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## How Ideal is the Oldest Ideal Greek Novel?

Review article of

Smith, S.D. 2007. *Greek Identity and the Athenian Past in Chariton: The Romance of Empire* (ANS, 9). Groningen: Barkhuis & Groningen University Library. ix, 282 p. (hb).

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**Abstract**

In this review article, I first offer a critical discussion of S.D. Smith's *Greek Identity and the Athenian Past in Chariton: The Romance of Empire* (Groningen 2007). Subsequently, I analyze in detail what I consider to be one of the most important contributions of the book; this is Smith's identification of what I would call 'epistemological relativism' as a pattern underlying Chariton's narrative technique. I single out two thematic areas in which this pattern is particularly relevant and make some additions of my own regarding specific readings by Smith in each area. I argue that these two thematic strands challenge the widely-held view that Chariton is one of the most prototypical representatives of the genre of the ideal Greek novel.

Whereas the first half of the twentieth century witnessed the publication of quite a number of monographs focussing exclusively on Chariton's ancient Greek novel *Callirhoe*,[2] Smith's book is only the second such monograph in the last three decades.[3] It offers an incisive analysis which makes for stimulating reading and opens up more prospects for further research than Smith himself acknowledges (see below). The first part of this review article offers a critical discussion of Smith's major points, roughly following the book's structure. Subsequently, I analyze in detail what I consider to be one of the most important contributions of the book; this is Smith's identification of what I would call 'epistemological relativism' as a pattern underlying Chariton's narrative technique. In the course of this analysis, I single out two thematic areas in which this pattern is particularly relevant and make some additions of my own regarding specific readings by Smith in each area. Finally, I connect the notion of relativism to a broader issue in present-day scholarship and suggest an avenue for further research.

## 1.  Critical Discussion of Smith 2007

Political dynamics have long been understood to play an important role in Chariton's novel. Naber (1901, 98-9), for example, suggests that the son of Chaereas and Callirhoe, who on his parents' return to Syracuse is left in Miletus to grow up as the son of Dionysius and whose own return is anticipated by his mother, is to be identified with Dionysius I, the famous ruler of Syracuse who is portrayed by ancient anecdotal tradition as the archetypal tyrant.[4] Since Naber, quite some scholarly attention has been paid to Chariton's concern with the notions of freedom, democracy, tyranny and empire (for a concise and handsome overview, see Smith pp. 2-13). Smith inscribes his own study in this tradition but focusses in particular on the representation of the Athenian past. His careful and systematic exploration of the Athenian literary tradition of anti-tyrannical ideology in Chariton transcends the traditional and oft-discussed distinction between Greek and barbarian identity and substantially complicates Oudot's (1992) thesis that Athens is intentionally trivialized by Syracusan characters. Smith's starting point is more dynamic and opens up prospects (albeit implicitly) for further research into

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[2]  Smith's bibliography mentions most of them. Only Jakob 1903 and Rein 1927 are absent from it.

[3]  To the best of my knowledge, the only other monograph on Chariton after Schmeling 1974 is Hernández Lara 1994. Two unpublished PhD dissertations on Chariton from this period are Gerschmann 1975 and Alvares 1993 (both are mentioned by Smith). Smith's book itself originates from a PhD dissertation defended at Boston University in 2003.

[4]  See *OCD*³ s.v. Dionysius. Naber's thesis is mentioned by Smith on p. 246.

other Greek novels. He rightly observes that Athens is represented negatively by some (Syracusan) characters, but that the narrative voice simultaneously ornates the entire text with 'Athenian' intertextuality (1-2). A similar "marked dissonance" (1), I may add, can also be detected in some other extant Greek novels. Heliodorus, for example, ornates his text with an elaborate layer of classical (and, indeed, to a considerable extent Athenian) intertextuality, but at the same time the narrative dynamics of his novel characterize Athens (and much of Greece in general) as the ignorant and morally pernicious opposite of Ethiopia, the utopian homeland of the heroine.[5] Another example is Achilles Tatius, whose novel interestingly inverts notions of Greekness. Unlike most other novelistic heroes, his hero Clitophon is not Greek but Phoenician, whereas the villain, Thersander, is depicted not as a barbarian but as a Greek from Asia Minor. These observations beg the question of what is actually at stake in the ambiguous novelistic representation of Greece in general and Athens in particular. It is a question which has not yet been answered, but Smith provides an elegant and often convincing exploration as far as Chariton is concerned.

