Dialogues in love:
Bakhtin and his critics on the Greek novel

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Mikhail Bakhtin occupies an extraordinary position in the intellectual universe of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Though he wrote from the turbulent context of Communist Russia, he nevertheless seems to endorse many of the liberal-leaning West's most favoured concepts: hybridity, polyphony, openness, multiplicity. Bakhtin's utopian space (as it is often presented) of open-ended dialogues speaks with real depth and resonance to the increasingly (socially, racially, economically, militarily) stratified worlds of late capitalism. His emphasis, moreover, on the prose novel as the principal literary focus for heteroglossia (speaking with/to/for/in view of 'the other') chimes well with the secular materialism of the age.[1] This beguiling seductiveness, though, comes at a cost: too often, his complex thought has been reduced to slogans and ciphers. As the authors of the best recent book on his thought put it, '[m]uch of Bakhtin's fame today rests on a few neologisms and new uses of existing words that have rapidly been reduced to cliché'.[2]

Bakhtin has proven particularly congenial to scholarship on the Greek novel, my subject in this chapter.[3] This field has been gratifyingly free from the kind of reductive cliché-mongering characterised by Morson and Emer-

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[1] See esp. *DN*, *EN*, *FTCN, PDP*, *Prehistory*. *RW*. A list of abbreviations used for Bakhtin's work is appended at the conclusion of this chapter. For Bakhtin's views of the novel, see especially Holquist (1990), 67–106; Morson & Emerson (1990), 306–70.

[2] Morson & Emerson (1990), 10.

[3] See Fusillo (1989), esp. 17, 21, 26–7; (2003), 279–80; Nimis (1994), 387–8; 398–400; (1998), 106; (1999), 216; Whitmarsh (1998), 94–5. Cf. Finkelpearl (1998), 24–8 on Apuleius. Branham (2002) offers an incisive reading of Bakhtin's analysis of the chronotope of the ancient novel.

son in the passage quoted above; indeed, some of the most stimulating work has been produced with reference to Bakhtin. But this field certainly has developed a strongly individualised sense of what Bakhtin stands for, and this — I want to argue in this chapter — makes the best use neither of Bakhtin nor of the novels themselves.

In particular, scholars on the novel have taken swiftly to the Bakhtinian characterisation of the novel as an 'open' genre. Massimo Fusillo's (excellent) *Il romanzo greco*, for example, attributes to Bakhtin the contrast between the 'staticità impersonale dell' epica' and the 'dinamismo aperto del romanzo'.[4] Although Fusillo is careful not to overstate this particular contrast, the quasi-Bakhtinian concept of *polifonia* (which Fusillo takes in a primarily intertextual sense) does lie at the heart of the book. Steve Nimis meanwhile, uses Bakhtin to argue that the 'novel is anti-generic, unable to be specified as a single style of discourse; it is a container of styles rather than itself a homogeneous and distinctive style'.[5] For Nimis, the novel is characterised by a distinctive open-endedness of perspectives, styles, genres and narratological markers.

This coalescent orthodoxy, however, focusing upon the idea of the novel as a constitutively 'open' form, is unsatisfactory. In this chapter, I want to offer a critical re-reading of Bakhtin's understanding of (particularly Greek) novelistic discourse, and to explore ways in which this revised model might inspire a more insightful analysis of the Greek texts. There are, in particular, two key aspects of his thought that need greater emphasis than they have generally received, and I shall treat them in turn.

Negative structure

The first is the misreading of Bakhtin's model of heteroglossia as a kind of formlessness or negative structure. Some of his writings, admittedly, do come close to this position. *Discourse in the novel*, notably, argues (over the course of a long and rather rambling essay) for the centrality of 'hybridity' and 'centrifugality' to heteroglossic language, which he sees as embodied particularly in the post-sophistic (or 'second-line') novel.[6] '[T]he prose

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[4] Fusillo (1989), 26.
[5] Nimis (1994), 398.
[6] *DN* 309–10, 319–20, 360–2 (hybridity); 272 (centrifugality); 366–422 (first-line and second-line novels).

writer', he argues, 'witnesses … the unfolding of social heteroglossia *sur-rounding* the object, the Tower-of-Babel mixing of languages that goes on around any object'.[7] Prose novels, he argues here, multiply the available perspectives upon the world; the novel, in contrast with the vatic authoritarianism of the poem, allows many different voices to co-exist without hierarchical resolution. 'Authoritative discourse cannot be represented [in prose] — it is only transmitted';[8] which is to say, novelistic characters and narrators may pronounce authoritatively ('monologically') upon the world, but the novel positions their utterances in dialogue with other utterances (and indeed the events of the narrative), so as to challenge any faith the reader might have in them. Novelistic characters and narrators find themselves in perpetual, unresolved dialogue with the world around them.

Yet Bakhtin (a notoriously inconsistent writer) does not always privilege the unresolved to this extent.[9] Even in *Discourse in the novel*, the centrifugal forces of any utterance are said to be accompanied by centripetal.[10] Heteroglossic language is *not* infinitely open, and for two reasons. Firstly, the various constituent voices that are to be found in dialogue with each other in the novel can be, on their own terms, authoritarian; that there is no ultimate closure or resolution does not necessarily detract from their forcefulness.[11]

More importantly, however, heteroglossic language — and particularly the novel — must have its monologic aspect. The crucial factor in this rather paradoxical and confusing formulation is the role of the author. The author's attempt to create and communicate an image of her- or himself as the master of a certain (heteroglossic) genre is itself an attempt to monopolise language, to dictate reception. 'The author of a literary work (a novel)', writes Bakhtin, 'creates a unified and whole speech work (an utterance). But he creates it from heterogeneous, as it were, alien utterances'.[12] Each novelistic author manipulates the latent dialogism of the form in a highly proprietorial man-

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[7] *DN* 278.

[8] *DN* 344.

