

# Bakhtin and Chariton: A Revisionist Reading

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Ancient literary theory did not in a formal sense account for the phenomenon of extended prose fiction, in particular those texts we call the Greek romances.<sup>1</sup> Prose was the medium for a truthful account of the world, or at least for allegory which reflected truth. Fiction was common enough in antiquity, but it was the stuff of poetry, a medium suitable for the construction of artifice.<sup>2</sup> Within this scheme, extended prose fiction was problematic. Bryan Reardon notes that in the second century CE some writers appear “to keep their distance from fiction, to offer a justification for writing it. Thus, the romances of Longus and Achilles Tatius are theoretically both commentaries on pictures.”<sup>3</sup> For John Morgan, the generic hybridity of the ancient novels generated unease: “novels are fictions couched in a form appropriate to and implying something else: factual history. What makes them dangerous is that they blur an essential dividing line between truth and untruth.”<sup>4</sup> Reardon concludes humorously that as far as romance is concerned, “The ancient world was not very good at literary criticism.”<sup>5</sup>

The hybrid quality of the ancient novels at last finds a champion in Bakhtin, who saw genre not just as a system of classification or description,

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<sup>1</sup> Though I will use the terms “romance” and “novel” interchangeably when discussing the works of Chariton, Xenophon of Ephesus, Achilles Tatius, Longus, or Heliodorus, by “romance” I mean generally a subset of “novel.” The two are not mutually exclusive. I wish to thank Bracht Branham for his comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Reardon 1991: 8–9, 48; Morgan 1993: 178–179.

<sup>3</sup> Reardon 1991: 48.

<sup>4</sup> Morgan 1993: 178.

<sup>5</sup> Reardon 1991: 8. Both Reardon and Morgan offer excellent accounts of ancient literary criticism’s failure to account for the Greek romances.

but as a quasi-organic accumulation of utterances.<sup>6</sup> An integral part of the creative process, genre is, according to Bakhtin, a way of conceptualizing reality, and any given literary work is not merely a single conceptualization, but is itself a “mixed plate”<sup>7</sup> of the genres participating in its construction. The literary critic is thus to examine how a work functions as an “*interaction of genres*,”<sup>8</sup> not only in terms of how the genres mutually reinforce each other (the “centripetal” force of poetics), but also in terms of how they disrupt one another (the “centrifugal” force of prosaics<sup>9</sup>). Ideally the literary critic will sense both the harmony and the disharmony within a work.<sup>10</sup>

For Bakhtin, the novel in particular is the literary form which most embraces the inconclusive present for its “artistic and ideological orientation”<sup>11</sup> and resists the closed system of high genres which “harmoniously reinforce each other.”<sup>12</sup> The novel operates always in contact with the muddled, inconclusive present. When the novel appears in literary history, “the subject of serious literary representation ... is portrayed without any distance, on the level of contemporary reality, in a zone of direct and even crude contact.”<sup>13</sup> When referring in this paper to Bakhtin’s conception of novelness or to a Bakhtinian sense of novelness, I have in mind Morson and Emerson’s definition: for Bakhtin the novel is “the genre that is most dialogic. More than any other competitor, it treats character, society, and knowledge as unfinalizable; it is closest to prosaic values, and appreciation of centrifugal forces, and a sense of the world’s essential messiness.”<sup>14</sup>

Petronius’ *Satyrica* and Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* vividly depict a contemporary world and thus exhibit a truly Bakhtinian sense of novelness. By contrast, however, the canonical Greek romances are, according to Bakhtin,

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<sup>6</sup> As opposed to the Formalist theory that “the parts of a work are linguistic in nature.” Drawing on Medvedev’s argument that “literature cannot be divided into linguistic elements,” Bakhtin later distinguishes “between utterances and sentences. Only utterances mean; works are utterances; and sentences are units of a different order” (1990: 272–273). See also Branham 2002: 161–163.

<sup>7</sup> A *satura* in the original meaning of the term. See Morson and Emerson 1990: 292–293.

<sup>8</sup> Morson and Emerson 1990: 299.

<sup>9</sup> “Prosaics, as Bakhtin developed the concept, regards novelistic discourse not as a style but as a style of styles, or, more accurately, as the dialogization of styles” (Morson and Emerson 1990: 317).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Nimis 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 38.

<sup>12</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 4.

<sup>13</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 22.

<sup>14</sup> Morson and Emerson 1990: 303.

unable to capture the sublime crudeness and complexity of the present; they are too idealized, too abstract in their technical manipulation of time and chance. This is not to say of course that the novels of Petronius and Apuleius were more sophisticated than their Greek counterparts; they are merely organized by different temporal orientations. In fact, the novelistic qualities of both Latin and Greek prose fiction according to Bakhtin suffer by comparison with modern novels. In antiquity, the novel was simply unable “to gather unto itself and make use of all the material that language images had made available”; Bakhtin goes on to say of the Greek romances and the Latin novels that “The ancient world was apparently not capable of going further than these.”<sup>15</sup>

A truer sense of novelness is seen by Bakhtin in the Socratic dialogues of the classical period, Roman satire, symposiastic literature, Menippean satire, and the dialogues of Lucian. “The authentic spirit of the novel as a developing genre,” Bakhtin writes, “is present in them to an incomparably greater degree than in the so-called Greek novels.”<sup>16</sup> Bakhtin seems to have been influenced by Rohde’s disparagement of the Greek romances as a degenerate genre. One feels Bakhtin attempting to re-establish a connection between the Greek romances and the development of the novel when he writes that Rohde’s study “does not so much recount the history of the novel as it does illustrate the process of disintegration that affected all major genres in antiquity.”<sup>17</sup> While Bracht Branham has argued that Bakhtin’s theory of genre is not meant to reinforce “the hierarchy of literary genres,”<sup>18</sup> and despite Bakhtin’s attempt to re-integrate the Greek romances within the development of the novel, it is difficult not to get a sense of the old hierarchy and of Rohde’s devaluation of the Greek novel as a decadent genre in Bakhtin’s chronotope essay. It must be said, though, that Bakhtin was not entirely convinced by Rohde’s theory. “Rohde,” he writes, “does not have much to say on the role of polyglossia. For him, the Greek novel was solely a product of the decay of the major straightforward genres. In part this is true: everything new is born out of the death of something old. But Rohde was no dialectician. It was precisely what was new in all this that he failed to see”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 60.

<sup>16</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 22.

<sup>17</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 4.

<sup>18</sup> Branham 2002: 162.