Despite one or two structural imbalances and infelicities,[6] the book is on the whole well balanced. The introductory chapter (1-22) is mainly conceived as a state of the art (6-13 and 18-22) and discusses methodological issues of narratology and focalization (13-7). The second chapter (23-49) surveys different representations of classical Athens in thematically relevant works by six Latin and Greek prose authors from the first centuries BC and AD (Diodorus' *Bibliothêkê*, Cicero's *Pro Flacco*, Nepos' *Life of Alcibiades*, Velleius Paterculus' *Historia Romana*, Seneca's *De tranquillitate animi* and Plutarch's *De gloria Atheniensium*). Smith explores a number of *topoi* underlying evocations of Athens' classical past (such as its reputation as the cultural beacon of antiquity and the contestations thereof, the greed, moral decay and political factiousness informing its anti-democratic critiques, and its presence as a figure for Rome) and seeks to point out that, although such evocations in both languages share some common themes, the depiction of Athens is ultimately ambiguous and resists easy definition. In the subsequent chapters, a similar ambiguity will repeatedly be traced in Chariton's novel. Smith is careful to point out that he makes no claim that Chariton was necessarily familiar with any

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[5] See, for example, Morgan 1989.

[6] In the introductory chapter (1-22), for example, the discussion of the figure of Callirhoe (18-9) is only partly relevant to the rest of the book: whereas the figure of Chaereas is regularly taken up (most notably in Chapter 7), Callirhoe resurfaces only occasionally (for example on pp. 99-104, 161-2, etc.). Secondly, the conclusion is relatively short (244-8) and is typographically presented as the conclusion to Chapter 7 rather than to the book as a whole.

of these works and that this chapter merely functions as a "discursive background" (23). Such a background is highly appropriate at this point, but precisely because any relationship of the authors to Chariton remains unclear, the chapter is ultimately perhaps less instructive than one might hope for.

The subsequent chapters take up the above-mentioned dissonance between the representation of Athens by various characters in the story (Chapter 3) and Athenian intertextuality (Chapters 4-7). In Chapter 3 (50-98), Smith often offers innovative interpretations of individual passages (e.g. Hermocrates as semiotician on pp. 57-8 and 74, the description of the Athenian spring on pp. 67-71, etc.). At other instances, one could wish for a somewhat more detailed discussion. The comments on Callirhoe's soliloquy (66), for example, would have gained depth by taking into account rhetorical theory on *ethopoeia*.[7] Moreover, although the introductory chapter rightly (but somewhat lengthily) draws attention to the importance of the narratological distinction between the narrator's and a character's focalization (13-7), it is sometimes difficult to agree with Smith's interpretation of its relevance in specific passages. Whereas I agree with his reading of Callirhoe's funeral procession as a tool used for Syracusan self-representation ("they make a statement through spatial organization", 57), I cannot find any indication in the text to support his claim that the *ecphrasis* of this procession is therefore an example of text interference.[8] On a more general note, a recurrent aspect that might have benefited from more explicit attention (particularly in view of the subsequent chapters) is the metaphorical relationship between characters who adopt the representation of Athens as a means of self-representation, and the text itself as an expression of Greek identity. This is first touched upon on p. 51, and taken up in examples on pp. 57 (the analogy between the *sêmeia* carried by the Syracusan hoplites and the ecphrastic passage itself) and 110 (the analogy between Callirhoe as different from Ajax and Medea and the text itself as a departure from 5th-century Athenian tragedy). The example on p. 110 is of particular interest in this regard because of similar associations between the heroine and the novel itself in other Greek novels (most notably in Longus)[9] and the most likely original title ('Callirhoe') of Chariton's novel.[10]

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[7]  On the importance of rhetorical theory for the study of Chariton, see also Birchall's (2008) review of Smith's book.

[8]  Smith (57 n. 17) cites the definition of Bal ([2]1997, 52): "narrator's text and actor's text are so closely related that a distinction into narrative levels can no longer be made".

[9]  Passages such as Longus 2.27.2, where Pan rebukes the Methymnian soldiers for having abducted Chloe, 'about whom Eros wants to make a story (*mython*)', are illustrative. See, for example, Morgan 2004, 193.

[10]  For an overview of scholars defending this title, see p. 1 n. 2.

