Philostratus' *Imagines* 2.18: Words and Images

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A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT has been written about ecphrasis during the time of the Second Sophistic,[1] a period which, by placing a high premium on public displays and spectacles in general,[2] stimulated the development of literary descriptions into rhetorical devices included in the technical handbooks (*progymnasmata*) of the sophists.[3] A marked theoretical interest in defining ecphrasis is indeed easily attested in the Imperial period: Theon in the first century, Hermogenes of Tarsus in the second, Aphthonius and Nicolaus in the fourth and fifth all with minor variations emphasized the *enargeia*,

[1] S. Bartsch, *Decoding the Ancient Novel: The Reader and the Role of Description in Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius* (Princeton 1989), is a classic discussion of ecphrasis in the novels. For ecphrasis in general the fundamental work remains P. Friedlander, *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentarius* (Berlin 1912). For recent scholarly approaches, see among others J. Elsner (ed.), "The Verbal and the Visual: Cultures of Ekphrasis in Antiquity," Special issue, *Ramus* 31 (2002), and S. Bartsch, J. Elsner (eds.), "Ekphrasis," Special issue, *CP* 102 (2007), and the abundant bibliographies cited there.

[2] See e.g. J. Onians, "Abstract and Imagination in Late Antiquity," *Art History* 3 (1980) 1–24; S. Price, *Rituals and Power* (Cambridge 1984) 170–206, although focused in particular on the impact of imperial image, highlights the concentrated attention paid to the visual in the Roman world; S. Goldhill, "The Erotic Eye: Visual Stimulation and Cultural Conflict," in S. Goldhill (ed.), *Being Greek under Rome* (Cambridge 2001) 154–194, at 159–160, discusses in particular the figure of the *pepaideumenos theates* whom he places within a "culture of display."

[3] On the *progymnasmata* see G. Anderson, *The Second Sophistic: A Cultural Phenomenon in the Roman Empire* (London/New York 1993); R. Webb, "Ekphrasis Ancient and Modern: The Invention of a Genre," *Word and Image* 15 (1999) 7–18, and "The *Progymnasmata* as Practice," in Y. L. Too (ed.), *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Leiden 2001) 289–316.

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vividness of words, which should bring the object described clearly before a reader's eyes.[4] Inextricably linked with the vivid description was the hermeneutic analysis, the interpretation, which such a description could afford. Philostratus in the introduction of his *Imagines* (pro. 3), a series of descriptions of paintings purportedly exhibited in a house in Naples,[5] noted that he had composed his work so that his audience ἑρμηνεύσουσί τε καὶ τοῦ δοκίμου ἐπιμελήσονται, "will interpret and pay attention to what is excellent," highlighting precisely the importance of meaning as a fundamental element of ecphrasis.

It is with Philostratus' practice of balancing both the descriptive and the interpretive capabilities of his language that I will be concerned in this essay. I intent to explore how pure description and interpretation relate specifically to one particular passage, the ecphrasis on Polyphemus and Galatea (*Imag.* 2.18), and how the sophist exploits his literary medium to render the story of the Cyclops and the Nereid in a unique way. Amidst odd transformations from images to words to living figures, paradoxes of "speaking images" and "visible thoughts," intertextual games, and, finally, listeners who become viewers, and then voyeurs, the ecphrastic rendition of the story of Polyphemus and Galatea leaves a mark as a sophisticated trope that remarkably synthesizes all these strands.

The ecphrasis opens as follows:

> οἱ θερίζοντές τε τὰ λήϊα καὶ τρυγῶντες τὰς ἀμπέλους οὔτε ἤροσαν, ὦ παῖ, ταῦτα οὔτε ἐφύτευσαν, ἀλλ' αὐτόματα ἡ γῆ

[4] Spengel, *Rhet.* II 118 (Theon). For *enargeia*, see especially G. Zanker, "*Enargeia* in the Ancient Criticism of Poetry," *RhM* 124 (1981) 297–311.

[5] Philostratus' claim purports to be truthful, but its reliability has been the subject of heated debate. K. Lehmann, "The Imagines of the Elder Philostratus," *Art Bulletin* 23 (1941) 16–44, greatly advanced the theory that Philostratus' work was based on a true painting collection from the second century A.D. L. James and R. Webb, "To Understand Ultimate Things and Enter Secret Places: Ekphrasis and Art in Byzantium," *Art History* 14 (1991) 1–17, raise important questions to the contrary, while J. Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer* (Cambridge 1995), discusses the irrelevance of real referents in Philostratus. A good discussion of real paintings of Polyphemus and Galatea is E. W. Leach, "Polyphemus in a Landscape: Traditions of Pastoral Courtship, " in J. D. Hunt (ed.), *The Pastoral Landscape* (Washington 1992) 63–87.

> σφίσιν ἀναπέμπει ταῦτα· εἰσὶ γὰρ δὴ Κύκλωπες, οἷς οὐκ οἶδα ἐξ ὅτου τὴν γῆν οἱ ποιηταὶ βούλονται αὐτοφυᾶ εἶναι ὧν φέρει. πεποίηται δὲ αὐτοὺς καὶ ποιμένας τὰ πρόβατα βόσκουσα, ποτόν τε τὸ γάλα τούτων ἡγοῦνται καὶ ὄψον. οἱ δ' οὔτ' ἀγορὰν γινώσκουσιν οὔτε βουλευτήριον, οὐδὲ οἶκον, ἀλλὰ τὰ ῥήγματα ἐσοικισάμενοι τοῦ ὄρους.
>
> Those who both harvest the fields and gather the grapes neither ploughed the land, my boy, nor planted the vines but of its own accord the earth sends these forth for them. They are indeed Cyclopes, for whom I do not know why the poets would have it that the earth produces its fruit spontaneously. The land has also made them shepherds, as it fosters the sheep, and they regard their milk as both drink and meat. And they know neither of assembly nor of council nor yet of house, but they inhabit the clefts of the mountains.