<sup>19</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 64–65. And yet a subtle disparagement of the Greek novels persists even in Bakhtin. Perry wrote that even though Rohde’s estimation of the development of the

My intent is not to undermine Bakhtin's approach to the novel; on the contrary, the chronotope is valuable for assessing a work's conceptualization of time, space, and character. Likewise, the many-voiced nature of the novel and its contact with the present reveal how novelistic discourse resists a centripetal poetics. I instead propose in this paper that the Greek romances themselves are not as limited as Bakhtin's analysis implies and deserve a more significant place in his theory of the genre's development. I will take Chariton's *Callirhoe* as a case study, considering how this text measures up to three of Bakhtin's defining theories: (1) the chronotope of adventure-time, (2) the inconclusiveness produced by a text's relationship to contemporary reality as opposed to the static, absolute past of epic, and (3) the novel as "a living mix of varied and opposing voices."<sup>20</sup>

### 1.0 The chronotope

Bakhtin's theories of the chronotope and adventure-time have been explicated at length elsewhere,<sup>21</sup> and it here suffices to say that Bakhtin defines the chronotope as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature."<sup>22</sup> Adventure-time, more specifically, is that spatio-temporal connectedness which, according to Bakhtin typifies the ancient Greek romances, narratives in which a series of episodic exploits are guided by the technical intervention of Chance (*Tyche*). In this infinitely expandable narrative mode, Bakhtin writes, there is not "even an elementary biological or maturational duration."<sup>23</sup> Adventure-time, "in which [the hero and heroine] experience a most improbable number of adventures, is not measured off in the novel and does not add up; it is simply days, nights, hours, moments clocked in a technical sense within the limits of each separate adventure." In adventure-time, the hero and heroine never really age or change.

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genre has "been entirely abandoned even by Rohde's most ardent followers, yet it will probably be a long time before the numerous misconceptions and errors of method to which it has given rise will have disappeared" (1930: 95).

<sup>20</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 49.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. most recently Branham 2002: 165–173, Connors 2002: 12 – 15.

<sup>22</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 84.

<sup>23</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 90.

Consequently, an infinitely expandable timeframe, theorizes Bakhtin, demands “an *abstract* expanse of space.”<sup>24</sup> Remarkably, however, this vast expanse of space is not furnished with the details, which characterize real existence. Rather, life is drained from geography; the landscape across which the characters pursue each other and elude capture is barren of culturally distinguishing features. Egypt could be Babylon could be Miletus could be Ephesus. “All adventures in the Greek romance,” writes Bakhtin, “are thus governed by an interchangeability of space; what happens in Babylon could just as well happen in Egypt or Byzantium and vice versa.”<sup>25</sup>

This is fine if one believes that the author’s primary goal is the presentation of an erotic bond between young hero and heroine that is incapable of being affected by seemingly insurmountable external challenges. If Bakhtin’s theory is correct, then the variable conditions to which the hero and heroine are subjected reinforce their virtuous erotic bond. I intend to demonstrate, however, that Chariton’s approach to his characters is not so straightforward. By a few brief analyses I will show that Chariton’s manipulation of time is varied (i.e., the characters do not exist in a theoretically reversible series of moments ruled by chance alone), and that place is integral for understanding how the individual is constructed (i.e., space is not interchangeable). Ultimately adventure-time characterizes only one aspect of Chariton’s novel.

### 1.1 Time in Chariton

Bakhtin is partially correct when he writes that the narratives of ancient romance are governed by the logic of “*random contingency*.”<sup>26</sup> One may indeed find no less than twenty-three narrative coincidences, which motivate the plot in Chariton’s novel,<sup>27</sup> with the highest concentration of coincidences (fourteen) occurring within the first three books (figures 1 and 2). Throughout the remainder of the novel (books four through eight), there are only one or two plot-motivating coincidences per book. Books five and six, which narrate the events in Babylon, contain only one plot-motivating coincidence

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<sup>24</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 99.

<sup>25</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 100.

<sup>26</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 92.

<sup>27</sup> Bakhtin records sixteen such coincidences for Achilles Tatius’ *Leucippe and Clitophon* (1981: 92–94).

Book	Number of Plot Coincidences	Locations in Text
1	4	1.1.5, 1.1.6, 1.7.1, 1.12.6
2	3	2.7.1, 2.8.3, 2.8.4
3	7	3.3.13, 3.4.10, 3.6.1, 3.6.3, 3.7.1, 3.7.4, 3.9.1
4	2	4.2.8, 4.5.3
5	1	5.10.10
6	1	6.8.1
7	2	7.2.2, 7.6.6
8	2	8.5.5, 8.6.1

Figure 1 Plot Motivating Coincides in Chariton’s *Callirhoe*

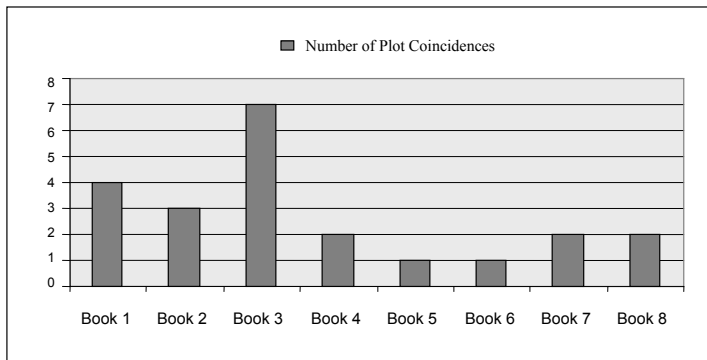


Figure 2 Number of Plot Coincidences

each, and so it seems that this is the nadir of *Tyche*’s intervention in the story. Yet much still happens in these two books: Callirhoe stuns Babylon with her beauty, Artaxerxes falls desperately in love with Callirhoe, the eunuch Artaxates attempts to seduce Callirhoe for the king, and Mithridates contrives to present Chaereas at the trial as if he were summoning the dead back to life. Surely, then, there are other forces at work in the story than simply that of *Tyche*, blind chance, and we must question Bakhtin’s claim that “‘suddenlys’ and ‘at just that moments’ make up the entire contents of the novel.” I concede that this remark appears as part of Bakhtin’s assessment of Achilles Tatius’ *Leucippe and Clitophon*. But since he presents *Leucippe and Clitophon* as typical of the other Greek romances and since he does not discuss Chariton as an exception to the rule, Bakhtin’s remark must by implication also apply to Chariton’s romance.

*Tyche*, then, is only partially responsible for the movement of Chariton’s plot; she merely *interrupts* or *brings people or things together*. After the

chance coincident, it is up to the characters themselves to decide how to *react*. In fact, the reasoning of Chariton's characters is integral to the deployment of narrative time in the novel. Tomas Hägg has shown that a full 44% of Chariton's text is direct speech,<sup>28</sup> which means that Chariton is especially interested (for nearly half of the novel, in fact) in presenting the individual thoughts of his characters.