Chapters 4-7 comprise a rich study of intertextual networks underlying the novel. Chapters 4-6 deal with intertexts from Athenian myth and drama, rhetoric and historiography respectively, and illuminate the implications of all these presences at specific places in the novel. Chapter 7, finally, adduces intertexts from Thucydides, Xenophon and Plato to demonstrate that Chaereas is generically associated with Alcibiades. This reading connects Chaereas to the novel's major themes of eros, tyranny and gender. The breadth and depth of these analyses demonstrate that the author is on the whole well acquainted with both primary and secondary literature. One exception may be his discussion of asianism and atticism in the courtroom speeches of Mithridates and Dionysius (134-40), which does not acknowledge Doulamis' (2002, 171-200) detailed rhetorical and stylistic analysis of the *partes* of both speeches and a number of their rhetorical features.[11]

At times, Smith's effort to match passages from Chariton to exact intertexts neglects the possible importance of more varied material. This affects not only his approach to specific intertexts,[12] but also his handling of passages from Chariton. If Chaereas is characterized as a "superior individual" (216), for example, the same can be said of almost any other ancient Greek novel hero. Similarly, the absence of any specific physical characteristics (215-6) topically characterizes most Greek novel heroes rather than Chaereas alone. Smith's own observation that the ambivalence of Alcibiades' ethical gender also "surrounds the heroes of the Greek romances" (228) seems to acknowledge the topical resonances of some of Chaereas' characteristics, but fails to address the question of how this topicality affects the comparison with Alcibiades. Conversely, the potential presence of Rome in Chariton's novel remains somewhat indeterminate. After occupying a prominent place in the introductory survey of scholarship (10-3) and the discussion of authors contemporary to Chariton (43-9), Rome virtually disappears until pp. 192-8, where a recapitulation of the foregoing chapters builds up to what turns out to be one of the book's central points, namely that Athens in Chariton is constructed not as a symbol for Rome, but rather as a catalyzer for cultural negotiation with it (or, it would seem, imperial power in general).[13] Smith then

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[11] Smith does mention Doulamis 2002 in the bibliography (252), but not in the discussion of the courtroom speeches, where he refers only to Alvares 2000, 384, who touches upon this issue only in passing.

[12] As Akujaervi (2008) suggests in her review of this book, Smith's discussion of Lysian infuence in Chariton (120-7) might well be a case in point.

[13] See p. 193: "ideas about freedom and empire, relevant to all Greek cultural production in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE, are evoked in Chariton's novel primarily by allusion to a classical Athenian discourse that both reaffirmed and problematized the ideological

goes on to identify some parallels with Roman power throughout the novel (194-5) and concludes that it moves beyond "ideological binarism" (194) and ambiguously harbours imperialist transformations from freedom to tyranny as well as evidence of resistance to empire. This is correct as far as it goes, but although Smith announces as early as p. 5 that "the appropriation and reconfiguration of Athenian discourses in Chariton's novel are [...] evidence of a widespread cultural process of redefining what it means to be Greek in the Roman Empire of the 1st century CE",[14] both this cultural process of identity (re)definition and the precise role(s) played by Rome therein remain surrounded by a certain degree of indeterminacy. This vagueness persists even in the conclusion to the book, which states that "the transition from Greek freedom to foreign tyranny was a theme that was highly relevant [*sic*] for a Greek writer and audience of the 1st century CE" (247).

## 2. How Ideal is Chariton's Novel?

One of the most stimulating aspects of Smith's book is the critique of the commonly-accepted ideal reading of Chariton's novel. In Greek novel scholarship it has been assumed, intuitively and dogmatically rather than on the basis of research, that both the happy ending and the characterization of the protagonists, described as ideal figures whose perfection is never affected by their numerous adventures, illustrate the novels' preference for an idealized depiction of the story world.[15] Smith's critique of such a reading often connects with the creation of open-endedness[16] and ambiguity in Chariton, which replaces a straightforward happy ending by a profound sense of relativism. Ultimately, it entails what I would call 'epistemological relativism'. This aspect is most emphatically thematized on pp. 155-63, where Thucydidean *akribeia* in Chariton's novel is demonstrated to be a tool for creative lying, which, in turn, is connected to the essence of fiction ("Chariton lays bare the impossibility of a completely truthful account and a narrative devoid of the pleasures of fiction", 162-3). Within the narrative, the impossibility of truth-

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antithesis between democracy and tyranny. Athenian literature of the 5th and 4th centuries BC, in other words, provided Chariton with the means by which an indirect cultural negotiation with Rome might find expression".

