

Konstantin DOULAMIS, Storytelling and the voice of the author in Chariton's *Callirhoe*

The purpose of this paper is to throw fresh light on the narrative technique employed in Chariton's *Callirhoe*. My interest is with two narratological aspects of this novel. Firstly, I wish to examine the role of the intrusive narratorial voice within the story, especially in connection with the authorial persona emerging at the start and end of the novel, and, secondly, I will consider the implications that this unusually pronounced narratorial presence has for the telling of the story, especially in relation to its happy ending.

With the exception of Tomas Hägg's book on Chariton, Xenophon and Achilles Tatius (Stockholm, 1971), Chariton's narrative technique has received little attention in modern scholarship. John Morgan's recent chapter on the narrator and narratees in *Callirhoe* (in Irene de Jong *et al.* (eds.), *Narrators, Narratees and Narratives in Ancient Greek Literature*, Leiden – Boston 2004) has brought out the obtrusive character of narratorial intervention in this novel; building on John Morgan's observations, this paper seeks to provide further material for understanding Chariton's narrative technique, by examining the identity and role of both the narrator and the author, and by considering the use of predictive devices in anticipation of the almost obligatory happy finale.

A closer look at Chariton's novel reveals that Fortune, Eros and Aphrodite are repeatedly presented as shaping powers within the story, while Chariton limits his role merely to "telling the love story of Chaereas and Callirhoe", as he clearly states in the proem (Char. 1.1.1). The narratorial presence is made known throughout the novel in the form of explicit comments and questions (at 3.2.17, 5.4.4, 5.8.2, 5.8.3 and 6.9.4), which serve to reinforce Chariton's role as the teller of a story narrated to an audience. Interestingly, it is not until the last book of the novel that reference is made to *Callirhoe* as a written work and, for the first time, Chariton's narratees are clearly identified as readers rather than as an audience, an "inconsistency" which has not yet received a satisfactory explanation and one that may have, in my view, important implications for our understanding of Chariton's narrative technique.

In this paper I argue that, by explicitly yielding the responsibility for the shaping of the story to deities and by assigning only the telling of that story to himself, Chariton the narrator distances himself from Chariton the author, who remains "hidden" – to employ the term that Gian Biagio Conte (Berkeley 1996) applies to the author of Petronius' *Satyricon* – until the very end of the novel. This conveniently allows Chariton the *auctor* to engage in a subtle interplay with his characters, often with a humorous effect, and to "intervene" in the story in order to thwart any developments that threaten to divert the plot from its desired ending, such as the heroine's attempt to commit suicide (Char. 6.6.5). At the same time, a system of ambiguous predictive signs strategically placed in the narrative serves to heighten the suspense and helps to sustain the reader's interest in the plot.

This play on the reader's expectation of a happy ending, which manifests itself in silent authorial interventions and in the system of forewarnings mentioned above, reveals a self-conscious and highly competent novelist.