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Visual Metaphor and Narrative: Ekphrasis in Fictional Narrative Prose of Late Antiquity

Original Study

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Abstract: This article presents an interpretation of some functions performed by ekphrastic structures in the context of Ancient fictional narrative prose. Concrete examples are taken from two Ancient Greek novels: *Daphnis and Chloe* by Longus and *Leucippe and Clitophon* by Achilles Tatius. Using Olga Freidenberg's conceptual and interpretative apparatus as a lens for reading the textual material, the central claim of the article is that within Ancient prose narrative, ekphrasis and metaphor are functionally interrelated, with ekphrasis serving to metaphorically embed narrative content within the mythological, affective, and genre-related fields of the textual production of meaning. At the same time, while adopting Freidenberg's definition of metaphor as a primal state of cognitive indistinction between image and concept, the article attempts to go beyond her mythological interpretation of the Ancient novel and to provide a more socially and historically relevant understanding of the semantic features of this genre.

Keywords: ekphrasis, Ancient Greek novel, metaphor, Olga Freidenberg

INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on a textual structure that can be described in the traditional terms of rhetoric as a figure or trope and that is known as ekphrasis. The aim of the article is to explore the metaphorical potential of this figure. Since the notion of metaphor has been the subject of a recurrent debate, where different theoretical positions have developed it in different, sometimes incompatible directions, we must specify that the concept employed here adheres to Classical philology. As the foundational understanding of metaphor for this study, we adopt the traditional definition: metaphor is a rhetorical figure of substitution based on likeness. Aristotle (*Poet.*, 1459a8–9; 2006, 56) famously defined metaphor in poetry as "the greatest form of wording" because it "is a sign of natural gifts, since to use metaphors well is to have insight into what is alike" (τὸ γὰρ εὖ μεταφέρειν τὸ τὸ ὅμοιον θεωρεῖν ἐστιν). However, the understanding of metaphor as solely relying on the mechanism of substitution is insufficient when it comes to complex poetic figures. The 20th century developed a whole range of understandings of metaphor going beyond substitution to include different forms of production of new meaning – for example, the transition from the semiotic to the semantic levels (in Benvenistean terms) according to Paul Ricœur (1975, 88–171), metaphor as a secondary motivation of the otherwise arbitrary sign relation in Gérard Genette (1966, 205–221), or metaphor as modelling activity in Max Black (1962, 219–243).

However, since the subject of the present analysis is the novel of Antiquity, the approach we will follow is that of the Soviet Classical philologist Olga Freidenberg. The principles of her poetics (and by "poetics", she understands "the theoretical history of literature") pertain to the so-called stadial theory of literary research. This method combines Marxist historicism with Nikolay Marr's linguistic paleontology in studying the development of literary forms. In her first monograph, *Poetics of Plot and*

Genre (*Poetika syuzheta i zhanra*, 1936), in accordance with Marrist linguistics and the work of her colleague Izrail Frank-Kamenetsky, Freidenberg (1997 [1936], 32) introduced the following definition of metaphor: "Metaphor as a form of complex and identificatory thought precedes the distinction between myth and language; at the moment of its birth, the elements of consciousness are not yet divided, and it is precisely this process of identification that is metaphorization."[1]

In the second part of her later work, *Myth and Literature of Antiquity* (*Mif i literatura drevnosti*), published posthumously for the first time in 1978,[2] she elaborated on the same idea, explaining the genesis of metaphor as a development of the earliest forms of thought that identified image and concept (Freidenberg 1998 [1978], 232–261). A more accurate formulation would be that metaphor is a remnant of an epoch when human consciousness did not know the distinction between image and concept. The dimension that distinguishes metaphor from this earlier state of thought is the idea of illusion (an "as if"):

> The former identity of the meanings of the original and its representation was replaced by the mere illusion of such identity, which is only an "appearance" of an identity to the imagination. The formal identity of the meaning of the original and its representation in an "image" remained the same. But in fact, illusion introduced its "as if" into the pictorial representation, and sameness turned into deliberate improbability – the same thing in form, but with a new content. (Freidenberg 1998 [1978], 239–240)

At this initial point, it is important to make some additional remarks about the meaning of the terms used by Freidenberg, especially about the meaning of the notions "image" and "concept" present in the title of her 1954 monograph to which the above-quoted passage pertains. In this case, they should be understood in their more traditional, philological sense, as they were employed in the philological tradition in Germany and later in Russia in the second half of the 19th century. Since the whole monograph is dedicated to the clarification of the semantic dimensions of these two notions, it is quite difficult to simplify it too much, yet it is appropriate to indicate the central claim of the study. First, Freidenberg understands her work along the lines of what she calls "historical aesthetics". That is a discipline combining anthropological, philological, and historical knowledge close to what Alexander Veselovsky defined earlier as "historical poetics". Thus, "image" designates the quasi-pictorial mental representation of an entity in the mind, based on sensual perception, which was the only means of a presumedly "primitive" human to perceive and understand reality, while "concept" is the basic building unit of abstract thinking. According to a Hegelian understanding of history, characteristic of this type of 19th-century philological research, concepts are a later achievement of the human mind and are supposed to have developed out of a more intuitive and less clearly articulated way of perception of reality.

