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Introduction

Denounced through the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century for its triviality, smuttiness, and pastiche (to say nothing of intimations of 'oriental' influence), the Greco-Roman novel began to find in the late years of the last century a much more enthusiastic audience. Perhaps better than any other ancient form, the novel embodies the spirit of (post-)modernity; of a prosaic world, politically and ethically complex beyond compare yet questing after simple truths, pluralist yet hierarchical, riven by global homogenisation. Art, literature, music, dance and film have all drawn inspiration from these texts.[1] The worlds of scholarship and teaching have been similarly energised: across the world university programmes, conferences, organisations, websites and publications testify to the vitality of novel studies.

The *Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel* offers eighteen new essays by internationally distinguished experts in the field of Greek and Roman narrative fiction. It seeks to provide students, scholars and the interested public with a sophisticated yet accessible point of entry into these beguiling texts. It is not designed as a general survey: although it is aimed at readers new to the novels as well as those with more familiarity, the *Companion* has no text-by-text discussions, and indeed no single agenda.[2] Rather it consists of a series of state-of-the art provocations, interlocking in overall design but written from a range of intellectual positions. Taken together, these essays represent both the culmination of the latest thinking on the novel and a stimulus to future exploration.

The volume is divided into four sections: 'Context', 'The world of the novel', 'Form' and 'Reception'. The book thus begins with the cultural background from which the novels emerged, progressing through content to literary analysis, before concluding with what readers (ancient, mediaeval, renaissance and modern) have made of them. Although structural divisions

1 See Fusillo, this volume.
2 For introductory works on the ancient novel, see the 'Further reading' appendix to Bowie, this volume.

like this are useful, however, all these fields are ultimately interconnected by myriad pathways; it is the aim of this introduction to encapsulate all these into a single whole.

What is the 'Greek and Roman novel'?

I begin with a short answer to this question. For the purposes of this volume, 'the novel' means, primarily, seven texts from the period of the Roman empire: in Latin, Petronius' (fragmentary) *Satyrica* and Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*; in Greek, Chariton's *Callirhoe*, Xenophon's *Anthia and Habrocomes*, Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* and Heliodorus' *Charicleia and Theagenes*. Attention is also given to the impressive range of Greek texts preserved either in summary or (showing up in ever-increasing numbers) in fragments.[3] Still within range, but at greater distance, are related works such as Lucian's *True stories*, the two known Greek versions of the *Ass* story (which also underlies Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*),[4] the *Alexander Romance* (a fictionalised version of the conquests of Alexander the Great, which achieved extraordinary popularity: eighty versions survive from antiquity and the middle ages, in twenty-four languages including Pahlavi, Arabic, Armenian and Bulgarian), and the *History of Apollonius, King of Tyre*. All of these works are written or achieve canonical form in the period of the Roman empire, and mostly from the first three centuries. Readers unfamiliar with the content and chronology of these texts may at this point choose to consult the 'Index of Greek and Roman novelists'.

The novel, on the definition adopted in this volume, is very much a product of imperial times. There were, of course, earlier works of inventive prose narrative: the fabulous travel accounts of Antiphanes of Berge (c. 400 BCE), Euhemerus of Messene (c. 300 BCE) and Iambulus (c. 100 BCE);[5] the romanticised Persian and Indian histories of Ctesias (c. 400 BCE), and their numerous Hellenistic acolytes (now mostly lost);[6] Xenophon's *Education of Cyrus* (c. 350 BCE), an important intertext for Chariton in particular;[7] the inventive rewritings of the Trojan War by Hegesianax (under the pseudonym 'Cephalion of Gergitha') and Dionysius 'the leather arm' (second century BCE);[8] and the collections of local myth by Parthenius (first century BCE) and

3 Stephens and Winkler (1995); see further *P. Oxy.* 4760–2.
4 For the new *Ass* see *P. Oxy.* 4762.
5 See in general Holzberg (2003b); Winiarczyk (2002) provides more context, together with specific discussion of Euhemerus.
6 For Ctesias as a forerunner of the novelists, see esp. Holzberg (1992).
7 Perry (1967) 169–74.
8 For Dionysius Scytobrachion see Rusten (1992).

