

THE ELIZABETHAN VIEW OF THE GREEK ROMANCES

Among the variety of influences that shaped the character of Renaissance literature in England and the continent, Greek romance is often the most neglected in studies of the background of the period¹. This neglect stems mainly from the fact that there are, unfortunately, many gaps in our knowledge of the transmission and overall significance of the Greek romances as literary influences throughout the Middle Ages. Yet, the conventions of the genre were applied to the writing of the saints' lives between the fourth and ninth centuries, Greek romances and authors are mentioned in the ninth-century *Bibliotheca* by Photius, and there is an unmistakable influence of Greek romance in a number of Medieval and Byzantine romances, while Boccaccio in his earliest work, *Il Filocolo*, and in the tales of the *Decameron* drew largely from the tradition². In the Renaissance, the increasing knowledge and interest in the classics, the discovery of dusty manuscripts and their printing

1. This study is based on the research done recently for my doctoral dissertation *«The Faerie Queene» and the Greek Romance*, Diss. Univ. of Oklahoma 1981. The titles and the now accepted dating of the Greek romances appear as follows in the study by Arthur Heiserman, *The Novel Before the Novel*, Chicago 1977: *Ninus Romance* and the *Alexandrian Erotic Fragment* (both from the first two centuries B.C.); Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe* (c. 50 A.D.); Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* and Tatius' *Clitophon and Leucippe* (both c. 160 A.D.); Heliodorus' *Ethiopian Story* (c. 230 A.D.); extant in epitomes the *Ephesian Story* by Xenophon of Ephesus (shortly before 150 A.D.) and Iamblichus' *Babyloniaca* (c. 165 A.D.). There is also the epitome of *The Wonderful Things Beyond Thule* (second or third century A.D.) by Antonius Diogenes, not mentioned by Heiserman. The Latin *Apollonius of Tyre* (sixth century A.D.), whose ultimate source has been lost, is believed by many scholars to have been a Greek romance and therefore, it is usually classified as such (See Peter Goolden, ed., *The Old English Apollonius of Tyre*, Oxford 1958, p. xi).

2. For a substantial bibliography on the Greek romances (manuscripts, editions, translations, and criticism) see Elizabeth Haight, Notes on Recent Publications about the Greek Novel, *The Classical Weekly* 46 (1953) 233-37, and Gerald N. Sandy, Recent Scholarship on the Prose Fiction of Classical Antiquity, *Classical World* 67 (1974) 321-59.

in scholarly editions and translations, brought about a revival of Greek romance: Between c. 1470 and 1642 the publishing of the Greek romances flourished in worldwide scale, «running east and west from Kolozvar to London, north and south from Copenhagen to Valencia»¹.

Major Renaissance works bear the mark of the tradition of Greek romance. Although Ariosto died (1533) before a number of the editions and translations of the Greek romances saw the light, there is evidence of Greek material in the *Orlando Furioso*². Other works stamped by the imprint of Greek romance are Sannazzaro's *Arcadia* (1504), the *Novelle* (1554) of Bandello, Tasso's *Aminta* (1573), Guarini's *Pastor Fido* (1585), Montemayor's *Diana* (c. 1542-1558/9), De Vegas' *El Peregrino en su*

1. Carol Gesner, *Shakespeare and the Greek Romance*, Lexington Ky 1970, p. 17. See her Appendix, «A Bibliographical Survey», pp. 145-62 for a complete listing of all the Renaissance translations of the Greek romances and the number of times they were reissued between 1470 and 1642. This survey reveals that *Apollonius of Tyre*, which was well known to the Middle Ages, appeared sixty-four times. The text of *Clitophon and Leucippe* was published in Latin by Annibale Cruceio, first in part (1544), and later in a complete version (1552); it appeared about thirty-eight times between 1544 and 1640, and it was especially popular in Italy where the first complete Italian translation was done by Francesco Coccio as early as 1550. The *Aethiopica* was published ninety-six times between 1534 and 1638, and *Daphnis and Chloe* fourteen between 1559 and 1628. The Greek text of Xenophon's *Ephesiaca* was not published until 1726 and it has no history of Renaissance translations. Yet it was known to Politian who refers to it in his *Miscellaneorum Centuria Prima* (1489); it seems to be among Boccaccio's sources of the *Decameron* (tales II, 7 and 5), and also the source of the live burial plot of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The link between the Renaissance and the *Ephesiaca* is probably a thirteenth century manuscript discovered in 1809 by P. L. Courier in a Florentine monastery (La Badia codex), which is the only extant copy of the *Ephesiaca* today, and it also contains the texts of *Daphnis and Chloe* and Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*. There is no mentioning of Chariton's romance during the Renaissance, but it may have been the source of Matteo Bandello's tale XXII of the *Novelle*, which Shakespeare used for the Hero-Claudio plot of *Much Ado About Nothing*. There are hardly any traces of the *Babyloniaca* and *The Wonderful Things Beyond Thule* during the Renaissance—these were extant in Photius' epitomes of the *Bibliotheca* published in 1601 and 1611 (I am indebted to Carol Gesner's, *Shakespeare and the Greek Romance* for the bibliographical information about the Renaissance translations of the Greek romances appearing here).