Thus, Freidenberg formulates her central claim in the following way:

> […] the emergence of Ancient poetical categories is due to the becoming of the concepts, since Ancient concept is still simply a form of image, and in this form of image, the concept has the function to "transfer", to translate concrete pictorial meanings into abstract, "metaphorical" meanings, by means of which it evokes the coming about of metaphor and poetical allegory. (Freidenberg 1998 [1978], 224)

In this optics, the emergence of metaphor is discerned in the dynamics of the relation between concept and image, understood as a relation between concrete, pictorial, sensual, on the one hand, and abstract, logically cognitive, rational, on the other.

Coming back to the above-quoted definition of metaphor, we shall point out that when speaking of "the original and its representation" and an initial "identity" between the two, Freidenberg explores a proto-semiological relation she understands as a foundation of any type of cognitive processing of reality. This initial relation constitutes mental entities that could be structured either as "images", in the case of the identity of the mental (or other) representation with its presumed "original"; or (proto-) "concepts," when a cleft between "the original" and "its representation" is perceived. At an earlier stage of development of this cleft, it emerges under the guise of an "as if"-structure. It is important to pay attention to the fact that Freidenberg does not distinguish between mind-dependent and mind-independent reality since these terms do not take part in her terminological framework. Rather, she assumes that the "reality" described cognitively by a set of images and/or concepts is the historically condition perception of a world by a given culture. In the analysis that follows, we will endorse this definition for the interpretation of metaphoric constructions in Ancient literature, and more precisely, in novels, attempting to preserve the historical view on the semantic functioning of those texts. Viewing metaphor not as a construction that comes only *afterwards*, not as a later association of two elements based on their similarity, but as an earlier phase in the development of thought mechanisms, provides one seminal interpretative advantage: complex metaphoric constructions (such as ekphrases in literature) that do not allow for logical simplification and breakdown into easily discernible semantic elements since they appear on the level of text and not on that of

1 This and all the following translations from Russian are mine.

2 This book includes a lecture course and a monograph written by Freidenberg in the 1940s and early 1950s before her death in 1955. The monograph, titled *Image and Concept* (*Obraz i ponyatiye*), makes up the second part of the book.

predication, could be read in their genuine complexity and multifariousness as poetic pictures.[3]

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NOTION OF EKPHRASIS

The notion of ekphrasis emerged in Late Antiquity, and more precisely, in the Hellenistic period (from the 3rd century BC onwards), in the context of education in rhetoric. We find it initially in the so-called *Progymnasmata* – handbooks for schools of rhetoric containing not only theoretically formulated knowledge but also exercises for improving students' ability to compose and utilize different elements of rhetorical speech.[4] According to the definitions given in these early handbooks, ekphrasis simply means *description* (Kennedy 2003, 45–47, 86, 117–120, 166–168; Spengel, vol. 2 and 3). Potentially, anything can become the subject of an ekphrasis – persons, landscapes, cities, etc. – as long as its description fulfils the requirements for *enargeia*, the vividness of the description.[5]

According to Ruth Webb's monograph on the development of the notion of ekphrasis in Antiquity (Webb 2009, 28–38), it was much later in history – in the 1950s – that the notion of ekphrasis was narrowed down to the description of (mainly pictorial or sculptural) works of art within the framework of a verbal work of art. This conceptual transformation should be attributed to the work of the German philologist Leo Spitzer. In his seminal article "The 'Ode on a Grecian Urn,' or Content vs. Metagrammar", Spitzer (1955, 206–207) declared that this poem by John Keats "belongs to the genre, known to Occidental literature from Homer to Theocritus to the Parnassians and Rilke, of the *ekphrasis*, the poetic description of a pictorial or sculptural work of art."[6] As Webb shows, the Classical tradition doesn't identify ekphrasis as a genre, but rather as a rhetorical device with a much broader scope than the one noted by Spitzer. However, in speaking of ekphrasis as a specific genre dedicated to the description of visual artworks in verbal ones, Spitzer refers to an actual practice that already existed in Late Antiquity. And while according to the handbooks of rhetoric, ekphrases could be composed about all sorts of objects (persons, buildings, landscapes, individual objects, etc., including artworks[7]), in the 20th-century use of the term it only means descriptions of artworks. As regards the hosting discourse, the notion of ekphrasis traditionally refers to literary texts, but later started appearing in discourse on art history and art criticism as a specific problem posed to those disciplines (Marin 1988).