[14] This concern is repeated on p. 49 ("how one recreated the Athenian past was highly relevant to how one articulated a Greek and Roman identity in the imperial context of the Common Era").

[15] Anderson (1997, 2284), for example, acknowledges this tendency in secondary literature. For a more detailed account of scholarship on characterization of protagonists in the Greek novels, see De Temmerman 2007, 235-8.

[16] Nimis 1999 and Fusillo 1996 would have been helpful to give this aspect more focus.

ful communication is illustrated by characters who adopt versions of mythological or historical narratives in function of their own agendas (for example Chaereas' adoption of the story about Theseus (101-3) and Artaxerxes' and Callirhoe's manipulation of the Athenian expedition for different purposes (85)).

Because of Smith's consistent focus on the representation of the Athenian past, some of the broader implications of his reading remain implicit and run the risk of going unnoticed. In this respect, it is regrettable that even the conclusion does not deal with this point in a more comprehensive way. Here, I go some way towards exploring what I see as such an important implication. The observations upon which Smith bases his critique are scattered over the different chapters of the book and can broadly be divided into two thematic areas. Firstly, he identifies a trend in the narrative that undermines the ideal picture of Syracusan government in Chariton as drawn by some scholars[17] (and as found in some of the characters' attitudes within the narrative). He points out that Syracuse is subtly associated with Athens (63-4, 132-3 and 176-92), which suggests that it "at least has the potential to embody those qualities that distinguish its fearful political opponent" (64). On the other hand, it is also associated with Persia (83), the traditional model of tyranny. Smith convincingly argues that these associations implicitly invite conjectures about Syracuse's future (for example on pp. 182-92 on Chaereas' and Callirhoe's return to Syracuse as a tyrannical invasion). Part of this reading of open-endedness draws upon the passages 1.1.13 and 8.7.2. In the former, we read that the Syracusans celebrated the day of Chaereas' and Callirhoe's marriage 'with more joy (ἥδιον) than the day of their victory (τῶν ἐπινικίων) over the Athenians' (tr. Goold 1995, 35).[18] In the latter passage, the Syracusans know that their gratitude for the couple's safe return home is greater than that for their victory (τῶν ἐπινικίων) over the Athenians. Smith (190-1) connects the two passages on the basis of the verbal echo (τῶν ἐπινικίων) and the Syracusans' focalization of their own joy. He persuasively reads the ring composition thus created as a possible indication of open-endedness: given the devastating events following the protagonists' engagement in the former passage, "one naturally wonders if the people's same expression of delight and thanks this time around is equally vain" (191). It is tempting, I think, to complement this reading with a more detailed reading of the former passage, where the Syracusans' focalization (ἥδιον ... ἤγαγον) may be proleptic of the vanity of their extreme sense of joy. By mentioning the joy of the Syracusans not in simple narrator text but in personal focalization, I suggest, the narrator distances himself at the very beginning of the story from their emotional disposition and implicitly anticipates the difficulties to come. In this respect, Smith's

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[17] Smith (63 n. 26 and 27) refers to Hunter 1994, 1077 and Alvares 2001-2002, 133.

[18] Akujaervi (2008) rightly corrects Smith's mistranslation of this passage.

reading is corroborated not only by the instance of open-endedness at the end of the novel, but also by the anticipation of less than ideal developments at the start.