2. Pio Rajna, in *Le Fonti dell' Orlando Furioso*, 2nd ed., Florence 1900, points out the following parallel situations: The thieves' cave where Isabella is kept in *OF* xii, 86 is modeled after Charicleia's imprisonment in *Aethiopica* I, 28-29; the story of Gabrina in *OF* xxi, 43-66 recalls the story of Cnemon in *Aethiopica* I, 19-17; and the chastity test in *OF* xliii, 28 has a precedent in *Aethiopica* X, 8 and in *Clitophon and Leucippe* VIII, 6.

Patria (1604), Cervantes' *Persiles y Sigismunda* (composed c. 1585), some plays of Racine and other seventeenth century French works¹.

In sixteenth-century England the vehicles for the transmission of Greek romance were partly indirect (Italian *novelle*, continental romance, and Spanish pastoral), and partly direct (the Renaissance continental translations of Heliodorus, Longus, and Tatius). The Elizabethans contributed to this revival of Greek romance with English translations of four of the major romances, while the domestication of the genre gradually took place with Lyly, Sidney, and Greene in fiction, with Spenser in poetry, and in the next century with Shakespeare in drama². Thomas Underdowne translated the *Aethiopica* in 1569. The romance had been available since 1547 in Amyot's French translation and parts of it had been included, along with material from Plutarch, in a book by James Stanford in 1567. Underdowne, however, based his translation on a 1551 Latin version by the Polish Stanislaus Warschewiczki³. In 1576 Lawrence Twyne translated from the *Gesta Romanorum* the anonymous *Apollonius of Tyre*, which together with the Middle English version in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* served as Shakespeare's source for his *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*⁴. Longus appeared next in English with Angel Daye's 1587 version of *Daphnis and Chloe*, based on Amyot's superb French translation, and containing in the form of a digression *The Shepheards Hollidaie*, a dull pastoral in honor of queen Elizabeth⁵.

1. For a complete bibliography of the critical sources connecting the Italian, Spanish, and French works with Greek romance see Gesner's notes pp. 172-81. The critic analyses herself the influence of the tradition on Boccaccio (pp. 19-33) and on Cervantes (pp. 32-46).

2. See Samuel Lee Wolff, *The Greek Romances in Elizabethan Prose Fiction*, New York 1912; Carol Gesner; and my Diss. *«The Faerie Queene» and the Greek Romance*, in *University Microfilm International*, Ann Arbor, Mich. 1981.

3. *An Aethiopian Historie written in Greek by Heliodorus: very coitie and pleasaunt*, etc., trans. Thomas Vnderdowne, London 1569. Reissued in 1577, 1587, 1605, 1622, 1627. All quotations from Underdowne used throughout this study are from the following reprint of the 1587 edition: *An Aethiopian History Written in Greek by Heliodorus, Englished by Thomas Underdowne, Anno 1587*, ed. W. E. Henley London, David Nutt, 1895. See also, *L'Histoire Aethiopique de Heliodorus...*, trans. Jaques Amyot, Paris 1547. Reissued 1549, 1559, 1560, 1575, 1583 etc.

4. *The Patterne of painefull Adventures*, etc., trans. Laurence Twyne, London 1576. Reissued in 1594?, 1607, 1608.

5. *Daphnis and Chloe excellently describing the weight of affection, the simplicitie of love, the purport of honest meaning, the resolution of men, and disposition of Fate, finished in Pastorall*, etc., trans. Angell Daye, London 1587. See also *Les Amours*

The first appearance of Tatius' *Clitophon and Leucippe* in English was with William Burton's translation in 1597, but the work had already been available in a number of Latin, Italian, and French translations¹.

