

STEFAN TILG, *Chariton of Aphrodisias and the Invention of the Greek Novel* 2010, pp. 343. Oxford: Oxford University Press. £60.00
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“The ancients tended to posit a *prōtos heuretēs* even in areas where modern scholars are absolutely sure that there was none.” So writes Joseph Farrell in a recent essay on the origin of Roman epic.¹ Stefan Tilg goes counter-current: he posits a *prōtos heuretēs* even in an area where the ancients did not see one. That area is the Greek love novel, and the *heuretēs* would be Chariton of Aphrodisias.

Though the thesis may seem provocative, Tilg is in good company. The ancients did not posit a *prōtos heuretēs* for the novel (for the simple reason that they did not even seem to have considered the novel a separate genre), but several modern critics have paved the way for Tilg to formulate his invention-theory: most famously Edwin Ben Perry with his now classic pronouncement, “the novel was invented on a Tuesday afternoon in July,” followed by B. P. Reardon, who comes very close to calling Chariton the inventor of the novel (as acknowledged by Tilg himself [e.g., p. 126]). This approach is refreshing because it puts individual creativity center-stage in literary history rather than viewing the latter as a concatenation of anonymous and almost mechanical developments, each responding to often ill-defined “needs” of a given society at a given time. Tilg forcefully opposes this view: “...the ideal novel was neither the result of any generic evolutions and struggles, nor of any comprehensive cultural needs” (p. 11).

Tilg’s book is neither extravagant nor even entirely new in its thesis. It is new, however, and thought-provoking in the painstaking scientific demonstration it builds in support of its arguments. The thesis is borne out by both external and internal evidence: on the one hand, a variety of data would point to Chariton as the earliest not only of the extant novelists but of the novelists as a whole, while, on the other, several stylistic habits in the novel itself, such as its drawing attention to the high emotionality or the novelty of a scene, suggest an author coming to grips with a new genre, which he is attempting to define, legitimize, and advertize.

These are important claims, which deserve full critical inspection. In my opinion the second part (dealing with the internal evidence) is more success-

¹ “The Origins and Essence of Roman Epic,” in J. M. Foley (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Epic*, Oxford, 2005, 417-428 (the citation is at p. 420 and does not end with a period).

ful than the first, for it is based on tangible evidence (the text) imaginatively interpreted (though not infrequently over-interpreted: see below). The external data Tilg musters to make the case that Chariton is the first novelist are substantial enough and cleverly put together; but the reasoning tends to remain overly speculative, as the countless number of conditional sentences alone shows. The argument often develops like a sequence of syllogisms with no agreed true premises. Likewise, the road Tilg walks to establish a *terminus ante quem* and a *terminus post quem* for Chariton (an object of inquiry he pursues with energetic zeal) is paved with much more speculation than fact.

In spite of its speculative thrust, however, the section devoted to the external evidence for Chariton's date is convincing in its main conclusion, namely, that Chariton dates to *circa* AD 40-60. What I found most impressive in this part of the study is Tilg's ability to investigate the issue from every possible angle, including language, references to institutions, material culture, and historical characters. I truly admired Tilg's agility and competence in dealing with these disparate areas and the thoroughness and general open-mindedness with which he tackles each item. For instance, he tentatively suggests (pp. 46-47) that the name Chaereas might refer to Cassius Chaerea, a tribune of the praetorian guard who assassinated Caligula; but then revisits or qualifies this hypothesis by suggesting that Chariton is interested in private characters rather than in leaders of history (p. 48): if the praetorian guard is indeed a blueprint for the novel's protagonist (which I doubt: Chaereas is a common name, especially in comedy), Chariton has reconfigured the historical character to fit his romantic needs. The section on Athenagoras, on the other hand, seems to me vitiated by a *parti pris*: Tilg needs Chariton's Athenagoras to be earlier than the famous rhetor at the end of the first century AD, otherwise Chariton might be too late to be the novel's inventor. Hence he identifies Chariton's employer with one Athenagoras of the early Julio-Claudian period, who held administrative offices and was celebrated in an honorary inscription in Aphrodisias (p. 52). This identification cannot be proven. In addition the other Athenagoras seems to have been a much better known figure, one a writer aspiring to fame might want the world to know he is attached to. I do not see what we gain from the proposed identification, except to date Chariton early. Tilg also wants to see reflections of Athenagoras' jobs in Chariton's novel. Perhaps I am missing something, but I do not understand why a creative writer, especially one who is "inventing" a new form, would draw inspiration from the activities of an administrator. The arguments adduced are not the strongest. For instance,

