellow man was not an idle pastime but an essential survival skill".²⁴⁾ Because of the absence of clear borders between public and private life, all behavior was part of a strategic self-presentation of the individual to safeguard its reputation as a member of the intellectual and political elite.²⁵⁾ Observing carefully the words, the movements, the actions and the appearance of others and being observed by others were social realities of primary importance. In this social context, physiognomy provided the civilian with guidelines and techniques to decipher a man's behavior on the one hand, and to mold efficiently his own conduct and reactions on the other. It is evident that physiognomy was part of a larger game of self-performance, in which also *variable* physical features (of which the totality can be referred to with the overall term 'body-language') played an important role. Therefore, it certainly does not seem too far-fetched to assume that, along with invariable physiognomical references, also instances of body-language will have struck ancient readers of literary texts as potential indices of character.²⁶⁾

3. Callirhoe's Invariable Physical Features

Evans has written extensively on the presence of physiognomy in imperial literature.²⁷⁾ Although she gives an impressive overview of literature which shows traces of physiognomical theory, the discussion of physiognomy in the ancient Greek novel is limited to one footnote in her 1969 article, which counts nearly a hundred pages.²⁸⁾ She mentions only one passage from Chariton's novel, namely the one in which the Persian king Artaxerxes thinks passionately about Callirhoe, whom he saw earlier that day:

[...], πάλιν δὲ νυκτὸς γενομένης ἀνεκάετο καὶ ὁ Ἔρωσ ἀὐτὸν ἀνεμίμησεν οἴους μὲν ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχει Καλλιρρόη, πῶς δὲ καλὸν τὸ πρόσωπον. Τὰς

²⁴⁾ Gleason 1989, 389.

²⁵⁾ van Houdt 2000, 58.

²⁶⁾ Cf. also Doody 1996, 130 on the importance of physical characteristics for characterization.

²⁷⁾ Evans (1941) lists, and comments on, no less than fifteen second-century authors who show physiognomical influence. An important part of Evans 1935 is dedicated to the use of physiognomy in Suetonius (62-70).

²⁸⁾ Evans 1969, 72 n. 51.

τρίχας ἐπήνει, τὸ βᾶδισμα, τὴν φωνήν· οἷα μὲν εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸ δικαστήριον, οἷα δὲ ἔσθη, πῶς ἐλάλησε, πῶς ἐσίγησε, πῶς ἠδέσθη, πῶς ἔκλαυσε. (Chariton 6.7.1)²⁹⁾

‘[...] when night came, the King was once more inflamed with passion; Love kept on reminding him what eyes Callirhoe had, how lovely her face was. He recommended her hair, her walk, her voice; the way she entered the courtroom, the way she stood; her manner of speaking, her manner of not speaking; her blushes, her tears.’

The relevance of this quotation as an illustration of physiognomy in Chariton is, I think, questionable. This passage, it is true, lists a series of physical features which are, according to the above-mentioned quotation from pseudo-Aristotle, important sources for physiognomical inference.³⁰⁾ The eyes, the face, the hair, the walk and the voice are mentioned indeed in his overview of physiognomically relevant parts of the body. Furthermore, an uninterrupted description like the one of Callirhoe in this fragment is a prototypical form in which a physiognomically relevant portrait could be sketched.³¹⁾ However, the problem with this passage is that the narrator only lists different parts of Callirhoe’s body without attributing to them any specific characteristic which could possibly lead to inferences about Callirhoe’s character. The reader does not get any information about the color of Callirhoe’s eyes, about the length or color of her hair or about the sound of her voice. As regards her face, we only know that it is *καλόν*. Again, this is not a characteristic which can be interpreted, but rather an interpretation in itself by the focalizing character, Artaxerxes. Thus, this description can, I think, be labeled as a physiognomical ‘template’ that is not filled with concrete information. It is physiognomical form without content.

Another such ‘empty’ template, which strongly resembles the above-mentioned passage, but is not mentioned by Evans, can be found in Chariton’s second book. Here, it is Dionysius who thinks of Callirhoe, with whom he is desperately in love:

²⁹⁾ Chariton’s text is taken from Molinié 2002. I use Reardon’s 1989 translation.

³⁰⁾ Pseudo-Aristotle 806a.26-33.

³¹⁾ Cf. physiognomically relevant descriptions in biography and historiography, e.g. Suet. *De Vita Caesarum* 3.68.