[9] Morson & Emerson eds (1990), 91: 'Throughout his career, Bakhtin explored the proper ratio of unfinalizability to finalizability'.

[10] *DN* 272.

[11] See e.g. *PDP* 248–9, on hagiographic discourse ('[t]he hagiographic word is a word without a sideward glance, calmly adequate to itself and its referential object') and 'penetrative discourse' ('a word without a sideward glance, without a loophole, without internal polemic'). In Dostoyevsky, Bakhtin argues, these discourses are invariably sited in dialogue with other readings of the world.

[12] *PT* 115; cf. *SG* 75–6, 77–8.

ner: thus Bakhtin can write of Tolstoy's discourse as 'characterized by a
sharp internal dialogism',[13] or of 'the characteristic features of Dostoyev-
sky's work'.[14]

This is the fundamental reason why it is a misunderstanding of Bakhtin's
position to characterise the novel as an infinite plurality of positions. Bakhtin
sees the novel, like any literary form, as an attempt on the author's part to
communicate a meaningful, significant, and idiosyncratic perspective upon
the world: the novel that plays off against each other multiple utterances *is
itself an utterance*.

This does not mean that the author manifests himself or herself in the
text, in the form of an epiphany. The words attributed to characters and nar-
rators are not (of course) those of the author. The author's meaning lies more
in an overall perspective, a style of communication. As with any utterance,
the meaning of a literary text is constituted through dialogue, in this case
between author and readers: 'the event of the life of the text, that is its true
essence, always develops on the *boundary between two consciousnesses, two
subjects*'.[15] Bakhtin's author, however, is not 'dead' like Barthes':[16] her or
his existence is invoked in the act of reading, not in the form of a pale, spec-
tral vision but as an active, determining ('conscious') subject in the dialogue
— even if always in dialogue with the reader. In a late essay, he distin-
guishes between 'primary' (i.e. real, flesh-and-blood) and 'secondary' au-
thors. The secondary author is an 'image', an *effet du texte*, created by the
primary.[17] Readers can envisage the author only in a reflected, secondary
form. Nevertheless, imagining the author is a crucial part of the interpreta-
tive process:

> We find the author (perceive, understand, sense, and feel him) in any
> work of art. For example, in a painting we always feel its author (artist),
> but we never *see* him in the way that we see the images he has depicted.

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[13] *DN* 283.

[14] *PDP* 182.

[15] *PT* 106 (Bakhtin's emphasis).

[16] Barthes (1977), e.g. 145: 'Linguistically, the author is never more than the instance writ-
ing, just as saying "I" is never more than the instance saying "I"'. See also Morson &
Emerson (1990), 251–2.

[17] *Notes* 148–9.

We feel him in everything as a pure, depicting origin (depicting subject), but not as a depicted (visible) image.[18]

In order to make sense of the literary work, we (readers, interpreters) need to supply our own understanding of the author's intention. It is not currently fashionable in literary criticism to speak in terms of 'authorial intention', but Bakhtin is surely right in this respect: it is in fact almost impossible to write about an authored text without supplying a characterisation of the author. The crucial point is that when we read the author in the text, the image is created through 'a special kind of dialogue: the complex interrelations between the text and the created, framing *context* (questioning, refuting and so forth)'.[19] This does not simply mean that we invent the author in our own image, any more than 'we' (readers) are simply projections of the author's desire: reading, for Bakhtin, is a dialogue in the full sense between real author and real receiver.

So, you can never step into the same text twice, and to this extent novel-reading is inherently pluralistic (though we should note that Bakhtin sees the complex dialogue between author and receivers as an effect of *all* types of utterance, not just the novel). But this does not mean that the text itself is formless: each text contains definite and particular features that are open to analysis (even taxonomy), just as each author presents certain idiosyncratic characteristics. If we want to understand Bakhtin's thought, we need to give due weight to the *centripetal* as well as the centrifugal elements of the novel.

History and politics

The other aspect of Bakhtin's thought that has not always been fully thought through in scholarship on the Greek novel is his emphasis upon the political and ideological dimensions of the utterance. 'The theme of an utterance is concrete — as concrete as the historical instant to which it belongs. *Only an utterance taken in its full, concrete scope as an historical phenomenon possesses a theme*'.[20] The novel's characteristic heteroglossia, for Bakhtin, is not

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[18] *PT* 109.
[19] *PT* 106.
[20] *MPL* 100.

simply a feature of literary form,[21] but also, definitively, the product of a certain set of historical forces; indeed, much of his work is designed as an attack on formalism, which he saw as fundamentally ahistorical.[22]

In particular, the novel is considered an epiphenomenon of a process of desacralisation and redistribution of social authority. Literature, he writes, 'has been completely secularized', stripped of its religious and authoritative contexts, no longer pronounced by 'priests, prophets, preachers, judges, leaders, patriarchal fathers'.[23] This process, according to Bakhtin, is concentrated in times characterised by 'a decay and collapse of the religious, political and ideological authority connected with … language'.[24] The novel, entering into dialogue with older, monologic forms such as epic, thus represents a powerful articulation of a given culture's sense of its relationship with its past.

In Bakhtin's view, this phenomenon is particularly intense in the eighteenth century, the time of 'the decline of authorities and authoritarian forms, and the rejection of authoritarian forms of language'.[25] But it is also visible, in less concentrated form, 'in the polymathic and heteroglot world of the Hellenistic era, in Imperial Rome, and during the disintegration and collapse of the church-directed centralization of discourse and ideology in the Middle Ages'.[26] The Greek novels represent (albeit not to the same extent as the later novel) 'a language consciousness that has been profoundly relativized by heteroglossia and polyphony'.[27] The birth of the novel is directly linked to the evanescence of political identities in the post-classical Greek world:

> To fully understand the human image in a Greek romance and the distinctive features of its identity (and consequently the distinctive way its identity is put to the test) we must take into consideration the fact that human beings in such works — as distinct from all genres of classical

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[21] See e.g. Harrison (2003), 515, who prefaces a reference to Bakhtin's 'attractive ideas … that the novel necessarily falls outside generic categories' as follows: 'Having considered issues of meaning, overall interpretation and ideology, I now turn (finally) to questions of literary form'.

