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**Chariton's Romantic Ideology**

Classical literature repeatedly evaluates the joys and dangers of erotic love by weighing it against martial prowess, political power, and a range of ethical values and social goals. Hector, for example, foremost of the Trojan warriors, condemns "woman-crazy" Paris in Iliad 3. Plato subordinates physical desire to philosophy in the Symposium. Conversely, Sappho 16 elevates the objects of personal desire above military pageantry. Among the Greek novelists Chariton employs this comparative method of exploring and evaluating eros to an unparalleled degree. Throughout the romance of Chaereas and Callirhoe he repeatedly matches love against other human concerns and activities, and love consistently ranks first in the hierarchy. This paper surveys the phenomenon in Chariton's novel and explores its implications.

Chariton's opening chapters offer his readers a programmatic declaration of love's preeminence. When "political enmity" (1.1.3) between their fathers threatens to keep Chaereas and Callirhoe apart, the Syracusan assembly intervenes to secure their marriage. The city appoints itself as a kind of marriage broker (1.1.11), and the god Eros assumes an unusually political function as "demagogue" of the assembly (1.1.12). As he recounts the mastery of Eros over the political institutions of Syracuse, the novelist elevates romantic love to an unusual and fantastic prominence above traditional political and military concerns. Chariton offers several morally disturbing demonstrations of love's supremacy during Callirhoe's adventures in Ionia and Persia, by subordinating a series of personal values and social ideals - friendship, self-control, political power, and political responsibility - to the irrepressible desires of Callirhoe's admirers. Chariton exhibits his romantic ideology also in his adaptations of Homeric material, as noticeable deviations from Homeric models firmly identify the principal preoccupations of the romance novelist as distinct from those of the epic poet.

I conclude that this erotic perspective is a defining feature of Chariton's romance. Chariton composes not just erotic fiction, but fiction driven by an erotic ideology, as he consciously shapes his work according to a well-defined conception of love's centrality within his chosen genre. In adopting this erotic perspective, Chariton sharply distinguishes his novel from epic, historiography, and historical fiction. These observations counter recent scholarship which, while highlighting the advocacy of socially sanctioned marriage and procreation within the corpus of Greek novels, undervalues their glorification of personal emotion.