Ἐπεὶ δὲ προέκοπτε τὰ τῆς νυκτός, ἀναλύσας ὕπνου μὲν οὐκ ἐλάγχχανεν, ὄλος δὲ ἦν ἐν τῷ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης ἱερῷ καὶ πάντων ἀνεμιμνήσκετο, τοῦ προσώπου, τῆς κόμης, πῶς ἐστράφη, πῶς ἐνέβλεψε, τῆς φωνῆς, τοῦ σχήματος, τῶν ῥημάτων· ἐξέκαε δὲ αὐτὸν τὰ δάκρυα. (Chariton 2.4.3)

‘The night was far advanced when he [i.e. Dionysius] dismissed the company. He was too preoccupied to sleep. In thought he was in Aphrodite’s shrine, recalling every detail: her face, her hair, the way she turned, the way she looked at him, her voice, her appearance, her words; her very tears inflamed him.’

The two above-mentioned passages are symptomatic of the way in which Chariton reveals information about Callirhoe’s physical features. By using ‘empty’ physiognomical templates, he succeeds in ‘describing’ his heroine without attributing to her any physical characteristics. The absence of physical characteristics of Callirhoe’s ‘description’, which has been frequently observed,³²⁾ reminds us of Homer’s depiction of Helen. In a recent publication, Schmeling pointed out that, unlike Callirhoe’s assimilation with Aphrodite, her assimilation with Helen is based on both the *tertia comparationis* of beauty and misfortunes.³³⁾ Since Homer does not mention a single physical characteristic of Helen,³⁴⁾ I suggest that, next to Callirhoe’s beauty and her misfortunes, precisely the absence of any ‘real’ physical characteristics is in itself another *tertium comparationis* which assimilates our heroine with Helen.

³²⁾ Rohde (1914, 150-6) linked the absence of physical detail to ancient sculpture. Hunter (1994, 1073) sees the absence of actual physical description of Callirhoe as part of Chariton’s attempt to *prevent* the reader from reading the heroine physiognomically. Dubel (2001, 29-30) argues that the absence of physical features is characteristic of the representation of *all* Greek novel heroines. This claim is far too general (cf. X.Eph. 1.2.6 and 3.3.5 on Anthia; Ach.Tat. 1.4.3 on Leucippe; Longus 1.17.3 on Chloe; Hld. 3.4.2-6 on Chariclea), but it is correct as far as Callirhoe is concerned.

³³⁾ Schmeling 2005, 37, 43-4. On the assimilation of Callirhoe with Helen, cf. also Biraud 1985, 24-7, Fusillo 1990, 40-1. On Helen in the Euripidean intertext as a paradigm for Callirhoe, cf., among others, Haynes 2003, 48.

³⁴⁾ The closest we get is Hom. *Il.* 3.158, where Helen seems to the leaders of the Trojans ‘wondrously like the immortal goddesses to look upon’ (αἰνῶς ἀθανάτησι θεῆς εἰς ὤπα ἔουκεν). This is, of course, not a characteristic but an interpretation by the Trojans, focalizing Helen. Cf. Holford-Strevens 1997, 95.

4. Callirhoe's Blushes

Having dealt with the (absence of) invariable physical characteristics of Callirhoe, I now focus on one specific type of variable physical features, namely blushing. In his study of blushing in ancient fiction, Lateiner addresses the different meanings of blushing: blushing can indicate shyness, but also shame or modesty, sensuality or sexual passion, dishonesty or guilt.³⁵⁾ The Greek novelists would not be the Greek novelists if they had not explored and exploited the possibilities offered by this multiplicity of explanations for one phenomenon. In Chariton, five characters blush: three male characters (Chaireas—Mithridates—Artaxerxes) and two female characters (Callirhoe—Rhodogune). In some cases, the reason of their blushing is obvious. The Persian woman Rhodogune, for example, blushes (ὑπερυθριῶσα) when she asks Dionysius upon his arrival in Babylon to make Callirhoe descend from the carriage, because she 'wants to embrace her sister' (τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἀπάσασθαι, 5.3.8). The reader, of course, knows that this is a lie: Rhodogune wants to challenge Callirhoe in a beauty contest. Significantly, however, Dionysius does *not* pay attention to Rhodogune's blushing, consequently he does *not* suspect what she is up to and he reluctantly does what he is asked to do.