Conon (first century BCE – first CE).[9] Among the latter might well belong the notorious but now lost *Milesian affairs* of Aristides, alluded to by Apuleius as a precursor at the outset of his *Metamorphoses* ('Milesian discourse', 1.1).[10]

The novels discussed in this volume, however, represent something different from their Hellenistic precursors: they use wholly invented characters (that is to say, not mythical or historical); they are consistently (if not identically) erotic, with a particular emphasis upon romantic love (or parodies of it) despite obstacles and separations. This, however, raises a new question: can we speak meaningfully of the novel as a single literary form? The concept of genre as a tool for reading and writing is considered in Goldhill's chapter in this volume, but it will be worth our while to pause and consider an issue that is arguably more fundamental to a collected volume like this: does it make sense to bundle together all these diverse texts, written in Latin and Greek, spanning some three centuries?

As is often noted, antiquity not only avoided literary-critical discussion of the novel,[11] but even (apparently) lacked any distinctive name for it: words such as the Latin *argumentum* and the Greek *plasma* simply mean 'made-up story', the Latin *fabula* means 'story', and the Greek *drama* means 'action'. The English word 'novel' is only a label of convenience, which does not correspond directly to any ancient generic concept (the same goes for 'romance', sometimes used of the Greek texts). Nor are formal criteria any help. Poetic genres are often indicated by metre (hexameter for epic, iambic trimeters for tragic speech, and so forth), but these obviously do not apply to prose. Finally, there is no performance context to decide genre: whereas, for example, classical Athenian tragedies and comedies were performed during the relevant phase of the festival of the Great Dionysia, novels would have been read (whether in isolation or collectively) in different environments that were wholly unrelated to their content.

On these grounds, it has been claimed that there was no concept of the novel as a genre at all in antiquity: the novel is, we are told, 'a container of styles rather than itself a homogeneous and distinctive style'.[12] There are, however, problems with this formulation. That novels are radically intertextual – that is to say, that they (or most of them) rework literary motifs from

9 On whom see, respectively, Lightfoot (1999), Brown (2002). For a general account of Hellenistic prose fiction see Whitmarsh (forthcoming).
10 On these see Harrison (1998c).
11 The only explicit discussion is in Macrobius' commentary on Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* (1.2.8, end of fourth century CE), and even that is very brief. Julian's comment on 'fictions . . . narrated in earlier authors in the guise of history' (*Epistles* 89b 301b Bidez) is often cited in connection with the novel, but in fact Julian is unlikely to have thought of writers of the imperial period as 'earlier' (Whitmarsh (2005a) 607–8).
12 Nimis (1994), at 398.

an astonishing range of sources – does not itself mean that they necessarily lack any distinctive style of their own. After all, tragedy makes liberal use of epic, lyric and rhetorical forms, but no one would argue that it lacks its own qualities. There are, in fact, good reasons to take the novels upon which this collection focuses as a distinctive genre – so long as we use the concept flexibly.[13] Let us turn now to consider how we might capture this idea of the Greco-Roman novel.

Novels and ideals

Critics often argue for the unity of the genre using the concept of the 'ideal' novel: the five major Greek texts all focus upon the enduring love of a young heterosexual couple through a series of tribulations; they are united in conclusion, apparently to live happily ever after.[14] They are all set in the distant past (or at least a historically indeterminate setting that might be the past). Against this backdrop, the 'non-ideal' texts can be read as deliberate perversions of the norm. Of the five Greek texts, Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, with its recurrent emphasis upon earthier motives and hints of a darker aftermath to the text, looks like a subversion, even a parody, of the protocols of ideal romance.[15] The various novels preserved in fragments and summary offer further examples: Lollianus' *Phoenician Affairs*, with its scenes of human sacrifice and (perhaps) gay plot; *Iolaus*, with its bawdy take on mystery-cult; Iamblichus' *Babylonian Affairs*, with its entirely non-Greek setting and its grotesque elements (such as ghostly goats and man-eating dogs).