that Chaereas is coming back from a gymnasium when he falls in love does not need to call forth Athenagoras' position as gymnasiarch (p. 55): gymnasia were places where young men spent time, as in Plato's *Lysis*. On the same point, less compelling still is the suggestion that the use of γυμνάζω for the trials Aphrodite imposed on Chaereas (8. 1. 3) is "an allusion to Chaereas' initial exercises" (hence to Athenagoras the gymnasiarch?). The verb γυμνάζω has long been used for all kinds of exertions or trials, and if Chariton has a specific kind in mind, I would rather think of the endurance tests promoted by contemporary or almost contemporary moral philosophers (e.g. Epictetus or Maximus of Tyre). In my view the most convincing argument in favor of the earlier Athenagoras is that his son was called Mithridates (p. 55). Since Mithridates is not a common Greek name, Chariton's choice of it for one of his characters (and one who after all comes out well) could indeed be an act of allegiance to his employer.

The second important section (chapter 2) of the part devoted to the external evidence deals with the literature surrounding Chariton. Tilg reverses Bowersock's thesis that the novels responded to the increasing popularity of stories about Christ: Chariton comes first. He also contests (with undue harshness) the thesis, propounded by Edmund Cueva, that Chariton knew Plutarch; instead, he is confident that the novelist knew and used Virgil's *Aeneid* (more on this below), which gives us, at last, a *terminus post quem*, Virgil's death in 19 BC (p. 68). Tilg also believes that Persius is alluding to Chariton's novel, which provides a *terminus ante quem*, AD 62. If these limits are accurate, and if the Athenagoras who employed Chariton is the one Tilg postulates, *Callirhoe* was written between 41 and 62, a date with which many specialists ultimately would agree. (Tangentially, Tilg repeats the observation, made by other scholars, concerning Philostratus' dismissal of Chariton (p. 81): it testifies to the novelist's popularity, for Philostratus would not have taken pains to disparage a non-entity. Chariton's popularity in the third century, however, does not prove he was the inventor of the novel or even the first novelist, but only that he was particularly successful.)

Chapter 3 is an attempt to date other early novelists with respect to Chariton. This is a strong chapter, though perhaps not the most original. That Xenophon depends on Chariton is not a new theory, but Tilg lays it out convincingly; the attribution of *Parthenope* to Chariton was already advanced by Hägg and Reardon, though Tilg pushes the evidence further. He emphasizes especially the free adaptation of history in both *Callirhoe* and *Parthenope*, as well as shared motifs and stylistic features (he could have added to the list a possible similar use of the recognition-motif: apparently Parthe-

nope's shining beauty did not remain undetected even when she tried to be inconspicuous by shaving her hair,² just as Callirhoe's splendor breaks through the most slavish outfits [2. 2. 4]). Tilg is particularly persuasive when he notes that both texts, alone among the extant novels, refer to the art of sculpture: this probably points to the author's Aphrodisian identity, since that city was famous for its marble statues. Likewise, the attribution of *Chione* to Chariton (again in the wake of Reardon and Hägg) is well argued. A compelling point is the appearance of Rumor in both *Chione* and *Callirhoe*; another good point is the presence in both texts of crowd scenes (though crowd scenes are not unique to those two texts: Heliodorus makes sustained use of crowds at highly emotional junctures, such as the reunion of Calasiris and his sons as well as of Charicleia and Theagenes in Book Seven and the recognition of Charicleia in Book Ten). Tilg is more hesitant to attribute *Ninus* to Chariton (as proposed by Stephens and Winkler). He spots significant differences between that novel and *Callirhoe*: in *Ninus* the heroine is secondary to the hero, Aphrodite is not a personal goddess, and the characters are not as fictional. These are good arguments. At the same time, however, the contrast between Ninus, who discloses his love to his aunt, and Semiramis, who keeps her peace, closely recalls Chariton's gendered treatment of the onset of passion, with Chaereas confessing it to his father and Callirhoe hiding it from everyone out of shame (the author is referred to M. J. Anderson, "The Silence of Semiramis: Shame and Desire in the Ninus Romance and Other Greek Novels," *AN* 7 (2008), 1-28).

