previous chapter (117-24) M. had pointed to the popularity of the work of Apollonius of Tyrus in the Middle Ages and to the French Roman de la rose. There too he had discussed the problem of classification of ancient novels as 'novels' or 'romances' but not settled this matter. Therefore his ensuing quasi-profound thoughts on why the novel disappeared concern a problem which he fails to define properly.

The book ends with two appendices on ‘author and date’ (about 200 A.D.) and ‘scholarly interpretations of the ancient novel’ useful, but rather selective). The index preponderantly contains titles and names of ancient authors and scholars but not e.g. references to key notions like ‘cycle, myth, ring, rhetoric, dialectic’.

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2) E.g. O. Schoenberger, Longus, Hirtengeschichten von Daphnis and Chloe (Berlin 1980\(^3\), 1989\(^4\)), 38-41 and in his note on 3, 20, 3 (p. 198).
3) For this structuring principle M. refers to O. Weinreich, Der griechische Liebesroman (Zürich 1962) but he neglects the discussion along the same lines by Schoenberger 38-9. See also Rojas Alvárez Lourdes, Nova Tellus 4 (1986), 27-41.
4) E.g. D.N. Reeve, To whom did the ancient novelists address themselves?, RSC 25 (1977), 18-29.


This is an excellent book. The author knows the evidence, knows how to handle the evidence and how to bring it to bear on the questions he poses. He also presents his views and conclusions in a lucid English, which does not suffer from anything even remotely resembling opaqueness, trendiness or semi- or pseudo-sophistication. In his preface H. mentions in passing that one colleague had pointed out to him that he was 'not even asking the truly interesting
questions'. For this we might be thankful! H. does focus, however, on two fundamental questions: what developments can be observed in the use of writing and how do these developments relate to the extent of literacy? He asks these questions for the archaic (ch. 3), the classical (ch. 4), and the Hellenistic periods (ch. 5), for the Early and Middle Roman Republic (ch. 6), the late Republic and Principate (ch. 7), and finally for Late Antiquity (ch. 8). I presume that H. has asked himself these two fundamental questions from the very start of his intellectual journey and that the 'truly interesting questions' concern the possible influences of 'ancient patterns of literacy on the intellectual history of Greece and Rome' (337), such as: was writing an instrument of political domination; was writing necessary for the rise of the polis, for the emergence of the Greek penchant for rational, critical philosophy; did it lead to historiography? H. does give some answers on these and similar questions in his chapter 2 and at the end of his 'Conclusions' but the thrust of the book lies elsewhere. To think in terms of 'truly interesting' and just barely interesting questions betrays a certain kind of intellectual arrogance common among those who are eager to show off their familiarity with the latest trends in Paris; fortunately this is not part of H.'s mentality.

H. observes quite a strong penetration of writing into the various branches of Greek and Roman society: business, law, contracts, politics, administration, letters, religion etc.; and he ably describes all these developments in the above-mentioned periods. But at the same time he correctly emphasizes the fundamental importance of orality and, more important, never falls into the trap of believing that, because of the victorious march of written culture in antiquity, most people may be thought to have been able both to read and write, in short to have been literate. In fact the whole book offers a very strong playdoyer in favor of a rather low level of literacy throughout antiquity (with relative highs and lows, of course) and opposed to the rather biased views of some classicists about alleged very high, almost modern levels.

Harris basically follows two paths. The first is that of stringent examination of the ancient source material, literary, epigraphical, and papyrological; the second that of drawing comparisons. 'Low' and 'high' are rather relative notions. H. draws on later preindustrial European history in order to specify and clarify these notions. In the wake of L. Stone and other preindustrial historians, he describes which factors explained the presumed rise in the level