

Maaïke ZIMMERMAN

Latinising the Novel: Greek "models" and Roman (re-)creations

It is well known that behind many of the Roman novelistic texts stand Greek models. To mention only the most obvious ones, the *Golden Ass* or *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, composed in the 2nd century AD, is based on a Greek model, written not much earlier. Recently even a fresh case has been made for the opinion that Petronius' *Satyricon* might be considered an adaptation of a comic Greek novel. Although the dispute has not been settled, there are strong indications that at some stage in the genesis of the Latin novel *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri*, transmitted to us in late-antique versions, an earlier, now lost Greek text plays a role. Also Latin "translations" of the Greek *Alexander romance* are known, e.g. the one by Julius Valerius (4th cent. AD). More examples could be added.

In this paper I will cast a fresh look at the ways in which Latin novelists handled the Greek models which inspired them. It will be shown that this process is best described as a process of re-creation rather than adaptation. The result more often than not is a new and original text, at the background of which Latin literary predecessors stand on a more than equal footing with the Greek "palimpsest". The thoroughly Roman feel of these new creations is partly effectuated by means of an intricate intertextual dialogue with preceding Roman literary texts, especially epic, mainly Vergil, but also his successors. Other Roman literary texts are involved as well; for instance it will be shown that Roman Satire often not only contributes to the characterization of the *personae* of prime and secondary narrators, but also lends a special atmosphere to whole episodes of these Roman novelistic texts. In this connection I will also demonstrate that, especially in the case of the narrating "I" of some Latin novels, the Roman authors have deepened and complicated the issue of the speaking "I", a phenomenon which may be explained by specific developments of the enunciating "I" in Latin literature.

Perry 1967 discussed the handling of Greek models by Roman novelistic authors in terms of the use of "sources" which were then "enlarged" and/or "contaminated" by the Latin authors, the result being described as more or less successful patchwork. Since Perry a number of studies have, through various approaches, helped to establish the insight that the Roman novels have their own, intrinsic literary value.

The independent handling of Greek predecessors by Latin novelists will be discussed against the background of the long tradition of translation and adaptation of Greek originals for Roman readers, and the novelists' position within that tradition will be investigated. Latin novelists were also in a position to fully exploit the heritage of Latin literature including its richly developed art of entertaining a sophisticated intertextual dialogue with literary predecessors. Thus, in this paper a complex and intriguing picture of the relationship of the Latin novels with Greek models will emerge, a relationship which cannot be subsumed under the heading of adaptation or "contamination" of sources.