With chapter 4 begins the evaluation of the internal evidence for Chariton's role as the novel's inventor. Chariton, it is argued, develops a "novel poetics" to promote the new genre he was conscious of creating. Authorial intrusions are read in this key; and so is Chariton's (likely) reference to Aristotle's *Poetics* in Book Eight, which would inaugurate a new "poetics of tragicomedie," one Chariton is pushing by presenting this book as "the most pleasant." The treatment of Chariton's poetics is generally very good (though I would have liked to be reminded, by Tilg as by other critics who use "tragicomic" for the novels' style, that no novelist, Chariton included, uses the term, a cognate of which instead appears for the first time in Plautus *Amphitruo* 59 [*tragicomoedia*]). The greatest novelty in Chariton's tragicomic poetics would be that he "adds a happy ending to an ideal love story in

² See the reconstruction of the plot by T. Hägg, "The *Parthenope* Romance Decapitated?" in Id., *Parthenope: selected studies on ancient Greek fiction (1969-2004)*, L. B. Mortensen and T. Eide (eds.), Copenhagen, 2004, 233-61 (first published in *Symbolae Osloenses* 59 (1984), 61-92), especially 258-59.

prose fiction” (p. 132); before Chariton, such stories did not end well (most famously that of Abradatas and Pantheia). This is a thoughtful and thought-provoking suggestion. It might, however, be asked whether a Greek reader would notice that for the first time a happy ending crowns a love story *in prose fiction* (as opposed to poetry, especially comedy). This would depend on how much emphasis an ancient reader put on the medium—and Aristotle, as is known, undermines the difference between the mechanics of prose and of poetry when he says that Empedocles writes in verse but is a *physiologos*, not a poet like Homer (*Poetics* 1447b18).

Tilg then moves on to show how Chariton relies on drama to guide readers through his new poetics, especially by investing internal audiences with the function of tragic choruses. This role of the crowd in Chariton was already demonstrated by M. Kaimio (as Tilg knows). More original is the section on Chariton’s use of Homer: the great number of citations from this poet gives the novel the patina of a “classic,” the seal of literary authority. While I find this suggestion sound and the demonstration solid, some details in the analysis are inaccurate, for instance where it is claimed (p. 143) that only in Chariton do we find references to Homer “in the novelist’s own person:” this could be meaningful if the *comparandum* is Heliodorus, but no comparison can be drawn with Achilles Tatius or Apuleius (contrary to what Tilg seems to think: see p. 143, note 30), which are of course first-person narratives. Likewise, to say that Heliodorus suffers from “anxiety with regard to Homer” (p. 144) perhaps because “he had to shake off Chariton who, in a way, was Homer” (p. 145), does not do justice to Heliodorus’ complex exploitation of Homer for the characters of Charicleia and Calasiris (to say the least). That Heliodorus does not adopt the relationship of Odysseus and Penelope for his protagonists is simply not true: in Book Five Odysseus in a dream tells Calasiris that Penelope blesses Charicleia for her chastity. Finally, on a more technical level, I would not call Chariton’s novel a *prosimetrum* in the style of Petronius (p. 145) because Chariton does not compose his own poetry but intersperses his prose with poetic citations.