Spitzer's reformulation of the notion of ekphrasis as a philological, poetological and literary-theoretical concept appeared, indeed, in an essay on a Romantic poem, but we can easily discern similar textual structures in Ancient literature dating from the same period as the original rhetorical concept of ekphrasis. Of course, we can already point to the very first work of European poetry, Homer's *Iliad*, where the well-known description of the shield of Achilles takes up a large part of Book 18 (verses 478–608). This early example already poses a whole series of complex theoretical questions about the relation between the visual and the verbal, between sight and hearing (and reasoning), generally – questions about the relation of different media of communication, since ekphrasis is an exemplary case of transmediality (Becker 1995).[8]

In Late Antiquity, ekphrases appeared in separate volumes as well. There was one famous example of a collection of ekphrases – a volume of descriptions of the existing paintings in a public gallery in Naples, known under the title *Eikones* (*Images*). The book was attributed to a certain Philostratus (2nd century AD) and although there are still serious discussions on the historical identity of this person(s) (Schönberger 1968, 10–20), the book gives us precious testimony not only about the artistic practices and practices of art exhibition in Imperial Rome but also about the potential of transmedial verbal structures (Phil., *Imag.*, I; Philostratus, Callistratus 1931, 2–7). At a later point in time, the rhetorician Callistratus composed a collection of *Descriptiones* of sculptural works following Philostratus's model (Philostratus, Callistratus 1931, 376–423).

The problem of ekphrasis in relation to that of metaphor in Classical literature is tackled again by Olga Freidenberg (1998 [1978], 223–622) in her monograph from the early 1950s titled *Image and Concept*. While discussing the genesis of the distinction between original and copy in Classical thought, she points to the emergence of the idea of illusion precisely with respect to the birth of metaphor in language. In her view, this process is homologous to the one that brought about visual art

3 Strictly speaking, the statement that metaphor is a remnant of an earlier cognitive state of human consciousness could be affirmed only if one accepts the whole Marrist premise of the stadial development of cultural phenomena. However, without necessarily endorsing this theoretical system, we are still trying to use the advantages it could provide with respect to textual interpretation.

4 *Progymnasmata* literally means "preparatory school" or "preparatory exercises".

5 The quality of *enargeia* (ἐνάργεια) – vividness of a description – is an important element of the theory of ekphrasis in the rhetoric of the Second Sophistic that we will only mention in passing. Its importance is ubiquitously acknowledged.

6 The theoretical intricacies of this situation for literary history are well examined by James A. W. Heffernan (1991).

7 In fact, the possibility to compose an ekphrasis of a work of art is indicated in only one of four extant handbooks, the one by Nicholas the Sophist, considered to be the latest in time (Spengel vol. 3, 492; Kennedy 2003, 167).

8 Andrew Sprague Becker (1995, 4–5) develops his analysis of the shield of Achilles according to the idea that ekphrasis generally is to be treated as metaphor in poetry. Still, the notion of poetic metaphor he uses is actually closer to the traditional notion of synecdoche, since he equates it to "mise-en-abîme".

in Antiquity because of the connection of metaphor to pictorial thinking[9]:

> As we know, ekphrasis describes a work of plastic art in terms of what is represented in it and how. The description of this "how" constitutes the soul of ekphrasis. Beginning with Homer, Ancient ekphrasis strives to show that a soulless object wrought by a skillful artist looks as if it were alive. Ekphrasis represents one thing, an imaginary one, like another, a real one. (Freidenberg 1998 [1978], 250)

Thus, image and concept appear to meet on the ground of metaphor, and metaphor, understood as a state of cognitive approach to the world,[10] is apparently expressed by means of ekphrasis. The historical origination of metaphor coincided with the emergence of the idea of illusory art, and the earliest distinction between "reality" and "illusion", "essence" and "appearance" became expressed through the very figure of ekphrasis.[11] This happened as early as Homer's time:

> Ancient ekphrasis contains a hidden likening and comparison of the dead to the living, of the illusory to the real. But unlike simile, its "as if" is only visual, not comparative; it is aimed exclusively at conveying a visual illusion.
> If similes were called εἰκόνες in Greek, this very term "image" and "representation" ("picture") is even more applicable to ekphrasis. In fact, Ancient ekphrases were also called εἰκόνες, like similes. A later rationalizing thought suggests that ekphrasis is thus called because it describes paintings, εἰκόνες, while in fact, ekphrasis describes precisely εἰκόνες, paintings, because it is itself an εἰκών. (Freidenberg 1998 [1978], 250–251)

The nature of this reasoning goes beyond simple positivistic history and explains the grounds of a certain historical process in terms of the development of the human spirit in a broadly Hegelian-Marxist-Marrist framework. If we accept the proposition that metaphor, the pictorial dimension of thinking, and ekphrasis are genetically linked, we may easily see how this link could be used with respect to Ancient narrative prose.

