

Art of Gold: Precious Metals and Chariton's Callirhoe
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Throughout Chariton's *Callirhoe*, the vocabulary and imagery of sculpture and metals are consistently hammered out.² From the first paragraph, Chariton introduces his use of statue imagery as a rhetorical device by referring to both Callirhoe and Chaereas in sculptural terms.³ This is typical of Chariton's use of such imagery for characterisation throughout the novel, often relying on comparisons between Callirhoe, especially, and famous statues of the gods to express her beauty and add intertextual colour to the narrative.⁴ While some have claimed that Chariton's characters appear two-dimensional, we shall operate from the opposing standpoint that, on the contrary, Chariton employs allusions and associations which subtly contribute to his characterisation, following recent trends by scholars such as Richard Hunter. In this paper, I hope to demonstrate the importance of the golden statue of Callirhoe constructed by Dionysius, her royal Miletian lover; what significance this piece of art has for gold and silver in the context of the rest of the novel; and how the depiction of the precious metals contributes to characterisation.

Of the artworks represented in the novel, Dionysius' golden statue of Callirhoe may have the greatest resonance for the novel as a whole, perhaps more so than has been considered. Once Callirhoe is captured by pirates and sold to Dionysius, Dionysius falls

¹ This paper emerged from a graduate seminar at UC Santa Barbara in spring 2009 with Professor Helen Morales on "Chariton and the Ancient Novel"; I thank her for helpful comments on an earlier draft. My thanks also to those involved in discussion at both the University of Canterbury graduate seminars and ASCS 31 in Perth, and the anonymous referee for the proceedings.

² The text employed throughout is that of Goold, in his Loeb edition of 1995.

³ Callirhoe is called the "ornament/cult statue" (ἄγαλμα) of all Sicily (1.1.1), while Chaereas is compared to several heroes "as sculptors and painters depict them" (πλάσται τε καὶ γραφεῖς ἀποδεικνύουσι, 1.1.3).

⁴ R. Hunter, "History and Historicity in the Romance of Chariton," *ANRW* 34.2 (1993), 1055-1086.

in love and erects a golden statue of her in the shrine to Aphrodite on his estate.⁵ Golden statues were clearly objects of great power for the Greeks and Romans, and normally reserved for gods and cult statues. During the dramatic period of this "historical novel" (late 5th century BCE) there were only isolated examples of gold statues of notable (human) individuals, normally erected as rewards for excellence.⁶ In Hellenistic Greek literature they are representative of wealth and accomplishment,⁷ but also great love; for example, in Theocritus, Bucaeus says that if he had all Croesus' money, he would erect gold statues of himself and his lover.⁸ Whitehorne notes that the Romans of Chariton's (probable) own day (1st century BCE/1st century CE) saw such statues as epitomising decadence.⁹ Steiner notes that the very act of raising a statue to a mortal connoted "heroization and/or apotheosis", while too close an association between the mortal and a legendary, mythical or divine prototype "risks violating the unbreachable boundary between gods, heroes and men."¹⁰ This boundary certainly appears to be breached with Callirhoe's statue, since it is placed in Aphrodite's shrine and goes a step further by being made of gold. It seems clear that Chariton's purpose in such a depiction is both to emphasise Dionysius' wealth and Callirhoe's divine beauty, which had been compared to Aphrodite's at the beginning of the novel and the girl herself called an ἄγαλμα, "ornament/cult statue".¹¹ The golden εἰκών erected by Dionysius as an offering to Aphrodite is equivalent to a cult statue of the divine and is thus placed in an appropriately

⁵ 3.6.3. All references are to Chariton's *Callirhoe*, unless otherwise stated.

⁶ J. E.G. Whitehorne, "Golden Statues in Greek and Latin Literature", *G&R* 22.2 (1975), 111.

⁷ *Ibid.* 111-119.

⁸ Theoc. *Id.* 10.32-35.

⁹ Whitehorne, 111-119.