In spite of these objections this part of Tilg’s book is strong and all in all persuasive. I also found much of interest in the section “past Athens,” in which Tilg argues that Chariton is competing with Athenian authors, especially Thucydides, to whom he winks by celebrating Syracuse and, along with the city, his own story. Best of all I liked the suggestion (pp. 161-62) that *Callirhoe*, located in Syracuse, might call to mind Arethusa, the spring who became a Muse of pastoral poetry (though we should not exclude Homer as Chariton’s primary source: see *Odyssey* 5. 441; 17. 206). Perhaps Cha-

riton “played with the notion that *Callirhoe* was his novel Muse, distinctly un-Athenian, not too far from the name and the epic voice of ‘Calliope,’ and in any case vouching for a ‘fair-flowing’ narrative.” To bear out this hypothesis Tilg could have added that Chariton lavishes dithyrambic praise on Callirhoe’s voice: it has a musical echo, as of a lyre (2. 3. 8). Could not the novelist be eulogizing his own “voice” in the voice of his heroine? Conversely, the idea that Theron “is a fitting mouthpiece of the novelist because the latter does something roguish himself” by writing in a new form (p. 163) seems counterintuitive to me: Theron is too negative a figure to impersonate the author, especially an author who is advertizing his “new form.” And how to reckon with Theron’s crucifixion? Will *Callirhoe* suffer the same treatment?

Chapter 5 keeps the reader on his toes: it is, I think, the core of the Book. In it Tilg argues that Chariton makes strong claims of originality. For instance, he contrasts his seemingly true prose fiction, δῆγμα, and the unbelievable poetic μῦθοι (there is a problem though with a passage adduced as evidence: at 5. 8. 2, Chariton by μῦθος is referring to his own story, not to poetic fictions.) The most important indication of Chariton’s intention to propound a new poetics is in his persisting and consistent use of καινός, novel, in connection with remarkable narrative sequences. This section is, in my view, the best of the book. It raises complex issues in the relationship between “tradition” and “innovation” in ancient literary criticism and practice, and all in all gives satisfactory answers to difficult questions. Tilg persuasively shows that Chariton points up his invention of motifs (as “the self-accusing accused” in the trial at 1. 5. 4), using Tyche and Eros as “lovers of novelty, creators of narratives” (p. 182). In several details, however, Tilg again forces, or misreads, the evidence. On p. 187 he assumes, with no discussion, the variant καινή for 8. 5. 15 (Dionysius would be blaming his “novel jealousy”): καινή is only in Theb., and is rejected by all the editors in favor of κενή, empty, which makes much more sense. Tilg is sometimes over-zealous in defending his arguments. His comparative analysis of the uses of καινός by Chariton and the other novelists does prove the former’s awareness of his originality and his programmatic efforts to promote his new form, for no other novelist uses καινός with the same consistency to make a metaliterary point. But once again the reader at times feels that Tilg overstates the case: for instance, in at least one episode Achilles Tatius uses the charged metaliterary expression δρᾶμα καινόν for an untypical sequence, namely when the protagonist, as he was trying to escape to his beloved, is being brought face to face with his enemy and recognized by him (6. 3. 1).

This is not a standard novelistic motif but is Achilles' "invention". Likewise, it could be argued that the label "new tragic episode" for Calasiris' sudden appearance on the battleground where his sons are contending for the priesthood (*Aethiopica* 7. 6. 4) is as self-conscious a ploy as similar ones in Chariton, for Heliodorus is bringing onto the stage of a fictional narrative in prose an episode from drama (Jocasta's appearance on the scene of her sons' slaughter in Euripides' *Phoenician Women*) that no previous writer had transposed into prose fiction (the episode of Calasiris' "dramatic" appearance is marked by one more daring experiment: it stages Achilles' pursuit of Hector, which Aristotle considers most unfit for the stage [*Poetics* 1460a 14-17]). Along similar lines, I think, Tilg underestimates (p. 196) the metaliterary importance of *καινός* in Longus 4. 22. 3, where the adjective refers to a radically novel alternative plot, one which, as John Morgan has eloquently illustrated,³ would put this text's novelistic ethos in danger (Tilg does not seem to know Morgan's commentary on Longus). Let me repeat, though, that this section of the book is excellent. If I have been fastidious about details, it is because I felt challenged to scrutinize the arguments closely.

