

# ***Character Portrayal in Chariton's Callirhoe***

## ***The abstract of the thesis***

### ***I. The aims of the dissertation, the definition of the theme***

In the doctoral dissertation, I analyse the work of an ancient novelist, namely Chariton's Chaireas and Callirhoe. The novel was written either at the end of the 1st century BC or during the 1st century AD. Searching for the roots of the ancient Greek novel, we can draw the conclusion that in the ideal Greek romance, as well as, in Chariton's work, epic, historiography and rhetoric are bound together so that a new genre – the novel – may be born. Chariton's novel also bears the emblem of the predecessors: here and there we can discover elements from Homer, Menandros' figures revive in the scenes of the romance, and creating a historical framework, the author employs Thucydidean or Plutarchan models subordinated to his own aims. The theme of the dissertation is character portrayal in Chariton's novel. Edwin Ben Perry, the pioneer of novel research writes about Chariton's novel in 1930 this way: "Chariton has no peer in character portrayal among the Greek novelists." (Perry, E.B. *AJPH* 51 (1930) 99–134). One of the main characteristics of Chariton's work is the efficient character-drawing, varied style and rich usage of direct speech (Hägg, T., 1983, *The Novel in Antiquity*, Oxford). The basic elements of the novel are psychology, rhetoric and history. In this framework, emphasis is put on such emotions as happiness and sadness, hope and fear or hesitation in difficult situations and in decision making. In the line of novel researchers, one must mention Helms' monography, in which he proves that character drawing is an essential element in Chariton's art, but he does not go into detail.

The present dissertation consists of five chapters:

#### *I. Introduction*

##### *Chariton and the ancient romance*

##### *The traditional concepts of character*

#### *II. The anonymous figures*

#### *III. The supporting characters*

#### *IV. The protagonists*

#### *V. Conclusions*

In 1972 Tomas Hägg raises the question again and analyses the methods of presenting a character in the novel (Hägg, T., *Some Technical Aspects of the Characterization of Chariton*,

*Studi in onore di Q. Cataudella*, Catania, 545–56). It is a generally accepted view that Chariton's character portrayal renders depth and realism in his figures. The aim of the thesis is to map the *dramatis personae* of the romance through the study of the text.

## ***II. The sketch of the methods***

In the research work, I observe three means of character portrayal: first, the building stones, i.e. the nouns and the adjectives, secondly, the dialogues and the monologues, and finally the writer's narrative remarks. In a few cases, I pay attention to other characters' opinion on each other. The amount and the quality of the main methods may enable one to group the figures of the novel: into the categories of anonymous characters, supporting participants and protagonists. After the linguistic analysis of the text, I would like to answer the question whether the above mentioned methods are in harmony or in contradiction in the drawing of the characters.

## ***III. The research results***

1. The anonymous figures represent the lowest category. Within this seemingly simple group one can further differentiate the characters, as the basic techniques are employed to a different extent. We can discern the differences in the noun phrases used to define the characters, in verbosity or absence of speech and in the abundance or lack of writer's remarks. On the basis of these viewpoints, one can set up two types: characters appearing individually and in groups.

2. To the second category belong the supporting characters. These figures have a personal name and their appearance is linked to several episodes. In their portrayal, the three methods are used to a greater extent than in the presentation of the anonymous characters. There are figures whose portrayal is more elaborate and others who have a simple presentation, but in general, all representatives have a personal trait. Among them emerges Plangon, Dionysios' landlady and Callirhoe's confidante, Artaxates, the Great King's eunuch, and last, but not least Theron, the pirate.

3. The third group consists of the three protagonists: Chaireas, Dionysios and Callirhoe. Chaireas is a good-looking, noble, young man, the obligatory figure of the ancient Greek romances. In every novel there is an almost divinely attractive youngster, who falls in love with an ever-beautiful girl, and separated from her, he is sorely tried. In his portrayal, we can dis-

cover general features of novel heroes as well as more personal characteristics. Because of his emotional outbursts, passionate nature and frequent suicidal attempts, he is harshly criticized, but still he is the hero of the story. The hero is the one who emerges from the crowd and through his different behaviour comes to the forefront. By Homer, those who were fighting risking their lives at the battlefield, have gained the title “hero”. Chaireas can be considered to be a hero in both senses of the word. His portrait becomes realistic, since human deficiencies and positive features appear simultaneously in his personality.

4. Dionysios is the excellent, well-educated man, whose character reveals the conflicting relations of human nature and noble birth. In his figure, we can notice the *πεπαιδευμενος ανηρ*, the bearer of timeless values and the man, who is struggling with his passion, emotions and intentions, which work together in a complicated way and influences the realization of his principles. His portrayal is not accidental, one can discern consciousness in it. The adjectives, verbal presentation and the narrative remarks are constructed intentionally and through interplay or contradiction, they form Dionysios’ character. In the widower lover’s figure, the writer’s teaching purpose is conspicuous.