Philostratus' interpretive tendency is striking right from the beginning. Paying no attention to such standard ecphrastic features as color, shape, and material of the picture and mentioning neither the name of the painter nor his skill, Philostratus gives us his own reflections about the Cyclopes, insights which, although relevant to the theme of Polyphemus and Galatea, could not have been woven into the image proper. We learn that the Cyclopes "never ploughed nor planted," and that "the earth spontaneously gave forth produce for them." We are informed about their pastoral mode of living and their lack of lawful institutions and we even gain an understanding of these creatures' thoughts ("they regard the milk as drink and meat"). But nowhere are we told what the Cyclopes look like; in fact there is no clear indication that the Cyclopes as a group even appear in the painting proper, although Galatea and Polyphemus certainly do.

The implications of this literary rather than pictorial understanding of the painting are complex. Deflecting attention away from the visual appearance of the *painting*, the passage directs the focus, inevitably, to the textual nature of the *story* behind it, giving prominence to a verbal dimension more accessible to the ear rather than to the eye. Thus the narrative, as it eschews direct references to visible features potentially painted, points to a paradoxical *textualization* of the visual image, a process directly opposite to that of the *visualization* of

the imagery that it is to be expected from a traditional ecphrastic experience. Furtheremore, both we, the extratextual viewers of the ecphrasis, and the internal audience of youths to whom the sophist is supposedly accountable are asked to be turned from viewers into listeners.

The overt intertextuality of the paragraph enhances even more the impression that Philostratus' aim at this point is not to descibe a picture that can been be seen but rather to narrate a story that can be heard. The exactness of the section's allusions to the Homeric description of the Cyclopes is easily illustrated (*Od.* 9.108–115):

οὔτε φυτεύουσιν χερσὶν φυτὸν οὔτ' ἀρόωσιν,
ἀλλὰ τά γ' ἄσπαρτα καὶ ἀνήροτα πάντα φύονται,
πυροὶ καὶ κριθαὶ ἠδ' ἄμπελοι, αἵ τε φέρουσιν
οἶνον ἐριστάφυλον, καί σφιν Διὸς ὄμβρος ἀέξει.
τοῖσιν δ' οὔτ' ἀγοραὶ βουληφόροι οὔτε θέμιστες,
ἀλλ' οἵ γ' ὑψηλῶν ὀρέων ναίουσι κάρηνα
ἐν σπέεσι γλαφυροῖσι, θεμιστεύει δὲ ἕκαστος
παίδων ἠδ' ἀλόχων, οὐδ' ἀλλήλων ἀλέγουσι.

Neither do they plant plants with their hands nor do they plough
but all these come about without sowing or ploughing,
wheat and barley and vines which bear
the rich clusters of wine; and Zeus' rain will cause them to grow.
They have neither assemblies for council nor appointed laws,
but they inhabit the peaks of high mountains
in hollow caves, and each is lawgiver
to their children and wives, nor do they dispute with one another.

That Philostratus knows his Homer, as we should expect from a sophist of the period, is beyond doubt. What is more interesting, though, is the way these references further heighten our perception of the specific section not as a work of visual art but literally as a literary text. Bryson, describing the peculiar effect of Philostratus' ecphrastic allusions in general, speaks of "words reverting to words," and refers to "negative ecphrastic spaces where words remain words" and "in which [negative spaces] the reader apprehends the text as a sophisticated web of allusions."[6] As the passage's allusivity, a fundamentally literary

[6] N. Bryson, "Philostratus and the Imaginary Museum," in S. Goldhill,

process, puts emphasis on verbal, not visual, meaning, the audience of the sophist both internal and external again is invited not only to look beyond the picture, but, in essense, to *read* Homer between the lines.

After setting the scene with a section referring to the Homeric Cyclopes, Philostratus turns his attention to the figures of Polyphemus and Galatea. He starts with a description of Polyphemus:

> τοὺς μὲν ἄλλους ἔα, Πολύφημος δὲ ὁ τοῦ Ποσειδῶνος ἀγριώτατος αὐτῶν οἰκεῖ ἐνταῦθα, μίαν μὲν ὑπερτείνων ὀφρὺν τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ ἑνὸς ὄντος, πλατείᾳ δὲ τῇ ῥινὶ ἐπιβαίνων τοῦ χείλους καὶ σιτούμενος τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὥσπερ τῶν λεόντων οἱ ὠμοί. νυνὶ δὲ ἀπέχεται τοῦ τοιούτου σιτίου, ὡς μὴ βορὸς μηδὲ ἀηδὴς φαίνοιτο· ἐρᾷ γὰρ τῆς Γαλατείας παιζούσης ἐς τουτὶ τὸ πέλαγος ἀφιστορῶν αὐτὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄρους.
>
> Leave the rest of the Cyclopes aside. But Polyphemus, the son of Poseidon, the fiercest of them, lives here. One eyebrow stretches above his single eye, with a broad nose above his lip; he feeds on men as savage lions do. But now he abstains from such food so that he may not appear gluttonous or unpleasant. For he loves Galatea, who is playing here on the sea, as he watches her from the mountain.