[22] Most clearly articulated in *FM* (see Morson & Emerson (1990), 277–80).

[23] *Notes* 133.

[24] *DN* 370.

[25] *Notes* 149.

[26] *DN* 370.

[27] *DN* 400. This interpretation is followed by Nimis (1994), 407, who refers to the 'more fragmented social order' that lies behind the novels.

literature — are *individuals, private persons*. This feature corresponds to the *abstract-alien* world of the Greek romance: in such a world, a man can *only* function as an isolated and private individual, deprived of any organic connection with his country, his city, his own social group, his clan, even his own family. He does not feel himself to be a part of the social whole. He is a solitary man, lost in an alien world.[28]

This interpretation of the novels, as a kind of consolation for the political and spiritual losses of the Hellenistic world, has been popularised more recently by Bryan Reardon and Tomas Hägg (it is rooted in Erwin Rohde's *Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer*, which Bakhtin read with admiration).[29] It represents, however, an entirely negative characterisation of the novel, as an intrinsically deficient form. In the rather despairing account of the Greek novels in *Forms of time and chronotope in the novel*, Bakhtin only really refers to what it is they lack:[30] their narrative 'lies outside biographical time'; 'Greek adventure-time lacks any natural, everyday cyclicity'; 'there are absolutely no indications of historical time, no identifying traces of the era'; 'nothing changes … [t]his empty time leaves no traces anywhere, no indications of its passing'.[31] These sham novels are shorn of the political urgency of real, ideologically committed forms (whether dialogic or monologic).

As an interpretation of the Greek novel, this is clearly questionable: Bakhtin has absorbed too easily Erwin Rohde's contempt for the genre. What interests me more here, however, is the larger issue of the relationship between history and literary form, which is vulnerable on at least two fronts.

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[28] *FTCN*, 104.

[29] Reardon (1969), and esp. (1991), 29: 'This [Chariton's] narrative expresses a social and personal myth, of the private individual isolated and insecure in a world too big for him, and finding his security, his very identity, in love'. Reardon's view is endorsed by Hägg (1983), 16. This view has been widely challenged: see most recently Haynes (2003), 160. For Bakhtin's approval of Rohde (1876), see *EN* 4; 372 n.43; for respect, if not full agreement, see *EN* 64. For Rohde, what the novels lack is principally the rich internal characterisation of a modern novel.

[30] For a critical account of this essay, see Branham (2002).

[31] *FTCN* 90–1. In *DN*, Bakhtin presents a more sympathetic reading of the Greek texts as 'first-line' predecessors of the 'second-line' modern novels, fundamentally heteroglossic, even if not as powerfully so as their modern equivalents: 'Novels of the First Stylistic Line approach heteroglossia from above, it is as if they *descend* onto it … Novels of the Second Line, on the contrary, approach heteroglossia from below' (400).

Firstly, there is a very real question as to whether the post-classical Greek world, and in particular that of the Roman period, *was* depoliticised in the way that Bakhtin claims: this is a time of vibrant political cultures within cities, fiercely competitive relationships between them, and endless embassies to foreign potentates.[32] Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the historical model of stability followed by fragmentation is questionable.[33] *All* societies are in process; all societies look to the past as a time of greater stability. One would be hard pushed to think of any period of human history that has not considered itself to be faced with new challenges to its inherited sense of community and authority. The vagueness of Bakhtin's historical periodisation for heteroglossia, indeed, is evidenced by his astonishingly broad-brush description in *Discourse in the novel* of the proto-heteroglossic phase: 'the Hellenistic era, in Imperial Rome, and during … the Middle Ages'.[34] A span of (depending on how one takes the periods) almost two millennia … this is not going to provide us with a watertight historical explanation for novelistic heteroglossia.

The problem is — paradoxically — that Bakhtin's model of history is not itself dialogic. He treats historical change as though it were a simple fact, rather than an *interpretation* of the relationship between two periods and two generic universes. When a text conjures up an image of itself as a fragmented, dialogic reinvention of a monologic hypotext, the image of the hypotext is itself (necessarily) in part a construct of the later text. This is the process identified by Bloom in *A map of misreading*: in order to represent itself (through intertextual dialogue, the only means open to it), a later text must misrepresent, misread an originary 'parent' text.[35] (A dialogic model of history would not, however, use such rhetorically strident, normative-sounding terms.)

Bakhtin has been criticised for his reductive view of epic as banally monologistic.[36] Equally reductive is the corresponding characterisation of the

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[32] See e.g. (briefly) Whitmarsh (2001), 17–20.
[33] For this point, see Whitmarsh (2001), 296.
[34] *DN* 370.
[35] Bloom (1975), esp. 83–103.
[36] See Nagy (2002), 73: 'This aspect of Bakhtin's description of the novel leads to an overly narrow formulation of the epic as genre'. *PDP* 109 is cited for a supposed palinode, but I am not convinced. Bakhtin's assertion is not that epic is an 'aspect' (as Nagy paraphrases) of the novelistic, but a 'root' (i.e. an ancient progenitor). Elsewhere in *PDP*, Bakhtin continues to oppose epic to dialogistic forms (pp. 107, 116).

historical period of the epic as narrowly authoritarian and culturally self-contained: scholars now often read the *Iliad*, for example, as a product of the emergent collectivist culture of the *polis,* and the *Odyssey* as an expression of colonial encounters with other peoples.[37] This reductivism, however, cannot be simply pared away from his thought, nor (conversely) can we simply expand the scope of dialogism to include epic: the misreading of epic and archaic society is a necessary by-product of his monological view of historical change.