When, for example, Callirhoe discovers that she is pregnant by Chaereas, her deliberation motivates all of the subsequent events in the novel. Faced with the dilemma of whether or not to bear her child as Dionysius' son, Callirhoe is at first intent on aborting the child, refusing to allow the grandchild of Hermocrates to be born a slave. Then, for some reason, "she changed her mind and somehow pity for her unborn child came over her. 'Do you plot to become a child-killer? Most wicked of all women, you are raving mad and you consider the logic of Medea ...'" (πάλιν δὲ μετενόει καὶ πῶς ἔλεος αὐτὴν τοῦ κατὰ γαστρὸς εἰσήει. "βουλεύη τεκνοκτονῆσαι; πασῶν ἀσεβ<εστάτη, μ>αίνη καὶ Μηδείας λαμβάνεις λογισμούς ..." 2.9.3).<sup>29</sup> Granted, Callirhoe's pregnancy is said by the narrator to have been brought about through the agency of *Tyche* (2.8.4). But *Tyche* does not compel Callirhoe to bear Chaereas' child under the pretense that it belongs to Dionysius; this is rather the result of Callirhoe's own λογισμός, the changing of the νοῦς within her (μετενόει). Callirhoe is not merely a passive object for the operations of fate; by choosing the course of action that she does, Callirhoe is in a very real sense controlling the movement of the story.

Bakhtin's chronotope of adventure-time does not allow for such internal changes. "Greek adventure-time," writes Bakhtin, "leaves no traces — neither in the world nor in human beings. No changes of any consequence occur, internal or external, as a result of the events recounted in the novel."<sup>30</sup> But the above passage reveals that change can in fact occur within an individual in Greek romance; the hero or heroine need not be only a passive object to whom events happen as a result of random chance. One might counter that Callirhoe's λογισμός is not really a very significant change, that she only changes her mind, pursuing a different train of thought. Her love for Chaereas, the most important defining feature of her character, is unchanged. What then, I ask, are the results of this seemingly insignificant λογισμός?

<sup>28</sup> Hägg 1971: 294.

<sup>29</sup> I follow Goold's Loeb text (1995). All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

<sup>30</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 106.

First Callirhoe sacrifices her exclusivity as an erotic possession — no small matter, considering that the heroines of Greek romance must generally remain chaste until marriage and then monogamous after marriage. Though she wishes to die as the wife of Chaereas only (θέλω γὰρ ἀποθανεῖν Χαιρέου μόνου γυνή, 2.11.1), she realizes that for the well-being of her child she must endure as the wife of Dionysius also.

Second, after she has given birth to her son, the narrator states that Callirhoe “quickly recovered from the birth and became stronger and more mature, having gained the bloom of womanhood, no longer a maiden” (Ταχέως δὲ αὐτὴν ἀνέλαβεν ἐκ τοῦ τόκου καὶ κρείττων ἐγένετο καὶ μείζων, οὐκέτι κόρης, ἀλλὰ γυναικὸς ἀκμὴν προσλαβοῦσα, 3.8.3). The physical transformation from maiden into woman, articulated by the narrator, implies both an internal and external change in Callirhoe. In the ensuing scene Callirhoe herself elaborates on the change effected by the birth of her son. No longer believing Chaereas to be alive, Callirhoe beseeches Aphrodite to protect her son, whom she sees as the image (εἰκόνα) of her first husband. In her prayer to Aphrodite, the child becomes the only proof for Callirhoe that her original love for Chaereas persists, not displaced by the marriage to Dionysius (ὄλον οὐκ ἀφείλω μου Χαιρέαν). Nonetheless, her love for Chaereas is imagined as having changed; the original erotic bond between husband and wife is articulated here by Callirhoe as a thing no longer to be hoped for, but only to be remembered (3.8.7–9).<sup>31</sup>

Third, the birth of Callirhoe’s son will ultimately have ramifications in the political world of the novel. From the moment when Callirhoe decides not to abort her unborn child, she looks forward to the day when her son will leave the shores of Miletus and return to Syracuse: “You too, my son,” she says in her soliloquy, “will sail to Sicily” (πλεύση μοι καὶ σὺ, τὸ τέκνον, εἰς Σικελίαν, 2.9.5). At the end of the novel Chaereas himself, the boy’s biological father, announces to the assembled Syracusans that “One more fleet of

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<sup>31</sup> Hägg has convincingly demonstrated Chariton’s “lack of interest in time” as “a concrete substance” (i.e. that it is impossible to gauge precisely how much time has elapsed from the beginning of the story to the end). But in connection with the presentation of time in the novel, Hägg states that, “Only exceptionally is the *age* of the characters mentioned” (1971: 196). The above passage from Chariton in which the narrator clearly marks Callirhoe’s passage into womanhood (3.8.3) is conspicuously absent from Hägg’s account of the way physical age is marked within the narrative. But certainly any consideration of Chariton’s presentation of time in the novel must come to terms with the central heroine’s clearly marked physical transformation and rite of passage into motherhood.



yours will come from Ionia, and the grandson of Hermocrates will lead it" (ἐλεύσεται καὶ ἄλλος στόλος ἐξ Ἰωνίας ὑμέτερος· ἄξει δὲ αὐτὸν ὁ Ἑρμοκράτους ἔκγονος, 8.8.11). By some interpretations, these brief glimpses of a future beyond the fictional time of the narrative imply the eventual reign of Dionysius I at Syracuse (405–367 BC).<sup>32</sup> In this regard, Chariton's novel provides a legendary etiology of the tyrant's reign. Callirhoe's choice to bear Chaereas' child therefore begins a series of events, which have effects not only in the world of the novel, but in the world of history as well.

David Konstan, challenging Bakhtin's theory, has argued that the erotic bond which initially unites hero and heroine undergoes a change in the narrative in that it is "augmented by fidelity"; the persistence of the erotic bond is accomplished only when *eros* is supplemented "by the very fact of endurance."<sup>33</sup> The erotic bond only becomes significant, in other words, when it is measured *in time*. But Branham, supporting Bakhtin's argument, counters that by emphasizing the persistence of the erotic bond between hero and heroine, Konstan actually supports rather than challenges Bakhtin's theory. Branham questions whether "change or maturation" within the characters themselves is "ever dramatized or reflected upon."<sup>34</sup> In my above analysis, however, I have shown how change (both of the characters and of the depicted world) is registered in the narrative.<sup>35</sup> Referring to such notions of change within the characters, Branham has written that, "Fans of the genre may be engaging in special pleading in attributing to it thematic concerns and formal resources that we have come to value from later forms of fiction."<sup>36</sup> But it could also be argued that Bakhtin's ideas about the Greek romances prevent readers from recognizing changes in the characters and in the depicted world even when they are marked in the narrative.

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<sup>32</sup> Beginning with S. A. Naber in 1901. Perry incorporated this idea as part of his larger explanation of the genre, theorizing that the earliest of the ancient romancers expanded upon the legends of "*presumably* historical persons" (1967: 137–140). More recently, Catherine Connors has touched upon the etiological aspects of Chariton's novel and the subsequent ramifications such aspects would have upon Bakhtin's theory (2002: 14 - 15).

<sup>33</sup> Konstan 1994: 45–47.

<sup>34</sup> Branham 2002: 173–174.

<sup>35</sup> See also Billault 1996: 127–128 and Doody 1996: 44–45.

<sup>36</sup> Branham 2002: 174.