5. The queen of the novel is Callirhoe. In beauty, she can compete with goddesses, her fidelity reminds us of Penelope and with her Aphroditean appearance she makes trouble just as Helen. Terms related to her beauty can be found in all chapters of the novel, but the noun phrases change. In the first book, in behaviour and speech, Callirhoe steps up as the daughter of the great general. When Chaireas for the first time charges her with infidelity, she gets annoyed and rejects her husband’s false accusation “as a true daughter of a general, full of pride”. In another scene, she is Theron’s captive, and forced to abandon her home, Sicily. Sailing to Athens, she speaks of herself as Hermocrates’ daughter, but this expression has a different meaning here. The heroine, using the same structure, refers to her noble origins, emphasizing, how far she is from what it means to be a general’s daughter. In the first case, the expression highlights an inner characteristic, her inborn pride, in the second one, expresses the strangeness of the situation and Callirhoe’s despair. In effect, this scene serves as a starting point for a greater separation which the heroine has to experience in the rest of the novel. She is sold into slavery, but her style does not change. Talking to Dionysios she can get annoyed, as before quarrelling with Chaireas or in her dialogues with Artaxates. Slavery is a temporary condition which makes her depressed, but does not alter her character. In a new situation, she has to implore Dionysios for her own freedom and for the rescue of Plangon’s husband. It is a new voice, since earlier – as a member of a noble family – she did not have to beseech any-

one. In the second book, beyond the anguish of slavery, she has to encounter another conflict, namely the burden of motherhood. When she has to come to a decision, after much hesitation, discernible in her long monologues, she chooses the life of her child. She becomes Dionysios' wife and she is respected as a lady. The main motive of the fourth book is mourning Chaireas, then she finds herself in a hopeless situation, she has to depart from her second home, Miletos. In her dialogues with Artaxates, one can observe her clever argumentation and the power of her speech. The two voices, the annoyed and the desperate, accompany her all through the novel. To these new ones are added: she gives advice to Chaireas and argues with Artaxates, implores Dionysios, and comforts Stateira. Callirhoe goes through changes: she becomes mother and wife, a noble woman is a captive and a slave, moreover she gets into situations where she has to choose, make a decision or give up values for new ones. We can see the changes in the noun phrases, in the tone and content of her words, but her style remains intact. Her presentation is reinforced by the direct means of character portrayal together with the writer's remarks.

6. In the linguistic analysis of the text, the primary character-revealing elements were analysed, but through the technical methods we can reach the concrete and abstract semantic content of the characters. Among the anonymous figures, we can find some that do not appear only for functional or narrative purposes, but represent values in the background. The supporting characters can be episode characters, set characters or some of them live up to the standards of the protagonists. The three great stars of the novel are Chaireas, Dionysios and Callirhoe, in their character the writer reaches psychological heights and depths. In Chaireas' hopeless despair, Dionysios' difficult struggles and Callirhoe's silent strifes, the author dramatically and realistically reveals the mentality of the characters. In these moments, Chariton's artistic and literary talent can be seen best. He presents complicated inner processes, which are easy to identify with, as the adventures of the heroes involve real-life crises. In the background of the novel, love is omnipresent, it appears in the framework of the glorious past, and composes the history of human lots. The courting gentlemen have to learn that Aphrodite can turn the windward of their emotions at any time, and if they place their passion above their values, their indiscretion is inevitable. The leitmotif of the novel is Aphrodite, and the heroine, similar to the goddess in beauty, also plays a central role in the plot. Without her mysterious presence or enigmatic absence, the novel's adventures would not exist. One of the most decisive elements of Chariton's character portrayal is realism. In general, the figures are imbued with the spirit of παιδεία, which is represented best by Dionysios' and Callirhoe's

behaviour. Moulding the figures of the novel, the author relies partly on the reality of his environment and partly on that of the myths. He does this not in a servile mode, but according to his artistic aims. With the realistically presented figures, he teaches us true human attitude. The cast of Chariton's novel is unique, and one of his secrets is that instead of mythological heroes, human beings look upon us from the eternal stage of the novel. In this frequently underestimated genre, the analysis of the novel's character portrayal techniques seems to show that the novelist is able to present the figures in a manifold way; the characters represent values and their behaviour can provide us with positive or negative examples in human situations. In conclusion, we can state that this neglected work can carry us away with its adventures and with its realistic characters transmits imperishable standards.

#### ***IV. Publications***

##### ***Journals***

Rome in the Greek Novels? *Klió*, 2005/1 (before publication).

On Chariton's Callirhoe. *Book and Library*, 2005/1 (before publication).

Abstracts from Chariton's Callirhoe. *Kalligram*, 2004/ December (before publication).

##### ***Conferences***

Character Portrayal in Chariton's Callirhoe. Conference of Ancient Studies, Budapest, 2004 May.