What is needed is a reading of the novel not as a (passive) *symptom* but as the (self-conscious, subjective) *articulation* of a specific historical position, in dialogue with the past. This does not mean that historical change is *exclusively* a form of narrative understanding, which would imply that historical materialism has no role to play in literary history (Bakhtin commits to the Marxist view of the materialist base underlying the linguistic superstructure, albeit the relation between the two is complex).[38] A dialogic view of history would grant the past its own determinative, centripetal force; but as with authorship (see the previous section), that force would only exist in dialogue with its reception in the present.

I want at this stage to summarise the conclusions of this and the previous section, and their implication for a revised Bakhtinian reading of the Greek novels. Firstly, the heteroglossic novel is not simply negative structure, 'anti-genre' in a crude sense. Novels contain powerfully authoritative voices with real ideological urgency, although the structure of the novel precludes the absolute dominance of any one ideology. Moreover, the novel itself (both as a genre and as an individual work) constitutes a certain kind of utterance, with a definite form. That form is certainly activated in dialogue with the receiver (the reader), but 'shaping' the text is seen as a central part of the meaning-making process. Secondly, the novel activates an ideological dialogue with the historical past, and is as such a materially based utterance. The novel positions itself in the present, however, by invoking what Bakhtin might have called an 'image' of the past, or a 'secondary' past (as distinct from the 'primary' past, irrecoverable in all its material fullness). In the following sections, I want to put some of these ideas into practice.

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[37] E.g. (respectively) Seaford (1994), Dougherty (2001).
[38] *MPL* 17–24.

Centrifugal and centipetal forces in the Greek novel

Bakhtin's influential analysis of the Greek novel's chronotope emphasises the role of chance, contingency and the unexpected in the 'adventure time' sequences of novelistic plot.[39] Time in the Greek novels, he claims, is theoretically reversible: nothing changes, experience leaves no marks on the characters. This particular chronotopic formulation, he argues, is representative of the novel's ideological position as an inherently private, elite form: the generic commitment to random contingency militates against any material (which is to say, ideological or political) specificity.[40]

For Steve Nimis, the novels' emphasis upon the vicissitudes of fortune are an index of their (fundamentally prosaic, as he sees it) open-endedness: 'Such narrative turns seem to be impromptu adjustments made by the author as he moves forward step by step, rather than being examples of the articulation of an already finished plan'.[41] The novels, he argues (with specific reference to the *Aethiopica*), manifest a 'dialectic of closing and opening' throughout,[42] a dialectic that is unresolved towards the end. As a prosaic 'anti-genre', the novel is committed to open-endedness, or (we might say) narrative centrifugality.

It is certainly the case that the novels identify paradox and surprise explicitly and self-reflexively as key markers of their distinctive narrative structure.[43] But such markers are not simply inert microcosms of the aesthetic structure of the whole: they are carefully framed. In Chariton, a crucial passage at the beginning of the final book looks forward towards the forthcoming resolution: Eros and Aphrodite, we are told, have spent their anger, and are appeased by Chaereas' 'wandering from East to West amid multiple sufferings' (ἀπὸ δύσεως εἰς ἀνατολὰς διὰ μυρίων παθῶν πλανηθείς, 8.1.3).

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[39] *FTCN* 89–96; Branham (2000), 165–74.

[40] *FTCN* 100.

[41] Nimis (1999), 232.

[42] Nimis (1999), 234.

[43] Particularly Chariton and Achilles. 'Eros rejoices in extraordinary (*paradoxois*) triumphs' (Chariton, 1.1.4); for other paradoxes, cf. 2.8.3 (Callirhoe's pregnancy); 3.2.7, 3.3.2 (Callirhoe marrying Dionysius); 3.3.13 (the empty ship); 3.4.1 (Callirhoe's disappearance); 4.1.2 (the fact that each has buried each other); 5.8.2 (the trial scene); 8.1.2 (fortune prepared something *paradoxos*); 8.1.9 (the reunion of Callirhoe and Chaereas); 8.6.10 (return to Syracuse). *Tychê* (fortune/fate) is said to enjoy changes and innovations (4.4.2; 6.8.1; *cf.* 8.3.6). See also Achilles Tatius 2.18.6; 4.4.1; 6.2.3 (*paradoxos*); 4.14.5; 4.14.8; 5.1.6; 5.23.5; 6.2.8; 6.4.3 (*paralogos*).

The protagonist's quasi-Odyssean sufferings at the capricious hands of Fortune, then, are over; the gods are satisfied. Chance and contingency represent the *exceptional* state of narrative, Aphrodite's punishment meted out to Chaereas for kicking his wife. It is, to use anthropological terms, in the liminal phase of inversion that the protagonist is buffeted by Fate, not during the stable phase when identity is stable.[44] Even if the liminal phase does occupy the majority of the narrative, it does so by necessary reference to the framing 'moments' of stable identity (as, indeed, Bakhtin himself acknowledged).[45]

Indeed, Chariton's narrator proceeds to apostrophise his readers directly, promising a 'purge of the earlier grim subject-matter' (καθάρσιον … τῶν ἐν πρώτοις σκυθρωπῶν),[46] and 'no more' (οὐκέτι) piracy, slavery, trials, battles, suicide, warfare and capture; instead he offers 'proper love and legal marriage' (ἔρωτες δίκαιοι <καὶ> νόμιμοι γάμοι, 8.1.4). The lurid crises that form the substance of the narrative are 'purged', supplanted; the plot is providentially guided by deity and author alike towards a stable conclusion, with Chaereas and Callirhoe reclaiming their positions at the heart of a well-ordered society. The novel's 'abstract-alien', open-ended world, contrary to what Nimis claims, is presented as an aberration from the socially engaged world legitimised by the conclusion of this text. Whether we choose to read (properly) for the end, or to revel instead in the divagatory pleasures of the episodes, is a choice we as readers shall have to make for ourselves; but to ignore the plot's architectonic structuration and to focus exclusively upon its elements of random contingency is to misinterpret its central tension between centrifugality and centripetality.