If adventure-time “leaves no traces — neither in the world nor in human beings,”<sup>37</sup> then adventure-time does not sufficiently describe the novel of Chariton. Bakhtin states that, “all of the action in a Greek romance, all the events and adventures that fill it, constitute time-sequences that are neither historical, quotidian, biographical, nor even biological and maturational.”<sup>38</sup> Certainly, adventure-time plays a part in the narrative progress of the novel, but the focus on Callirhoe’s maturational development at 3.8.3 and the world-altering significance of her son’s eventual growth reveal the novel’s concern also with biological time. I contend that Chariton’s novel even opens up into what Bakhtin terms a “real-life chronotope” when at the end of the story Chaereas stands in the theatre of Syracuse and provides a full account of his actions and his transformation into a war hero (8.7.9–8.8.11). Though the content of his extended narration is of course the stuff of adventure and romance (in essence, the compressed version of the events in the novel), the temporal orientation of the novel nevertheless shifts away from adventure-time to encompass something closer to autobiography. Chaereas’ speech is an example of the way in which, “In ancient times the autobiographical and biographical self-consciousness of an individual and his life was first laid bare and shaped in the public square.”<sup>39</sup> To be sure, there are elements of adventure-time in Chariton, but there are also shifts in the temporal organization of his narrative which adventure-time as defined by Bakhtin fails to describe. What we see rather is the interaction of several different chronotopes — adventure-time, biological-time, and autobiographical-time — and this feature makes Chariton a notable exception to Bakhtin’s generalizations.

## 1.2 Space in Chariton

Callirhoe’s journey takes her from Syracuse to the shores of Attica, to Miletus, then Babylon, Aradus, Paphos, and then finally a long sea voyage returns her home to Sicily. By Bakhtin’s account, Greek adventure-time needs only a wide expanse of space in which geographical and political borders become superfluous; in adventure-time, space becomes abstract. If such were

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<sup>37</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 106.

<sup>38</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 91.

<sup>39</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 131.

the case, however, why would Chariton invest Sicily with so much political significance or why fill so much of his narrative with references to the cultural differences between Greeks and non-Greeks? Or why would he present Callirhoe's crossing of the Euphrates as a momentous narrative event? For Chariton, the places in which the adventures of his hero and heroine unfold are every bit as important as the historical setting at the end of the fifth century BC.

The significance of Syracuse as the romantic couple's home becomes apparent only after Chariton has defined the temporal frame of his narrative (an example of the fullness of this chronotope: time and space are a "carefully thought-out, concrete whole"<sup>40</sup>). This is not just Syracuse at any given time, we learn, but Syracuse in the years following the victory over the Athenians in 413 BC (1.1.1). In fact the memory of the Athenian defeat haunts the entire narrative.<sup>41</sup> Callirhoe continually defines herself and constitutes her own identity by reference to her father's victory over Athens. After she has been stolen from her tomb by the robber Theron and his band of pirates, Callirhoe laments to herself on board the ship:

“σὸ μὲν” ἔφη, “πάτερ, ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ θαλάσῃ τριακοσίας ναῦς Ἀθηναίων κατεναυμάχησας, ἤρπασε δέ σου τὴν θυγατέρα κέλης μικρὸς καὶ οὐδέν μοι βοηθεῖς. ἐπὶ ξένην ἄγομαι γῆν καὶ δουλεύειν με δεῖ τὴν εὐγενῆ· τάχα δὲ ἀγοράσει τις τὴν Ἑρμοκράτους θυγατέρα δεσπότης Ἀθηναῖος. πόσω μοι κρεῖττον ἢ ἐν τάφῳ κεῖσθαι νεκράν ...”

“You yourself, father,” she said, “on this very sea conquered three-hundred Athenian ships in a naval battle, but now a small boat has snatched away your daughter and you are of no help to me. I am driven to a foreign land and I, born from a noble family, must become a slave. Soon some Athenian master will buy the daughter of Hermocrates. How much better was it for me to lie as a corpse in a tomb!” (1.11.2–3).

Callirhoe's soliloquy wonderfully illustrates Chariton's mastery of the ironic. The daughter of a famous naval general has, by a twist of fate, become the prisoner at sea — and for that matter not the prisoner of a worthy naval opponent like Athens, but of a lowly tomb robber. The glory of Syracuse arose from Hermocrates' naval defeat of three hundred Athenian tri-

<sup>40</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 84.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Smith 2003.

remes; but now positioned on board a ship and in the very sea (ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ θαλάσῃ) where her father and Syracuse were victorious, Callirhoe conflates her own private tragedy to become also a public tragedy.<sup>42</sup> Her own worst nightmare, to become the possession of an Athenian master (τάχα δὲ ἀγοράσει τις τὴν Ἑρμοκράτους θυγατέρα δεσπότης Ἀθηναῖος), mirrors the political nightmare of all of Syracuse.

Likewise, Chaereas' opportunity for forging his own martial identity arises when the Egyptian pharaoh accepts Chaereas' defection from the Persian king and acknowledges Sicily's renowned military superiority, "for no nation was uninformed of the disaster of the Athenians, which they suffered in the Sicilian war" (οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔθνος ἄπυστον ἦν τῆς Ἀθηναίων δυστυχίας, ἣν ἐδυστύχησαν ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ τῷ Σικελικῷ, 7.2.4). And then later, after his successful capture of Tyre, Chaereas is given control over the Egyptian navy because the Pharaoh believes he is better suited to the sea than to the land (οἰκειότερόν σοι εἶναι τὴν θάλασσαν, 7.5.8). Syracuse's naval victory over Athens is the single most important historical event defining the imagined world of the novel, and it directly affects Chaereas' transformation into the novel's military hero: Chaereas is put in charge of the navy because of the renowned naval superiority of his homeland. The Pharaoh then tells Chaereas to "Act like your father-in-law Hermocrates on the sea" (μίμησαι τὸν κηδεστὴν Ἑρμοκράτην ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ). And so, just as her Syracusan origin is significant for Callirhoe's role as a tragic heroine, Chaereas' status as the son-in-law of Hermocrates constitutes him in the minds of others as an heir to the political and military legacy of Syracuse. In Chariton's novel, Syracuse clearly matters as a political power and it defines who the hero and heroine are. Syracuse, therefore, cannot be interchanged with Miletus or Cyprus in Chariton's imagined world, for it is inextricably bound up with the identities of the hero and heroine.