The Roman novels too have been held to presuppose – and subvert – the generic norm of the ideal romance. Since a classic article by Heinze (1899), Petronius' *Satyrica* has often been read as wittily undermining the romantic ideology of the Greek version, substituting rapacious male pederasts (i.e. boy-lovers) for heterosexual *naïfs*, lust for love, and quotidian, contemporary 'realism' for sepia-tinged classicism. Current hypotheses over the dating of the novels raise a problem with this thesis: if Chariton's *Callirhoe* is the earliest Greek novel at c. 50 CE, then Petronius – assuming our author is the Neronian courtier – can hardly have been responding to a major literary vogue (he committed suicide in 66 CE). Ultimately, however, there are just too many uncertainties around the dating of both texts to allow for any real conclusion either way.

13 Literary-theoretical discussions of genre are numerous: for guidance, see Goldhill, this volume.
14 See e.g. Holzberg (1995) 43–60. 15 Parody: Durham (1938); Chew (2000).

Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* is at first sight a different kind of work: quite explicitly a take on a Greek original ('a Greekish story', *fabulam Graecanicam*, 1.1), but on the *Ass* story rather than the ideal romance. *Ass* narratives seem to have circulated in a number of Greek forms. The ninth-century bishop Photius records that he has read two, one that he takes to be the original, and another that he ascribes to Lucian (the prodigious satirist of the second century CE).[16] The latter survives, although scholars do not all follow Photius in treating it as the work of Lucian himself. Fortuitously, a further papyrus fragment has turned up, apparently from a different version of the same narrative, describing a sex scene between a woman and an ass.[17] Apuleius' version, then, is a sophisticated version, packed with literary flamboyance and blended with a Platonising account of conversion to the cult of Isis, of a scurrilous tale that circulated around the Greek world in multiple forms.

Even so, there are grounds for thinking that Apuleius – who was very aware of the Greek intellectual currents that washed around him[18] – was reacting to the dominant Greek narrative form of his day, *viz.* the heterosexual novel. Specifically, the famous inset tale of Cupid and Psyche that dominates the central part of the text (books 4–6), and which is (so far as we know) unparalleled in Greek versions, looks very much like a gesture towards the ideals of sublime, heterosexual love. This tale, moreover, is narrated to a young woman whose story that, told from a different angle, might very well have been a kind of romance.[19] This Charite (whose name might even recall the novelist Chariton) has been kidnapped by bandits on her wedding night, attempts escape, is recaptured and threatened with a grim death, before being finally rescued by her disguised fiancé Tlepolemus. This 'novel', however, has a grim aftermath: Tlepolemus is brutally murdered, and Charite kills herself on his tomb – but not before her husband's murderer has tried it on with her. Apuleius' assault upon ideals of romantic love seems even more starkly brutal than Petronius'.

The works discussed in this volume, then, revolve around the matrimonial ideals fostered in the Roman empire, even if the shapes of their orbits are very different. Such ideals of mutual affection and support (with overarching control, it almost goes without saying, ceded to the male) are expressed in a range of works by Seneca, Musonius Rufus, Plutarch and others, and

16 *Library* codex 129.
17 *P. Oxy.* 4762. This narrative is externally narrated, whereas that of 'Lucius' seems, to judge from Photius' summary, to have been a first-person account. The papyrus also seems to mix verse and prose.
18 Sandy (1997); Harrison (2000).
19 Lalanne (2002). For the Greek-novelistic tone of the whole bandit episode see Mackay (1963).

have been memorably discussed by Michel Foucault in the third volume of his *History of Sexuality* (see Morales in this volume). Foucault (following the lead of Paul Veyne) detects a series of shifts during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, away from pederasty (boy-love) towards heterosexual marriage, away from civic virtues towards the more ostensibly private ideals of self-reflection and the 'care of the self'.[20] The 'ideal' novels are thus read as an expression of the social, indeed sacramental, importance of marriage among the traditional Greco-Roman aristocracy. These, frustrated (so the argument goes) at their newly limited opportunities for political advancement, focused their energies instead upon preserving the traditional, aristocratic structures of the family (the very structures that radical Christians would seek to destroy through the ascetic denial of sexuality). Meanwhile the 'less-than-ideal' novels (to coin a phrase) can be read as riffs around the same theme, subverting rather than promoting these same ideals.

