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A NOVELISTIC CONVENTION REVERSED:  
TYCHE VS. EROS IN ACHILLES TATIUS

It is difficult to wring a satisfying interpretation from Achilles Tatius' novel *Leucippe and Clitophon*. As B. P. Reardon writes, "no unchallenged interpretation [of this novel] exists."<sup>1</sup> Herewith, I propose another foray into the depths of Achilles' cunning and versatile world with the aim of better understanding the novel's beginning, middle, and end by reconsidering the role of Tyche in the novel.

In particular, both the beginning and the end of the novel have vexed scholars, the beginning because it creates a narrative frame to which the narrative never returns, and the ending because it does not align with the beginning, either in mood (tragic/hopeful) or in location (Sidon/Tyre and Byzantium). Scholars have advanced various readings of the beginning:<sup>2</sup> for instance, the ekphrastic painting of Europa (or Selene) is a metaphor for the narrative of Leucippe;<sup>3</sup> the setting of the conversation about love between the anonymous narrator and the stranger in a grove of plane trees evokes a Platonic dialogue;<sup>4</sup> and the lament of Clitophon the stranger conforms to a *topos* in ancient literature in which a stranger always laments his lot in life to new acquaintances.<sup>5</sup> The ending has proved more troublesome, but interpretations nevertheless have been proposed: Platonic dialogues, after which the novel is modeled, often do not return to their opening frames (e.g., the *Symposium* but not the *Phaedrus*);<sup>6</sup> the novel subverts the convention of the happy ending, offering a non-happy non-ending;<sup>7</sup> Achilles is forced to comply with the convention of the happy ending,<sup>8</sup> though he does so perfunctorily;<sup>9</sup> the inconclusive ending demonstrates the limits of erotic instruction<sup>10</sup> or reflects its uncertain beginning;<sup>11</sup> or, the novel is not unfinished but unique.<sup>12</sup> I have deliberately arranged these last interpretations in order of increasing randomness to call attention to the incongruity of interpretations for the beginning and the end of the novel. The problem is that the novel has a deliberate and deliberately crafted beginning and a loose ending, where some of the story's threads are gathered but not bound, and this leaves a distinct impression that something is missing, that the ending is not as happy as might have been expected, given that the hero and heroine are at last reunited.<sup>13</sup> None of these above interpretations have convincingly connected the ending of the novel to the beginning. Some adjustment always must be made; either the novel's tight beginning must be weakened to match up to its loose end, or the novel's loose end must be projected back upon the beginning. There is need of an interpretation that needs no finessing.

My thanks to the editor and the anonymous referees. For Bryan Reardon, beloved mentor and friend.

1. Reardon 1994, 80.

2. Repath (2005, 250–58) catalogues and demolishes previously proposed interpretations.

3. Bartsch 1991, 48–55; Morales 2004, 37–48.

4. Morales 2004, 50–60; Laplace 2007, 77–87, 747–66; Goldhill 1995, 102–3; Ní Mheallaigh 2007.

5. Most 1989, esp. 127–33.

6. Ní Mheallaigh 2007.

7. Repath 2005; this summation does not do justice to his brilliant and complex analysis.

8. Most 1989, 118.

9. Repath 2005, 265.

10. Morales 2004, 151.

11. Kasprzyk 2004.

12. Rabau 1997.

13. Perhaps Stephen Nimis would argue that the novelist ran out of steam at the end; he suggests (1998, 101, 118–19) that we need not look for unity in Achilles' novel.