It is necessary to correctly understand how the ontogenetic process of human thinking envisioned here by Freidenberg is related to a broader and longer historical tradition of philological thinking (in late-19th-century Russia). It was generally inspired by Hegel from whom it inherited the search for a meaningful explanation of the succession of cultural phenomena. The second Hegelian element in this process that was important to Freidenberg and can be found already in her 1936 monograph *Poetics of Plot and Genre* is the idea that earlier steps in cognitive development, understood both phylogenetically and ontogenetically, refer to more simple and monolithic cognitive entities which are about to expand, unfold, and differentiate. This is the reason why such phases might appear later as "syncretic" forms. However, to perceive them as genuinely syncretic would be a mistake, according to Freidenberg's claim (1997 [1936], 20), since the respective "pure" cultural forms did not exist yet at the time of the supposedly syncretic forms. However, we do not need to agree with Freidenberg's methodological presupposition that simpler forms came earlier, in order to preserve the potential of her conception of metaphor and ekphrasis. For the purposes of the present analysis, it is sufficient to accept that both metaphor and ekphrasis can be interpreted as bringing together otherwise separate cognitive aspects such as perceptual plasticity, abstract ideas, affects, and historically conventional connotations.

However, at this point, we will refrain from unequivocal definitions of metaphor or ekphrasis in semiotic, linguistic, or cognitivist terms since in the course of the following analysis, they will disclose their potential as instruments to express multifaceted affective-cognitive constellations.

METAPHORICAL FUNCTION OF EKPHRASES IN ANCIENT FICTIONAL PROSE NARRATIVE

If we examine the literature of the Hellenistic period, we will immediately notice the frequent occurrence of ekphrastic structures in narrative prose, and especially in fictional narratives. These are the so-called Ancient novels.[12] The genre is notoriously difficult to define, since the characteristics of these texts, their narrative structure and composition possess neither the coherence nor the dynamics of a modern novel (Holzberg 1995; Fusillo 1996). Without going into details, we would like to highlight the fact that ekphrases were a relatively common choice for some of the authors of Ancient Greek novels (Bartsch 1989, 5). This allows for more profound research on the relation between visuality and narrative in these texts.

It is important to note that from a very early point onwards, Ancient fictional prose narratives, or novels, were of interest to Olga Freidenberg. At the end of the 1910s, while still a student, she chose to write a master's thesis

9 A very important remark of hers is that "[i]n the context of pictorial thinking, metaphor historically performed the function of a concept" (Freidenberg 1998 [1978], 255).
10 Such was the meaning of the term "semantics" in the definition of Nikolay Marr.
11 We will not go into details about the genesis of these terms and the very methodology developed by Freidenberg, but would like to note in passing the Hegelian type of perception of historical processes in it. On the other hand, it is well worth noting that Freidenberg's monograph *Image and Concept*, where ekphrasis is directly defined in its modern sense – as a description of a visual work of art in a verbal one – predates by a couple of years Leo Spitzer's article on John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn". The manuscript is dated by the author as completed on 17 August 1953, while Spitzer published his article in 1955.
12 In the present analysis, we will leave Latin novels aside, and concentrate only on Greek-language novels traditionally combining the themes of adventure and love.

on *The Origin of the Greek Novel* (*Proiskhozhdeniye grecheskogo romana*, 1919–1923; Freidenberg 1997 [1936], 8). Nina Braginskaya (2009, 4–16) comments extensively on this early phase in Freidenberg's understanding of the Ancient Greek novel. However, we are going to turn to her later works, *Poetics of Plot and Genre* and *Image and Concept*, where the cultural-anthropological reading of the Greek novel as a narrative expression of two fundamental myths[13] gives way to a more elaborate dialectical-historical understanding of the place of the novel among other genres.

