Torn between Hope and Despair: A Novel Approach to Two Emotions

Picture this: you are the hero, or heroine, of a Greek novel. Chances are good that you have just been abducted by pirates, sold into a brothel, or worse. You are separated from the one you love, for whose benefit you have undergone this painful and frankly somewhat ridiculous series of trials. You think s/he may even be dead. But then, Something Happens. Perhaps it is a conversation overheard, perhaps you have a dream, perhaps you see a dedication in a temple – whatever it is, you think all may not be lost. You find this reassuring, but it is too ambiguous: might things all work out all right in the end? Should you commit suicide? Are the gods continuing to toy with you? (Don't worry – it will all be fine.) My interest in this paper is the use of the emotions of hope and fear, especially the former, at key points of suspense to structure narrative in the five "ideal" Greek novels (i.e., *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, the *Ephesiaca*, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, *Daphnis and Chloe*, and the *Aethiopica*).

Hope (*elpis*) is an emotion which is, at best, ambiguous, in the ancient world (as we can already see from its first appearance in Hesiod's story of Pandora at *WD* 96). It is the emotion felt by individuals across a wide swathe of ancient literature who have failed to plan properly for the future: when you are about to be besieged and you have not bothered to get the crops within the city walls, you hope for the best. When you are facing a warrior who is much your superior, you hope for the best. Generally speaking, in extant Greek literature, *elpis* is disappointed, sometimes with a sententious statement about its delusive nature. At the same time, however, there is one genre in which hope is frequent, felt by characters for whom the narrative encourages sympathy, and regularly rewarded by its fulfillment: the Greek novel.

While there has been much work on the structure of the Greek novel (notably Hägg 1971 and Reardon 1991, the former especially useful on foreshadowing), and also on how novels do

and do not engage with contemporary philosophical debates (Morgan and Jones 2007, though not much about philosophies of emotion), the role emotions play in the Greek novel deserves much more attention than it has to date received (see the remainder of bibliography). It is not merely that the novels are written in a time period which witnessed an incredible flourishing of interest in private life, and so the emotions. They themselves emphasize extraordinary situations, good and bad, alternating with dizzying rapidity, and the protagonists' essential passivity (Konstan 1994) leaves them reacting with one emotion after another, sometimes as a precursor to taking action and sometimes instead of it. So too, novels are predicated upon the notion that an unpleasant present will be replaced by a pleasant future, so emotions about the future, like hope and fear, form a regular refrain.

After discussion of some representative examples of *elpis*' function in the novel (as part of a list of emotions concurrently felt, as a sententious statement, and especially as a foreshadowing device letting readers know that all will work out), I suggest that the deployment of *elpis* points to the novel's difference from other kinds of ancient narrative and helps to explain some of that difference. Specifically, the novel offers a "limit case" of what *elpis* might potentially do in an ideal, "fantasy" world.

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