The interest in the translations of the Greek romances in sixteenth-century England stems from reasons that go beyond the desire to revive the literature of antiquity. The popularity of Greek romance should be sought in its own merits as a type of literature catering to the current taste of English readers. The Elizabethans liked Greek romance because it was pertinent to three areas of contemporary considerations: the increasing appeal of romance to all social classes, the cultivation of highly rhetorical styles, and the emphasis on morality. «Hardly any other kind of fiction, hardly any other view of life, could appeal more strongly to the sixteenth century novel-reader and novel-writer than the ornate, spectacular, rhetorical, sentimental, fortuitous medley» of the Greek romances, writes Wolff².

The long list of printed tales of love and adventure in the *Short Title Catalogue* is a testimony to the appeal of romances during the sixteenth century³. A large number of the earliest books in England published by Caxton and his successors were prose and metrical romances. These «fell from the presses like leaves in autumn throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries»⁴. With the increase of literacy among the middle classes, Caxton's earlier expensive editions—obviously addressed to aristocratic audiences—were soon followed by more affordable ones, and thus romance became easily available to the general pub-

pastorales de Daphnis et de Chloe, escriptes premierement en grec par Longus, etc., trans. Jacques Amyot, Paris 1559. Reissued 1594, 1596, and 1606.

1. *The most delectable and plesant historye of Clitophon and Leucippe, etc.*, trans. W. B., London 1597. See also *Achillis Statii Alexandrini de Clitophonis and Leucippes amoribus Libri VIII*, trans. L. Annibale Cruceio, Bergamo 1552. Reissued 1554, Basil; 1581, Cologne; 1587, 1589? Cambridge; 1587, Bergamo. And *Achille Tatio Alessandrino Dell' Amore di Leucippe et di Clitophonte, etc.*, trans. Francesco Angelo Coccio, Venice 1550. Reissued 1551, 1560, 1563, 1568, 1576, 1578, 1600, 1608, 1617, Venice; 1598, 1599, 1617, Florence; 1600, Treviso. All the quotations from Burton in this study are from *The loves of Clitophon and Leucippe*, trans. William Burton (1597), ed. Stephen Gaselee and H.F.B. Smith, Oxford 1923.

2. Samuel Lee Wolff, *Greek Romances in Elizabethan Prose Fiction*, p. 235.

3. See also Arundell Esdaile, *A List of English Tales and Prose Romances Printed Before 1740*, New York 1971.

4. Lewis B. Wright, *Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England*, Chapel Hill 1935, p. 375. For the facts concerning the printing and reading of romances in England cited here I am indebted to this study.

lic. We know from the testimony of Robert Laneham's letter describing the library of Captain Cox, a Coventry mason, that around 1575 the middle-class taste for romances included the stories of Arthur, *Hunon of Bordeaux*, *Bevis of Hampton*, *Sir Eglamour*, *The Squire of Low Degree*, *Robinhood*, *The Four Sons of Aymon*, etc¹. During the last quarter of the century, the increasing demand for romance turned the attention of the translators to the continent. This was the time of the Greek romances, and of *Amadis of Gaul* and the *Palmerin*, which together with the older romances continued to satisfy the reader's thirst for romance in court and marketplace alike.

To the aristocrats, the idealism of romance and its emphasis on such important Renaissance matters as heroism, love, friendship, and loyalty had a special appeal because they saw in it a view of life closely related to the courtly ideal. To the populace, the romances were an escape through the examples of high life and the strange adventures in far-away lands. «For despite the daring deeds of the Sidneys, the Drakes and the Raleighs, the every day life of the plain citizen was often savorless and dull, and he was glad to seek excitement in company with Amadis of Gaul, or Guy of Warwick, or some such hero of the romances that were to feed the imagination of middle-class readers for generations to come»².