I conclude this section with only a brief examination of the scene in which Callirhoe crosses the Euphrates for the first time and herself calls attention to the thematic significance of the transgression of geographical and geopolitical borders in the novel. Having set out from Miletus on their road to Babylon, where they will await the great trial before the king, Dionysius and Callirhoe at last reach the banks of the river Euphrates, the gateway into the heart of Persia. Callirhoe, with only her attendant Plangon present,

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<sup>42</sup> For a similar reading cf. Hunter 1994: 1078.

reproaches her nemesis *Tyche*, for whom Callirhoe's banishment to Ionia and marriage to another man seem not to have been punishment enough:

“... σὺ δὲ καὶ τούτων ἤδη μοι φθονεῖς· οὐκέτι γὰρ εἰς Ἴωνίαν με φυγαδεύεις. ξένην μὲν, πλὴν Ἑλληνικὴν ἐδίδους γῆν, ὅπου μεγάλην εἶχον παραμυθίαν, ὅτι θαλάσση παρακάθημαι· νῦν δὲ ἔξω με τοῦ συνήθους ῥίπτεις ἀέρος καὶ τῆς πατρίδος ὄλω διορίζομαι κόσμῳ. Μίλητον ἀφείλω μου πάλιν, ὡς πρότερον Συρακούσας· ὑπὲρ τὸν Εὐφράτην ἀπάγομαι καὶ βαρβάροις ἐγκλείομαι μυχοῖς ἢ νησιῶτις, ὅπου μηκέτι θάλασσα. ποῖαν ἔτ' ἐλπίσω ναῦν ἐκ Σικελίας καταπλέουσας; ἀποσπῶμαι καὶ τοῦ σοῦ τάφου, Χαιρέα. τίς ἐπενέγκῃ σοι χοάς, δαῖμον ἀγαθὴ; Βάκτρα μοι καὶ Σοῦσα λοιπὸν οἶκος καὶ τάφος. ἄπαξ, Εὐφράτα, μέλλω σε διαβαίνειν· φοβοῦμαι γὰρ οὐχ οὕτως τὸ μήκος τῆς ἀποδημίας ὡς μὴ δόξω κάκεῖ καλὴ τι.”

“... But you already begrudge me even these, for no longer do you banish me to Ionia. Foreign, yes, but it was at least a Greek-speaking land you gave me, where I was greatly consoled because I sat beside the sea. But now you snatch me away from surroundings familiar to me and I am banished from my country by a whole world. Now you have taken Miletus from me as before you took Syracuse. I am led away beyond the Euphrates and I, an islander, am confined by the innermost recesses of a barbarian land, where the sea is no longer. What sort of ship do I now expect to put in from Sicily? I am torn away even from your tomb, Chae-reas. Who will bear the libations for you, dear spirit? From now on Bactra and Susa will be my home and tomb. I shall cross you once, Euphrates, for I do not so much fear the length of my journey as I fear that even there I shall seem beautiful to someone” (5.1.5–7).

The linguistic and cultural divide between Greek-speakers (οἱ Ἑλληνικοί) and non-Greek-speakers (οἱ βάρβαροι) is an important theme in Chariton's novel, and in the above passage Callirhoe uses that divide to articulate two types of foreignness to which she is exposed. Ionia was foreign enough to her, but there at least she could communicate with others and was reminded of Syracuse by the presence of the sea. But with the entry into Persia Callirhoe is surrounded by a different sphere of alterity; as she crosses the Euphrates, she will be separated from Syracuse (the familiar) by a whole world (τῆς πατρίδος ὄλω διορίζομαι κόσμῳ). And interestingly, Callirhoe senses that

her punishment, her divine retribution is foreignness itself, for she believes that *Tyche's* persecution of her is the threat of increasingly alien surroundings (Syracuse to Ionia to Persia). The most frightening aspect of the alien world into which she embarks is the absence of the sea (ὄπου μηκέτι θάλασσα). An island dweller by birth (ἡ νησιῶτις), she imagines the inner recesses (βάρβαροι μυχοί) of this new land-locked world as both her home and her tomb (οἶκος καὶ τάφος). Callirhoe therefore maps out her own tragedy by highlighting the geographic transformations around her.<sup>43</sup>

The conclusion of Callirhoe's soliloquy foreshadows the events of the second half of the novel. Her fear of the foreign world into which she is traveling is compounded by the possibility that her beauty will attract yet another lover (φοβοῦμαι ... μὴ δόξω κάκεῖ καλή τι, 5.1.7). The indefinite, seemingly insignificant, pronoun which concludes her speech (τινι) turns out to be none other than the Great King of Persia himself, Artaxerxes II Memnon.<sup>44</sup> In the end, however, the geographic, social, and cultural distinctions between Sicily, Ionia, and Persia are subsumed under the power of Aphrodite, for even so slight a thing as the beauty of a young woman has the ability to topple the majesty of the Persian king. It could therefore be argued that geographic, social, and cultural distinctions in the novel are meaningless and void of any significance, ultimately revealing the weakness of human institutions in the face of a divine force. But this is not exactly the interchangeability of place which Bakhtin's adventure-time describes; for Bakhtin, "The nature of a given place does not figure as a component in the event; the place figures in solely as a naked, abstract expanse of space."<sup>45</sup> As Callirhoe's soliloquy makes clear, however, the different spaces and settings of the story are *not* interchangeable. Rather, spaces both familiar and foreign

<sup>43</sup> For more on foreign geography see Alvares 1993: 121–122. Economic differences between Sicily, Ionia, and Persia are considered by their respective agricultures, slave management, and wealth (128–152). The comparisons between the various forms of government in the novel "contribute to the work's latent ethnography, and emphasize the superiority of Greek culture" (206). See also Alvares 2001–2002: 113–144.

<sup>44</sup> Arthur Heiserman has noted the steadily escalating status of Callirhoe's victims/admirers: beautiful Syracusan youth, wealthy Ionian nobleman, all-powerful Persian king. The supreme irony of the novel is that Callirhoe's rise to greater prominence contrasts with her moral perspective. Aphrodite "is at once [Callirhoe's] divine enemy and her divine protectress, the source of her worldly success and her moral suffering. Chariton's plot resolves all the paradoxes from which it springs by reconciling our desire to be Aphrodisian with our desire to be good" (Heiserman 1977: 77).

<sup>45</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 100.

become thematically significant in the portrayal of Callirhoe's tragic adventure abroad and heroic restoration in Syracuse. Although Aphrodite's power equalizes all sense of relative superiority in the mortal realm (Greek versus Persian customs, Syracusan democracy versus eastern tyranny), divine power and mortal power are nevertheless paradoxically dependent on one another. Aphrodite's erotic power, while acknowledged by the characters in the novel, does not exist abstractly, without reference or relation to other systems of power. Rather, Aphrodite's power is consolidated when Callirhoe's divine beauty subverts human political institutions. Thus at the beginning of the novel, civic dialogue in the assembly at Syracuse is transformed into erotic dialogue (1.1.11–13), and in the second half of the novel, Artaxerxes' focus on justice is blurred by the erotic distraction caused by Callirhoe (6.3.1–2). The differentiation between spaces and between the systems of power dominant within those spaces is integral for understanding Aphrodite's overarching power. Though supreme power in Chariton's narrative is located in the divine realm, it is not at the cost of a vivid, differentiated backdrop. The "degree of *specificity* and *concreteness* of this world"<sup>46</sup> is not necessarily as limited as Bakhtin would have us believe.