The later, so-called 'sophistic', novels develop still further this self-consciously metaliterary play, emphasing the naivete and inexperience of those who 'read' the world as abstract-alien. In Achilles Tatius, for example, the ego-narrator Clitophon certainly perceives the world in terms of random vicissitudes hurled at him by a malevolent Fortune.[47] Yet his cousin Clinias, who is presented as an older, more worldly figure (1.7.1), holds him back from his melodramatic moments, advising him (for example) not to jump to

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[44] On novelistic travel as liminal inversion, see e.g. Whitmarsh (1999).

[45] 'Moments of adventuristic time occur at those points when the normal course of events, the normal, intended or purposeful sequence of life's events, is interrupted' (*FTCN* 95).

[46] For the possible echo of Aristotelian *katharsis*, see Rijksbaron (1984), a more sympathetic reading than Müller (1976).

[47] 'Let Fortune devise some new game' (4.97); cf. 1.13.6; 5.7.9. For the larger point, see further Whitmarsh (2003), 197–8.

conclusions when Leucippe appears (for the third time in the text) to have died: 'Who knows whether she has come back to life? Has she not died many times before?' (7.6.2). The sophisticated Clinias here attempts to persuade Clitophon not to jump hastily to the apparent conclusion, but to become a more generically attuned reader of novelistic discourse, to recognise *Scheintod* when he sees it.

In Heliodorus' *Ethiopian story*, the characters' perception of their travels as endless, aimless wandering[48] is gradually supplanted by an awareness that they are being guided providentially towards Ethiopia. Charicleia tells Theagenes at one pointedly self-reflexive stage:

> My darling, great affairs need equally great preparations. When the god has made the beginnings tangled, the conclusion can only be reached over a long period.
> Ὦ γλυκύτατε … τὰ μεγάλα τῶν πραγμάτων μεγάλων δεῖται κατασκευῶν. Ὧν γὰρ πολυπλόκους τὰς ἀρχὰς ὁ δαίμων καταβέβληται, τούτων ἀνάγκη καὶ τὰ τέλη διὰ μακροτέρων συμπεραίνεσθαι (9.24.3–4).[49]

This advice to her beloved is also a cue to the reader. Heliodorus is characterising two responses to the vagaries of novelistic plot: Theagenes' hasty desire for immediate resolution is offset by Charicleia's more sophisticated faith that the end will be attained in good time. And indeed, as classic discussions by Jack Winkler, Shadi Bartsch and John Morgan have shown, Heliodorus dapples his text with elegant (if sometimes misleading) narrative prolepseis;[50] Heliodorus encourages his readers to invest heavily, if cautiously, in the concept of reading as an *art*, an acquired competence, and not simply as the perception of an endless succession of narrative mutations. The accomplished reader learns to read for the (providentially ordered) plot, not just for the effect.

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[48] References to a 'life of wandering' by Calasiris, of Nausicles and himself at 2.24.5 (βίος … ἀλήτης); cf. Calasiris of himself at 5.16.2 (ἡ σὴ πλάνη), 7.8.2 (ἄλης); of Homer at 3.14.3 (ἀλητεύων); Charicleia and Theagenes at 5.2.7 (ξένον καὶ ἀλήτην βίον), 6.7.2 (συναλητεύειν), 6.8.4 (ἀλητεύει), 7.13.2 (ἀλήτην καὶ στυγνάζοντα βίον), 7.14.7 (τῆς πλάνης).

[49] This passage alludes to the scene at *Od.* 23.96–122, where Penelope and Odysseus rebuke Telemachus for anticipating a quick reunion.

[50] Winkler (1982); Bartsch (1989); Morgan (1989).

In the later novels, then, the perception of an 'abstract-alien' world is specifically constructed as a naïve, affective form of novelistic reading, to be counterposed to more sophisticated, knowing (and, we might add, centripetal) techniques. In Achilles and Heliodorus, the pervasive sense of isolation and impotence is carefully framed, constructed as a limited and limiting perspective. The novelistic plot teaches us precisely how *not* to be beguiled by the apparent disorder of the abstract-alien world, and to look forward instead to the promise of a secure role within an ordered society. Of course, it is still possible and — more importantly — pleasurable to read centrifugally, for the divagatory, episodic *plaisirs du texte*; but both forces need acknowledgement. Affective pleasures in centrifugal wandering are counterbalanced by narrative teleology.

The politics of the novel

There is a strong political dimension to this tension between the centrifugal and the centripetal. 'Adventure time', as we have seen, is a liminal phase, prior to integration into the political community. If we are to give due weight to the novel's centripetal as well as its centrifugal aspects, we shall need to explore further the idea of political identities in the novel. Bakhtin is certainly aware that there is a strong public dimension to the novels. There are, as he notes, recurrent scenes of a public nature: banquets, assemblies, trials. But, he claims, 'social and political events gain meaning in the [Greek] novel only thanks to their connection with private life. And such events are illuminated in the novel only insofar as they relate to private fates; their essence as purely social and political events remains outside the novel'.[51] On Bakhtin's reading, then, the novels represent public institutions only to mark their subsumption into the private sphere.

Bakhtin's reading, however, oversimplifies the dialogue between private and public identities. Let us take the example Chariton's version of a typescene, representing the attempts of a participant at a public banquet to conceal his private feelings. In book 4 of *Callirhoe*, Chaereas (persuaded by his false confidant, Mithridates) writes a letter to Callirhoe, seeking to seduce her away from her new husband, Dionysius. The letter, embodying the emotive intimacy of love, is written in absolute privacy: Chaereas goes 'alone

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[51] *FTCN* 109.