¹⁰ D. Steiner, *Images in Mind: Statues in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature and Thought* (Princeton: PUP, 2001), 265-266.

¹¹ 1.1.1-1.1.2. Chaereas emphasises Callirhoe's "divinity" when he refers to his "murder" of Callirhoe as being worse than temple-robbing (1.5.5: χείρονα δέδρακα ἱεροσύλων καὶ πατροκτόνων).

sacred place.¹² The material from which this statue is made, however, perhaps deserves some more attention in the context of the novel. Gold, for the Greeks, was “the finest of all metals, associated with the gods, symbolic of moral excellence and of true and just sovereignty”.¹³ Since Callirhoe is compared to a statue throughout the novel, when we see a depiction of her as a gold statue, this suggests that gold may have some special association with the girl within the novel.

Indeed, throughout the narrative we find gold closely associated with Callirhoe;¹⁴ of the thirty occasions¹⁵ on which gold is mentioned in Chariton, all, I believe, can be shown to be directly related to Callirhoe, whether by physical proximity or proximity of content; that is, when the narrative is concerned with her. Let us examine these passages. After Chaereas kicks his new wife Callirhoe into unconsciousness, she is mistakenly thought to be dead and a funeral is held for her. At this funeral, Callirhoe lies on a golden bier (ἐπὶ χρυσηλάτου κλίνης).¹⁶ Gold and silver are also present at this funeral as the dowry,¹⁷ and it is this gold which the pirate Theron ogles.¹⁸ Callirhoe awakes in the tomb and

¹² F. Zeitlin, “Living Portraits and Sculptured Bodies in Chariton’s Theater of Romance”, in *The Ancient Novel and Beyond*, eds. S. Panayotakis, M. Zimmerman, W. Keulen (Leiden: 2003), 77. Phryne, the famous courtesan, was the subject of a gold εἰκόνα sculpted by Praxiteles and consecrated at Delphi (Ath. 13.591b), and may well have been in the minds of Chariton’s readers: Phryne, after all, had also been compared to Aphrodite in art, for she was the model for Apelles’ *Aphrodite Anadyomene* and Praxiteles’ *Aphrodite of Cnidus* (Ath. 13.590f-591a).

¹³ Steiner, 128.

¹⁴ As observed by Herrenschildt: “Chariclée et Callirhoe...souvent associées à l’or et à sa lumière...” (C. Herrenschildt, “Callirhoé et Chariclée héroïnes monétaires? Une proposition sur Chéréas et Callirhoé de Chariton et les Éthiopiens d’Héliodore”, in M. Guglielmo, E. Bona (eds) *Forme di Comunicazione nel Mondo antico e metamorfosi del mito: dal teatro al romanzo*, (Edizioni dell’Orso, 2003) 228). However, her article is limited to the “monetary metaphor” and does not trace the association with gold to the extent that we do so here.

¹⁵ I do not retain the Florentine manuscript reading of χρυσός at 4.4.4 and adopt Jackson’s suggestion of omitting that word.

¹⁶ 1.6.2.

¹⁷ 1.6.4.

¹⁸ 1.7.1. Theron soon tells his companions that they had all seen this gold and silver, and that it should belong to the living (1.7.6).

clinks the gold and silver,¹⁹ which Theron and his merry band then mention in discussions of the price of Callirhoe's beauty in relation to the precious metals,²⁰ and the danger of her talking, something which the metals cannot do.²¹ Then something particularly interesting: when Callirhoe is kidnapped by the tomb-robbing pirates and sold, Leonas (the steward of Dionysius, king of Miletus) buys her with silver money (ἀργύριον) from Theron.²² While ἀργύριον can just mean 'money',²³ my argument is that Chariton's choice of word here (as opposed to χρυσίον later at 4.5.2, which can also mean 'money') is significant.²⁴ Now, up to this point Callirhoe, despite the fact that she is thought to be dead, has still technically remained the free-born wife of Chaereas. Once she is sold to Leonas, however, she essentially becomes a slave (at least until marrying Dionysius).²⁵ This is significant in relation to the metals referred to in the narrative. Back