Normally, the blushes of the characters are not commented upon, neither by the primary narrator nor by other characters. The only exception is Artaxerxes' blush, which is explained by the primary narrator to be a sign of shame (ἠδεῖτο, 6.3.1). Furthermore, this blush is also interpreted by another character. Significantly enough, this character, the only character in Chariton who interprets another character's blush, is the despicable but *cunning* eunuch Artaxates. He immediately understands the reason for his master's blushing and asks what he is hiding from him (τί κρύπτεις).

Whereas all other blushing characters blush only once, Callirhoe blushes four times. In the following paragraphs, I argue that the narrator uses Callirhoe's blushes to underline subtly an evolution in her character.

³⁵⁾ Lateiner 1998, 164-9. On p. 175, he lists the passages in Chariton where characters blush, but his interpretations are limited to the different passages separately, without connecting them in view of an overall interpretation. Blushing in Ach.Tat. is addressed by Liviabella Furiani (1998, 110) under "le reazioni psicofisiche involontarie". She offers no interpretation of the material. Blushing in Hld. is touched upon by Liviabella Furiani (1996, 305-6).

The first two times that Callirhoe blushes, she is in Miletus with Dionysius (book 2). In both instances, she blushes when she is about to address her new master. Both times, her blush is accompanied by bowing of the head and uttering words softly or with difficulty:

(1) Ἐρυθρίασεν ἡ Καλλιρρόη καὶ κάτω κύψασα ἡρέμα εἶπεν· “Ἐγὼ νῦν πρῶτον πέπραμαι· [...]” (Chariton 2.5.5)

‘Callirhoe blushed and bowed her head. “This is the first time,” she said in a low voice, “that I have ever been sold; [...]”

(2) Στᾶσα δὲ ἡ Καλλιρρόη πλησίον καὶ κάτω κύψασα πρῶτον μὲν ἐρυθρήματος ἐνεπλήσθη, μόλις δὲ ὅμως ἐφθέγγετο· “[...] Δέομαι δὴ σου, κύριε, μὴ ὀργίζου τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς, [...]”. (Chariton 2.7.5)

‘Callirhoe came and stood by him, her head bowed. At first she blushed deeply; then she managed to find her voice: “[...] Master, I ask you not to be angry with her husband, [...]”

Neither the primary narrator nor Dionysius interprets either of these blushes, but the reader infers that the most obvious reason for Callirhoe’s blush is a feeling of shame: she is the daughter of the Syracusan general Hermocrates, she is full of pride about her origin (this is frequently clear from her own direct speech) and now for the first time in her life, she is subjected to the ultimate humiliation, that of being a slave of a master.³⁶

Callirhoe’s emotion of shame can, in turn, be interpreted by the reader as an index of her overall *ēthos* of modesty. Anonymus Latinus mentions blushing (*vultus rubori honesto permixtus*) as a characteristic of the ‘modest’ person (*homo temperatus atque moderatus*). Also in Pollux, John Philoponus and in numerous other texts throughout classical literature, blushing is related explicitly to αἰδώς.³⁷ One of the clearest illustrations in this regard might well be found in the two following passages from Gregory of Nazianzus, which both deal with decent behavior, especially for women. In his poem *For Olympias*, Gregory writes:

³⁶ Cf. the many monologues in which Callirhoe laments about her τύχη and about her condition as a δούλη (1.11.2-3, 1.14.6-10, 5.1.4-7, etc.).

³⁷ Pollux, *Onom.* 2.87, in Förster 1893, II § 83. John Philoponus, *ad Aristotelis de anima* 1b3, in Förster 1893, II § 130.

Στάζοι δ' άγνόν έρευθος όμόζυγι παρθένος αιδώς
 σοΐσιν ύπό βλεφάροισι· δίδου δ' όρώσιν έρευθος,
 όμματα πηγά φέρουσα και ές χθόνα όφρύν άγουσα.³⁸⁾

'Let virginal modesty before your husband drop a pure blushing beneath your eyes. Offer blushing to those who watch you, your eyes fixed and your eye-brow downward.'

The second illustration comes from Gregory's poem *Against cosmetics* and is, in all its conciseness, even more telling:

άνθος έν έστι γυναιξίν έράσμιον, έσθλόν έρευθος,
 αιδώς.³⁹⁾

'For women, there is one lovely flower, the noble blushing, modesty.'