We should pause, however, to nuance the concept of the ideal novel. Like all ideals, it does not exist in practice: even the most philosophically high-minded novels are idiosyncratic, sophisticated, playful and ethically complex. For example, the earliest novel, Chariton's *Callirhoe*, turns upon the story of a woman who loves her husband; after he has jealously kicked her into a coma and she has been abducted by pirates, she is forced to marry a second husband for the sake of her unborn child (for which she earns comparisons with the arch-bigamist Helen of Troy, 2.6.1, 5.2.8, 5.5.9). Hardly an 'ideal' love story, then, on any criterion. Nor is the demotion of boy-love quite as uniform as is sometimes suggested.[21] In a well-known discussion, Simon Goldhill accuses Foucault and his followers of 'virginity' – that is, intellectual naivety – in reading the novels as straightforwardly moral narratives.[22] What is ultimately significant, however, is not whether the novels are serious or playful, a question that has been running (under various guises) for years,[23] and which no doubt deserves more than a box-check answer. The more important lesson of these debates is that each novel needs to be taken on its own terms, as an individual creation. What makes the notion of the 'ideal' novel problematic is the implication that some of the novels are straightforward, unreflective expressions of ideology.

These issues bring us back to the question of what we should expect from a genre. Genres are not templates, recipes, or checklists, but loose

20 Foucault (1986); cf. Veyne (1978). See further Konstan (1994); Swain (1996) 101–31; Cooper (1996) 20–44.

21 See e.g. Effe (1987). Broadly sympathetic pederasts appear in Petronius, Xenophon and Achilles; Iamblichus' *Babylonian Affairs* possibly even featured a lesbian relationship, between Berenice and Mesopotamia (see Morales, this volume).

22 Goldhill (1995). 23 See esp. Anderson (1982); Winkler (1982); Dowden (1996).

affiliations of ideas: they rest on 'family resemblances', in Stephen Heath's (Wittgensteinian) formulation, rather than phylogenetic properties.[24] Most people's intuitive idea of a cowboy movie might involve a pistol duel, but the absence of such a scene would not disqualify a particular movie from the genre. Similarly, a number of the Greco-Roman novels feature abduction by pirates and shipwrecks, but that does not make those without such episodes any less novelistic. In fact, arguably, quite the opposite is true: it is when a text subverts or frustrates our expectations that the idea of a generic 'law' is most forceful. When, for example, Longus' Daphnis is kidnapped by sea-faring robbers, generically attuned readers expect them to initiate a narrative of travel and pursuit, rather than (as actually happens) having their boat capsized by marauding cows before they have left the harbour (Long. 1.30.2).

Love and learning

The novels discussed in this volume also share a chronological range between the first and the third centuries CE (although Heliodorus may be fourth).[25] In addition to its distinctive sexual ethics (discussed above), this period is also characterised by a preoccupation with Greek culture, particularly embodied in the prose literature of classical Athens. Across the empire, the elites immersed themselves in Thucydides, Plato, Xenophon and Demosthenes, absorbing not only their subject-matter but also their dialect and style. To be educated meant to be conversant with the Greek classics, and (particularly from the second century onwards) to be able to write and perform in the 'Attic' form of Greek peculiar to Athens of half a millennium or so earlier.[26] The Greek past does not simply offer an excuse for escapism: as Connors shows in her chapter, it is better imagined as a set of imaginative resources through which to explore, allegorically, political issues in the present.

The novels are located squarely within this culture of education, or (to use the Greek term) *paideia*.[27] They are highly sophisticated works, as contributors to this volume emphasise, in terms of style (Laird), narrative strategy (Whitmarsh, Bartsch) and allusions to earlier literature (or 'intertextuality': Morgan, Harrison). The Greek novels of the second century and later (Achilles, Longus, Heliodorus) are composed in the Attic dialect, often ostentatiously brandishing linguistic features (such as the optative mood) that

24 Heath (2004) 168. 25 For dates see the 'Index of Greek and Roman novelists'.
26 Bowie (1970); Swain (1996); Schmitz (1997); Whitmarsh (2001a), (2005b); Goldhill (2001a); Borg (2004).
27 This has been a cornerstone of novel studies since Rohde (1914), the first edition of which was published in 1876.