¹⁹ 1.8.2. It is evident, then, that the gold has been buried with Callirhoe. Cicero mentions a law from the Twelve Tables (*Legg.* 2.60) whereby gold cannot be part of the funeral accoutrements. Chariton may be sticking to his historical setting here, and thus this evidence has no bearing; alternatively, the author may be showing how exceptional Chaereas' devotion is (or indeed Callirhoe's beauty) that he would break the law to give her the finest funeral possible.

²⁰ 1.9.6

²¹ 1.10.6; Theron also frets that he has left behind the gold and silver to be taken by other pirates (1.12.2). That Theron here says that gold has no voice (ὁ μὲν γὰρ χρυσὸς οὐκ ἔχει φωνήν), and Callirhoe is associated with gold throughout the novel, may have ramifications for the 'female voice' in this novel.

²² 1.13.7. This term is used again (1.14.4) when Leonas chooses to entrust Theron with the ἀργύριον before registering Callirhoe as a slave, and when Leonas hands over a talent's worth of silver for her (1.14.5). Earlier (1.12.9), Theron had convinced Leonas of the benefits of having a "slave bought with silver" (ἀργυρώνητον). Callirhoe is labelled ἀργυρώνητος on several occasions: at 1.14.9, by Callirhoe herself; at 2.3.7, when Dionysius reprimands Leonas for designating her so; at 3.1.7, by Callirhoe again, as told by Plangon; at 3.2.7, by Dionysius, debating whether he should marry her; and finally, appropriately, by Chaereas in recounting the tale at 8.7.10. For this word denoting slaves, cf. Eur. *Alc.* 676; Isoc. 14.18. For Callirhoe's slave status, see n.25 below.

²³ LSJ, s.v.2.

²⁴ That the ancients did at some point make a distinction between ἀργύριον and χρυσίον as "money" is shown by Aristophanes in the *Knights*, when he says "and not by bribes of ἀργύριον or of χρυσίον or sending friends, will you persuade me..." (Ar. *Eq.* 472-3).

²⁵ Callirhoe was not technically a slave: Theron's manipulation of Leonas meant that she was never formally registered as such (1.14.3-5; see F. Pringsheim, *The Greek Law of Sale* (Weimar: 1950), 239-242). Chaereas even explicitly says that she "did not become a slave" (8.7.10; οὐκ ἔδούλευσεν). This serves to further characterise Theron as being beyond the law (Herrenschmidt, *op. cit.*, p223). Nevertheless, the fact is that she is sold as property at this point in the narrative, no matter what the actual legal status of the transaction. The attendant at the shrine of Aphrodite, at least, is under the impression that Callirhoe had been a slave (3.6.4).

at the beginning of the novel, just before Chaereas and Callirhoe meet, Chaereas had the flush of exercise on his face, ὡσπερ ἀργύρῳ χρυσός “like gold on silver”.²⁶ Thus Chaereas is equated with silver in that passage. There is also an allusion here to the Homeric Odysseus, as twice in the *Odyssey* Athena’s efforts to enhance Odysseus’ attractiveness are compared to a master craftsman overlaying gold on silver. Both instances occur in contexts in which Odysseus is required to attract a woman, and succeeds: in the first instance, Odysseus appears before the maiden Nausikaa, and after Athena’s “makeover” Nausikaa is persuaded to take him in;²⁷ on the second occasion, Odysseus has returned to Ithaka, killed the suitors, and is hoping to be recognised by his wife Penelope.²⁸ Such an epic allusion in Chariton adds to the attractiveness of Chaereas and increases his heroic quality, having already been compared to Achilles, Nireus, Hippolytus and Alcibiades in appearance.²⁹ This also helps us understand his appeal to Callirhoe when the two meet, moments later. From that point until Callirhoe is sold, silver is usually referred to alongside gold.³⁰ But once Callirhoe is bought (with “silver”, ἀργύριον), silver is not heard of in relation to gold until after Chaereas has reappeared to Callirhoe at the trial of the Great King in the novel’s sixth book. Therefore, silver can perhaps be loosely read as representing “Chaereas”, while Callirhoe, compared with gold by means of her statue and continual association with that precious metal, represents gold.³¹ Furthermore, Theron is compared to a money-changer, or “assayer of silver” (ἀργυρογνώμων) prior to the sale of Callirhoe, when weighing up fellow robbers to