The second thematic field of realistic strands discussed by Smith (albeit less elaborately) is the psychological level. He refers to scholars such as Laplace (1997, 70-1) on the one hand, who identify Chariton's protagonists as "idealized heroes" (145), and to Goldhill (1995) and Balot (1998) on the other, who offer interpretations of a less idealizing nature (145 n. 49). It is true that a certain ambiguity in the characterization of some of Chariton's characters has been detected before. Billault (1981, 206), for example, suggests that Chariton fleshes out his protagonists' weaknesses rather than portraying them as "héros positifs sans existence réelle", as do other novelists. Similarly, Reardon (1982, 23) remarks that Chariton's so-called 'good' characters are characterized by "a good deal of ignobility, to our kind of romantic taste; all of the principal characters do things which hardly fit heroic standards". Although these observations tantalizingly beg the question of how exactly the protagonists are characterized, this question has never been addressed. Symptomatically, Doody (1996, 492 n. 6) merely interprets Reardon's observation as an indication of Chariton's ability to portray characters encompassing conflicting elements. Smith, for his part, does tackle this question as far as Chariton's hero Chaereas is concerned, and mainly builds his argument around the conflict between democracy and tyranny. It has often been pointed out that psychologically realistic detail plays a more important role in Chariton's novel than in the other extant novels,[19] but so far it has been mainly the characterization of minor characters (and occasionally Callirhoe) which has been adduced in support.[20] Smith's book is an important step forward in this matter. He occasionally touches upon Chaereas' innate jealousy (144-5 and 171-2) and his adoption of rhetorical control and manipulation (95-8, 104 and 162).[21] More importantly, he points out that this aspect is often constructed through Chaereas' association with different paradigms. The implicit depiction of the protagonist as a new Cleon or Alcibiades (95-8), for example, encourages the reader to ask "potentially disconcerting questions" (22) about Chaereas' political and rhetorical ability to succeed Hermocrates in Syracuse.

I would add that some of the paradigms in Chariton might function even more subtly than Smith allows. For example, Smith rightly points to the importance of Chaereas' introduction:

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[19]  Schmeling 1974, 157-8 and Billault 1981, 206.

[20]  On minor characters, see, among others, Rohde ³1914, 430; Reardon 1982, 13; Helms 1966, 127-46 (esp. 128-9). On Callirhoe, see De Temmerman 2007.

[21]  For a more detailed discussion of Chaereas' adoption of rhetorical control, see De Temmerman 2009.

> There was a young man called Chaereas, surpassingly handsome, like Achilles and Nireus and Hippolytus and Alcibiades as sculptors and painters portray them (οἷον Ἀχιλλέα καὶ Νιρέα καὶ Ἱππόλυτον καὶ Ἀλκιβιάδην πλάσται καὶ γραφεῖς <ἀπο>δεικνύουσι) (1.1.3; ed. Reardon 2004, tr. Reardon ²2008).

Smith reads Achilles, Hippolytus and Alcibiades as "famous for their inability to exist on a plane equal with their fellow men" and rightly argues that their presence at the very beginning of the narrative complicates ideal readings of the figure of Chaereas (100). However, to fully appreciate this passage, one may point out that the figures of Alcibiades, Hippolytus and Achilles open up a broader range of associations. I would argue that they also function as implicit foreshadowings of Chaereas' character in other respects. Just as Achilles' anger is the starting point of the *Iliad*, Chaereas' anger will be the starting point for the many adventures which make up the love story. The figure of Alcibiades also evokes impetuosity and recklessness.[22] It is not difficult, therefore, to read both paradigms as foreshadowings of Chaereas' impetuous jealousy culminating in his fatal assault on his wife (1.4.12). Hippolytus, for his part, is not only a symbol of erotic jealousy in Athenian drama, as Smith (99) points out, but also a paradigm of chastity, punished by Aphrodite for neglecting her.[23] It is significant, therefore, that Chaereas' misfortunes are also presented by the primary narrator as a punishment by Aphrodite for the mistreatment of his wife (e.g., 8.1.3). Nireus, finally, who, according to Smith (100), does not evoke any problematic associations, is notorious for being a weakling in the *Iliad* (ἀλαπαδνός), having only a small number of soldiers under his command.[24] As such, this paradigm may foreshadow Chaereas' generally passive attitude in the first six books of the novel. The implicit *tertia comparationis* addressed by the four paradigms at Chaereas' introduction, then, are impetuosity, divine punishment and weakness respectively. Whereas the paradigms seem to have idealizing functions, they implicitly highlight important *realistic* aspects of Chaereas' character. Sure enough, the physical overtones of Chaereas' introduction ('as sculptors and painters portray them' and the explicit mention of physical beauty: εὔμορφον, πάντων ὑπερέχον) highlight his physical appearance, which seems to underscore a straightforward idealizing reading of these paradigms as presented by Morales, who points out that Achilles and Nireus were indeed the two most beautiful soldiers before Troy.[25] Alcibiades and Hippolytus too were in

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[22] See also Cueva 2004, 24-5.

[23] See Hunter 1994, 1079 and *OCD*³ s.v. Hippolytus (1).