Once more the description contains no direct reference either to the physical medium or the painter. Yet the emphasis on physical details underlines precisely how Polyphemus can be perceived by the eye, while the careful insertion of ἐνταῦθα, "here," specifies the spatial arrangement of the image on the picture and thus guides the gaze in a specific direction. In this case, then, the words that evoke Polyphemus' physical features leave no doubt that it is a figure in a painting that is being described with such clarity.

Of course the description openly draws upon Theocritus' account of the Cyclops' appearance in *Idyll* 11,[7] and in fact the

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R. Osborne (eds.), *Art and Text in Ancient Greek Culture* (Cambridge 1994) 255–283, at 282.

[7] Theoc. *Id.* 11.31–33, οὕνεκά μοι λασία μὲν ὀφρὺς ἐπὶ παντὶ μετώπῳ ἐξ ὠτὸς τέταται ποτὶ θώτερον ὡς μία μακρά, εἷς δ' ὀφθαλμὸς ὕπεστι, πλατεῖα δὲ ῥὶς ἐπὶ χείλει.

Theocritean "quotation" is expanded to include also a borrowing from Homer's epic (the reference to Polyphemus' cannibalistic ways, absent from Theocritus' version). But as opposed to the textual density of the opening section which moderates its visual force, the double allusion in the present lines turns the description into an ecphrasis in its traditional meaning. As the literariness of the lines, despite their allusivity, successfully enacts the visualization of the text, the words do not revert to words but, interestingly, conjure up pictures. Bryson has rightly observed that "one of the principal desires of the descriptions in the *Imagines* is exactly to cease being words on the page, to come alive in the form of an image, to pass from the opacity of the words to luminous scenes behind the words,"[8] and indeed this is precisely the effect generated in these lines: the literary texture is successfully penetrated and it is on account of this transparency that Polyphemus can be unmistakably visualized.

Quickly, however, non-visual data come to the fore, and the Cyclops' physical sketch spurs the recounting of a brief story about him. Philostratus speaks of the man-eating habits of Polyphemus and of his current inner state, focusing on significant, and yet invisible, aspects of the Cyclops. The description shifts from the pictorial to the verbal and seeing gives way to hearing in what seems to be a fluid give-and-take between narration and pure description. Explaining the motives behind Polyphemus' abstinence from human flesh, Philostratus decodes what is known about the Cyclops, adding his own interpretation, which is of course not painted in the picture, and compels the spectator to become a listener once more.[9]

What is more, as the referent is endowed with emotions, another effect surfaces: Polyphemus is transformed into a living person. The language itself supports this illusion. The verbs, (οἰκεῖ "he lives," ἀπέχεται "abstains," ἐρᾷ "loves"), and the

[8] Bryson, in *Art and Text* 266.

[9] M. Beaujour, "Some Paradoxes of Description," *Yale French Studies* 61 (1981) 27–59, remarks: "Literary descriptions remain quite opaque and meaningless to those unaware of 'the story behind them'. Hence the pressing need for interpretations, the hermeneutical transcoding being sometimes woven into the warp of the descriptive procedure itself" (33).

participial phrases (σιτούμενος "feeding on," ἀφιστορῶν "watching"), all used in the present tense, give a peculiar immediacy to the passage which tricks us into imagining Polyphemus as an actual breathing figure. Even νυνί, by introducing a temporal dimension, erases the supposed timeless frame of a work of art and adds much to the verisimilitude. Anderson has put it concisely: "Sophists are chiefly interested in describing pictures in the act of leaping out of the frames,"[10] and indeed the section includes no explicit sign that the Cyclops is made of color. Philostratus' language very effectively constructs the illusion that the Cyclops is made of flesh, and a new process takes effect: the images, which only a while ago had turned into words, are now transformed into breathing figures.[11]

The same illusion of animation is sustained by what follows:

> καὶ ἡ μὲν σύριγξ ἔτι ὑπὸ μάλης καὶ ἀτρεμεῖ, ἔστι δ' αὐτῷ ποιμενικὸν ᾄσμα, ὡς λευκή τε εἴη καὶ γαῦρος καὶ ἡδίων ὄμφακος καὶ ὡς νεβροὺς τῇ Γαλατείᾳ σκυμνεύει καὶ ἄρκτους. ἄδει δὲ ὑπὸ πρίνῳ ταῦτα, οὐδ' ὅπου αὐτῷ τὰ πρόβατα νέμεται εἰδὼς οὐδ' ὁπόσα ἐστὶν οὐδ' ὅπου ἡ γῆ ἔτι.
>
> And his pipe is still under his arm and silent, but he has a pastoral song to sing that tells how white she is and skittish and sweeter than unripe grapes and how he is raising for Galatea fawns and bear-cubs. All these he sings beneath an oak tree, not knowing where his flock is feeding, or their number, or even where the earth is.

The Theocritean echoes are once again clear,[12] and Philostratus' role not simply as an observer but in particular as a πεπαιδευμένος ἑρμηνεύς of the Hellenistic poet and an instructor of his alleged audience is thus stressed. Without prior knowledge of the story represented, the sophist would have described perhaps only an open-mouthed Polyphemus holding his pipe;

[10] G. Anderson, *Philostratus: Biography and Belles Lettres in the Third Century A.D.* (London 1986) 264.

[11] Bryson, in *Art and Text* 269, referring to Philostr. *Imag.* 2.1 ("Looms"), states: "the ecphrasis is in fact in continuous circulation across all of the interstices between the world, the word, and the image." I find his observation highly applicable to the present passage.