Various other texts indicate that also the bowing of the head is an indication of this αιδώς.⁴⁰⁾ Furthermore, in Chariton, αιδώς is explicitly attributed to Callirhoe in another passage where she is the object of the attention of others (Αΐδουμένη... τὸ πλῆθος, 2.3.9). Her blushing in the above-mentioned passages is an index of this *έθος*.

The reason for this characterization of Callirhoe may be apologetic. Throughout the novel, Callirhoe's amazing beauty is emphasized time and again. On many occasions, we read about the heroine's beautiful body, focalized by the primary narrator or by other characters,⁴¹⁾ or about the stupefied reactions of characters who behold the heroine.⁴²⁾ Thus, Callirhoe constantly arouses sexual lust in most male characters who see her. The primary narrator takes pains to make sure that she does not do so deliberately. This is apparent from Callirhoe's own direct speech, in which she

³⁸⁾ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Πρὸς Όλυμπιάδα* (carm. II, 2.6) vv. 77-9. Cf. Bacci 1996.

³⁹⁾ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Κατὰ γυναικῶν καλλοπιζομένων* vv. 255-6.

⁴⁰⁾ Cf. Lucian, *Philops.* 29.20-1 (έγὼ μὲν οὖν ήρυθρίασα και κάτω ένευσα αΐδεσθεις τὸν 'Αρίγωτον); Aelian Sophistes, *NA* 3.1 (ὁ δὲ ὡσπερ οὖν πληγεις τήν ψυχήν και ύποπλησθεις αΐδοϋς ήσυχή και κάτω βλέπων ἀπαλλάττεται, ήττηθεις τῶν δικαίων); Polyaeus, *Strategemata* 8.52.1; Basil of Caesarea, *Against the prophet Isaia* 3.123.15-7 ('Η μὲν γάρ σεμνή γυνή και κοσμία, εις γήν κατανεύουσα ύπό αΐδοϋς, ἐπὶ τὸ κάτω καθελκόμενον έχει τὸ πρόσωπον); etc.

⁴¹⁾ Chariton 2.2.2-3, 2.4.3-4, 4.1.8, 6.7.1, etc.

⁴²⁾ Chariton 1.1.16, 2.3.5, 2.3.9, 3.2.14, etc.

frequently curses her own beauty. It is also apparent from the above-mentioned passages, in which Callirhoe's blushing and bowed head provide her with the required dosis of αιδώς towards her admirer Dionysius.

The next time Callirhoe blushes, she has, as a result of Plangon's skillful machinations, decided to marry Dionysius for the well-being of her unborn child:

(3) ἡ δὲ ἐρυθρίασασα ἡρέμα κατεφίλησεν αὐτὸν καὶ “Σοὶ μὲν” εἶπε “πιστεύω, Διονύσιε, ἀπιστῶ δὲ τῇ ἐμῇ τύχῃ [...]” (Chariton 3.2.3)

‘Callirhoe blushed, and kissed him gently. “I trust you, Dionysius,” she said. “It is my own fortune I do not trust [...]”’

Here, too, she blushes just before addressing Dionysius, but now she kisses him and calls her future husband not by his title, like in her speech following her second blush (κύριε, 2.7.5), but by his name. Since she is, technically speaking, married with Chaireas, the *real* father of her child, a totally innocent αιδώς can no longer be an adequate explanation for this blush. This becomes even clearer when Callirhoe blushes for the last time, that is, when she gives her letter of farewell for Dionysius to Statira:

(4) ἐξιοῦσα δὲ τῆς νεῶς ἡ Καλλιρρόη, ἡρέμα προσκύψασα τῇ Στατεΐρα καὶ ἐρυθριῶσα τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἐπέδωκε [...]. (Chariton 8.4.9)

‘As she was leaving the ship, Callirhoe leaned a little towards Statira, blushed, and gave her the letter [...]’

This blush clearly indicates a certain sense of guilt. Guilt, firstly, towards Dionysius: with this letter, Callirhoe abandons a man whom she made believe that he was the father of her child—a lie which she repeats explicitly in this very letter. Secondly, guilt towards Chaireas: this is emphasized when the narrator tells us that writing this letter is Callirhoe's only action which she keeps hidden from her husband (Τοῦτο μόνον ἐποίησε δίχα Χαίρεου· εἰδυῖα γὰρ αὐτοῦ τὴν ἔμφυτον ζηλοτυπίαν ἐσπούδαζε λαθεῖν, 8.4.4), and when he subtly adds that she *hides* the letter (ἀπέκρυψεν) when she brings it to Statira. Thus, this blush is a clear indication of something far less pure than the innocent αιδώς which colored Callirhoe's face at the beginning of the story.