²⁶ 1.1.5

²⁷ Hom. *Od.* 6.232-233: ὡς δ’ ὅτε τις χρυσὸν περιχέυεται ἀργύρῳ ἀνὴρ ἴδρις (“just as when a skilled man overlays silver with gold. . .”). Cf. *Alcm.* 1.50-6, in which a girl has hair like gold, and a silver face.

²⁸ Hom. *Od.* 23.159-160, with the same phrasing as at Hom. *Od.* 6.232-233 in n.27 above.

²⁹ 1.1.3

³⁰ Unless there is an object which is specifically golden, such as Callirhoe’s funeral bed (1.6.2).

³¹ Of the twenty references to silver in the novel, each can be linked to Chaereas. See further discussion below.

join his band; it is possible to read this as an indicator of the significance of the impending transaction, with Theron having control over the fates of the precious metals, Chaereas and Callirhoe.

To continue tracing gold and silver in the novel, after selling Callirhoe, the robbers, now on their own, come into some rough sailing and become short on provisions. Soon all die of thirst except Theron, and when Chaereas, passing by on his search for Callirhoe, sees the ship he sees nothing on board except “gold and corpses” (χρυσὸν καὶ νεκρούς).³² It seems that the gold (Callirhoe’s funeral gold) represents here the fated opportunity for Chaereas to find Callirhoe; if there had been no gold on that ship, then it is unlikely Chaereas and his crew would have pursued the matter to the extent that they discover Theron alive, as is suggested by their excitement at finding treasure (θησαυρόν) at sea.³³ So here it seems gold stands in to represent Callirhoe.³⁴ Soon after, Callirhoe’s mother laments that the robbers have left the clothing and gold but taken her daughter; her surprise that they did not take the gold along with her daughter again associates the two things.³⁵ After the mention of Callirhoe’s gold statue, which we have discussed above,³⁶ we hear that in Dionysius’ home Callirhoe sleeps on a golden bed (ἐπὶ χρυσηλάτου κλίνης).³⁷ Interestingly, this is the exact same phrase used earlier for Callirhoe’s funeral

³² 3.3.14. Just prior, Theron and the pirates had been dying of thirst in the midst of gold (3.3.11). This simply prepares us for the “gold and corpses” reference.

³³ 3.3.14

³⁴ Note that silver is not mentioned.

³⁵ 3.4.2

³⁶ 3.6.3. The shrine's attendant (ἡ ζώκορος) again refers to the εἰκόνα χρυσηῶν at 3.6.4, commenting that the girl was once a slave. This repetition only serves to emphasise the centrality of this metamorphosis to the story. Chaereas gives his own, misleading account of seeing Callirhoe's εἰκῶν at 8.8.1; see K. De Temmerman, "Chaereas Revisited: Rhetorical Control in Chariton's 'Ideal' Novel Callirhoe", *CQ* 59.1 (2009), 258ff.

