

Losing Hope as a Cure for Love:

The Role of Self-Enslavement in the Ancient Novel

I. Xenophon of Ephesus: *An Ephesian Tale*

1. Habrocomes: ‘ὁ μέχρι νῦν ἀνδρικός Ἀβροκόμης... ἐάλωκα καὶ νενίκημαι καὶ παρθένῳ δουλεύειν ἀναγκάζομαι.’ (1.4.1)

“I, Habrocomes, until now a man...have been captured and conquered and I am compelled to be a slave to a maiden.”¹

2. Habrocomes: ‘Δοῦλος μὲν εἰμι ἀλλὰ συνθήκας οἶδα τηρεῖν. Ἔχουσιν ἐξουσίαν μου τοῦ σώματος, τὴν ψυχὴν δὲ ἐλευθέραν ἔχω. Ἀπειλείτω νῦν, εἰ θέλει, Μαντὼ ξίφη καὶ βρόχους καὶ πῦρ καὶ πάντα ὅσα δύναται σῶμα ἐνεγκεῖν οἰκέτου: οὐ γὰρ ἄν ποτε πεισθεῖην ἐκὼν Ἄνθεια ἀδικῆσαι.’ (2.4.4)

“I am a slave, but I know how to keep my agreement [of marriage]. They have authority over my body, but I have a free soul. Now, let Manto threaten, if she wants, the sword and noose and fire and all such things the body of a slave can endure: for I would never comply to harm Anthia willingly.”

3. Habrocomes: ‘ποῦ μὲν ἢ ἐν Ἐφέσῳ δοκοῦσά ποτ’ εὐδαιμονία; ποῦ δ’ οἱ λαμπροὶ καὶ οἱ περίβλεπτοι Ἄνθεια καὶ Ἀβροκόμης, οἱ καλοί;’ (2.8.1)

“Where is the happiness once thought good in Ephesus? Where are the bright and admired by all Anthia and Habrocomes, the beautiful?”

4. Habrocomes: ‘ἰδοῦ...Ἄνθεια, ὁ σὸς Ἀβροκόμης ἐργάτης τέχνης πονήρας καὶ τὸ σῶμα ὑποτέθεικα δουλείᾳ.’ (5.8.3)

“Look, Anthia...your Habrocomes is a workman of grievous deeds and has enjoined his body to slavery.”

5. Anthia: ‘εὐδαίμων τότε ἐνομιζόμην: νυνὶ δὲ δούλη μὲν ἀντ’ ἐλευθέρας, αἰχμάλωτος δὲ ἢ δυστυχῆς ἀντὶ τῆς μακαρίας’ (5.11.4)

“At that time, I was considered fortunate: but now I am a slave instead of a free woman, and I am an unfortunate captive instead of blessed.”

¹ All translation are my own.

II. Chariton: *Chaereas and Callirhoe*

6. Τότ' ἦν ἰδεῖν ἀγῶνα λογισμοῦ καὶ πάθους. Καίτοι γὰρ βαπτιζόμενος ὑπὸ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας γενναῖος ἀνὴρ ἐπειράτο ἀντέχεσθαι (2.4.4)

Then it was possible to see a struggle of reason and passion. And yet, flooded by desire, the noble man tried to hold out against it.

7. Callirhoe: “Ὀνειρος ἦν τὰ πρῶτα καὶ μῦθος, εἰμὶ δὲ νῦν ὁ γέγονα, δούλη καὶ ξένη.” (2.5.7)

“The things before were a dream and a story, but now I am that which I have become, a slave and a foreigner.”

8. Plangon: ‘Πανταχόθεν ἀπόκοψόν σου τὰ τῆς εὐγενείας ὑπομνήματα, μηδ' ἐλπίς ἔστω σοι πατρίδος. Συνάρμοσαι τῇ παρουσίᾳ τύχῃ καὶ ἀκριβῶς γενοῦ δούλη.’ (2.10.6-7).

“Cut off in every way the memory of your noble birth, do not let there be any hope for your fatherland. Adapt to your present fate and completely become a slave.”

9. Σκάπτων δὲ τὸ σῶμα ταχέως ἐξετρυχώθη: πολλὰ γὰρ αὐτὸν ἐβάρει, κόπος, ἀμέλεια, τὰ δεσμά, καὶ τούτων μᾶλλον ὁ ἔρωσ. (4.2.1)

Digging, he quickly became exhausted in his body: for many things were weighing him down: fatigue, negligence, the chains, and, more than these, his love.

10. Artaxerxes: ‘Τίς γάρ ἐστιν Ἔρως πρότερον ἤκουον ἐν μύθοις τε καὶ ποιήμασιν, ὅτι κρατεῖ πάντων τῶν θεῶν καὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ Διός: ἠπίστουν δὲ ὁμῶς ὅτι δύναταί τις παρ' ἐμοὶ ἐμοῦ γενέσθαι δυνατώτερος. Ἀλλὰ πάρεστιν ὁ θεός... δεινὸν μὲν ὁμολογεῖν, ἀληθῶς δὲ ἐάλωκα.’ (6.3.2)

“For I have heard who Eros is before in stories and poems, that he has power over all the gods and Zeus himself: but nevertheless, I disbelieved that someone could be more powerful than me in my court. But the god is here...Although terrible to agree, nevertheless I am truly captured.”

11. Artaxates (Artaxerxes' slave): ‘Φάρμακον γὰρ ἕτερον Ἔρωτος οὐδέν ἐστι πλὴν αὐτὸς ὁ ἐρώμενος’ (6.3.7)

“For there is no other remedy for Eros except the very one being loved.”

12. Βασιλέως γὰρ δοῦλος οὐκ ἦν, ἀλλὰ τότε μόνος ἐν Βαβυλῶνι ἐλεύθερος. (7.1.1)

He, in fact, was not a slave of the king, but at that time he was the only free man in Babylon.