The first element that is important here is narration. In a chapter on the origin of narration in *Image and Concept*, we can see that narration was perceived as emerging as early as Homer's epic, and this moment is again structurally explained as a transformation in thought:

> Narration comes into being when the past becomes separated from the present, this world from the one beyond. It constitutes itself as an imitation – a ghost of that which takes place on earth, having an everyday type of form, but with a space and time of its own, both situated "far away", beyond the boundaries of the earth. (Freidenberg 1998 [1978], 274)

The Ancient Greek novel basically shares the same genetic line as the epic, yet two elements distinguish it from the latter. The first one is the shift of the narrative focus from action to passion. This component displays the common origin of Ancient novels and Christian Gospels (Freidenberg 1997 [1936], 245–246). The second element is the different socio-historical conditions in the Hellenistic period that permit new contents to enter the old narrative form:

> In Hellenistic literature we encounter for the first time the loving couple of a chaste young man and a chaste maiden, and this happened due to the transformed social relations and the relative freedom of women in that period. (Freidenberg 1997 [1936], 247)

After this genetic explanation about the development of the Ancient novel, we are directed back to the problem of ekphrasis in it. Ekphrases appear in Ancient fictional prose narratives at very specific points: by introducing a dimension of a transcribed visuality, these structures build up a whole new level of meaning within the narrative itself. Sometimes hastily considered to be purely ornamental in purpose (Bartsch 1989, 171), they always find a way to refer to the events that are being played out against their backdrop. In juxtaposing two media, they acquire a potential that we will call metaphoric in the sense of Freidenberg's understanding of metaphor. This brings them close to the level on which metaphor functions in lyrical poetry.[14] However, it is important to highlight the specific nature of these images in the narrative context. This would mean that Freidenberg's reconstruction of an initial mythological complex preserved as a sedimented form in the novelistic plot would not be sufficient for understanding the concrete socio-historical and cultural-historical mechanisms that govern the discourse of the genre in this case. Aiming to understand the different possible directions in which ekphrasis could be employed not merely as an ornament, but as a meaning-producing macrometaphor, we will explore the connotative chains that such metaphoric constructions unlock in relation to the actual plot of the novel.

The first important function of ekphrasis is to provide a broader, yet specific, mythological context for the development of the narrative plot. Ekphrases relate to an episode or to the whole of the narrative as a visual *substitution* of the narrative. This endows them with lyrical functions – a moment of stasis, a *pause* in the development of the narrated events, a poetic reflection before the narrative continues, enriched. The second function of ekphrasis is the densification of connotative meanings through the lens of the depicted subject. These connotative meanings are not always easily and clearly definable, but they build up an atmosphere that colours the narrative. By condensing *affective* and/or *thematic* elements around the core of the narrated story, ekphrasis creates a whole semantic sphere within which the narrative is to be interpreted. This sphere is characterized by the values of personal, private, intimate experiences such as love and friendship, the everyday life of the individual with its small (non-political) joys and sorrows, the adventures (or rather "passions", as Freidenberg would have put it) of a private person. Such privacy of the thematic and affective dominants of the narrative is only possible in the new socio-historical situation of the Hellenistic world (Bogdanov 1986; 1992).

We will corroborate this interpretation through examples from two Greek novels. The first example is from the novel *Daphnis and Chloe* by Longus. This novel is considered a relatively late one, and the identity of the author is uncertain (Hunter 1996, 367–370). The opening section (*Proemium*) is separated from the rest of the narrative by its extradiegetic position. Here, the narrator speaks in the first person and clarifies the circumstances in which the narrative became possible. These circumstances are expressly related to a visual matter:

> 1. When I was hunting in Lesbos, I saw in the grove of the Nymphs a spectacle [θέαμα] the most beauteous and pleasing of any that ever yet I cast my eyes upon. It was a painted picture [εἰκόνα γραπτήν], reporting a history of love. The grove indeed was very pleasant, thick set with trees and starred with flowers everywhere, and watered all from

13 These are the myths of the dying and rising deity (Adonis), and of the battle against death (Heracles) (Braginskaya 2009, 7; Freidenberg 1997 [1936], 119–121). Unfortunately, Freidenberg's master's thesis has not been published yet.
14 Freidenberg (1973) also published an article on the origin of Greek lyrical poetry, interpreting it as closely linked to the emergence of metaphor.

one fountain with diverse meanders and rills. But that picture, as having in it not only an excellent and wonderful piece of art but also a tale of ancient love, was far more amiable. And therefore many, not only the people of the country but foreigners also, enchanted by the fame of it, came as much to see that, as in devotion to the Nymphs. There were figured in it young women, in the posture, some of teeming, others of swaddling, little children; babes exposed, and ewes giving them suck; shepherds taking up foundlings, young persons plighting their troth; an incursion of thieves, an inroad of armed men.