The “solution,” if you will, proposed here to this novel’s interpretation turns on Achilles’ skill as a sophistic writer, one who is no slave to convention but a master of his medium, as the scholars cited above testify. Writing in the mid-second century,<sup>14</sup> well after novelistic conventions had been established, Achilles is in a position either to follow or, as often, play with the conventions of the genre. For instance, the novel’s “happy ending” becomes even more controversial when one considers that, in the “actual” timeline of the story, the tragedy-themed beginning of the novel is actually its ending. The novelistic convention upon which I would like to focus for the rest of this article is that of Eros as the instigator of the story. This god explicitly initiates the loves of Chariton’s characters (*Callirhoe* 1.1.4), Xenophon of Ephesus’ characters (*Ephesiaca* 1.2.1), and Longus’ characters (*Daphnis et Chloe* 1.11.1), and insofar as Heliodorus admits divine intervention, his characters’ love at first sight sets their adventures in motion (*Aethiopica* 3.5.4).<sup>15</sup> Tyche generally introduces unexpected occurrences that delay the lovers’ satisfaction, both directly in Chariton’s narrative<sup>16</sup> and as interpreted in the characters’ words<sup>17</sup> and in Xenophon’s story.<sup>18</sup> Thus the pattern in Chariton’s and Xenophon’s novels is that Eros makes the characters fall in love and then Tyche prevents them from enjoying themselves, until the very end. Achilles alters this pattern, introducing a Tyche who not only sets things in motion, but also provides opportunities for enjoyment. When Clitophon begins his narrative proper at 1.3, he charges Tyche with bringing the first change to his life: ἤρχετο τοῦ δράματος ἡ Τύχη (“Tyche began her drama,” 1.3.3).<sup>19</sup> This very first mention of divine guidance in his life is programmatic,<sup>20</sup> and this metaphor is renewed later (6.3.1).<sup>21</sup> It should also be noted that the first-person narration necessarily constrains the representation of divine activity in this novel, restricting it to either Clitophon’s<sup>22</sup> or other characters’<sup>23</sup> perceptions and comments.

What is the life-changing event that Tyche causes? The arrival of Clitophon’s cousin Leucippe? Or something else? We can be guided in examining this by two principles: how other “tychic” events are presented in the novel and what sort of events Tyche tends to create. To consider the first, most of the major catastrophes in this novel occur in a pattern, preceded by a foreshadowing event or description. For instance, the kidnapping (2.18) of Calligone, Clitophon’s half-sister and first fiancée, is augured by an omen (2.12); Leucippe’s disembowelment (3.15) is foreshadowed by both her mother’s dream (2.23.5) and by descriptions of paintings of Prometheus and Andromeda (3.6–8); and

14. Hunt 1910, 143; Vogliano 1938, 125; Parsons 1989, 62; Plepelits 2003, 388–90; and Stephens and Winkler 1995, 480.

15. As I have shown elsewhere (2007, 286–88), almost all instances of divine intervention in this novel occur in indirect speech.

16. 2.8.3, 3.3.8, 4.4.2, 4.5.3, 6.8.1, 8.1.2.

17. 1.10.2, 1.13.4, 1.14.7, 1.14.9, 2.8.6, 4.1.12, 4.7.3, 5.1.4, 5.5.2, 5.6.8, 8.3.5.

18. I have argued (Chew 1998) that a shift in focalization to the characters’ perspective removes Tyche from mention in the narrative but not the sort of events she usually causes.

19. All translations are mine.

20. An earlier reference to love (1.2.1), which is misleadingly translated by Winkler (2008), has Clitophon mention all that he has suffered ἐξ ἔρωτος, which denotes cause but not agency; “out of love” or “because of love,” but not “at the hands of love,” which would require ὑπό. See LSJ, s.v. “ἐκ” A. III. 5 and 6.

21. ἐμοὶ δὲ ἡ συνήθης Τύχη πάλιν ἐπιτίθεται καὶ συντίθεται κατ’ ἐμοῦ δράμα καινόν (“My customary Ill-Fortune attacks me again and contrives a new drama against me,” 6.3.1). Laplace (2007, 86 n. 67) remarks that these references to Tyche highlight the incongruity of the novel’s beginning and end, but I argue that these passages instead explain the connection between the beginning and end.

22. E.g., 4.9.5, 5.2.3, 5.7.9, and 7.5.2.

23. E.g., 1.9.2, 1.13.4, 3.22.3, 5.10.4, 5.17.3, and 7.2.3.

her kidnapping and beheading (5.7) are foretold by the picture of Philomela's myth (5.5). Immediately after the mention of Tyche above, Clitophon also has a premonitory dream (1.3.4) in which his and his sister's bodies have grown together below the waist and a hideous woman severs them with a sickle. The woman symbolizes Tyche, and her action clearly has a sexual implication: Clitophon will not be having sex with Calligone; they will be separated. But how?