Another term that Tilg takes to have a metaliterary function in Chariton's expounding his new poetics is *διήγημα*, which would amount to a *terminus technicus* for the kind of fiction he invents. Tilg shows that the term does not have the same importance in the other novels (a pattern of his book is to acknowledge that the terms Chariton employs for metaliterary purposes appears also in the other novelists, but not with the same frequency or significance). Tilg goes so far as to propose that the very title of the novel was "Narratives" (*διηγήματα*) about Chaereas and Callirhoe." The argument that a neuter plural would make a fitting title is attractive because neuter plurals are common titles indeed, though those titles tend to adopt more specific terms (*Ephesiaca*, *Satyrica* etc.) than the generic "narratives."

The last two chapters are devoted to the noticeable recurrence of *Φήμη*, Rumor, in Chariton. The hypothesis that Rumor "is an allegory for the author's voice" (241) is interesting and novel. (Regrettably, though, Tilg does not seem to know G. Schmeling's article "Callirhoe: god-like beauty and the making of a celebrity,"⁴ which studies the workings of Rumor in the novel from a different angle. Tilg could have profited from this piece in his discussion (pp. 242-43) of the function of Rumor to spread the reputation of Cal-

³ J. R. Morgan (ed.), *Longus. Daphnis and Chloe. With an introduction, translation, and commentary*, Oxford, 2004, 239, at 4. 22. 3.

⁴ In S. J. Harrison, M. Paschalis, S. Frangoulidis (eds.), *Metaphor and the Ancient Novel*, Groningen (*AN Suppl.* 4), 2005, 36-49.

lirhoe's beauty.) A comparison with the role of Rumor in the other novels shows, again, Chariton's uniqueness. Tilg, however, points to the similarity between Longus 4. 25. 3 (Rumor spreads the news that Dionysophanes has found a son) and Chariton 8. 1. 11 (Rumor spreads the news that Chaereas has found his wife), arguing that we can posit either Longus' imitation of Chariton or a generic pattern (p. 256). If the alternative is left open, as it should, then I do not understand Tilg's conclusion (p. 258) that "no clue to any generic convention about Rumour in the ideal novel can be found." Tilg seems to exclude the possibility he himself advances, that Longus is drawing from an existing motif. The comparison that follows between treatments of Rumor in earlier Greek literature and in Chariton reaches sound conclusions about possible influences: whereas *Odyssey* 24. 413-16 (Rumor spreading news of the suitors' death) is a likely source for Chariton 1. 5. 1 (Rumor spreading news of Callirhoe's death), historiography played no role because Rumor in it is not a remarkable presence and can lie—which it never does in Chariton.

Finally the *pièce de résistance*, for which Tilg has long whetted our appetite: has Virgil's *Fama* influenced Chariton's fashioning of Φήμη? Tilg's answer not only is positive: Virgil would even be Chariton's main source. Tilg supports his argument with solid evidence. The parallels with *Aeneid* IV are specific enough to suggest that Chariton knew at least this part of the Roman epic (see especially p. 268). Tilg wants to see in Chariton's Rumor a reversal of Virgil's (pp. 264-65): whereas in the *Aeneid* "Fama is [Virgil's] device to bring romance to a halt," in Chariton it broadcasts the romance. *Callirhoe* is "a romantic response to Virgil's story of Dido and Aeneas." Virgil's influence, Tilg argues, is not limited to Rumor: it extends to Callirhoe's double marriage, the child, and the very characterization of the heroine. The "triangle" Dido-Sycheus-Aeneas provides the blueprint for Callirhoe-Chaereas-Dionysius. Tilg is on less firm ground here. Though Callirhoe (at times) thinks Chaereas dead, she is not attracted to Dionysius at all but is forced to marry him by dire circumstances. (Tilg considers Callirhoe an adulteress: how can that be, since she does not love her "lover"? When she is compared to Helen, it is because of her predicament, not her feelings.) The point about the child is stronger: its presence could have been inspired by Dido's desire for a child to keep an image of Aeneas with her after he is gone. That is: the heroine of the romance gets what Dido does not. This suggestion nicely fits Tilg's reading of *Callirhoe* as a romantic rewriting of the story of Dido and Aeneas. The third point, about characterization, seems less forceful to me. Tilg thinks (pp. 278-79) that there are no women in Greek