[24] Hom. *Il.* 2.675 (παῦρος... λαός). See also Cueva 2004, 24-5.

[25] Morales 2004, 66 n. 93: "The comparison both serves to suggest Chaereas' gorgeousness (Achilles and Nireus are described as the handsomest of the Greeks at Troy: *Iliad* 2.673-4)

ancient tradition paradigms of male beauty.[26] Although the narrator's reference to sculptors and painters emphatically draws the reader's attention to the physical similarities between Chaereas and his paradigms, the implicit message conveyed by these paradigms ominously indexes some important *inner* characteristics. In fact, the paradigms touch upon some of the most important strands of Chaereas' characterization that the novel will set out to develop. This passage, that is, invites the reader to look below the surface of what the text literally tells him/her and to find the ambiguous material that the narrator has put there. In my view, then, the tension created in this passage between explicitness and implicitness is emblematic of the novel as a whole. Therefore, I argue that this passage is illustrative not only of the non-ideal strands underlying Chaereas' characterization (both on political and psychological levels), but also of the ambiguous nature of Chariton's novel itself.

A similar tension between apparent idealism and hidden realism may inform Chaereas' implicit association with Odysseus and Diomedes at 7.4.6. As has been pointed out by Reardon (²2008, 105 n. 110),[27] the Homeric verse adopted in the novel to describe Chaereas' performance during the battle at Tyre ('he smote about him on every side; and a hideous groaning rose from them')[28] simultaneously aligns the hero with Odysseus (when slaughtering the suitors in his home) and Diomedes (during his and Odysseus' joint expedition against the Thracians). Chaereas' military *aristeia* seems to be the most obvious reason for the evocation of these two paradigms. Like Odysseus, Chaereas is depicted as physically and intellectually superior to his opponents, which is underlined both by his military victory and by the ruse adopted to achieve it (7.4.5). As in both Homeric passages, moreover, this verse appears exactly when the superior soldier (Diomedes/Odysseus/Chaereas) is about to kill the weaker characters (the Thracians/the suitors/the Tyrians). Both paradigms highlight, then, Chaereas' courage and martial excellence. But, as Smith aptly points out, this passage also evokes Diomedes' problematic relationship with Aphrodite ("a transgressive figure whose power was so great as to wound even Aphrodite in battle", 94). What Smith does not mention, and what makes Chaereas' association with Diomedes even more complicated, is that Chaereas has already been aligned with him. In the Egyptian army

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and, with the number of comparanda, also makes his desirability less individualised and more generic".

[26]  See Hunter 1994, 1079, with references to Plu. *Alc.* 1.3 and D.S. 13.68.5 about Alcibiades.

[27]  Smith (93 n. 83) refers, of course, to the first edition (1989).

[28]  τύπτε δ᾽ ἐπιστροφάδην· τῶν δὲ στόνος ὤρνυτ᾽ ἀεικής, *Il.* 10.483, *Od.* 22.308 and 24.184.

council (7.3.4-5), Chaereas counters the plan of the Egyptian leader to give up the siege of Tyre. The conclusion to this speech unmistakably evokes the conclusion to Diomedes' speech (*Il.* 9.48-9), which counters Agamemnon's proposal to return to Greece:[29]

> But if you insist on going, leave a few volunteers with me; I and Polycharmus will fight, for it is at a god's behest that we have come (νῶι δ᾽, ἐγὼ Πολύχαρμός τε μαχησόμεθα·… σὺν γὰρ θεῷ εἰλήλουθμεν) (7.3.5)

These words evoke Diomedes' forecast about Agamemnon's plan to abandon the war: if Agamemnon wants to flee, the Greeks will remain. And if they want to flee as well, at least Diomedes himself and his companion Sthenelos will remain.[30] It has often been noted that both explicit and implicit assimilation of Chaereas with epic heroes is frequent in Chariton.[31] What is important in this passage, however, is that it is not the primary narrator who casts Chaereas as an epic hero, but Chaereas *himself*, adopting the above-mentioned Homeric quotation in his own speech in order to present himself as an epic hero and soldier. The strategy is successful: the Egyptian leader abandons his plan to retreat and gives Chaereas as many soldiers as he wants to capture Tyre. This observation is important for two reasons. Firstly, it corroborates Smith's characterization of Chaereas as "a kind of Cleon or Alcibiades, using subtle rhetorical persuasion as a means of demagoguery" in the Thucydidean vein (98). Secondly, it also sheds new light on Chaereas' association with Diomedes in the battle scene discussed by Smith (7.4.6). I suggest that this association evokes his earlier association with Diomedes and points to the fact that his military performance perfectly mirrors his rhetorical performance in the council. The Homeric quotation in the battle episode, therefore, thematizes not only Chaereas' military excellence, but simultaneously addresses more realistic issues, such as the rhetorical and manipulatory talents that allowed him to rise from the ranks and gave him access to the battleground in the first place.