2. When I had seen with admiration these and many other things, but all belonging to the affairs of love, I had a mighty instigation to write something as to answer that picture [πόθος ἔσχεν ἀντιγράψαι τῇ γραφῇ]. And therefore, when I had carefully sought and found an interpreter of the image [ἐξηγητὴν τῆς εἰκόνος], I drew up these four books, an oblation to Love and to Pan and to the Nymphs, and a delightful possession even for all men. For this will cure him that is sick, and rouse him that is dumps; one that has loved, it will remember of it; one that has not, it will instruct. For there was never any yet that wholly could escape love, and never shall there be any, never so long as beauty shall be, never so long as eyes can see.

(Longus, *Proem.*, 1–2; 1916, 6–9)

This long quotation is central to understanding what is at stake in the whole narrative about Daphnis and Chloe. The first moment is rather obvious: the story depicted in the Nymphs' grove is the one that we will read about in the narrative. That is to say, the story of two children abandoned at birth who were initially suckled by a sheep and a goat, and then raised by shepherds; their mutual love in a pastoral setting, followed by a number of adventures (including a pirate attack and abduction), leading up to the happy ending in which love triumphs. Thus, at the initial point of the narrative, we have a sort of *transmedial diptych*: image and narrative repeat each other contrapuntally and complement each other (ἀντιγράψαι τῇ γραφῇ). This moment is underlined by the use of the verb γράφειν, which means both "to draw, to paint" and "to write" in Greek. On this level, the writing (of the following story) in response to the picture might identify the whole novel that is yet to come as one extended ekphrasis of the described mural, as Bruce MacQueen (1990, 22–24) suggests.

At a subsequent step, we will note a couple of details that define the function of the introduced ekphrasis beyond the purely content-related juxtaposition. The described image supplies a series of semantic accents to the narrative. First, the whole landscape complex – the Nymphs' grove (the so-called *locus amoenus*) – already inscribes the story into the tradition of the pastoral genre (idyll): a genre related to the private and intimate sphere of the individual's experience in a setting of benevolent nature.[15] Second, a religious level is introduced – a level of the deities that are characteristic of the complex of pastoral culture: these are the Nymphs, Pan, and Eros (Love). It is important to note that these are not the gods of Olympus, but deities of local, small, private, and individual life. Third, the unfolding of the narrative is preceded by and practically springs from the visual dimension, and the narrative thus obtains the character of a votive object, a religious offering – to the same pastoral deities ("I drew up these four books, an oblation to Love and to Pan and to the Nymphs"). This element adds a ritual character to the narrative. Reading it would install the reader in the position of a worshipper in the private religion of Love. On the other hand, the narrative context narrativizes the image. It organizes the visual material into a narrative one, into a linear story. Although the image as described appears to be unrolling in a cartoon-like narrative manner, it still takes an *interpreter* to transform it into an actual, verbal narrative, so that, as Shadi Bartsch (1989, 42) highlights, a description is always paired with an interpretation.

Our second example is from the novel *Leucippe and Clitophon* by Achilles Tatius, an author who was long considered to be a follower of Heliodorus, but who was eventually proven to be an earlier author, today dated to the 2nd century AD (Plepelits 1996, 388). The novel contains three sets of ekphrases that are engaged in even more intricate relations with the narrative. A detailed analysis of the descriptive components of this novel is presented in Shadi Bartsch's monograph *Decoding the Ancient Novel* (1989), where the author focuses exclusively on Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius. She applies the notion of ekphrasis in its broader rhetorical meaning as "description", offering an interpretation of all descriptive elements (including descriptions of oracular dreams and of theatrical performances). Bartsch (1989, 40–76) dedicates a whole chapter to the problem of pictorial description, defending the claim that description and interpretation are necessarily paired.

As in *Daphnis and Chloe*, it is again the opening section of the novel that will steer the course of the narrative line. However, the setting of the love story between Leucippe and Clitophon is not directly pastoral, but rather that of a typical adventure story. In this respect Achilles Tatius's novel is much more dynamic than Longus's because it employs the chronotope of travel (in Bakhtin's terms). On the other hand, it also embeds the semantic range of the narrative in a mythological context. Thus, the novel opens with a *double ekphrasis*, the first paragraph being a description of the city of Sidon, and the second one a description of a visual work of art, a painting representing the rape of Europa by Zeus. As pointed out above, the broader meaning of the notion of ekphrasis developed in the Hellenistic handbooks of rhetoric encompasses all types of descriptions, including descriptions of places (in the *Progymnasmata* of Aphthonius the Sophist, the description of the harbour of Alexandria is

15 Regarding the *locus amoenus* complex, Bruce MacQueen (1990, 89–97) identifies a second idyllic ekphrasis in the final Book 4 of the novel as a symmetrical counterpoint to the opening one – the description of the garden of Dionysophanes.