Furthermore, this evolution in Callirhoe's character is mirrored by the passages in which Callirhoe does not blush herself, but provokes blushing in the male characters. Three male characters blush, each of them once. And the reason for their blush resides always, directly or indirectly, with Callirhoe. In other words, Callirhoe is not only the character which blushes most frequently, she is also the character which *makes* other characters blush. This 'catalysing' function of Callirhoe, too, mirrors the above-mentioned evolution in her character. Let me first list the three relevant passages:

(5) Ταῦτα ἀκούσας ὁ Μιθριδάτης ἐρυθήματος ἐνεπλήσθη καὶ ἴδρου τὰ ἔνδον, καὶ πού καὶ δάκρυον αὐτοῦ μὴ θέλοντος προῦπεσεν, ὥστε καὶ τὸν Πολύχαρμον διασιωπήσαι καὶ πάντας ἀπορεῖν τοὺς παρόντας. (Chariton 4.2.13)

'At these words [that is, when Polycharmus mentions Callirhoe's name and origin] Mithridates blushed violently and burst into sweat; in fact a tear even dropped from his eye in spite of himself; whereupon Polycharmus himself fell silent, and nobody knew what to do.'

(6) Βασιλεὺς δὲ καλέσας τὸν εὐνοῦχον, ὃς ἦν αὐτῷ πιστότατος ἀπάντων, τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ἠδεῖτο κάκεινον· ἰδὼν δὲ αὐτὸν Ἀρταξάτης ἐρυθήματος μεστὸν καὶ βουλόμενον εἰπεῖν, "Τί κρύπτεις" ἔφη "δέσποτα, δοῦλον σόν, [...]" (Chariton 6.3.1)

'The King called the eunuch to him. He was his most trusted servant, but at first the King was embarrassed even with him. Artaxates saw that he was blushing deeply and had something to say. "Sir," he said, "what are you hiding from your slave? [...]"'

(7) Καλλιρρόη δὲ λαβομένη Χαιρέου τῆς δεξιᾶς, μόνον αὐτὸν ἀπαγαγούσα "Τί" ἔφη "βεβούλευσαι, Χαιρέα; Καὶ Στάτειραν ἄγεις εἰς Συρρακούσας καὶ Ῥοδογούνην τὴν καλήν;" Ἠρυθρίασεν ὁ Χαιρέας καὶ "Οὐκ ἔμαυτοῦ" φησὶν "ἔνεκα ἄγω ταύτας, ἀλλὰ σοὶ θεραπαινίδας." (Chariton 8.3.1)

'But Callirhoe took Chaereas by the hand and led him aside by herself. "What have you decided to do, Chaereas?" she asked. "Are you going to take Statira and the beautiful Rhodogune to Syracuse as well?" Chaereas blushed. "It is not for myself that I am taking them," he said, "but as servants for you."

In the first two passages, Mithridates and Artaxerxes blush because their feelings for Callirhoe are about to be discovered. Mithridates loses all self-control when Callirhoe's name unexpectedly appears in his conversation with Polycharmus. Artaxerxes blushes because he is ashamed (ἠδέϊτο) to confess his love for Callirhoe to his eunuch. Thus, Callirhoe's role in the blushing of her two admirers can be called rather 'normal' for a Greek novel heroine who is, as I mentioned earlier, against her own will, the object of passionate love of the men who cross her path.

Another picture appears, however, when Callirhoe is responsible for Chaireas' blushing towards the end of the novel. She asks him if he plans to take Statira and Rhodogune with him to Syracuse. Chaireas answers with a blush. Perhaps he feels 'caught', as Lateiner suggests.⁴³⁾ In any case, it is important to note that, whereas earlier in the story Callirhoe was blushing herself, now she is *directly* responsible for the blush of Chaireas.

This being said, we should take into account also the expressions λαβομένη Χαίρεου τῆς δεξιᾶς and μόνον αὐτὸν ἀπαγαγούσα in the passage above. To explain their relevance for my present purpose, I refer to the only three other passages in the novel where someone is taken by the hand and led away to a more remote place:⁴⁴⁾

(a) ὁ δὲ ἐμβαλὼν αὐτῷ τὴν δεξιὰν ἀπῆγεν εἷς τι χωρίον ἡρεμαῖον, εἶτα συναγαγὼν τὰς ὄφρῳς καὶ ὅμοιος γενόμενος λυπομένῳ, μικρὸν δὲ τι καὶ δακρύσας, [...]. (Chariton 1.4.5)

'The other grasped his [i.e. Chaireas'] arm and took him off to a quiet spot. Then he frowned, assumed a sad expression, and even let a tear drop from his eye, [...].'