[12] Theoc. *Id.* 11.19–21, 40–41.

now, however, he is able to explain this detail accurately, by supplying the Theocritean narrative discourse that lies behind it. Moreover, we are meant to contemplate the implicit motion of Polyphemus' mouth while he sings (ᾄδει), an activity which, especially when contrasted with the stillness of the syrinx (ἀτρεμεῖ), heightens the paradox of a "singing" painted image. The logical contradiction of a "speaking painting" had captured the interest of the ancients at least as early as Simonides' age, whose famous sentiment is particularly pertinent here: τὴν μὲν ζωγραφίαν ποίησιν σιωπῶσαν προσαγορεύει, τὴν δὲ ποίησιν ζωγραφίαν λαλοῦσαν, "he calls painting silent poetry, and poetry articulate painting,"[13] and in so doing he had at least exposed the different natures of the two media. To modify the phrase slightly, it is not difficult to see how Polyphemus' image has neatly turned into a ζωγραφίαν λαλοῦσαν and how the metaphor is literalized.

The most prominent feature of these lines, however, is that Philostratus does not just refer to the Cyclops' song, but actually quotes it, strongly implying that, in this instance, it is only as listeners that we can perceive its very *telling* content;[14] as our role as viewers is explicitly and significantly minimized, the description becomes almost what Laird has called a "disobedient" ecphrasis, clearly demarcated from an "obedient" one specifically on the grounds of speech. As he notes, "the content of an utterance cannot feasibly be rendered in a visual art form,"[15] and indeed when the words of a depicted image are presented, the ecphrasis describes only what cannot be painted in the picture proper.

[13] Plut. *Mor.* 346F.

[14] Compare e.g. Hom. *Il.* 18.493–495: describing the wedding celebration on the shield of Achilles, the poet remarks that "the wedding song roused loudly" and that "flutes and lyres gave off their sound." Later (569–571), referring to the song of Linos, he says that, "a boy was playing a lovely tune on a clear-sounding lyre, sweetly singing the Linos-song in his delicate voice." Also relevant is Theoc. *Id.* 1: on the cup is a picture in which two men vie for a beautiful woman "from either side in alternate speech." In none of these examples are the actual words reported.

[15] A. Laird, "Sounding Out Ecphrasis: Art and Text in Catullus 64," *JRS* 83 (1993) 18–30, at 22.

There is still more to these lines than an oscillation between obedience and disobedience and lookers and listeners. The sophist, from the entire Theocritean song, has chosen to extract lines that are especially descriptive, as they refer in particular to the color (λευκή) and the texture (ἡδίων ὄμφακος) of Galatea's skin. Thus, while Polyphemus' song by its very nature engages our ear, its content has a potency that activates our imagination to visualize the heroine. To put it differently, Philostratus' report of the Cyclops' song, an act that should epitomize the supremacy of a non-pictorial dimension, constructs, once again, a narrative that is itself so conspicuously visual as to bring the Nereid before our eyes. Hence, a sophisticated little ecphrasis within the song is created, even more straightforward, in its explicitness, than the larger, proper ecphrasis to which it belongs.

With our senses re-focused on sight, we turn to the last part of Polyphemus' description:

> ὄρειός τε καὶ δεινὸς γέγραπται χαίτην μὲν ἀνασείων ὀρθὴν καὶ ἀμφιλαφῆ πίτυος δίκην, καρχάρους δὲ ὑποφαίνων ὀδόντας ἐκ βοροῦ τοῦ γενείου, στέρνον τε καὶ γαστέρα καὶ τὸ εἰς ὄνυχα ἦκον λάσιος πάντα. καὶ βλέπειν μὲν ἥμερόν φησιν, ἐπειδὴ ἐρᾷ, ἄγριον δὲ ὁρᾷ καὶ ὑποκαθήμενον ἔτι καθάπερ τὰ θηρία τὰ ἀνάγκης ἡττώμενα.
>
> He is painted as a creature of the mountains and fearful, tossing his hair, which stands erect and thick as a pine tree, showing jagged teeth from his voracious jaw, shaggy all over, on his breast, belly, even to the nails. And he thinks, because he is in love, that his glance is gentle, but it is wild and stealthy, resembling a wild beast, subdued by necessity.

The sustained attention to Polphemus' visible features steers us back to the painting itself. Philostratus focuses on the Cyclops' physique, emphasizing his hair, jaws, breast, belly, and nails, in what seems to be a pure description of a painted image. The wording conveys the sense of a painting's stillness, and only the present participle ἀνασείων, "tossing," implicitly suggests some movement. The verb γέγραπται is well-chosen; as it means both "write" and "paint," it calls attention equally to the process of writing and to that of painting, enabling the sophist not only to merge wittily the two practices, but also to explicate what he has been doing all along: treating his ecphrasis simul-

taneously as a description of a painting *and* as a story about the painting, continually intertwining stillness and movement and proving that his piece rightfully purports to be the text of an image, not one or the other, but both.[16]

It is worth mentioning that this is the second physical description of Polyphemus, rightly set at the end of the section devoted to him and symmetrically balancing the first at the opening of the segment. As Beal has shown, Philostratus often uses the structure of his descriptions to communicate his interpretations of paintings.[17] One cannot help noticing then that the Cyclops' two descriptions literally enclose the brief reference to Galatea's physical appearence that is given in the middle of the section. The material is shaped nicely into a ring composition, but this structural feature has an additional, more particular force: Polyphemus figuratively entraps Galatea within a circle that endangers her.