In addition, the clear-cut distinctions of good and evil even in the least spiritual of the romances justified them as profitable reading in the conscience of the majority who felt that mere entertainment was not a sufficiently redeeming quality in a book. The increasing pressures of Puritanism and the respect paid to the Horatian precept of the *dulce et utile* by Renaissance literary theory were both strong factors in inculcating the belief that morality and profit were to be the criteria in the evaluation of literature³. Romance suffered several attacks by academically-minded critics and moralists alike, but it was also defended in the most influential critical document of the period, Sidney's *Defense of Poesy*⁴. Despite adverse criticism, the reading of romances continued

1. Wright, pp. 83-87.

2. Wright, p. 375.

3. See J. W. Saunders, The Facade of Morality, *Journal of English Literary History* 19 (1952) 81-114.

4. See *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, 2 vols., ed. G. Gregory Smith, London 1964, I, 173 (Sidney); for attacks on romance see II, 309 (Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia*); II, 15, 87, 166 (Puttenham, «Of Proportion»). Thomas Nash in «A General Censure»,

past the turn of the century, while publishers and translators took care to answer accusations in Prefaces and Letters to the Gentle Reader stressing the moral profit which was to be gained from the reading of the work.

The most likely one of the Greek romances to attain popularity and acceptance in Elizabethan England was Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* in Underdowne's highly moralized version (five English versions of Heliodorus appeared a total of twelve times, out of which Underdowne's accounts for seven)¹. The reason for this acclaim is that apart from the excitement of a new kind of adventures, elopements, shipwrecks, oracles, sacrifices, pirate attacks, abductions by brigands, imprisonment in dark caves, the *Aethiopica* provided the Elizabethans with many good examples of virtuous conduct, a conception of love similar to the courtly, and reinforcement of the belief in a divinely ordered universe. Ideas about chastity, heroism, friendship, the ideal monarch, and faith in the divine make the *Aethiopica* the most spiritual of the Greek romances. The Elizabethans perhaps liked it for the same reasons the Byzantines did: Heliodorus «was a kindred spirit. In him, more easily than in any other ancient romancer, they could find spiritual values of the kind they wanted to find, while enjoying at the same time that element of sensational adventure»². The loftiness of context and the epic structure of the *Aethiopica* prompted Sidney in the *Defense* to regard it as an epic in prose while Scaliger, in his *Poetices libri septem*, had recommended that epic poets should use Heliodorus' works as a model. It is not surprising then that during the youthful years of Edward VI the school curriculum included the Greek text of the *Aethiopica*, and that Underdowne's translation was among the textbooks of young King James VI of Scotland³.

Underdowne capitalized on the edifying qualities of Heliodorus' story. He provided a gloss at the margins of the text in which he abstracted the morals to be taught in every page, sometimes expanding with

gives the following estimation of romance:

... what else I pray you doe these bable book-mongers endeour but to repair the ruinous wals of Venus Court, to restore to the worlde that forgotten Legendary license of Lying, to imitate afresh the fantastically dreames of those worne out impressions of the feigned nowhere acts of Arthur of the round table, ...the four sons of Amon, with infinite others. (I, 323)

1. See Gesner, p. 147.

2. Ben E. Perry, *The Ancient Romances: A Literary-Historical Account of Their Origins*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1967, p. 108.

3. Cited in Gesner, p. 148.

quotations from Seneca and bits of Elizabethan commonplace wisdom. In the letter to the Gentle Reader prefixed to his 1587 translation he exhibits a typical Elizabethan attitude in seeking to justify his labor with commendations of the moral quality of the work. In a conventional opening he retracts, like a Medieval narrator, the earlier appearance of his translation—possibly the 1569? or 1577 edition—realizing, as he claims, too late, in his riper years, that it would have been better to publish «notable examples of goodly christian life then the most honest ...historie of love»¹. He then justifies his venturing on a new edition on the ground that this is a corrected and augmented one.

An interesting piece of criticism follows. Underdowne compares the *Aethiopica* with other popular romances, and thus reveals the very features that would have made this work attractive to its Elizabethan audience:

If I shall compare the reading of it to any, I might find other better to be commended. If I shall compare it with other of like argument, I think none commeth neare it. Mort Darthure, Arthur of little Britaine, yea, and Amadis of Gaule, etc. account violente murder, or murder for no cause, manhoode: and fornication and all unlawful luste, friendly love. This book punisheth the faultes of evill doers, and rewardeth the well livers. What king is Hidaspes? What patterne of a good prince? Countrariewise, what a leawde woman was Arsace? What a pattern of evill behaviour? What an evil end had shee?