## 2 Contact with the present

As opposed to epic and the high genres of the classical period (which are oriented toward an absolute past),<sup>47</sup> the novel, Bakhtin writes, "is portrayed without any distance, on the level of contemporary reality, in a zone of direct and even crude contact."<sup>48</sup> Bakhtin thus posits that the novel grew out of the low genres of antiquity, characterized in opposition to the high genres by their sense of "Contemporaneity, flowing and transitory," and their subject matter, "the common people's creative culture of laughter." In Greek literature, the *spoudogeloion*, the ancient label for "the field of 'serio-comical,'" is best exemplified in works such as mimes, the bucolic poets, fables, memoirs, the Socratic dialogues of Plato and Xenophon, and the writings of Lucian. Bakhtin also saw novelistic predecessors in Latin serio-comical literature:

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<sup>46</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 100.

<sup>47</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 20. Contra Bakhtin, see Nagy 2002.

<sup>48</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 22.

the satires of Lucilius, Horace, Persius and Juvenal; symposiastic literature; and perhaps most importantly in the Menippean satire. Notably Bakhtin excludes the Greek romances from this list, claiming that “the authentic spirit of the novel” can be seen in the above works “to an incomparably greater degree than in the so-called Greek novels.” For Bakhtin, that “authentic spirit of the novel,” which the Greek romances apparently lack, is only achieved when a work treats contemporary reality as its subject.<sup>49</sup>

Chariton’s romance would then at first consideration not measure up to Bakhtin’s requirements for the novel: it is not “crude” and contemporary reality is not its *literal* subject. A staid, backward-looking orientation, according to Bakhtin, precludes contact with the muddled present. But Bakhtin himself refines his seemingly rigid qualifications for novelness: “as a new starting point for artistic orientation, contemporaneity by no means excludes the depiction of a heroic past, and without any travesty.” As evidence he points to Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*, one of the great ancient forerunners of novelistic literature: “its subject is the past, its hero is Cyrus the Great. *But the starting point of representation is Xenophon’s own contemporary reality; it is that which provides the point of view and value orientation*”<sup>50</sup> (my emphasis).

It is within this frame that Chariton’s *Callirhoe* must also be viewed. Past readings have focused on Chariton’s narrative as a charming story about a young girl and boy who fall in love in Syracuse in the years following Athens’ failed Sicilian expedition. And this is by no means an invalid reading. But to ignore the fact that the author is *constructing* a past from a point of view in his own present (Χαρίτων Ἀφροδισιεύς, Ἀθηναγόρου τοῦ ῥήτορος ὑπογραφεύς, πάθος ἐρωτικὸν ἐν Συρακούσαις γενόμενον διηγήσομαι, 1.1.1) is to ignore other possible readings of Chariton’s narrative.

Chariton’s romance becomes more dynamic when we consider how the narrative invites a dialogue with the contemporary reality of the first century CE. Douglas Edwards, considering the context provided by epigraphical and archaeological evidence from Aphrodisias, has written that Chariton’s novel “reflects civic and religious pride in the cult of Aphrodite and therefore fosters a stronger sense of identity for Aphrodisians and those attracted to the cult within the empire.”<sup>51</sup> Likewise, Alvares has argued that the different

<sup>49</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 20–22.

<sup>50</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 28–29.

<sup>51</sup> Edwards 1994: 712.



political systems depicted in Chariton's imagined world provide "an ideological map of possible real and ideal political formations."<sup>52</sup> Chariton's narrative is therefore not detached from contemporary reality in its focus on the past, but rather the "depiction of Persia and the position of Greeks within its empire and the Egyptian rebellion owes much to [Chariton's] own complex attitudes about Rome and how Greeks should and did relate to it." Connors furthermore has argued that Chariton's idealized view of a classical Syracuse which looks ahead to "its Dionysian future" consequently "engages in a project that is parallel to Augustus' own,"<sup>53</sup> i.e. an idealized etiology, "controlling the script of his rise to power."<sup>54</sup> In its allusions to empire, "Chariton's novel demonstrates that an elite Greek response to Roman imperium could also include playful mastery of Roman history."<sup>55</sup> Contemporary reality, for Xenophon and Chariton alike, provides "a point of view and value orientation,"<sup>56</sup> however covert or allegorical.

But to operate in a zone of contact with the present is not merely to reflect contemporary reality or ideology. An orientation in the present also entails a difficult ambivalence, the ambiguous, often contradictory split between past and future, an open-endedness that "keeps the genre from congealing."<sup>57</sup> One reading of Chariton's novel might perhaps provide a charming tale of adventure which ends happily for the romantic married couple. Another reading, though, reveals precisely the kind of ambiguity and inconclusiveness that characterize novelness in the Bakhtinian sense. An important example of such an ambiguity is the very scene that begins the romantic couple's misfortunes.

After winning the hand of Callirhoe, Chaereas is plotted against by rival suitors who stage a scene of adultery outside his house and arouse his suspicion of Callirhoe's marital infidelity. Hiding in a place of secret observation, Chaereas sees a presumed erotic rival approach his house. But the man is only playing a dramatic role, *appearing* to pursue the hand of Callirhoe while in fact angling for the maid. Nevertheless his attire is perfect for the role of romantic seducer: "His hair was glistening with perfumed locks, his eyes were shadowed; he wore a soft cloak and fine slippers; heavy rings

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<sup>52</sup> Alvares 2001–2002: 140.

<sup>53</sup> Connors 2002: 21.

<sup>54</sup> Connors 2002: 18.

<sup>55</sup> Connors 2002: 23.

<sup>56</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 29.

<sup>57</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 27.

sparkled on his fingers”<sup>58</sup> (κόμην εἶχε λιπαρὰν καὶ βοστρύχους μύρων ἀποπνέοντας, ὀφθαλμοὺς ὑπογεγραμμένους, ἱμάτιον μαλακόν, ὑπόδημα λεπτόν· δακτύλιοι βαρεῖς ὑπέστιλβον, 1.4.9). Chaereas is unable to restrain himself any longer from preventing the erotic siege of house and wife that he thinks is taking place before him. As Chaereas rushes into the house, the rival lover is of course nowhere in sight. Callirhoe is said by the narrator to be sitting alone in the dark, missing her husband, but when Chaereas bursts in, “overwhelmed by his anger, he kicked her as she ran toward him. His foot landed squarely in her diaphragm and stopped the girl’s breathing” (κρατούμενος δὲ ὑπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς ἐλάκτισε προσιοῦσαν. εὐστόχως οὖν ὁ πούς κατὰ τοῦ διαφράγματος ἐνεχθεὶς ἐπέσχε τῆς παιδὸς τὴν ἀναπνοήν, 1.4.11–12). It is an emotionally complicated scene, to say the least. Before Chaereas enters the house, we seem to be in the world of Greek New Comedy: an adulterous plot is unfolding, the rival suitor is decked out in effeminate finery, and the romantic hero is in danger of losing his girl. But then the hero actually attacks his own wife with a brutal kick to the stomach, knocking her unconscious. Should we be reminded also of Athenian adultery laws permitting a husband to kill his wife’s seducer *in flagrante delicto*?<sup>59</sup> Richard Hunter goes so far as to suggest that Chariton’s text here recalls an entire literary tradition which depicts tyrants attacking their wives.<sup>60</sup> If so, then Chaereas is figured on one level as a type of impetuous, immoderate domestic tyrant. Even a careful reader is unsure at this point how to respond. Hunter argues that “Chariton has deliberately made problematic the question of which ‘frame’ or ‘code’ we should use when reading these scenes. Do we use a historical one, a comic one, a rhetorical/declamatory one?” But the reader may in fact find that no single frame or code is sufficient. “Rather,” continues Hunter, “we must recognise in this scene an interplay of various codes which, and this is crucial, we are supposed to recognise.”<sup>61</sup> The scene therefore resists any single generic interpretation, and it is within such interplay of codes that, as Bakhtin writes, “sense and significance are renewed and grow as the context continues to unfold.”<sup>62</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Goold’s translation (1995: 47).