given as a paradigmatic example of the figure of ekphrasis – Spengel, vol. 2, 47–49). In *Leucippe and Clitophon* we read about the harbour of the Phoenician city Sidon:

Sidon is on the sea-board of the Assyrian Ocean: it is the Phoenicians' mother city, and its people may be termed the father of the Theban race. There is a double harbour in the bay, wide within but with a narrow entrance so as to land-lock the sea by a gentle curve: where the bay makes an inward turn towards the right, a second inlet has been channelled out, for the water to run in, and thus there is formed a further harbour behind the first, so that in winter the ships can lie safely in the inner basin, while in summer they need not proceed further than the outer port.
(Achilles Tatius, I, 1; 1917, 2–3)

With this ekphrasis (in the broader sense), the narrative introduces the reader to the scene of action represented quasi-visually, *enarges* (ἐναργής) (Webb 2009, 87–106). Sidon is the city where the story begins: the two main characters are native citizens of Sidon. Thus, the description is meant to present the place where the story is about to start, but this is not enough: in the next paragraphs, the narrator (who will not be part of the narrative, also being an extradiegetic narrator) arrives at the harbour and then visits the temple of the Phoenician goddess Astarte. Her name is given in its Phoenician form, but to any Greek-speaking person of that time it must have been clear that she is the equivalent of the Greek goddess Aphrodite. By narrowing the scene of events from the whole city to the temple of the local Aphrodite, the narrator steers his readers toward the topic of love. Among the votive offerings to the goddess (again, a religious dimension is added), the narrator sees a picture of Zeus abducting Europa. This section of the novel is very extensive and provides an incredible number of details about the subject represented in the painting, so we will quote it only partially:

The painting [ἡ γραφή] was of Europa: the sea depicted was the Phoenician Ocean; the land, Sidon. On the land, part was a meadow, and a troop of girls: in the sea, a bull was swimming, and on his back sat a beautiful maiden, borne by the bull towards Crete. The meadow was thick with all kinds of flowers, and among them was planted a thicket of trees and shrubs, the trees growing so close that their foliage touched […].
(Achilles Tatius, I, 1; 1917, 4–5)

These lines are followed by a meticulous description of the position of the trees, their leaves, the effects of the falling light, etc.:

The painter had put the girls at one end of the meadow where the land jutted out into the sea. Their look [τὸ σχῆμα ταῖς παρθένοις] was compounded of joy and fear: garlands were bound about their brows; their hair had been allowed to flow loose on their shoulders; their legs were bare, covered neither by their tunics above nor their sandals below, a girdle holding up their skirts as far as the knee; their faces were pale and their features distorted; their eyes were fixed wide open upon the sea […] they seemed to be anxious to run after the bull, but to be afraid of entering the water.
(Achilles Tatius, I, 1; 1917, 4–7)

The effort of the narrator is wholly invested into representing or rather translating the visual *effect* of the painting into a verbal structure. This goal is pursued not only through the endless enumeration of details, but also by imbuing each detail with conventional connotations. The landscape, for example, evokes connections to a local tradition – that of the above-mentioned city of Sidon in the Phoenician land, a territory generally identified as Europa's place of birth. Even the coins minted in Sidon represented the same figure: Europa and the bull (Achilles Tatius 1917, 9). Secondly, intertwined with this etiological myth is a myth of godly love and a sacred marriage of a god to a mortal girl. Thirdly, the convention of the *locus amoenus* is introduced through the pastoral setting of the abduction that connotes a whole set of allusions (bliss, love, beauty, sensuality, etc.). On the other hand, the human figures are loaded with eroticism (the bare legs, the loosely-flowing hair, the garlands on their heads – typical features of an erotically attractive female person), and moreover, they are charged with a complex and intense *affect* (the interplay of fear and joy, the distorted features, the desire mixed with fear, etc.).

Thus, the metaphorical potential of the visual material that is verbally translated through the ekphrasis revolves around a set of connotations. The ekphrasis does not directly refer to any particular element, but rather sets the overall atmosphere and thus provides a key, or even a whole series of keys, with respect to the possible paths that the reader's interpretation of the narrative could follow.