Indeed, the last sentence reveals openly the Cyclops' implicit threating intentions: καὶ βλέπειν etc., "wild and stealthy, resembling a wild beast, subdued by necessity." The association of Polyphemus' sexual desires with the basic drives of animals is now patently expressed. The Cyclops, despite his anthropomorphism, is dangerously close to a wild beast and his predatory instincts can only target Galatea as prey. The Theocritean subtext should also not be missed, especially *Idyll* 6 where Polyphemus, using as criterion his own judgment (ὡς παρ' ὑμῖν κέκριται, 6.37), deludes himself into thinking that he is beautiful. The notoriously deluded Theocritean Polyphemus is nicely rewoven into Philostratus' text which opens up a gripping literary dialogue with both *Idylls* 11 and 6 and draws two narratives into the recounting of another.

[16] A similar use of γράφειν can be seen in Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*. The novel is introduced as a narrative prompted by an "inscribed painting" (εἰκόνα γραπτήν), and the narrator states that he feels the desire to "counterscribe the painting" (πόθος ἔσχεν ἀντιγράψαι τῇ γραφῇ), clearly expoloiting the ambiguity of the term: see R. Hunter, *A Study of Daphnis and Chloe* (Cambridge 1983) 43–45.

[17] S. Beal, "Word-Painting in the *Imagines* of the Elder Philostratus," *Hermes* 121 (1993) 350–363.

As the two verbs of seeing indicate (βλέπειν, ὁρᾷν), a particular emphasis has been placed on Polyphemus' gaze, a matter *a priori* sensitive to the one-eyed Cyclops and one at once prone to yield ironic readings. But even more intriguing is the nature of the adjectives used to characterize the latter's look; none of these (ἥμερον, ἄγριον, ὑποκαθήμενον) refer to qualities that can be visually represented, and in fact our sophist bypasses an opportunity that begs to be colorfully exploited.[18] The vocabularly of viewing notwithstanding, we cannot exactly envisage the way Polyphemus' glance looks; what we can do instead is hear a sophist deciphering the Cyclops' gaze and making this creature's ultimate thoughts visible.

But what is more intriguing in this instance is how we too, the readers, as well as the young onlookers inside Philostratus' narrative are impelled not only to turn the eyes towards the object of Polyphemus' gaze, but also to picture Galatea through *his* eyes. So far, we have been "looking" at *Polyphemus* through *Philostratus*' eyes, but now the register of storytelling changes; we are subtly guided to gaze at the *Nereid* through the eyes of the *Cyclops*, who thus becomes a second implicit focalizer, overtly voyeuristic,[19] and who may reflect also the viewers of the ecphrasis outside the picture. As we shall see below, the description of Galatea is focalized through Polyphemus' gaze and it is for this reason that it lingers on her physical features and conveys them in highly erotic terms.

The description starts with a pleasant scene, expressed in vivid language:

> ἡ δὲ ἐν ἀπαλῇ τῇ θαλάσσῃ παίζει τέτρωρον δελφίνων ξυνάγουσα ὁμοζυγούντων καὶ ταὐτὸν πνεόντων, παρθένοι δ'

[18] Philostratus' remark in the introduction of his work that paintings bring out αὐγὰς ὀμμάτων, "the brightness of the eyes," and have the ability to depict χαροπὸν δὲ ὄμμα καὶ γλαυκὸν καὶ μέλαν, "the grey eye and the blue and the black," cannot be supported by the present segment.

[19] D. P. Fowler, "Narrate or Describe: The Problem of Ekphrasis," *JRS* 81 (1991) 25–35, although focused on Aeneas, offers an insightful discussion on ecphrastic focalizers. Also very useful are the comments of J. Elsner, "Viewing Ariadne: From Ekphrasis to Wall Painting in the Roman World," *CP* 102 (2007) 20–40, and E. W Leach, "Narrative Space and the Viewer in Philostratus' *Eikones,*" *RömMitt* 107 (2000) 237–251.

> αὐτοὺς ἄγουσι Τρίτωνος, αἱ δμωαὶ τῆς Γαλατείας, ἐπιστομίζουσαι σφᾶς, εἴ τι ἀγέρωχόν τε καὶ παρὰ τὴν ἡνίαν πράττοιεν.
>
> She plays on the gentle sea driving a team of four dolphins, yoked together and breathing in harmony, and maidens, Triton's daughters, Galatea's servants, guide them, curbing them if they try to do anything mischievious or contrary to the reins.

Galatea, we are told, is playfully preoccupied, and her activity is conveyed by the verb παίζει which not only recalls Philostratus' earlier comment (ἐρᾷ γὰρ τῆς Γαλατείας παιζούσης) but also brings to mind, subtly, the Theocritean context which always lurks in the background. In *Id.* 11.77 Polyphemus had conceitedly declared that πολλαὶ συμπαίσδεν με κόραι τὰν νύκτα κέλονται, "many maidens ask me to play with them at night." Philostratus has of course completely altered the context; Galatea and her fellow nymphs not only do not ask Polyphemus to play with them, but they are unaware of his presense and, on account of that, vulnerable and potentially exposed to danger.