<sup>59</sup> Kapparis 2000: 380–383.

<sup>60</sup> “Periander (Diog. Laert. 1.94), Cambyses (Hdt. 3.32), Herodes Atticus (Philostratus, VS 2.1.8) and Nero (e.g. Tacitus, Ann. 16.6.1, Suetonius, Nero 35.3)” (Hunter 1994: 1080).

<sup>61</sup> Hunter 1994: 1082.

<sup>62</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 30, 39–40. See also Morson and Emerson’s explanation of the novel in terms of Bakhtin’s global concepts (1990: 302–303).

A similarly irresolvable ambiguity is located in the novel's heroine herself. As mentioned above, one of the rules for the romantic genre is that the female protagonist remains the exclusive erotic possession of her husband, untouched by another man.<sup>63</sup> But such a seemingly straightforward precept is problematized in Chariton's novel. Having already been married to Chaereas, Callirhoe must later also marry Dionysius to preserve both herself and her child. And so Callirhoe becomes the only heroine of all the extant romances to be twice a bride in her own story and she consequently becomes the possession of two men. True, in her own mind she marries Dionysius only as an affirmation of her love for Chaereas (symbolized through their unborn child), but the fact of her double marriage remains: she knowingly mounts the bed of two different men.

Although the erotic exclusivity of a woman — a wife's fidelity — is a defining feature of romance, it is precisely that erotic exclusivity which is challenged in Chariton's text.<sup>64</sup> At the end of the novel, Callirhoe carefully plots out who knows what so that she may regain her position at the side of Chaereas (despite her physical infidelity) and so that her son will remain in good hands in Miletus (her final letter to Dionysius remains a secret, unknown to Chaereas). Thus Callirhoe negotiates her own sense of chastity and fidelity, and the face she presents to Chaereas is veiled by subterfuge.

But Chaereas is himself a troubled hero, for though he has channeled the fire of his youth into martial valor, he cannot escape his innate jealousy (twice remarked upon by the narrator in the concluding chapters of the novel: 8.1.15 and 8.4.4). At the end of the novel the marital bond between hero and heroine, based as it is on subterfuge, is less than the genre's romantic ideal, and the problematization of the marital union by the narrator is open-ended.<sup>65</sup> In other words, Chariton's novel prompts a contemporary reader to ask questions about the very notion of an ideal marriage, questions which the text resists "finalizing."

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. inter alia Reardon 1989: "Virginity or chastity, at least in the female, is of crucial importance, and fidelity to one's partner, together often with trust in the gods, will ultimately guarantee a happy ending" (2).

<sup>64</sup> Goldhill 1995: 132.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Balot 1998: 161. Balot disagrees with Konstan's characterization of Eros in the novel. Konstan argues that "True fidelity, while inspired by *ēros*, overcomes time, distance, and adversity" (1994: 58), whereas in Balot's view, "the disruptive side of *eros* predominates for the bulk of Chariton's novel, and there is no reason to believe that *eros* becomes tamer at the end" (1998: 155).

Bakhtin has written that, “in ancient times the novel could not really develop all its potential; this potential came to light only in the modern world.”<sup>66</sup> The full potential of which Bakhtin speaks must refer particularly to the sense of open-endedness and inconclusiveness, which results from a literary orientation in the present. For Bakhtin, the novel “is plasticity itself. It is a genre that is ever questing, ever examining itself and subjecting its established forms to review.” Despite his preference for modern forms of the novel, Bakhtin’s assessment of “novelness” in the above passage could very well describe the work of Chariton.

### 3 Heteroglossia<sup>67</sup>

A distinctive characteristic of the novel is the multi-layering of voices and styles, a break from what Bakhtin considers the univocal style of high classical genres (monoglossia). In novelistic literature, not only is an imagined world depicted, but also language itself becomes an object of representation. If, for instance, the narrative of a novel alludes to or quotes a lyric poem, the novelistic narrative is not suspended in order to give precedence to the lyric mode, but rather the lyric poem becomes a linguistic image *within* novelistic narrative. The lyric poem, as Bakhtin has famously put it, must be uttered in “*intonational quotation marks*.”<sup>68</sup> In this way, linguistic styles as diverse as those of epic, tragedy, and comedy all participate in the novel: they simultaneously point back to their literature of origin, representations signaling the narrative’s generic affiliations, and become themselves a means of representation within the narrative. The novel ought not to be understood as a single authorial voice, but rather as “a *system* of languages” organized by an “authorial center.”<sup>69</sup>

Chariton’s novel is rich with the kind of “linguistic images” described by Bakhtin, the most abundant of which are drawn from the Homeric epics. As

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<sup>66</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 39–40.

<sup>67</sup> Not to be confused with “polyphony.” Heteroglossia “describes the diversity of speech styles in a language,” where as polyphony “has more to do with the position of the author in a text” (Morson and Emerson 1990: 232). Furthermore, “Polyphony demands a work in which several consciousnesses meet as equals and engage in a dialogue that is in principle unfinalizable” (238–239).

<sup>68</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 44.

<sup>69</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 47–49.

indexed by Goold, there are a total of thirty-four quotations or echoes of Homer in Chariton's narrative — nineteen from the *Iliad*, and fifteen from the *Odyssey*.<sup>70</sup> But when Chariton cites Homer, he does so not simply to demonstrate his erudition, or to affiliate his own work with the most prestigious poems of antiquity. Rather, in accordance with Bakhtin's theory, the images of Homeric poetry participate in representing a given character or situation. Perhaps the best example occurs at the end of the novel, when Chaereas and Callirhoe have finally been reunited on Aradus. On that night, the bond between husband and wife is restored upon the conjugal bed, and the narrator asks, "Who could describe that night filled with so many stories, so many tears, together with so many kisses?" (Τίς ἂν φράσῃ τὴν νύκτα ἐκείνην πόσων διηγημάτων μεστή, πόσων δὲ δακρῶν ὁμοῦ καὶ φιλημάτων; 8.1.14). Joined in an embrace, they narrate their separate experiences. But when Callirhoe must describe the events in Miletus and her second marriage to Dionysius, her embarrassment prevents her from continuing and Chaereas' problematic jealousy stirs within him (Καλλιρόη μὲν ἐσιώπησεν αἰδουμένη, Χαιρέας δὲ τῆς ἐμφύτου ζηλοτυπίας ἀνεμνήσθη, 8.1.15). Mention of their child, however, quickly dispels the awkward moment. Chaereas then tells of his own adventures and his newfound military prowess, and the narrator concludes the episode by saying that they "Gladly turned to the pact of their bed as of old"<sup>71</sup> (ἀσπάσιοι λέκτροιο παλαιοῦ θεσμὸν ἴκοντο, 8.1.17), a direct quotation of *Od.* 23. 296.