³⁷ 3.7.5

bier at 1.6.2; it seems Chariton is here reflecting the Greek concept of marriage as a type of death, which indeed Callirhoe recalls in this passage, saying to (the absent) Chaereas: “we shall have each other in death” (ἀποθανόντες ἀλλήλους ἔξομεν).³⁸ A little later, in order to win Callirhoe’s favour, the governor of Caria, Mithridates, having witnessed her beauty, sends slaves with gifts and money to her.³⁹ The word used for money here, χρυσίον, or ‘gold coin’, differs from that used when Leonas bought Callirhoe, ἄργύριον, ‘silver coin’.⁴⁰ This may be a play on words, given Mithridates’ erotic intent, since apparently χρυσίον was sometimes used as a term of endearment.⁴¹ In any case, the mention of silver (as loosely representing Chaereas for Callirhoe) is avoided for now, just as Chaereas is separated from Callirhoe, and again Callirhoe is associated with gold. This association perhaps reaches its most significant when Callirhoe is compared, in the form of a Homeric quote, to both Artemis and “golden Aphrodite” (χρυσείη Ἀφροδίτη).⁴² This appears to allude most appropriately to her golden statue, which Dionysius had of course set up in the shrine of Aphrodite. Since Callirhoe is constantly compared to Aphrodite throughout the novel, and, as we have seen, associated with gold, this comparison to “Aphrodite the golden” seems highly apt.

³⁸ 3.7.6

³⁹ 4.5.2. This money (χρυσίον) is squandered by the slaves at 4.5.3, and found by the στρατηγός of Priene at 4.5.5. A little while later, Dionysius complains to Pharnaces about Mithridates’ sending of this χρυσίον to his wife (4.6.1).

⁴⁰ For the difference between the two terms for ‘money’, see n.24 above. This distinction takes on further significance if we accept that in Chariton’s (supposed) own time, gold coin was becoming the preferred currency in the Roman East, and that this may be reflected in Chariton’s focus on gold (Herrenschmidt, *op. cit.*, 218).

⁴¹ As in *Ar., Lys.* 930, Kinesias to Myrrhine: δεῦρό νυν, ὦ χρυσίον. Dickey notes that such diminutives are “generally used in attempts to cajole the addressee...and appear to function as terms of endearment” (E. Dickey, *Greek Forms of Address* (Oxford: OUP, 1996), 51).

⁴² 4.7.5. I follow Goold’s choice of Reiske’s emendation here: χρυσείη rather than the manuscript (Codex Florentinus) reading of χρυσῆ.

It is perhaps significant that the next time we see silver in the text is once Chaereas has shown himself to Callirhoe at the Great King's trial. After this incident, the King, having also fallen in love with Callirhoe, is asked by his eunuch why he is sad when he has all the gold, silver, clothes, horses and women he could possibly want.⁴³ If we follow our present line of argument, then there is perhaps a hint of irony here because he does not possess 'golden' Callirhoe, nor control over Chaereas, who has appeared at the trial as if from nowhere. Soon after, when trying to impress Callirhoe with his manly hunting gear, the King has his horse fitted all in gold⁴⁴ and carries a golden dagger.⁴⁵ Chariton also says that, in war, it is customary for the king to bring along his wives, eunuchs, gold, silver and so forth.⁴⁶ The king issues commands for that to be done and then, casually in the same breath, asks for Callirhoe to be brought too.⁴⁷ It is surely significant that in such a wealthy setting as Babylon, there are very few references to gold, and all have some relation to Callirhoe. We next hear of gold in the eighth and final book, once Chaereas and Callirhoe have been reunited and are returning home to Syracuse. Their bed chamber on the ship contains a golden bed (κλίνη χρυσήλατος); again, the same combination of words which was used to refer to both Callirhoe's funeral bed and her marriage bed with Dionysius. It seems that now, at the end of the tale, Callirhoe is finally allowed to sleep on the golden bed she desires.⁴⁸ She is surrounded by Tyrian purple and Babylonian gold

⁴³ 6.3.4

⁴⁴ 6.4.2. All the horse's equipment (χαλινός, φάλαρα, προμετωπίδια, προστερνίδια) is said to be of gold; "gold" is mentioned twice: χρύσειον (referring to χαλινόν) and χρύσεια (referring to φάλαρα, προμετωπίδια, and προστερνίδια). Cf. D. Chrys. 2.51: "Ὀμηρος, καὶ ταῦτα εἰς πόλεμον, ψελίων τε καὶ στρεπτῶν, ἔτι δὲ χρυσῶν φαλάρων καὶ χαλινῶν, ὅποια τοὺς Πέρσας φασὶν ἐπιτηδεύειν· οὐ γὰρ ἔχουσιν ἐπιτιμητὴν Ὀμηρον τῶν πολεμικῶν."