   In my view, the above two thematic areas underlying Smith's reading tune in with broader issues discussed in present-day scholarship, where the distinction between the ideal Greek novel and its comic-realistic Latin counterpart (Petronius and Apuleius) has been, and still is, highly influential. This distinction originates with Heinze's (1899) thesis that Petronius' *Satyricon* developed from a literary

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[29] For a detailed analysis of the association between the two speeches, see De Temmerman 2009, 253-4.

[30] Hom. *Il.* 9.42-3 (εἰ δέ τοι αὐτῷ θυμὸς ἐπέσσυται ὥς τε νέεσθαι, / ἔρχεο).

[31] See, among others, Biraud 1985, 21-7; Robiano 2000, 509-29; Cueva 2004, 24-5.

genre parodying idealistic features in the Greek novels. In Anglo-saxon scholarship, it is, among other things, the purported lack of realism that has justified for some the banishment of the Greek narratives to the category of 'romance', "a term reserved for a certain low section of the bookstore appealing to women only".[32] *Realism* has often been put forward as an essential prerequisite for any text to be worthy of the title 'novel'. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* ([7]1982), for example, defines the 'novel' as a "fictitious prose narrative of book length portraying characters and actions *credibly representative of real life* in continuous plot". Since, of course, the distinction between 'novel' and 'romance' does not draw upon ancient notions, the question of how to label the Greek and Latin texts is irrelevant in itself. However, the adoption of these labels in past decades has proved to be an indication of the appreciation of the representational qualities of the genre. One of the reasons why the Greek narratives have been banished to the category of 'romance', whereas their Latin cognates were allowed to sail under the banner of 'novel', was their purportedly ideal nature. Despite the contributions of scholars warning against too rigidly applying the dichotomy between Greek ideal and Latin realistic fiction,[33] it has remained a commonly accepted tool used to classify novelistic literature.[34]

Since Chariton's novel is the oldest extant survivor of the genre, any well-corroborated critique of its main ideal characteristics inevitably challenges the validity of the entire above-mentioned distinction. Within the novelistic genre, Chariton and Xenophon of Ephesus are commonly labelled 'pre-sophistic', ideal novels. They are said to harbour stock motives and themes in their purest, most stereotypical forms upon which later novelists like Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus build their variations. In my view, however, Smith's analysis of the representation of the Athenian past in Chariton has pointed out convincingly that this novel can hardly be labelled 'ideal'. On the contrary, it highlights that Chariton's novel has travelled a long way: whereas Rohde ([3]1914) considers it the latest and most degenerately simple novel, it has been appreciated as early, straightforward and uncomplicated freshness since papyrological evidence firmly identified it as the

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[32] Doody 1996, 15.

[33] See, for example, Wehrli 1965, 133-54. Recently, Barchiesi (2006, 193-218) has pointed to a number of less idealistic elements in various Greek novels.

[34] See, for example, Holzberg [3]2006, 59-138, classifying the texts under the headings of "Der idealisierende Roman: Ältere Texte" (59-79), "Der komisch-realistische Roman" (80-111), and "Der idealisierende Roman: Jüngere Texte" (112-38). See also Hägg 1983, 4; Reardon 1991, 3; and, most recently, Brethes 2007, published more or less simultaneously with Smith's book and tantalizingly entitled *De l'idéalisme au réalisme. Une étude du comique dans le roman grec*, but ultimately endorsing the dichotomy between ideal and realistic novels rather than blurring it.

oldest extant representative of the genre. The two thematic strands in Chariton discussed above, now, indicate that this novel could (should?) be read as a deviation from (and maybe even as a critique of) some predominant conventions of the novelistic genre rather than as its most prototypical representative. I therefore think that Smith's book offers a trenchant step towards shaping a much more nuanced picture of Chariton's novel than found in modern-day scholarship.[35]

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