To consider the second principle above, the most common event that Tyche brings about in all the novels is war.<sup>24</sup> These wars usually arise well into the story and result in the separation of the lovers.<sup>25</sup> In Achilles' novel there are two wars, the second of which is of the type described above—the battle against the *Boukoloi* (3.13–4.18), which puts Leucippe and Clitophon at the mercy of a lustful general and a couple of lusty soldiers. The beginning of *Leucippe and Clitophon*, however, also features a war that does not fit the above stereotype. This war, between Byzantium and Thrace, is divisive, but not of the lovers, for they have not yet met. It divides Leucippe's family and forces her father, a general, to send her and her mother to the safety of his brother, Clitophon's father (1.3.6):

ἤκουσι πρὸς σὲ θυγάτηρ ἐμὴ Λευκίππη καὶ Πάνθεια γυνή· πόλεμος γὰρ περιελαύνει  
Βυζαντίους Θρακικούς. σῶζε δέ μοι τὰ φίλτατα τοῦ γένους μέχρι τῆς τοῦ πολέμου τύχης.

My daughter Leucippe and my wife Pantheia are coming to you, for Thrace is routing Byzantium in war. Protect the dearest of my family for me until the fortunes of war are decided.

Note the oblique reference to *tychê* in the message. The arrival of Leucippe in turn breaks up Clitophon's emotional ties to Calligone, as he falls instead for his cousin and fulfills his prophetic dream. This changes the usual convention in which the lovers meet and fall in love before uncertainty enters their world.

So it is war initiated by Tyche that sets events in motion in Clitophon's life. But that is not all. War activates a further force of disruption: Callisthenes, the dissolute youth who yearns for Leucippe and, after being rejected by her father (2.13), resorts to brigandage to take her (2.18). If Callisthenes had attempted his kidnapping in Byzantium, he might have been successful, but, as it is, he moves the theater of his attack to Tyre, where there is another beautiful maiden, Calligone. He mistakes her for Leucippe, and this kidnapping has an important result: it clears the way for Clitophon and Leucippe to be together by removing the obstacle of Clitophon's fiancée. Clitophon's dream also foreshadows this kidnapping, which literally separates Clitophon from Calligone.

That Tyche assumes the governing role, usually played in other novels by Eros, in Clitophon's life can be seen at three significant places in the novel. These passages have no parallel in the other novels, the reason for which, I would argue, is due precisely to Tyche's unique position in this novel. Their existence is the author's acknowledgment of manipulating convention. When Clitophon complains of his lovesickness to Clinias (1.9.1–2), the latter replies that Tyche has given Clitophon a lover and he should take

24. Chariton *Callirhoe* 6.8–8.1; Xenophon *Ephesiaca* 5.3–4; Longus *Daphnis et Chloe* 2.19–29; Heliod. *Aeth.* 8.16–9.23.

25. The king seizes Callirhoe in the confusion; the war in Xenophon's novel puts Anthia in Polyidus' hands; and in Longus' novel the Methymneans capture Chloe.

advantage of that,<sup>26</sup> which Clitophon soon does (1.16–19).<sup>27</sup> This is certainly the first time in the extant novels that Tyche is credited as a matchmaker of the *Liebespaar*! Shockingly, Clitophon employs a similar argument when he tries to seduce Leucippe a second time, in the midst of their travails, suggesting that they make use of the brief respite given them by Tyche (4.1.2–3). This seduction attempt does not work; prophetic dreams convince each of the lovers that their sexual union must await marriage. Here Achilles still pays lip service to the convention that the lovers must be married before they have sex.<sup>28</sup> Melite echoes Clitophon's use of Tyche to argue that her falling in love with Clitophon and his consequent reunion with Leucippe are Τύχης δωρεαί ("gifts of Tyche," 5.26.9), and thus he owes her sexual favors. Clitophon accommodates Melite this time, for there is nothing in the rules that explicitly forbids illicit encounters for the hero.<sup>29</sup> Tyche brings enjoyment, if not illicit at least not proper, though the lovers technically observe conventional moral proprieties.<sup>30</sup> This is not to say that the novel disregards Eros. There is plenty of eroticism here, more than in any other novel except perhaps Longus's. My point is that Eros plays second fiddle to Tyche, the results of which are not obvious except at the novel's beginning and end.