⁴⁵ 6.4.2 (χρύσειον ἀκινάκην).

⁴⁶ 6.9.6. For this practice, see Xen. *Cyr.* 4.2.2.

⁴⁷ 6.9.7

⁴⁸ 8.1.14 (with the same combination occurring again at 8.6.7); funeral bed 1.6.2; marriage bed with Dionysius 3.7.5.

thread,⁴⁹ a lavish display of wealth and status but also seeming to allude to the fact that Tyre and Babylon were key settings in the recent past of the novel. Then, once the couple are revealed to the Sicilians, the people are overjoyed: “never did anyone who had found a treasure of gold shout so loudly” (οὐτε θησαυρὸν εὐρών τις χρυσίου τοσοῦτον ἐξεβόησεν).⁵⁰ Thus Callirhoe is again associated with gold by being explicitly equated with that treasure of gold.⁵¹ The final reference to gold in the novel is when Chaereas unloads the spoils of both gold and silver for Syracuse.⁵² If Chaereas represents silver, as we have suggested, and Callirhoe gold, then this final scene would be quite appropriate, since both Chaereas and Callirhoe, as well as the gold and silver, are being unloaded at Syracuse, reunited after their long separation. While this identification of silver as representing Chaereas is not necessarily fully realised, it may simply be a by-product of Callirhoe’s identification with gold throughout the novel, as we have seen. While many of the references to gold are perhaps insufficient *per se* to prove a direct connection to Callirhoe, such “general details” appear to take on greater meaning when viewed in light of all the other references to gold in the work. Taken together, it seems most logical to conclude that there are rather too many associations to be coincidence. I suggest that Chariton, whether consciously or unconsciously, associated Callirhoe with gold throughout his novel.

It is only left for us to conclude. The powerful gold of Callirhoe’s statue in Aphrodite’s shrine appears to have greater bearing on the text than has perhaps been considered, as

⁴⁹ 8.4.7

⁵⁰ 8.6.8

⁵¹ That the gold is labelled χρυσίον appears to emphasise the failure of Mithridates to purchase Callirhoe's favour (see n.39 above) and the ultimate success of Callirhoe in returning home safely.

⁵² 8.6.12. I accept the Codex Thebanus' reading of ἄργυρόν here over ἀργύριον in the Codex Florentinus.

we have seen by tracing references to gold and silver throughout the novel. Callirhoe is associated with almost every reference to gold in the work, which contributes to her characterisation by serving to enhance her moral excellence, power and divinity. A by-product of this may see Chaereas as being silver to Callirhoe's gold, which would only serve to emphasise further Callirhoe's pre-eminence in the novel. I hope that this close association of precious metals and characters can contribute to our understanding of Chariton's subtle means of characterisation, given the noble status of these precious metals among the Greeks. This focus on gold may also be a reflection of the economic situation in the Roman East of Chariton's (supposed) own day, where gold coin was becoming the preferred form of currency.⁵³ Perhaps another, more meta-poetic, intention behind the association between gold and Chariton's leading lady is that the author hoped that his written work would endure with the immortal, constant quality of gold,⁵⁴ but this of course cannot be proved. Nevertheless, with his use of precious metals, Chariton carved out his own pioneering niche in the world of the romance novel, and by doing so he has erected a monument more lasting than gold.

⁵³ Herrenschmidt, *op. cit.*, 218.

⁵⁴ Plin. *NH.* 33.19