

Intensive Greek 2

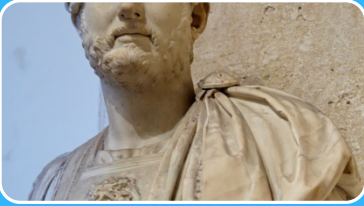
The Greek Novel: An Introduction

What do you mean, novel?

- * The Greek novel differs from other Greek literature in that it is
 - * Fictional (and not just semi-fictional or based on myth)
 - * ...and written in prose (like historiography)
- * When talking about the Greek novel, we generally focus on a core of five texts with stories of love and adventure
 - * There were a number of other, related texts that bridged the gap between fiction, biography, myth and history: most of these survive in fragments only – but cf. our earlier mention of Xenophon's *Kyropaideia*
- * Because of their length and fictional content, they are reminiscent of present-day novels: but note that this name was not used in antiquity



Chaereas and Callirhoe
Chariton of Aphrodisias



Ephesiaca
Xenophon of Ephesus



Leucippe and Cleithophon
Achilles Tatius



Daphnis and Chloe
Longus



Aethiopica
Heliodorus

Typical features?

- * These five novels have broad similarities in their plots, but...
 - * They vary significantly in length and in style
 - * Historical and recognisable setting or a generic Graeco-Roman world without identifiable specifics?
 - * Chariton: Callirhoe the daughter of a historical general
 - * First-person narrator (I-speaker) or third-person?
 - * Achilles Tatius vs. (e.g.) Longus
 - * Highly stylised or (seemingly) simple literary style?
- * Young lovers
 - * Separated by events
 - * Forced to wander
 - * Captors/Suitors
 - * Misunderstanding/deception
 - * Near death/sham death
 - * Reunion of lovers

A definition of the ancient novel

- * To sum up the most important characteristics in a definition of the genre: by 'ancient novel' we mean an entirely fictitious story narrated in prose and ruled in its course by erotic motifs and a series of adventures which mostly take place during a journey and which can be differentiated into a number of specific, fixed patterns. The protagonists or protagonist live(s) in a realistically portrayed world which, even when set by the author in an age long since past, essentially reflects everyday life around the Mediterranean in late Hellenistic and Imperial societies; the actual characters, however, are given idealistic or comic-realistic features.

Holzberg, N. 1995. *The Ancient Novel: An introduction*. 26-27

The praefatio of *Daphnis & Chloe*

While hunting in a grove sacred to the Nymphs, in the island of Lesbos, I saw the most beautiful sight that I have ever seen: a picture representing a history of love. The grove itself was pleasant to the eye, covered with trees, full of flowers, and well-watered: a single spring fed both trees and flowers. But the picture itself was even more delightful: its subject was the fortunes of love, and the art displayed in it was marvellous [...] on which were portrayed women in childbirth or wrapping children in swaddling clothes, poor babes – exposed to the mercy of Fortune, - beasts of the flock nurturing them, shepherds taking them up in token of adoption, young people binding one another by mutual vows, pirates over-running the seas, and enemies invading the land.

Many other subjects, all of an amatory nature, were depicted, which I gazed upon with such admiration that I was seized with the desire to describe them in writing.

Structuring features in Longus' novel

- * Foreshadowing: preface, the signs left with the babes hinting at the noble birth of both children, the dreams of the fathers,
- * Parallelisms: thus Daphnis, thus also Chloe
- * Repetition: gradual learning curve for the young lovers, interrupted in similar steps by external events, gradual introduction of additional characters
- * Daphnis' rescue: *At first he was minded to take up the tokens, without troubling about the child: but afterwards, feeling ashamed at the idea of being outdone by the goat in humanity, he waited till night...*
- * Chloe's rescue: *Nape – that was his wife's name – immediately took up the child and caressed her, as if afraid of being outdone in kindness by the sheep.*

Longus and the well-established genre

- * *Daphnis & Chloe* stands towards the end of the development of the Greek novel: Longus can play with earlier novels
 - * ...as well as other earlier literature!
- * The competition (or collaboration?) between artist and writer as a starting point used by Achilles Tatius in *Leucippe and Cleitophon*
 - * Literary sophistication: cf. ecphrasis and its popularity in Hellenistic literature
- * The travel motif used in several earlier novels (and earlier fringe novels) is used both in a concrete fashion and in a metaphorical sense: the journey towards understanding of love

A slightly different shipwreck...