The aforementioned segment nicely sets the tone for the eroticized section that follows:

> ἡ δ' ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς ἁλιπόρφυρον μὲν λῆδιον ἐς τὸν ζέφυρον αἴρει σκιὰν ἑαυτῇ εἶναι καὶ ἱστίον τῷ ἅρματι, ἀφ' οὗ καὶ αὐγή τις ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον καὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν ἥκει οὕπω ἡδίων τοῦ τῆς παρειᾶς ἄνθους, αἱ κόμαι δ' αὐτῆς οὐκ ἀνεῖνται τῷ ζεφύρῳ· διάβροχοι γὰρ δή εἰσι καὶ κρείττους τοῦ ἀνέμου. καὶ μὴν καὶ ἀγκὼν δεξιὸς ἔκκειται λευκὸν διακλίνων πῆχυν καὶ ἀναπαύων τοὺς δακτύλους πρὸς ἁπαλῷ τῷ ὤμῳ καὶ ὠλέναι ὑποκυμαίνουσι καὶ μαζὸς ὑπανίσταται καὶ οὐδὲ τὴν ἐπιγουνίδα ἐκλείπει ἡ ὥρα. ὁ ταρσὸς δὲ καὶ ἡ συναπολήγουσα αὐτῷ χάρις ἔφαλος, ὦ παῖ, γέγραπται καὶ ἐπιψαύει τῆς θαλάττης οἷον κυβερνῶν τὸ ἅρμα. θαῦμα οἱ ὀφθαλμοί· βλέπουσι γὰρ ὑπερόριόν τι καὶ συναπιὸν τῷ μήκει τοῦ πελάγους.
>
> She holds over her head against the wind a light scarf of sea-purple to provide a shade for herself and a sail for her chariot, and from it a kind of radiance falls upon her forehead and her head; it is no less charming than the bloom on her cheek and her hair is not tossed by the breeze, for it is so moist that it is proof against the wind. And truly her right elbow stands out and her white forearm is bent back, while she rests her fingers on her delicate shoulder, and her arms are gently rounded and her

> breasts project and beauty is not lacking even from her thigh. Her foot and the graceful part that ends it, my boy, is painted and touches upon the sea as if it were the rudder that guides the chariot. Her eyes are a marvel, for they have a kind of distant look that travels as far as the sea extends.

If seen simply within the frame of contemporary sophistic practices, the passage complements Polyphemus' description and forms with it an ideal *syncrisis*, a rhetorical exercise that requires the antithetical comparison of two descriptions: Polyphemus is ugly, Galatea is radiantly beautiful.

But in this case, this practice is not an end in itself. The stress on the Nereid's beauty calls attention to the plainly voyeuristic manner in which she is described. Concentrating on specific parts of her body, the description reveals sensual details: rosy cheeks, moist hair, delicate shoulders, breasts, and graceful thighs. Although no clear marking can determine where Philostratus' glance stops and Polyphemus' begins, the painstaking emphasis on the eroticized features of Galatea suggests that it is Polyphemus who scrutinizes the heroine with licentious desire. And it is precisely for this reason that the passage constitutes a pure ecphrasis that concentrates solely on what is depicted on the surface of the painting. Heffernan has argued that ecphrasis is "dynamic," drawing out a "narrative impulse" that often turns the images into stories.[20] However, while Polyphemus' description, as we have seen, accords well with this observation in allowing its narrator to tell the Theocritean stories to which the picture often only alludes, Galatea's deviates from this pattern. We hear nothing of her feelings, pointedly she is given no voice, and nothing more is added to her representation than what is presumably portrayed; interpretive comments are absent precisely because the narrator is no longer Philostratus, the πεπαιδευμένος ἑρμηνεύς, but rather Polyphemus whose exclusive aim is to devour Galatea's half-exposed body with his eyes and to entice both his young observers outside the picture and his readers to become equally lustful of her beauty.

It is this unmediated access to Galatea's body that carries the

[20] J. Heffernan, *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (Chicago 1993) 5.

external viewers away and tempts them, yet again, to forget the distinction between reality and representation. In fact, so effective is the *enargeia* of the text in its goal to recreate realistically the painted image that, when we hear that the Nereid's foot touches lightly upon the sea, we are encouraged to give ourselves over to the illusion that we actually experience Galatea as a living presence. To this end the absence of any spatial marker is especially effective. Never are we told about Galatea's exact arrangement within the picture; instead, led on by the vividness of the text, we are inclined to believe that she is right before our eyes, palpable, and suddenly brought to life. The familiarity of her gestures, indeed the ordinariness of her movement, adds much to the illusion that she could share the same reality even with contemporary women and that she could become indistinguishable from them.[21]

And yet this very illusion has a double edge; although, as we noted, the absence of any spatial marker is significant, the color that has been added now (ἁλιπόρφυρον) can only be a direct reference to the picture as such. In addition, despite the vividness of the scene, movement is only subtly suggested. In fact, while we are told that there is wind (ζέφυρος, ἄνεμος), no particular emphasis has been given to its supposed shifting motion, and, notably, Galatea's hair "is *not* tossed by the breeze, for it is so moist that it is proof *against* the wind." Even the ambiguous γέγραπται is again included to alert us to the potential presence of a painter who has represented Galatea in colors. Interestingly in this instance, Philostratus helps us comprehend the Nereid as a "work of art" in two ways: metaphorically, as a beauty icon, and literally, as a painted *eikon*, a silent picture, a ζωγραφία σιωπῶσα.

