

## THE READER IN THE “COMEDY OF ERRORS” OF THE ANCIENT GREEK NOVEL

by

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**ABSTRACT:** In my study I focus on a problem of the comedy of errors created via the *qui pro quo* technique which is also treated as a prism through which we can observe the relations between particular texts of ancient Greek novels and their implied audience. The conducted analyses of the ways in which the *qui pro quo* can be used in this kind of texts allow us to observe the phenomenon of a surprising broadening and diversifying of its functions, from the element serving the complication of a plot within individual stages of the novel's action in early romances to the multifunction instrument in later works. The discussed motif seems to be one of the most tangible mechanisms organizing the world of a novel in all of its aspects in Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon* and Heliodorus' *Aithiopika*. One can even state that with this instrument the authors provoke their reader to an aesthetic reflection on the work, the convention and, finally, the reader's own position towards the world of the novel and it seems that this effect comprises the author's basic creative idea.

The perspective of this paper has been shaped by two closely related aspects. One of them is the comedy of errors created via the *qui pro quo* technique whose application in the texts of ancient Greek novels has not been thoroughly analysed yet. The problem seems worthy of attention, the more so that it allows for characterizing the relations between particular texts of ancient Greek novels and their implied audience<sup>1</sup>.

Treating the *qui pro quo* as a prism through which we observe the inner communication structure of the texts of interest to us is conducive to emphasizing in some of them the characteristics typical, according to critics, for innovation-oriented, contemporary literature. These works are written with the use of the literary devices which seem to invite the reader to taking up a sophisticated game with text. In this game it is the audience which has a more active role, must be ready to both decode more or less direct references to literary tradition and reflect constantly upon the form of the text. A literary work therefore reveals the dual

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<sup>1</sup> The question of the audience of the ancient Greek novel is one of the most frequently discussed issues in the literature on the subject. See e.g. WESSELING 1988; HÄGG 2004.