had disappeared from normal usage. The Latin novelists are virtuosi of the same stature; Apuleius in particular has an astonishing facility with rhythm, word-play and literary reminiscence, setting him right in line with the Greek sophists of his day.[28] Although (as we have seen) not explicitly recognised by contemporary intellectuals, the novel is (as Bowie shows in this volume) deeply enmeshed with the literary currents of its day. These formal aspects are not merely stylistic; as well as enriching the literary texture, they also clearly position the texts socioculturally, as products of and for the elite. Nor was the training of the elite confined to mental activity: bodily fitness was crucial as well, and this concern is also expressed in the novels (see König's chapter).

Paideia is also a theme within the very narrative of the novels. Characters in the Greek novel (particularly in Chariton) are routinely said to be 'educated'.[29] Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* is centrally about education, in that it focuses upon the upbringing of two young children. Although the particular kind of education they seek is erotic, literary culture is never far away: the sculpted prose, suffused with Sapphic and Theocritean resonance, combined with the rural setting (the uneducated were commonly derided as 'rustics'), convert this apparently simple tale of rustic naivety into a complex allegory testing the reader's own *paideia*.[30] Longus does not, however, allow his educated readers to repose comfortably: the one figure actually described as 'educated' is Gnathon (4.17.3), a voracious pederast who attempts (and comically fails) to seduce and then rape Daphnis.

The most satirical account of Greek *paideia* comes in a Latin novel, Petronius' *Satyrica*. This narrative is entirely presented through the eyes of a pretentious Greek, Encolpius, a 'mythomaniac' who overlays his sordid story with inappropriately highbrow reminiscences of classical texts.[31] In the most famous (and unfragmented) part of the text, Encolpius sneers at the ignorance of the Roman freedman Trimalchio, whose banquet epitomises tasteless vulgarity (26–78).[32] Another character, Eumolpus, is a teacher of philosophy who seduces the boy under his tutelage, to the point where the boy becomes more ardent than he: the whole episode is a gleeful reworking of Plato's *Symposium*, where Alcibiades lusts after Socrates rather than

28 As Laird in particular highlights in this volume; see also Sandy and Harrison.
29 Char. 1.12.6, 1.12.9, 2.1.5, 2.4.1, 2.5.11, 3.2.6, 4.7.6, 5.5.1, 5.9.8, 8.5.10 (Dionysius), 6.5.8, 7.5.6 (Callirhoe), 7.2.5 (Chaereas), 8.3.10 (Demetrius); Xen. Eph. 1.1.3; Ach. Tat. 1.8.4; Long. 1.8.1; Hld. 2.33.5.
30 Hunter (1983), e.g. 59; Zeitlin (1990); Whitmarsh (2001a) 100–3.
31 The phrase 'mythomaniac' is Conte's (1994).
32 The name 'Trimalchio' seems to invite derivation from the Semitic root *MLK* (Hebrew מלך) denoting royal rule.

the reverse.[33] For all that Petronius mercilessly attacks the venality and corruption of contemporary Rome (there is more than a whiff of Nero about Trimalchio), he also targets the hypocritical Greeks who affect an air of moral superiority.

The status of the novels

The reasons behind this widespread emphasis upon Greek learning have been widely debated, and are beyond our present scope.[34] It will be important to us, however, to underline that this was an empire-wide phenomenon, and not simply limited to mainland Greece. There were certainly those inhabitants of the old Greek centres, particularly Athens, who saw themselves as defending their cultural purity against the hordes of barbarian outsides.[35] There were, however, also those from further afield like the Gaul Favorinus and the Syrian Lucian (both second-century CE) who saw Greek education as an opportunity to transform themselves from locals to cultural citizens of the empire: for such figures, 'Greek' signified power, status and respect, not just ethnic affiliation.[36]