literature who fit the bill of the heroines of the ideal novels with their “mental strength, emancipation, passion, idealism, and loyalty.” But what about the Medea of Apollonius’ *Argonautica*? She seems a closer and more readily available model than Dido for Chariton’s heroine.

If Tilg is right, Chariton would be the first Greek author to be inspired by a Latin poet on a large scale. We might expect an Aphrodisian author to be susceptible to the *Aeneid* because, as Tilg shows in great detail, both Rome and Aphrodisias were concerned with Aphrodite as ancestress to the Romans. At the same time, however, the hypothesis of Virgil’s influence on Chariton seems at odds with the novelist’s careful avoidance of everything Roman. Tilg argues that it is not true, as is often claimed, that the novel represents “a world without Rome”, and this because Chariton’s reception of the *Aeneid* would not fit the picture (p. 292). But what if there is *no such thing* as Chariton’s reception of the *Aeneid*? The latter must remain a hypothesis, not the “fact” on which to base criticism of an argument (“a world without Rome”) which is supported by the evidence of the text. On the same topic but from a different angle, if Chariton wished to acknowledge Virgil or, more politically, the tie between Aphrodisias and Rome, why did he do it so implicitly, so “silently”? Why would he disguise his admiration for and debt to *Virgilius Romanus*?

Finally Tilg draws three possible scenarios to show how Chariton could have known the *Aeneid*: in the original, in translation, or from pantomime spectacles. Though Tilg would opt for the second, I think the third is preferable, because it does not require the assumption either that Chariton traveled or that a text traveled, and, more importantly, it is in keeping with the great popularity of pantomime in the early Imperial period, in the East as in the West. Specifically, a fine study by Costas Panayotakis,⁵ apparently not known to Tilg, has demonstrated that Virgil, and the story of Dido and Aeneas in particular, was a major source for pantomime “libretti.” Chariton’s failure to be more explicit in stating his debt to Virgil could be better accounted for by supposing he did not read the text but saw the story staged (though admittedly this scenario would not sufficiently explain the detailed parallels in the treatment of Rumor as spotted by Tilg).

If I have been somewhat critical, it is because Tilg’s book is courageous and challenging. My criticisms are not intended to undermine the high quality of the research and argumentations displayed in this knowledgeable and rich piece of work, but to highlight its importance, which is also in the ques-

⁵ “Virgil on the Popular Stage,” in E. Hall and R. Wyles (eds.), *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime*, Oxford, 2008, 185-197.

tions and problems it raises. Tilg's book will be fundamental for scholars not only of the novel, but more generally of Greek literary history, for it tackles a central issue in ancient poetics: how decisive was "novelty" as a category in the creation and appreciation of literary forms? In what areas and to what extent do ancient writers point up their originality? (Aristophanes, for one, mocks innovators). Chariton's proud sentiment that he was writing a new form, if it indeed existed, resonates with an old dictum, of which Telemachus reminds Penelope: that (ancient) audiences prefer new songs (*Odyssey* 1. 351-52). Chariton's projected readership likewise is either assumed or invited to think that *tout nouveau, tout beau*, provided that novelty is dressed up as the offspring of nobility, of the best tradition. We learn much from Tilg's book. It is to be hoped that it will invite further research. If other scholars can prove with substantial evidence the theses Tilg has advanced, we will witness a momentous development in novel studies.