The point of intersection of all these chains of vaguely alluded connotative meanings is constituted by the figures of Zeus (in the guise of a bull) and Europa. The chastely-erotic charge of the story of the boy and the girl that is about to be told is concentrated precisely in these two figures:

Far out in the ocean was painted a bull breasting the waves, while a billow rose like a mountain where his leg was bent in swimming: the maiden sat on the middle of his back, not astride but sideways, with her feet held together on the right: with her left hand she clung to his horn, like a charioteer holding the reins, and the bull inclined a little in that direction, guided by the pressure of her hand. On the upper part of her body she wore a tunic down to her middle, and then a robe covered the lower part of her body: the tunic was white, the robe purple: and her figure could be traced under the clothes – the deep-set navel, the long slight curve of the belly, the narrow waist, broadening down to the loins, the breasts gently swelling from her bosom and confined, as well as her tunic, by a girdle: and the tunic was a kind of mirror of the shape of her body. Her hands were held widely apart, the one to the bull's horn, the other to his tail; and with both she

held above her head the ends of her veil which floated down about her shoulders, bellying out through its whole length and so giving the impression of a painted breeze. Thus she was seated on the bull like a vessel under way, using the veil as a sail; about the bull dolphins gambolled, Cupids sported; they actually seemed to move in the picture. Love himself led the bull – Love, in the guise of a tiny boy […].
(Achilles Tatius, I, 1; 1917, 6–9)

This extensive quotation shows how the semantic elements that will play a leading role in the narrative condense already in this picture. The idea that it is Love (Eros) that will guide the narrative thread is here visually transposed as the figure of the deity leading the way. But the complex description of Europa's clothing and the position of her body is just as relevant to the narrative. The dominant semantic cluster that receives its visual expression in Europa's intricate veiling is the idea of beauty. Especially, female beauty was traditionally associated with the charms of love. The eroticism of the alluring body visible through the transparent fabric and the dynamization of the figure are conveyed by the lightness of the veil. Thus, the reader/viewer perceives beauty as enveloped in the shimmering aura of the breeze, which serves to both accentuate and represent it as vibrant and alive. This atmosphere, rich with eroticism, affect, excitement, and allure, sets the stage for the unfolding narrative.

This ekphrasis also performs an additional function – it enables the transition from description to narration (*diegesis*) through the shared position of a fellow viewer. While gazing at the picture, the narrator gets to know Clitophon, the main character of the novel and central intradiegetic narrator, who also happens to be in the temple of Astarte at the same time, looking at the same picture:

I was admiring the whole of the picture, but – a lover myself – paid particular attention to that part of it where Love was leading the bull; and "Look," I said, "how that imp dominates over sky and land and sea!" As I was speaking, a young man standing by me broke in: "I may term myself a living example of it," he said; "I am one who has suffered many buffets from the hand of Love." "How is that?" I said. "What have your sufferings been, my friend? I can see by your looks that you are not far from being one of the god's initiates." "You are stirring a whole swarm of stories," said he […].
(Achilles Tatius, I, 2; 1917, 8–11)

At this point, the diegetic line is opened by means of the ekphrasis, and the love story is ready to begin. The position of narrator is taken by Clitophon, a functional counterpart of the *interpreter* of the picture in the Nymphs' grove from *Daphnis and Chloe*.[16]

FINAL REMARKS

As a verbal phenomenon, ekphrasis is a form of transmedial semiological structure. In Ancient fictional prose narratives, it has the function of complementing or even substituting the verbal structure with a visual one, understood through the rhetorical idea of *enargeia*. Ekphrasis allows for the narrative to unfold, which means that narrative is perceived as dependent on visuality. It also provides the narrative with additional levels of meaning, such as the mythological background, its affiliation to a certain genre, or the affective tuning of the reader's mind.

Thus, ekphrasis establishes a large-scale metaphor on the level of narrative discourse, enriching it with a series of connotations as a quasi-lyrical message. This would mean that ekphrasis as a metaphor cannot be read as either a logical or cognitive instrument, or as a verbal ornament. It is a complex poetic structure consisting of connotative chains that steer the interpretation in various semantic directions. In this respect, Olga Freidenberg's definition of metaphor, by superimposing the level of the conceptual and the level of the pictorial in discursive structure, provides an apt tool for examining ekphrasis in Ancient fictional narrative prose. The study of a literary genre or more generally, a literary phenomenon, as a historically conditioned phenomenon allows for exploring both its external and its internal aspects. Interpreted in that manner, the ekphrases in the two Greek novels, *Daphnis and Chloe* and *Leucippe and Clitophon*, are shown to be descriptive elements that enable and condition both the narrative plot and the reader's interpretation.

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16 There are two other examples of ekphrasis in the course of the novel – these are the paintings of Andromeda and Prometheus, and the myth of the Thracian king Tereus – some of whose functions in the narrative are the same as those of the opening ekphrasis, yet they pose a series of other questions that should be the object of further study. For an analysis of these two other ekphrases, see Bartsch (1989, 55–76).

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