

Erwin Rohde suggested elegy was important for the genesis of the Greek romances. Rohde's notions about the romances' chronology have been abandoned, but the similarity of the subject matter of elegy to that of romance suggests that critical techniques used by scholars of Roman love elegy could be profitably applied to the Greek romances, something which so far has not occurred. Roman elegy very much concerns desire and the conflicts, ambiguities and contradictions are found in the author's description of the love affair and of his beloved. Similar features occur in the Greek romances, which are very much histories of desire, its pursuit and (often problematical) satisfaction. In this paper I give several examples of how critical methods used by scholars of elegy might be employed by scholars of the Greek romances, leaning upon the work of Miller and Janan, whose critical methods owe much to the theories of Jacques Lacan. I focus on the text of Chariton's *Callirhoe*.

For Lacan, desire's true goal is an imagined, primordial full possession of being, and individuals constantly misrecognize items as stand-ins for that lost unity and construct narratives which aim (dupliciously) at the completeness of a true history. But the lover really loves only what he/she has projected upon the beloved, not any property she/he necessarily has. Romance protagonists are often compared to many (and contradictory) mythological personages; as Cueva has shown, Chariton's Chaireas is compared to Hippolytus, Nireus, Alcibiades, Achilles, and Callirhoe to Artemis, Helen, Penelope, Semele, Medea, Hera, Leda and Ariadne, suggesting they are desired precisely because individuals (including the reader) can misrecognize in them so many imaginary ideals. Correspondingly, the 'story' of their love displays multiple gaps and inconsistencies. It is hard to formulate why the lover is so loyal – particularly true in the case of Callirhoe's fidelity to Chaireas. The operations of Tyche and Aphrodite/Eros, as they suddenly move the story in new directions, recalls the Lacanian Real, the unfigurable cause which disrupts human life. The lover can love and hate, either because of the beloved's shortcomings or due to the lover's resentment of his dependency; elegiac poets are torn by contradictory emotions; as Fusillo has shown, conflicting emotions also figure prominently in the Greek romances. Love tends to dissipate because these misrecognitions cannot be maintained; the romance's central fantasy is to maintain such misrecognitions forever.

*Callirhoe* also presents the conflict of Law vs. Desire, with a more utopian resolution. Hermocrates represents the Law (and his rigid application of law is foregrounded), whose function is to declare "No!" and to thwart desire. He has denied the invading Athenians, and he is initially an obstacle to Chaireas' desire. Chaireas himself is a great desirer who is constantly tormented by the contradictions of desire. For Lacan, desire is often a desire to transgress, as Chaireas does, first in gaining Callirhoe despite Hermocrates' reluctance and then by kicking his wife to (near) death. Callirhoe likewise transgresses. But in *Callirhoe* the transgressors triumph. The fundamental Freudian/Lacanian drama of separation and return are figured in the separation and reunion of Chaireas and Callirhoe. In his eventual victory over Dionysios and Artaxerxes, Chaireas also overcomes older father figures who thwart his desire. Yet, in a utopian turn, Chaireas' power comes not from blocking desire but rather by granting it by letting himself become such a public object of desire as well as one who, instead of excluding the Athenians, incorporates noble Greeks, Aradians and even Egyptians into the Syracusan polity.