(μόνος) into solitude (ἐρημίας)' to compose it (4.4.6). Throughout the text, lovers seek solitary places to emote,[52] and this passage is typically emotive. Chaereas at first cannot write, since his tears are flowing and his hand is trembling; when he does manage to write, he tells her that 'I pour my tears and kisses over this letter like a libation' (4.4.8). The letter is construed as a vehicle for private emotions, its physical surface literally imbued with the signs of the lover's passion.[53]

This private document, however, becomes public property. The slaves to whom the delivery of the letter has been entrusted are intercepted by the Bias, the general of (where else?) Priene (4.5.4). What was intended to be a private communication now falls into the hands of 'civic officials' (δημοσίοις, 4.5.6), and thence (still sealed, and with a covering letter) to Dionysius. The latter receives it whilst entertaining 'the foremost citizens' (τοὺς ἐπιφανεστάτους τῶν πολίτων) of Miletos at a symposium (4.5.6). The letter which was written 'in solitude' by a man 'alone' in the world now becomes the property of a man thoroughly ensconced in the sphere of politics (and, of course, the last man on earth Chaereas would want to be reading his letter).

Dionysius' response to the interpenetration of the two spheres, the private-affective and the civic, is instructive. Particularly striking is the distinction drawn between the effects of the two epistles. The first, Bias' covering letter, engages him in his political capacity. It is addressed from 'Bias, general of Priene, to Dionysius the benefactor (εὐεργέτηι)'; the status of *euergetês* bespeaks the language of civic politics and public inscription. Dionysius reads the first letter, the 'official' covering note from Bias, 'in the midst of (ἐν μέσωι) the symposium' (4.5.8); the phrase ἐν μέσωι marks the public nature of the event.

The other letter, though, elicits a very different response. Dionysius proceeds to order the seals (σφραγῖδας) on this one to be cut (4.5.8). There was no mention of seals in connection with Bias' letter: the narrator here emphasises the transgressive, invasive aspect of epistolary interception. The seal is a highly charged symbolic boundary: infraction of that boundary, when the letter is not intended for one, makes for a disturbing moment. There is even

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[52] 2.9.1; 2.11.1; 3.1.1; 3.8.5; 3.10.4; 5.2.4; 5.9.3; 5.10.6; 6.6.2.

[53] On letters in the novels, see Rosenmeyer (2001), 133–68; Létoublon (2003). My chapter in Whitmarsh (forthcoming) will offer a more cultural-historical slant than these formal analyses.

be a hint of a metaphorical defloration. The *deltos* ('writing-tablet', especially for private documents) is sometimes in Greek culture symbolically linked to the *delta*, the 'triangle' that can suggest the pubic triangle:[54] both the *deltos* and the *delta* are the exterior ciphers of an intriguing, intimate interior. Moreover, the prised-apart 'seal' (*sphragis*) implicitly figures broken maidenhead.[55] Like the rapist of a virgin, Dionysius violently intervenes in another's intimacy, transgresses the boundaries of selfhood, forces the private individual to become embroiled in public scandal.

But Dionysius himself rapidly becomes the victim of this interpenetration of public and private. On reading the letter and learning of his wife's husband, he faints in horror. Even in this state, though, he attempts to maintain the boundaries between public and private: clasping the letters 'in fear lest anyone else should read them' (4.5.9), 'goes on his own' (καθ' ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος, 4.5.10) to peruse them, responding (as novelistic characters so often do) with 'multiple emotions' (πάθη ποικίλα, 4.5.10).[56] In this way, Dionysius seeks to reestablish the boundaries: the writing and reading of letters — particularly love letters — are proper to private spaces, and the mixing of these separate registers risks chaos. Dionysius is heavily aware of his dual obligations, orientated both outwards towards civic station and inwards towards an emotive life. Public self-presentation (at banquets, processions and festivals) in the novels seems almost inevitably predestined to self-destruct: novelistic characters are double beings, and there is always a residual trace of inner life behind the screen of public identity. Thus in *Leucippe & Clitophon*, Melite identifies the *malaise* of Clitophon, her unreciprocating beloved, at the banquet (5.21.2); and the attentive Calasiris in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* spots both the infatuation of the lovers in the Delphic parade (3.5.7) and Theagenes' distraction during a public banquet (3.10.4).

The point, however, is not simply that the affective, erotic forces subvert and overmaster the public occasion. Dionysius, like most figures in the novel, has an identity as a member of a political community, and it is the clash between the two spheres (the political and the affective) that impels the

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[54] See Ar. *Lys.* 151 with Henderson (1991), 146 for *delta* as pubic triangle; and duBois (1988), 130–66 on writing-tablets and the female body.

[55] The 'seal of virginity' appears in Christian texts (Gregory of Nyssa *Or. dom.* 1 = 44.1124b *PG*: παρθενίας … σφραγίς; Ambrose, *De inst. virg.* 52 = *Patrologia Latina* 16.334: *integritatis … signaculum*), but I can find no direct parallel in pre-Christian literature, *pace* duBois (1988), 154 on Soph. *Trach.* 615.

[56] On this *topos*, see Fusillo (1990).

narrative. Novelistic characters have a dual identity, as both public figures and private lovers, and the genre's tensions, crises and paradoxes emerge precisely when the two come into conflict. The novels do not simply privilege the private sphere over the public, as Bakhtin would have it; their narrative energy, rather, derives from the dynamic shuttling back and forth between the two.