The description of Galatea concludes on an ingenious note: θαῦμα οἱ ὀφθαλμοί, "her eyes are wonderful, for they look well

[21] J. Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer* (Cambridge 1995) 22, notes: "The naturalistic verisimilitude of Philostratus' paintings is grounded in a theory which sees 'reality' as being constituted by the world of the viewer's ordinary experience, a world of common sense." His discussion elucidates exactly how Phlilostratus' images can be easily assimilated into everyday life, producing this illusionary effect of reality.

beyond the lands and match the extent of the open sea." Expressions of praise were common conceits in literary descriptions of works of art, and θαῦμα in particular was a typical term of ecphrastic evaluation. However, while such phrases were mostly used to express amazement at the work of art itself,[22] Philostratus directs his admiration specifically to Galatea's eyes. It is her eyes which deserve the height of praise, a modification whose full significance we understand when we read it against another sophist's remark on θαῦμα: τὸ μὲν δὴ κάλλος κρεῖττον ἢ λέγειν· εἰ δέ τι παρεῖται, ἐν παρενθήκῃ γεγένηται θαύματος, "beauty is stronger than speech. If it is passed over, it comes about in an addition of wonder."[23] When words are simply not enough, only wonder can capture the essence of true beauty, and no better evidence can attest to the truth of this than the example of Galatea; the θαῦμα of her eyes embodies, in one word, the allure of her physical form.

Yet the tone of the comment is noticeably different from that of the scrutinizing observations that have dominated the description so far, and so we should locate here the return to the main focalizer, Philostratus. Certainly the seam cannot be found with any absolute confidence; however, marvelling at Galatea's eyes seems to be the aesthetic reaction of the primary narrator, the πεπαιδευμένος interpreter, who knows how to "interrupt" Polyphemus' gaze in order to steer the discussion back to a discreet level, suited especially for a young audience. At a crucial moment, when the description is in danger of becoming too graphically suggestive for young boys, Philostratus steps in and carefully tailors it to them. The vocabularly supports this suggestion: γάρ serves to invest the statement with a special power of explication, while the simile that compares the Nereid's foot to "the rudder guiding her chariot" is also a signpost: it is an analysis of the image, an explanatory detail. Markedly, this last reference to Galatea's eyes recalls the last

[22] E.g., Homer calls Hera's chariot a θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι (*Il.* 5.725) and expresses the same sentiment especially when he refers to Achilles' Shield (18.467, 549). Cf. Theoc. *Id.* 1.56 in reference to the cup which is called αἰπολικὸν θάημα, "pastoral marvel."

[23] Rabe, *Rhet.Gr.* X 49 (Aphthonius).

line of Polyphemus' section with its notorious mention of his voracious gaze and hence highlights even more the work of Philostratus as a deft writer; only a rhetorically trained sophist, one already proven competent in exploiting the device of ring composition, would re-employ the technique in order to bring his piece to an apt closure.

Despite the similarity, however, between the endings of Polyphemus' and Galatea's sections, a significant modification has taken place. The segment on Polyphemus had closed with the Cyclops looking intensely at Galatea. But now the Nereid is no longer an object to be consumed by the Cyclops' and the external audience's eyes; as *she* gazes at the open sea ("her eyes look far beyond any land and match the vast extent of the ocean"), *she* becomes a viewing subject in her own right, turning the tables on Polyphemus. Particularly pointed is the direction of her gaze: not back at Polyphemus but rather far away, as if suggesting with her eyes alone the rejection of the Cyclops' feelings. Philostratus in his introduction had already hinted at a painting's ability to convey emotions: σκιάν τε γὰρ ἀποφαίνει καὶ βλέμμα γινώσκει ἄλλο μὲν τοῦ μεμηνότος, ἄλλο δὲ τοῦ ἀλγοῦντος ἢ χαίροντος, "for it shows hues and knows how to distinguish the glance of a madman and that of a miserable or a happy one."[24] If Polyphemus showed his passion by looking at Galatea, then the Nereid is entitled to use her gaze in the same meaningful way. And this is exactly what she does, ironically paying Polyphemus with the same coin.[25] Her glance is especially poignant for one more reason. She is denied the right to speak, and so has to put into her gaze the emotions that she cannot put into words, she has to "speak" through her glances alone.

Or so at least Philostratus' interpretation implies, through

[24] Proem 2. Philostratus the Younger, in his own introduction, also argued that painters must show ἠθῶν ξύμβολα, "symbols of character" (390.19 Kayser).

[25] Elsner, *CP* 102 (2007) 33, referring to the importance of the gaze for Philostratus, rightly comments: "repeatedly in Philostratus gaze is articulated as a key mechanism for the emotional impact and, hence, meaning of the paintings."

wording that once more is carefully chosen. Galatea's seaward look recalls the image of the Theocritean Polyphemus, sitting on the shore and gazing at the sea in *Idyll* 11. But even more than simply reversing the pastoral scene and thus providing a new twist in the well-known scene, Philostratus underscores the expansiveness of the Nereid's gaze, measuring it against the vastness of the ocean (συναπιὸν τῷ μήκει τοῦ πελάγους). In using ὑπερόριον, "beyond the lands," he creates a startling hyperbole whose full impact we realize in recalling Polyphemus' fundamentally land-bound constitution. It is not only the lands that Galatea's look leaves behind; it is Polyphemus himself, whom the lands represent metonymically. A particular verse from Theocritus' *Idyll* 11 springs up and in hindsight sounds especially ironic: in line 43 the Cyclops had pleaded τὰν γλαυκὰν δὲ θάλασσαν ἔα ποτὶ χέρσον ὀρεχθεῖν, "let the grey sea beat upon the land," implicitly wishing for the sea and the land, and what they stood for, to blend. According to Philostratus, this goal will remain unattainable. Galatea will not unite with Polyphemus; instead, she will always seek her marine world, in preference to a life upon the land.

Also remarkable is the fact that the Nereid's glances seem to defy even the conventions of a real painting. A picture, by definition, occupies a specific space. But Galatea's gaze cannot be contained within spatial boundaries; it goes beyond the horizon, transcending or rather obliterating the limitations of its medium in an attempt to escape Polyphemus. Again, the distinction between art and life is blurred. As Galatea's gaze travels outside the borders of its representation, it casts a more literal light on what it means to be caught "in the act of leaping out of the frames."