And the cows heard it, and, recognising the strain, began to low, and all with a bound sprang into the sea. As they had leaped from the same side of the vessel, and caused the sea to part, it upset and sank under the waves that closed over it. Those on board were flung into the sea, but with unequal prospect of safety. For the pirates were encumbered with swords, and clad in scaly coats of mail, and greaves reaching halfway down the leg. But Daphnis, who had been tending his flocks, was unshod, and only half clothed, owing to the burning heat. The pirates had only swum a little way, when the weight of their armour dragged them down into the depths: Daphnis easily threw off the clothes he had on, yet it cost him some effort to swim, since he had hitherto only swum in rivers: but soon, under the impulse of necessity, he reached the cows by an effort, and, while with each hand he grasped one by the horns, he was carried along between them without difficult or danger, as if he had been driving a cart. (Longus, Bk 1)

Our vessel, after much plung-ing and tossing upon the waves, drove unexpectedly on to a rock hidden under water, and was utterly broken in pieces ; as she slipped off the rock the mast fell on one side, breaking up part of her and carrying the rest beneath the water. Those who instantly perished, their lungs full of salt water, experienced the most tolerable fate in our evil plight, because they were not kept in suspense by the fear of death. For a slow death at sea lets a man suffer all its pangs before the actual moment of dissolution. The eye, satiated with the waste expanse of the waters, prolongs the agony of fear, so that perishing in these circumstances is far more wretched than in any other : the terror of such a death is great in proportion to the size of the ocean. Some tried to swim, and were killed by being dashed by the waves on to the rock : many others fell upon broken pieces of wood and were spitted upon them like fishes ; others were swimming about already half dead. (Achilles Tatius, Bk. 5.4)

Threats to Daphnis/Chloe

- * The developing love story is threatened on a number of instances
 - * Rivals (x3)
 - * Incursions by pirates (x2)
- * This is familiar from earlier novels, but given in a much more comic and child-safe mode with humorous near misses and escapes: the earlier novels are quite gruesome!
- * Similarly, the level of eroticism in *Daphnis and Chloe* is very different from what is seen in earlier novels
- * The recognition scene at the novel's close is of course very much linked to similar scenes in New Comedy: still popular in both Greece and Rome in Longus' time

How the text works on its audience

- * Familiarity with the genre and its motifs leads to certain expectations: we have seen how they are comically overturned
- * Familiarity with the experience of love and sex places the reader in a position of advantage vis-à-vis the characters - does it make us laugh at their ignorance, or does it teach us something, too?
 - * “something for mankind to possess and enjoy. It will cure the sick, comfort the distressed, stir the memory of those who have loved, and educate those who haven’t.” (Longus *Preface*)
 - * Identified as an allusion to Thucydides
- * The focus on the idyllic country life: counterpoint to the crowded city life of the high empire?
 - * Cf. the combination of pastoral, rural scenes with city settings even in Theocritus’ *Idylls*
- * The focus on simplicity and morality: counterpoint to depravity and over-civilisation of the high empire?

So what is at the heart of this text?

- * Who can appreciate a text like *Daphnis and Chloe*? The need for a trained reader who will be aware of the simplicity of both story line and vocabulary
- * “Then you could learn what beauty is truly like, when it is properly presented.” Narrator’s comment on Chloe’s appearance as a bride – only after she has been dressed
- * => Longus proposes a crucial combination of natural development and educated art or skill (Gk. *tehcne*): This is mirrored in the development of the love story between Daphnis and Chloe too
- * The abstract nature of Longus’ point is underscored by the fact that neither Daphnis and Chloe are particularly developed characters: “they are types of artless rustic teenagers, and never become individuals” (Bowie, 1999, 57)

Daphnis and Chloe as learners

- * At the beginning, Daphnis and Chloe are put in an equal position – both foundlings, both raised by shepherd families
- * Differences between them are gradually discovered, first by Daphnis, then by Chloe
- * The journey toward maturity happens at different speeds: Chloe initially drives the development forward (e.g. encouraging Daphnis to bathe), later, Daphnis catches up and in the final scene, teaches her

Mythological complexity

- * Three myths are related in the novel, notably the stories of Syrinx and Echo – both girls being pursued in a pastoral setting
- * “each of the girls undergoes a painful metamorphosis as a result of male aggression and sexuality, but their music lives on beyond that” (de Temmerman, 2014, 211)
- * Chloe as myth material?
 - * *You have dragged away from my altars a young girl whom Love has reserved for himself to adorn a tale.* (Pan to the Methymneans, Longus 2.27)
 - * Consistent depiction of Chloe as a virgin (Gk. parthenos): same word used of Echo and Syrinx
 - * Chloe is the cultic name for the goddess Demeter, connected with Kore/Persephone’s transformation
- * Over the course of the novel, Chloe undergoes the passage from young girl to adult wife
- * ...and notably, it is this metamorphosis that forms Longus’ own narrative, his own *muthos* (After de Temmermann, 2014, 210-212)

To take away

- * Longus' novel is typical of Greek literature under the high Empire in that it is rhetorically sophisticated
- * It may use a simple style, but is unexpectedly complex
 - * Some features popular in Hellenistic writing recur here, e.g. *ecphrasis* and set piece descriptions (cf. Philetas' garden dream)
- * It draws on a literary tradition reaching from Homer and possibly to Roman material (e.g. Roman love elegy)
- * The development of the Greek novel is connected to the renaissance of Greek cultural and literary life in the 1st and 2nd C CE – cf. building projects in Athens under Hadrian