<p style="text-align:center">Dialogues in love</p>

Such competing obligations on the individual dramatise exactly the Bakhtinian principle of dialogism. Dionysius articulates his feelings not simply in terms of a passion welling up organically inside him, but also in terms of the responses (real and projected) of the community to which he belongs. 'The unique speech experience of each individual', writes Bakhtin in his late essay on speech genres, 'is shaped and developed in continuous and constant interaction with others' individual utterances'.[57] The Cartesian myth of the integrated, autarkic self is fundamentally antithetical to the Bakhtinian view of the individual as a being in constant dialogue with the competing voices of the community.[58]

Let us take, as an example of this process at work in Chariton's novel, the response of Dionysius when he first finds himself in love with Callirhoe:

> Dionysius had been wounded, but sought to conceal the wound, as you would expect from an educated man who laid especial claim to virtue (πεπαιδευμένος ἀνὴρ καὶ ἐξαιτέτως ἀρετῆς ἀντιποιούμενος). Wishing to appear neither contemptible to his slaves nor childish to his friends, he struggled throughout the entire evening: he thought he was avoiding notice (λανθάνειν), but in fact his silence made him all the more conspicuous. (2.4.1–2)

Dionysius' attempts to conceal the 'wound' of love are specifically linked to his public profile as an 'educated' (πεπαιδευμένος) man with a prominent claim to virtue; and the desire to conceal is explained as a concern for his status in the eyes of others. It is precisely because he is a man with a reputa-

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[57] *SG* 89.
[58] On Bakhtinian psychology, see Holquist (1990), 87–9.

tion and public profile that Dionysius wrestles with his traumatised emotions: his self stands in dialogue with the other. Ironically, however, this is a *failed* dialogue: his attempts to escape notice (λανθάνειν) only draw attention to his emotive self. Likewise in the passage's Homeric hypotext, Odysseus' tears attract Alcinous' attention, despite evading the attention of (ἐλάνθανε) the other guests (*Od.* 8.521–34);[59] but the allusion to the *Odyssey* only serves to underline the differences between the two cases, the battle-hardened, long-suffering Odysseus and the sensitive but lacrimose gent Dionysius.

In the episode that follows, Dionysius, sleepless (like so many lovers), experiences a 'contest between reason and passion' (2.4.4). He exhorts himself:

> Are you not ashamed (οὐκ αἰσχύνηι), Dionysius, the leading man (ἀνήρ) in Ionia thanks to your virtue and reputation (ἔνεκεν ἀρετῆς τε καὶ δόξης), a man admired by satraps and kings and cities, to suffer the fate of a mere boy (παιδαρίου πρᾶγμα πάσχων)? (2.4.4)

This is precisely the self in dialogue: not only in the literal sense that he is addressing himself to himself (a practice commended in much contemporary philosophy),[60] but also in that his protreptic depends fundamentally upon confronting the private, eroticised self with the public role demanded of him by his political station. It is the mismatch between these two selves — the adult male (ἀνήρ) behaving like a boy (παιδάριον) — that generates the narrative crisis.

I have focused primarily on one figure in one novel, but other examples could be advanced to make the same point, particularly in Chariton and Achilles Tatius. Achilles' Clitophon, for example, narrates his own internal dialogues, as he counsels himself with mythological exempla (πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν ἔλεγον, 1.5.7), and addresses himself in turn with the contradictory voices of desire and duty (2.5.1–2). That desire overmasters duty in the latter example does not mean simply that 'the social' and 'the political' signify 'only thanks

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[59] Chariton implicitly combines this Odyssean hypotext with *Od.* 8.83–6, where Odysseus conceals his face behind his cloak, ashamed (αἴδετο γάρ) to be seen weeping. Cf. also *Od.* 4.114–16, where Telemachus attempts to conceal his weeping; Menelaus, we are told, 'noticed' (ενόησε).

[60] Rutherford (1989), 14–21.

to their connection with private life', as Bakhtin puts it;[61] rather, the tension, and the thrilling frisson, emerge from the dialogue between the two: between the public self with obligations and commitments to others, and the private self impelled by dangerous and unpredictable forces. For sure, the novelistic plot is driven primarily by erotic rather than political energy, but the point is that the former crucially depends upon the latter. Bakhtin's formulation could be reversed: the erotic, it appears, signifies primarily thanks to its connection with (even subversion of) the political.

<div style="text-align:center">Positioning the past</div>

The phenomenon we have identified, the ideological clash between the conflicting demands of (normative) duty and (subversive) desire, is clearly not new in the Greek tradition. We could point to, for example, Euripides' *Hippolytus*, where Phaedra's desire to repress her feelings for Hippolytus is motivated by her 'shame' (αἰδώς), and concern for what others will think (373–430).[62] From a different perspective, Medea's dialogue with her θυμός in Euripides' play (1040–80) is, in part at least, a debate between a self who feels intimate compassion for her children and one who is driven by her desire to be perceived as strong rather than contemptible.[63]

Similarly, first-person love poetry can effectively shuttle between address to the other and address to the self. This is the route taken by, for example, Sappho 31, which famously begins by addressing an unnamed 'you'; before imploding into a catalogue of self-diagnosed symptoms of desire; and concluding — although the reconstruction is highly uncertain — with a moralising self-address. In this poem, the Sapphic (or, at least, the narratorial) speaker begins 'monologically', addressing another, but concludes 'dialogically', diagnosing and addressing itself.[64] The divorce between the two selves is perceptible in the marked tension between the proclaimed aphasia ('I cannot speak … my tongue is broken': με φώναισ' οὐδ' ἒν ἔτ' εἴκει, ἀλλ' ἄκαν μὲν γλῶσσα †ἔαγε, 31.7–9) and the elegant eloquence of the poetic form. The poem can be read as a dramatised clash between the poet-

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[61] *FTCN* 109, quoted more fully earlier.
[62] See Craik (1993), and esp. Gill (1996), 216–26, with 175–239 more generally for an excellent account of inner dialogues in early Greek poetry.
[63] See esp. Foley (1989).
[64] For 'dialogic lyric', see Batstone (2002).

narrator's mastery of articulation, and the social agent's disqualification from public expression of her emotions.