While this suspension between reality and representation is a strategy especially prominent in Galatea's section, it is the eroticism of her description, as we have noted, that is truly arresting. Philostratus was certainly not alone in emphasizing such erotically charged descriptive passages, and in fact similar descriptions were a common feature both of the *Imagines* itself and of the Greek novels written by authors of the Second Sophistic. Callirhoe's revealing dressing in Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe* (6.4) or Chloe's sensual depiction, described through Daphnis' eyes, in Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* (1.25) are

only two instances of this typical literary *topos* of the period. A particularly interesting text is Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, in which three paintings with blatantly erotic content are described: a picture of Andromeda represents her trying to cover her breasts with a piece of cloth that has been torn off by Tereus (5.3), while a painting of Philomela shows her clothed in the finest of tunics (3.7).

It is Europa's picture, however, placed at the opening of Tatius' work, which, "unabashedly voyeuristic,"[26] is in this sense linked more closely to Galatea's depiction. Indeed, Tatius' description (1.1) is as graphic as Philostratus', but certain details catch our attention even more. Europa is painted with "breasts projecting gently from her chest," she is compared to "a charioteer holding the reins," and finally she is depicted as "using her veil as a sail," all features present in the Galatea ecphrasis as well. The story of Europa was of course well known, and Philostratus may have drawn material not only from Tatius' narrative but also from Moschus' Hellenistic poem *Europa*. In fact, Moschus mentions the presence of Nereids (28–36) who ride dolphins (138–139) and accompany Europa, references which strengthen a possible affiliation between the Hellenistic Europa and the Philostratean Nereid.[27]

Especially striking is the similarity between Zeus, the abductor of Europa, and Polyphemus. It is characteristic that in Moschus' version the impact of Europa's appearance on the god when he first sets his eyes on her is vividly expressed: ἦ γὰρ δὴ Κρονίδης ὥς μιν φράσαθ' ὣς ἐόλητο θυμὸν ἀνωίστοισιν ὑποδμηθεὶς βελέεσσι Κύπριδος, ἣ μούνη δύναται καὶ Ζῆνα δαμάσσαι, "as soon as the son of Cronus saw her, his heart was tortured, tamed by the harsh arrows of Cypris, who alone can subdue even Zeus" (74–76). Exact verbal parallels with Philostratus' piece are lacking; however, the two scenes are noticeably comparable, as they both stress the ideas of taming and

[26] Bartsch, *Decoding the Ancient Novel* 49.

[27] The other literary account which includes Nereids in the myth of Europa is Lucian's (*Dial.Meret.* 15.1). Their presence is also visually attested in vases dating from the fourth century B.C., see J. Barringer, *Divine Escorts: Nereids in Archaic and Classical Greek Art* (Ann Arbor 1995) 95–109.

submission. What is more, like Polyphemus' look, which caused Philostratus to compare the Cyclops to a "subdued animal," Zeus' first glance at the maiden results in a similar transformation: Zeus is also turned into an animal, becoming a tamed bull. The god's gaze is emphatically described a few lines later: κύκλος δ' ἀργύφεος μέσσῳ μάρμαιρε μετώπῳ, ὄσσε δ' ὑπογλαύσσεσκε καὶ ἵμερον ἀστράπτεσκεν, "a circle of silver-white shone in the middle of his forehead, and the eyes beneath it were grey, and gave off lust" (85–86). Ironically, the κύκλος of Zeus reminds us, indirectly, of the Cyclops' eye, but even beyond this rather random coincidence, it is the eroticism of Zeus' gaze that closely resembles that of Polyphemus and brings out the correspondence of their situations: both figures are represented as "animals" that look longingly at beautiful maidens.

If the myth of Europa then lurks in the background of Philostratus' piece, even obliquely, then the description of Galatea could be replete with darker resonances. Heffernan writes: "the moment we identify the images with the living figures they represent, we must also imagine them *completing* the action signified by the pregnant moment of pursuit, and thus providing a narratable answer to the question that any picture of an arrested act provokes: 'What will happen next?' "[28] Although Heffernan does not refer to Greco-Roman antiquity in this case, his remark authorizes us to pose the same question of Polyphemus: what will *he* do next? Europa's is a story of abduction and sexual assault. Could it prefigure, by association, a similar fate for Galatea? Could Polyphemus, like another Zeus, act on his desire to possess the Nereid, turning from a potential predator to a sexual assailant? Significantly, to this crucial question Philostratus gives no answer. He refuses to deliver the narrative potential from the "pregnant" moment of Galatea's graphic picture and teases the reader by offering him only latent, not actual, resolutions. And it is this absence of guidance that enables each reader to construe, according to his or her own subjectivity, an outcome. For some, the Nereid's portrayal

[28] Heffernan, *Museum of Words* 112.

may be only a metaphor for Polyphemus' erotic desire, frozen in time and never to be activated; for others, it may function as foreshadowing of a dire future for Galatea. Be that as it may, either reading involves creative participation on the part of the readers, who supplement with their own vision the author's points and thus construct their own interpretations. It is in this sense that Philostratus both "instructs" his audience and proves to be a true artist. As Elsner has shown, "the role of the artist as author is that he forecloses the potentially infinite number of subjective contextualisations that a viewer might choose."[29] As a skilled artist, commited to the education of his students, Philostratus refrains from subjecting them to regulations, and, instead, makes them draw their own conclusions as to what Galatea's picture may truly constitute.

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[29] Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer* 39.