(Underdowne, p. xxix)

Underdowne may have had a Greek text at hand, but his translation follows very closely Warschewiczki's Latin version, which served as his prototype even for errors. Despite his little Latin and less Greek, however, Underdowne's English rendering surpasses all precedents in its fresh approach to the givens of romance which are tinted with Elizabethan color:

You are in the very citadel of Romance; and the citadel is built in Elizabethan England; and the romance is unfolded to you, not in the tasteless phrase thought out by a man of culture in his sombre study, but in a medley of vivid words culled from the chap-books or heard at the street corner. For Underdowne was one of

1. Letter to the Gentle Reader, p. xxix.

those who would put the gods into doublet and hose. His hero is «Captaine Theagenis»,...such phrases as «Syr Priest» and «Jollie Dame» ... sparkle on every page¹.

The very year of Underdowne's reissuing of the *Aethiopica* (1587) marks the appearance of Daye's translation of *Daphnis and Chloe*, based on the French version by Amyot. The interest of Longus' story does not lie on world-wide adventures but on the contrast provided by the happening of highly dramatic events on a fixed background of unsurpassed natural beauty and serenity. The plot is simple. It treats the love of two foundlings brought up by shepherds, and the discovery of their true parentage at the end and final marriage. The subject was dear to the Elizabethans judging from the frequency that related motifs kept appearing throughout the literature of the period. Pastoral romance was in the ascent during the last quarter of the sixteenth century in England, and works such as Sidney's *Arcadia*, Greene's *Pandosto* and *Menaphon*, and Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* and *Winter's Tale* witness the fruitful transmigration into English forms of the genre originated by Longus.

Although Daye used as a basis Amyot's French translation of *Daphnis and Chloe*, his was more of a paraphrase, or an adaptation, than an English version of the original. The Elizabethan view of the pastoral as a vehicle for praise and as a rhetorical context for the artificial display of various emotions and ideas prevails throughout. With courtly superiority Daye emphasized the ridiculousness of rustic manners, while he removed most of the contents of the third book in order to insert a dull metrical pastoral in honor of queen Elizabeth, entitled *The Shepherdes Hollidaie*. Probably influenced by Italian pastoral, he also interjected a number of songs expressing various moods of his characters, and he emphasized the role of Fortune far beyond either Amyot or Longus.

Most important, the lucidity of style and the simple delight of Longus story, so masterfully preserved by Amyot, disappears completely in Daye's version. In a close comparison of the English and French readings Wolff observes:

With the spirit of *Daphnis and Chloe* Daye took even greater liberties than with the letter. Longus and Amyot after him, are

1. Charles Whibley, Introduction, in Underdowne, p. xvi.

simple and sensuous; they draw their persons and their scenes with the Greek pure outline, as well as with the full Greek range of definite sensations¹.

Daye sentimentalizes emotions in Elizabethan fashion, uses «ink-horn» terms, and an abundance of oxymoron and antithesis. The English translator of *Daphnis and Chloe* transformed what is deemed the best-written of the Greek romances into narrative heavily ornamented with the conventional rhetoric of Elizabethan prose. What this means, however, is that although Daye failed to capture the singular beauty of Longus' prose, he succeeded in presenting his contemporaries with a story written in the style they would most likely enjoy and appreciate.

In his study on Renaissance rhetoric and wit, Crane has emphasized that the formal basis of Elizabethan prose style was «amplification» or «ornamentation», i.e. the development and embellishment of a subject by the use of various figures. This was the major concern of the rhetorical manuals included in the sixteenth-century school curriculum, and there is «hardly a writer of the sixteenth century whose work does not bear the mark of such discipline»². This traditional training, which the Middle Ages as well as the Renaissance had received from Cicero and Quintilian, is at the basis of highly rhetorical works of authors like George Pettie, Lyly, Sidney, and Greene.

At the same time, however, the stylistic influence of works from earlier periods on Elizabethan prose must also be considered. Not much critical work has been done in this direction. Wolff has entertained the possibility that the stylistic exaggerations of Tatius and Heliodorus—especially the figures of antithesis, oxymoron, the debates, soliloquies, and the numerous digressions—may have played a role in Lyly's «Euphuism»³. Recognizing the influence of Greek romance on Sidney and Greene, Baldwin calls their style «Renaissance Alexandrianism»⁴. Crane also suggests that the highly-wrought rhetoric of the sentimental novels and romances which were translated into English before the middle of the sixteenth century exercised a considerable force upon English prose,

1. *The Greek Romances in Elizabethan Prose Fiction*, pp. 241-42.