(b) λαβόμενος οὖν τῆς χειρὸς ἐξήγαγεν αὐτήν, [...]. (Chariton 1.9.7)

'So he took her by the hand and led her out [...].'

(c) Ὁ δὲ εὐνοῦχος ἰδὼν τὴν Καλλιρρόην μόνην ἀπολελειμμένην, ἐμβαλὼν τὴν δεξιάν, ὡς δὴ τις φιλέλλην καὶ φιλόανθρωπος, ἀπήγαγε τοῦ πλήθους τῶν θεραπαινίδων. (Chariton 6.7.5)

⁴³⁾ Lateiner 1998, 175.

⁴⁴⁾ I do not consider 5.9.3, where Statira takes Callirhoe's hand (without leading her away) to comfort her.

‘The eunuch saw Callirhoe left by herself, took her hand in a manner suggesting his goodwill towards Greeks and all mankind, and led her away from the crowd of attendant women.’

In passage (a), Chaireas is led away by the man who is about to tell to him the false story of Callirhoe’s adultery. In passage (b), Theron takes Callirhoe by the hand to bring her out of the tomb in which he found her. Immediately afterwards, Theron first pretends that he wants to give Callirhoe back to her parents, but finally he decides to sell her in Miletus. In passage (c), it is again Callirhoe who is led away—this time by the Persian eunuch Artaxates, when he is about to explain to her the choice which she faces at that moment: she will either sexually please the Persian king whenever he wants, or she will experience what ‘enemies of the king’ undergo. In all three cases, we are thus dealing with an action of a character with clearly malicious intentions towards one of the protagonists. Furthermore, this character clearly casts himself in all three situations in a dominant role towards the protagonist, whom he believes to be helpless against his manipulation. Consequently, when the reader arrives at 8.3.1, where Chaireas is led away by Callirhoe, he remembers the wicked manipulation announced by this gesture earlier in the story. Whereas this action between the hero(ine) and the bad character designated evil wickedness, it is now—among the heroes themselves—transformed into a rather harmless but significant incident. Thus, when we keep in mind the passages (a)-(c) in our reading of passage (3), it is obvious that Callirhoe, who was once defenceless and manipulated, becomes in this passage—quite literally—the manipulator herself.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have paid attention to both the invariable and the variable physical characteristics of Chariton’s heroine Callirhoe. Firstly, I suggested that the absence of actual invariable physical characteristics is in itself an element which aligns Callirhoe with one of her literary paradigms, namely Helen. Secondly, I argued that Chariton uses Callirhoe’s blush, and the blush with which she colors the face of her admirers, to construct evolution in his heroine’s character. Throughout Chariton’s novel, Callirhoe’s character evolves from that of an innocent and modest girl, a plaything of

Fortune, to that of an experienced woman, mother of a child, and wife of two husbands, deciding for herself whom she will follow. In short, a woman who takes her own decisions in order to cope with the difficulties which she encounters on her way. Through various adventures and misfortunes, she evolves from a girl being controlled by other characters, to a woman controlling other characters herself.

Whereas it is often said that the character of the Greek novel protagonists is (1) static, (2) idealized and (3) delineated in a rather grotesque way, lacking any form of subtlety, I have argued exactly the opposite for the character of Callirhoe. (1) Firstly, Callirhoe is not a static character, but an evolving one. (2) Secondly, the nature of this evolution rejects an idealized reading of her character and suggests a much more realistic one, involving issues of control and manipulation. (3) Thirdly, this evolution is never mentioned explicitly by the primary narrator (nor by any other character), but can (and should) be inferred from Callirhoe's blushes.

This observation suggests that it is time to revise and, if necessary, nuance some widely-held views on the characterization of Greek novel protagonists as they are found in mainstream secondary literature. It invites a differentiating approach, paying close attention to the technical aspects which construct the character of the individual heroes and heroines in the novels in a more thorough and systematic way than has been the case up to now. The fact that Chariton's novel is our oldest extant preserved novel, which we would therefore expect to operate relatively closely to generic traditions, makes this prospect only more interesting.⁴⁵⁾

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