The ending of the novel is emotionally disappointing, given Achilles' previous attention to affect and psychology.<sup>31</sup> But this ending is disappointing only if one expects to get the typical "happily ever after" conclusion found at the end of love stories. We must remind ourselves that this is an unusual love story, where Tyche has been given the reins. Instead of concluding with passionate unions,<sup>32</sup> we read stories of passions. A common meaning of *tychê* in the novels is "something that happens to a person, a person's fate."<sup>33</sup> The last chapters in the novel deal with the *tychai* of both Leucippe (8.16) and Calligone (8.17–18). These accounts are referred to as *mythoi* ("stories," 8.15.4, 8.17.1), perhaps in keeping with the metaphor of Tyche choreographing drama (1.3.3, 6.3.1). The final chapter of the novel (8.19) reveals the *tychê* of Leucippe and Clitophon. This chapter is bereft of sophistic ornament, and, as we know from Clinias that Eros is a sophist (1.10.1), perhaps this underscores the lack of Eros as well. As befits the changeable character of Tyche, the novel ends in motion toward, εἰς τὸ Βυζάντιον ("to Byzantium," 3.19.3), with no fixity or finality given to the relationship or the future. Life is always conditional: with Tyche in charge, love is future less vivid. The wish for ἀγαθαῖς . . . τύχαις for both his sister's and his own marriages (3.19.3), then, can seem ironic, coming from Clitophon. That this sentence is the penultimate one of the novel

26. αὐτὴν σοι δέδωκε τὴν ἐρωμένην ἢ Τύχῃ καὶ φέρουσα ἐνδὸν ἵδρυσεν ("Chance has given you this lover, carried her in your house, and set her up," 1.9.2).

27. The beginning of this passage contains an oblique reference to Tyche: τύχῃ τινί.

28. For the parody of conventional chastity in Achilles Tatius, see Chew 2000.

29. Clitophon later states as much to Leucippe's father, arguing that εἴ τις ἄρα ἔστιν ἀνδρὸς παρθενία, ταύτην καὶ γὰρ μέχρι τοῦ παρόντος πρὸς Λευκίππην ἔχω ("if there really is such a thing as male virginity, that is how I am with regard to Leucippe up till now," 8.5.7).

30. This same rhetoric is employed again at 6.13.2, but here it is a conventional use of Tyche, introducing an erotic rival to threaten the lovers' relationship.

31. See, e.g., Goldhill 1995, 66–111; Lateiner 1998, 174–76 and 183–88; Kytzler 2003, 74–75, 78; and Morales 2004, 106–17.

32. Another altered convention is the pairing up of all eligible singles by the end of the story, especially the hero's best friend, e.g., Chariton *Callirhoe* 8.8.12, Xenophon *Ephesiaca* 5.15.4, and Heliod. *Aeth.* 6.8.1–2. Clinias, by comparison, is left dangling.

33. See LSJ, s.v. "τύχη" A. III. 3. From Chariton, e.g., 1.3.5, 1.14.6, 2.5.6; from Xenophon, e.g., 1.16.3, 3.2.15, 4.4.1; from Achilles Tatius, e.g., 2.24.4, 3.6.3, 6.9.3; and from Heliodorus, e.g., 1.20.1, 2.23.4, 4.9.1.

is a deliberate acknowledgment that the convention has been bent, and, perhaps, that Leucippe and Clitophon's *tychê* might be anything but *agathê*.

This ending contrasts with the prologue, which is palpably erotic. In the other novels, Eros wins out over Tyche because he has the first bid on the lives of the lovers. Here, it is Tyche's hand that leaves a lasting mark on their lives. Keeping in mind this narrative departure from novelistic convention, we can see that the prologue and the first narrative embrace the original convention, being all about love and the things that love makes you do. Thus the first narrator makes the reader anticipate a traditional love story, and the second narrator, Clitophon, subverts these expectations, subordinating Eros to Tyche. Clitophon has a look of suffering about him, the first narrator notices,<sup>34</sup> and that is because Tyche's drama is still going on. If we consider the "actual" timeline of the story to commence with Clitophon's narrative and then finish with the prologue, we see how Tyche gradually unravels Clitophon's life until he has lost his country, his home, and perhaps his love.

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34. καὶ τί πέπονθας, εἶπον, ὦ ἀγαθέ; καὶ γὰρ ὁρῶ σου τὴν ὄψιν οὐ μακρὰν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ τελετῆς ("and what have you suffered, my good man?" I said. 'For I see from your expression that you are not far from initiation into the god's rites,'" 1.2.2).

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