2. William G. Crane, *Wit and Rhetoric in the Renaissance*, Gloucester, Mass., 1964, p. 5.

3. Wolff, p. 256, n. 3.

4. Charles S. Baldwin, *Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice*, New York 1939, p. 202.

and he includes among them Underdowne's translation of the *Aethiopica*¹. Burton's translation of *Clitophon and Leucippe* (1597) came too late to have any direct effect on Elizabethan prose, but Tatius' work had entered England, as Tieje notes, through the Spanish *Clareo y Florisea* (1552), or through the early continental translations which, according to Wolff, Sidney and Greene must have read².

The works of Heliodorus and Tatius—and to a lesser extent Longus—are typical products of the period called Second Sophistic, during which literary standards were prescribed by academicians and professional rhetoricians. The Greek romance of this period is in its latest and most artificial phase. The sophistic romancers, writes Perry, do not tell the love story for its own sake but in order to exhibit sophistical wares:

These may consist either of digressions upon topics of an informative kind, the tendency of which is scientific, pseudoscientific, philosophic, or paradoxological, or of rhetorical displays of one kind or another where the subject-matter, as in nearly all the great sophists of the day is of less consequence than the word-working...³.

The high rhetoricism of Heliodorus' and Tatius' fictions—especially the fondness for «ekphrasis», the use of paradox and antithesis, and the apostrophes, soliloquies, or debates—were the very things that the Elizabethans sought to embellish their prose with. This coincident in taste becomes obvious in Underdowne's translation. He exhibits the same stylistic traits as Heliodorus, and he even goes further than the original in emphasizing the aphoristic and argumentative elements of the story.

It is the «Copious eloquence, pleasant and delightful stile» of *Clitophon and Leucippe* that Burton commends in the Address to the Cour-

1. Crane, p. 162 ff.

2. Arthur Tieje, The Greek Romances, *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* XIII (1914) 484. See also Wolff, p. 247.

3. *The Ancient Romances*, p. 119. Besides Heliodorus and Tatius, Perry also classifies Iamblichus as a sophistic romancer—although Longus belongs historically to the same period he is less artificial than the others in his style. The earlier, pre-sophistic romancers were the author of the Ninus fragment, Chariton, and Xenophon of Ephesus. In contrast to the sophistic writers these were addressing more naive readers and emphasized less the «artistic exhibition of ethical qualities» than a kind of sentimental idealism «centering about young love and the sensational buffetings of Fortune that interfered with its realization and prolonged the dramatic suspense» (pp. 117-18).

teous Reader prefixed to his 1597 translation¹. And in the Epistle Dedicatory to Lord Southampton he views the work in terms borrowed from Sidney's *Defense*: «being a delightful poem, although in prose: which doth consist in the fiction, not in the meeter; although seeming full of prolixity, yet with delight avoyding satitie»². Burton based his translation on the Latin one of the Milanese scholar L. Annibale Cruceio, published numerous times since its first appearance in 1552, and including two reissuings in England (Cambridge 1587, 1589?). In the Introduction of the reprint (1923) of Burton's translation, Stephen Gaselee evaluates Cruceio's Latin as «vigorous and usually faithful», while Burton's English «is idiomatic, but remarkably close to his original» (pp. xix-xx). The rhetoricism of Tatius' style was thus conveyed intact through Cruceio into Burton's translation to delight the Elizabethans with a copious variety of stylistic witticisms.

In addition to its stylistic attractions, the picaresque quality of *Clitophon and Leucippe* puts Burton's translation in the proscenium of current developments in Elizabethan prose fiction. The public's fondness for the picaresque adventures of a rogue-like character produced numerous types of prose that catered to this taste: the jest books, literature of confessions, crime exposures, rogue biographies by Greene, and descriptions of the London underworld by Dekker, Rowlands, Middleton. In 1586 David Rowland translated the Spanish picaresque novel *Lazarillo de Tormes*, which immediately became a success among all social classes³. This novel stimulated freshly the vogue for rogue fiction which flourished in the decade of the nineties. This was the climate that also produced Burton's translation of *Clitophon and Leucippe*.

Tatius' romance, usually classified as a comic romance, is a sustained parody of the idealistic dimensions of the genre through its pragmatic, almost cynical point of view⁴. Like a pair of picaresque chara-

1. Burton, sig. A4^r.

2. Burton, sig. A4^v.

3. Gabriel Harvey thought that *Lazarillo* was «foolish», but he had to read it because it was among the books that his friend Spenser offered him as a present in Dec. 1578 (see *Gabriel Harvey: His Life, Marginalia, Library*, ed. Virginia F. Stern, Oxford 1979, p. 228).