Indeed, earlier, canonical examples of the clash between public face and private emotion are specifically invoked within the novels themselves. We have already noted the Odyssean hypotext for the scene of Dionysius' banquet, and allusions and echoes are everywhere. I confine myself here to a single further example, again drawn from *Callirhoe*. When the eunuch Artaxates presses the king's suit, Callirhoe is initially tempted to scratch out the 'barbarian's' eyes in her anger; but then, 'since she was an educated (πεπαιδευμένη) and thoughtful (φρενήρης) woman, she swiftly considered her place, who she was, and who was speaking' (6.5.8). At a simple level, Callirhoe's behaviour alludes to Odysseus' ability to conceal his passion for strategic advantage (and, indeed, Penelope's too).[65] But the reference to her *paideia* and intelligence adds an additional, metaliterary overlay: it is, perhaps, precisely because she is a well-read Greek that she knows how to behave like one of Greek literature's canonical figures. To be Greek, in this context, means to demonstrate awareness of the long literary tradition of self-dissimulation.

The brute fact that earlier parallels exist (many others could be offered), however, does not detract from the specific force of the novel's articulation of its historical position. The novel invokes a sense of 'the traditional' by constructing an image of the tralatitious expectations of Greek society in terms of an ossified political order — an order that is counterbalanced by the destructive, subversive forces of erotic desire. This heavy reading of the Greek tradition conceals its canonical precedents; but as an articulation of a historical positionality, it represents a powerful statement of intent, of centripetal generic control (in Bakhtin's terms), on the part of novelistic writers. The novelists, that is to say, present the ideological clash between political identity and the new erotics (or what is constructed as such) as a marker of difference from earlier cultures.

The Greek novel does not, however, simply emerge from a historical period characterised by 'a decay and collapse of the religious, political and ideological authority connected with … language' (as Bakhtin puts it in *Dis-*

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[65] At *Od.* 9.299–305, Odysseus has to be restrained from killing the Cyclops: that would leave them trapped in the cave. Later, at 20.18–21, he recalls this episode when exhorting himself to bear the indignity of seeing his maids sleep with the suitors. For Penelope's cunning, see esp. Winkler (1990), 145–61; Katz (1991).

course in the novel).[66] The traditional order of political, civic identities surely retains its powerful urgency in imperial Greece. If we want to pursue a fully Bakhtinian reading of the Greek novel — and we shall have to accept that this is, to an extent, Bakhtinian *malgré lui* — then we shall need to give full weight to the centripetal force of normative civic identity as well as the centrifugal forces of erotic dislocation, divagation, adventure time and experience of the other.

The novel's tension between centripetal and centrifugal elements is crystallised in lines 7–9 of the late epigram on Achilles Tatius ascribed to Photius or Leon (*Anth. Pal.* 9.203): 'If you too wish to maintain your self-control (σωφρονεῖν), my friend, do not look at the side-shows of the narrative (τὴν πάρεργον τῆς γραφῆς … θέαν), but first learn the direction of the text (τὴν τοῦ λόγου … συνδρομήν)'. The moral message is seen to lie in the teleological reading; but the author also acknowledges the possibility of an alternative, divagatory reading, focusing on mere πάρεργα.[67] A revised-Bakhtinian reading of the novel allows us to accommodate both forces within the novel, in an unresolved, dialogic, but nonetheless ideological, tension.

The discovery of theory within classics, over the last thirty years or so, has been a wonderful, inspirational thing. I am increasingly convinced, moreover, that Bakhtin was among the most brilliant and deepest of twentieth-century theorists (though he would have undoubtedly resisted the label). The best scholarship, however — and I do include in that bracket those scholars I have criticised in the course of this chapter — is creatively *heretical*. Bakhtin's most important lesson to classicists, perhaps, is that the dialogue between discipline and theory needs to be conceived of as reciprocal, ongoing; a 'dialogue', indeed, in the full, Bakhtinian sense.

Abbreviations used for Bakhtin's works

DN   'Discourse in the novel', in M. Bakhtin, *The dialogic imagination*, ed. M. Holquist, trans. C. Emerson & M. Holquist (Austin, 1981): 259–422.

EN   'Epic and novel', in M. Bakhtin, *The dialogic imagination*, ed. M. Holquist, trans. C. Emerson & M. Holquist (Austin, 1981): 3–40.

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[66] *DN* 370.
[67] 'See further Morales (2004): 227–8.

FM   P. Medvedev, *The formal method in literary scholarship: a critical introduction to sociological poetics*, trans. A. Wehrle (Cambridge Mass., 1985) [Many Bakhtinian scholars believe this work to be largely co-authored by Bakhtin.].

FTCN   'Forms of time and of the chronotope in the novel: notes towards a historical poetics', in M. Bakhtin, *The dialogic imagination*, ed. M. Holquist, trans. C. Emerson & M. Holquist (Austin, 1981): 84–258.

MPL   V. Volosinov, *Marxism and the philosophy of language*, trans. L. Matejka & I. Titunik (New York, 1973). [Many Bakhtinian scholars believe this work to be largely the work of Bakhtin.].

Notes 'From notes made in 1970–71', in M. Bakhtin, *Speech genres and other late essays*, trans. V.W. McGee, eds. C. Emerson & M. Holquist (Austin, 1986):132–58.

PDP   M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoyevsky's poetics*, trans. C. Emerson (Minnesota, 1984).

PND   'From the prehistory of novelistic discourse', in M. Bakhtin, *The dialogic imagination*, ed. M. Holquist, trans. C. Emerson & M. Holquist (Austin, 1981): 41–83.

PT   'The problem of the text in linguistics, philology, and the human sciences: an experiment in philosophical analysis', in M. Bakhtin, *Speech genres and other late essays*, trans. V.W. McGee, eds. C. Emerson & M. Holquist (Austin, 1986): 103–31.

RW   M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his world*, trans. H. Iswolsky (Cambridge, Mass., 1968)

SG   'The problem of speech genres', in M. Bakhtin, *Speech genres and other late essays*, trans. V.W. McGee, eds. C. Emerson & M. Holquist (Austin, 1986): 60–102.

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