It is, in this connection, particularly significant that the settings of the novels tend to avoid mainland Greece, apparently systematically (as Susan Stephens emphasises in this volume). The picture painted of Athens in particular is notably gloomy.[37] Chariton's *Callirhoe* is set on Syracuse in the aftermath of the failed Athenian invasion of 415–413; Callirhoe herself is the daughter of the victorious general Hermocrates (a figure familiar from the fourth, sixth and seventh books of Thucydides' *Histories*). This anti-Athenian feeling percolates even to the pirate Theron, who gives the Piraeus a wide berth because he despises the 'inquisitiveness' of the Athenians (1.11.6). In Heliodorus' *Charicleia and Theagenes*, meanwhile, Athens is the setting for Cnemon's inset story of treachery, tragedy and illicit passion, which serves as a counterpoint to the main tale that we read (which is set entirely in Africa).[38] The one exception is the *Ass* tale (both the Greek and the Latin version), but even this is set in Thessaly, in the semi-civilised north, where a veneer of Hellenism hides a world of magic and weird ritual.

This avoidance of cultural centres reflects the provenance of the novelists themselves, who tend to hail (as Stephens again notes) from the frontiers of the empire. The earliest Greek authors hailed from Asia Minor: Chariton

33 *Sat.* 87; Plato, *Symposium* 219b–c; Dimundo (1983).
34 See the works cited in n. 26 above.
35 An excellent example is Agathion (second century CE), at Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 552–4. See Whitmarsh (2001a) 105–8.
36 Whitmarsh (2001a) 116–29. 37 Oudot (1992). 38 Hld. 1.9–17; Morgan (1989a).

of Aphrodisias (the Carian city favoured by the Julio-Claudian dynasty, and plausibly the origin of the *Ninus* romance too),[39] and Xenophon of Ephesus. Petronius may have been a Neronian courtier, but Apuleius was from Madaurus in north Africa. Achilles Tatius, according to the Byzantine encyclopaedia known as the *Suda* and the manuscript tradition, was from Egyptian Alexandria (if this is not simply an extrapolation from the wide-eyed description of the city that opens book 5). Iamblichus, author of the fragmentary *Babylonian Affairs*, was apparently a Syrian for whom Greek was his third language after Babylonian and (presumably) Syriac.[40] Lucian (the author of the *True Histories*, and perhaps *Lucius or the Ass*) was also a native Syrian, from Commagene. Another Syrian was Heliodorus, who hailed from Emesa (modern Homs); he signs off by declaring himself a 'Phoenician, from the race of the sun' (10.41.4). The last phrase alludes to the local Semitic cult of Elahagabal (famously embraced by the Severan dynasty at the behest of the empress Julia Domna, another Emesene): the name is composed of two parts, the first of which (the Canaanite El, i.e. Aramaic *elāhā* ~ Hebrew *'ēl*, Arabic *ilāh-* / *Allāhu*) was Hellenised into Helios ('sun').[41] For the novelists, as for many other contemporary figures, Greek *paideia* is the common stock of civilised humanity, and not limited to those few who happened to hail from Greece itself.

Were the novels written with a female readership – now more educated than ever before – in mind? It has sometimes been speculated that the ideals of symmetrical marriage, pursued by determined, active, intelligent young women like Chariton's Callirhoe and Heliodorus' Charicleia, would have appealed to precisely this female readership.[42] Antonius Diogenes' *Wonders beyond Thule*, indeed, is (fictitiously) constructed as an account of the author's travels addressed to his sister Isidora.[43] This is, however, no concrete evidence either way; and, as Morales' chapter shows,[44] the representation of women can also titillate male readers. Moreover, it is questionable how many women were educated up to the standards envisaged by the novelists. Still, it is worth keeping an open mind on the matter: audiences are not uniform, nor has any writer ever imagined them to be.

39 For the importance of the Ninus and Semiramis story to Aphrodisias, see Yildirim (2004).
40 See the scholion to Photius cited at Habrich (1960) 2, and translated at Stephens and Winkler (1995) 181. On the problems raised by this testimony see Stephens and Winkler (1995) 181–2, and further Millar (1993) 489–92.
41 Nothing is known of Longus or Antonius Diogenes.
42 Egger (1988), (1994a–b); cf. Johne (2003) 156–64; fuller bibliography in Hunter's chapter below.
43 Photius, *Library* codex 166, 111a = Stephens and Winkler (1995) 127.
44 Cf. Morales (2004).