4. Arthur Heiserman in *The Novel Before the Novel*, p. 128, writes: «That the *Clitophon* could have been appreciated as being specifically comic is suggested by its exploitation of six of the topics which comedy, according to the *Tractatus*, has at its disposal» (deception, impossibility, the unexpected, assimilation to the worse, reaching possible ends through illogical means, and making worse choices when better ones are possible).

acters, the hero and heroine of the story travel throughout the Mediterranean world making a mockery of romance values. The heroine remains chaste, but only because circumstance prevented her from doing otherwise. The hero is cowardly, unfaithful at least once, and constantly being beaten up like a buffoon. Love is primarily sensual, lying and cheating is the most common solution out of a bind, blind Fortune is the supreme divinity, and the candidness of certain descriptions often suggests decadence.

Like the Elizabethan translator of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, who eased the conscience of his pious readers by extolling the value of the book as a travel guide to Spain, Burton did his best to justify his task as a translator of Tatius' shady but very amusing story: «As Fulgentius saith in his *Mythiologicke*, the morall dooth yeelde unfained profit,» and «as Cruceius saith upon Heliodorus, there is none who is learned, and desirous of good instruction, which once having begun to read him can lay him aside, until he have perused him over»¹. This is what Burton claims in the prefatory Address to the Reader. However, his appeal to the authority of Fulgentius and Cruceio may not have been persuasive enough to some readers. For there are only two existing copies of his translation today. It may be that the book was immediately suppressed after its publication in 1597. This was the same year that the Archbishop had ordered Marlowe's «Amores» to be burnt publicly. But in contrast to that some critics think that the very scarcity of Burton's book attests to its popularity: «Perhaps,» explains Gaselee, «like the more vulgar love-romances in chap-book form, the very popularity of such books causes them to be thumbed away to disappearance» (Introduction in Burton, p. xix). This last possibility should not seem surprising since *Clitophon and Leucippe*, despite the censure of Photius, was also read with relish by the Byzantines whose culture supposedly was based on paragons of religion and society.

The Elizabethan view of the Greek romances differs radically from the way we read these works today. The twentieth century sees in the Hellenistic romances of the three centuries after Christ the signs of the profound changes that mark the end of the classical world:

The quest for truth took the path of exact science rather than first philosophies, the urge to create in beauty took shape in a «Venus di Milo» or «Dying Gaul» rather than in the remotest Olympians

1. Burton, sig. A4^r.

of Phidias or Praxitelis, in the high finish of Alexandrian miniatures rather than in the statuesque harmonies of fifth-century tragedy¹.

Most contemporary readers find these romances tedious, melodramatic, teeming with artificial morality, rhetoric, and digressions on pseudo-science. But this would not represent the way the Renaissance judged literary values. For the Renaissance definition of the «classics» was far broader than it is today to include, besides the classical epics, tragedies, and philosophy, all the antique forms that historically and aesthetically belong to the period of the decadence of classical art and literature². The element that rendered the romances of Heliodorus, Tattius, and Longus especially congenial to the Elizabethan taste was the convergence of didacticism, pastoralism, sensational adventures, the picaresque, and elaborate rhetoric. Tending to extract a moral from everything—even the most unlikely places—the Elizabethan translators recommended the Greek romances highly to the public for their edifying qualities, along with the promise of amusement and commendations on their style. And with an impulse to assimilate everything foreign towards creating something essentially English, the translators converted these products of antiquity into Elizabethan fiction pleasurable to the courtier and the populace alike. The translations, however, are only one facet of the naturalization of the Greek romance in England. At the same time the materials of Heliodorus, Tattius and Longus were finding their way into the native products of the literature and drama with significant figures like Lyly, Greene, Sidney, Spenser, and finally Shakespeare.

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1. Moses Hadas, *A History of Greek Literature*, New York 1950, p. 197.

2. About the «decadence» of the Hellenistic art and literature Moses Hadas writes in his *Hellenistic Culture*, New York 1959, pp. 223-24:

To speak of Hellenistic decadence in any sphere of culture is meaningless; with reference to the plastic arts it is wrong. We may ideally prefer and as ordinary human beings be flattered by the high dignity of the classic, and if dignity be the gauge then the hellenistic art shows a degeneration. But hellenistic art embraces a much wider range, and granted the change in spiritual climate, hellenistic artists were as masterly as their predecessors and achieved effects beyond those of their predecessors.