The Homeric scene recalled by the quotation in Chariton's narrative is appropriately the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope. And so on one level, the quotation of Homer provides for Chariton's novel an epic analogue that elevates his own narrative. Just as Odysseus' separation from Penelope is at an end, so too is Chaereas' separation from Callirhoe at an end; and they, like their epic counterparts, are once again joined in conjugal bliss. Returning to Homer's text, a reader discovers that the analogy with Chariton's novel runs deeper, and that there is more joining the two literary worlds than simply the theme of marital reunion. Homer's narrator says,

Τὼ δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν φιλότιτος ἐταρπήτην ἐρατεινῆς,  
τερπέσθη μύθοισι, πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἐνέποντε

<sup>70</sup> Goold 1995: 420.

<sup>71</sup> Reardon's translation (1989: 112).

And the couple, after they had reveled in the pleasure of their longed-for love, reveled in their stories, each narrating to the other ...

*Od.* 23.300–301

In both scenes the concepts of *eros* and *muthos* are, like both pairs of lovers,<sup>72</sup> intertwined; erotic passion and narrative become one. But by quoting Homer's text, Chariton also forces a reader to consider the differences between the two scenes. Departures from the Homeric episode do not, I argue, weaken Chariton's analogy between his novel and that text, but rather reveal to the reader how Chariton subtly rewrites Homer and emphasizes the complexities within his own story.

In the *Odyssey* we are told that Odysseus and Penelope mount their bed first and only begin to tell their stories after they have "reveled in the pleasure of their longed-for love." In Chariton, by contrast, Callirhoe and Chaereas tell their stories first, and then afterwards make love. I argue therefore that Chariton's romantic couple is especially anxious to *tell themselves*, to reconstitute their identities for one another despite the changes that they have undergone. Callirhoe and Chaereas can only make themselves truly present for one another physically after they have provided narrative accounts of their separate *pathemata*. Even though she cannot explain the details and sexual implications of her married life to Dionysius, Callirhoe nevertheless exhibits a wifely *aidos* before her husband (8.1.15). And for Chaereas it is most important to assert that he has not shamed his wife (ἀλλ' οὐ κατήσχονά σε, 8.1.17). But this emphasis upon the character's need for self-fashioning through story is not made explicit by the narrator. In fact a reader can only arrive at this interpretation by consulting Homer's text, i.e. following through with Chariton's allusion to the *Odyssey*, the image of epic language embedded in Chariton's narrative.

This reading of Callirhoe's and Chaereas' reunion is further enhanced when we contrast their self-narrated stories with those told by Penelope and Odysseus. Penelope tells of the trials which she had to endure at home and how the suitors drained the resources of her husband's estate (302–305). Odysseus likewise tells of his own adventures, but what he does *not* narrate is no less significant than what he does. He does, for instance, tell about Circe and her cunning wiles (23.321), but he does not actually admit to hav-

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<sup>72</sup> Note particularly how in Homer's poetry Odysseus and Penelope are bound together linguistically through the use of the dual.

ing “mounted Circe’s gorgeous bed” (ἐπέβην περικαλλέος εὐνής, 10.347). He even says that the nymph Calypso desired him for a husband (23.334), but he politely (cunningly?) omits that he fulfilled her desire for seven years. Because Chariton’s text begs comparison with this scene from the *Odyssey* we must therefore dwell on the tale which Callirhoe tells her husband. In Chariton’s story, she, the wife, the female (*not* the male Chaereas) is the one whose journey requires erotic cunning, and, like Odysseus, she is silent about the sexual details of life with Dionysius. And it also becomes clear that her reunion with her first husband does not eradicate all of the feelings which she has for her second husband. Before her departure to Syracuse, Callirhoe still cares enough about Dionysius to write him a letter (which she keeps secret from Chaereas!) and she even entrusts her child to his care — a permanent bond. At the end of the novel, Callirhoe does not reject Dionysius.<sup>73</sup> And so Chariton’s quotation of Homer, as it both alters the register of Chariton’s prose and creates a dialogic relationship<sup>74</sup> between Chariton’s narrative and Homer’s poetry, supports Bakhtin’s theory that “represented languages themselves do the work of representing to a significant degree.”<sup>75</sup>

But quotations of Homer are not the only images of language embedded within Chariton’s narrative. There are numerous phrases and tropes borrowed from Xenophon, Thucydides, Menander, Euripides, and even an allusion to Sophocles.<sup>76</sup> Chariton constructs a text which demands a complex interrelatedness between many genres: epic, historiography, tragedy, comedy, and oratory.<sup>77</sup> This makes Chariton’s novel truly Bakhtinian: “a *system* of languages that mutually and ideologically interanimate each other.”<sup>78</sup>

But the heteroglossia of true novelness, according to Bakhtin, requires more than just allusion and the formation of a dialogic relation between literary genres. Since the novel operates in a zone of direct contact with the pre-

<sup>73</sup> Goldhill 1995: 130.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. the concept of “dialogized heteroglossia” described by Morson and Emerson. Chariton’s narrative and Homer’s *Odyssey* in this case “interanimate” each other and consequently “it becomes more difficult to take for granted the value system of a given language. Those values may still be felt to be right and the language may still seem adequate to its topic, but not indisputably so, because they have been, however cautiously, disputed” (1990: 143).

<sup>75</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 47.

<sup>76</sup> Hunter 1994: 1083.

<sup>77</sup> On the relationship between Chariton’s narrative and the panegyric discourse of classical oratory, see Laplace 1997.

<sup>78</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 47.

sent, it is necessarily in dialogue with the various languages of contemporary reality.<sup>79</sup> The novel is capable of depicting contrasting linguistic images drawn from beyond the world of literature; the lofty can mingle with the low, and it is entirely possible for the low to undermine the linguistic pretensions of the lofty.<sup>80</sup> Novelistic discourse, in other words, is capable of depicting the language of everyday life, language divorced from literary tradition. “But,” Bakhtin writes, “images of language that are capable of reflecting in a polyglot manner speakers of the era are almost entirely absent in the Greek novel.”<sup>81</sup>

It must be conceded that instances of vividly extra-literary language are rare in the Greek novels, even though it is always hard to determine exactly what is extra-literary once it is inside a literary text. This must be due, in part, to the relative conservatism of the extant Greek novels and because they seem to adhere to a certain generic pattern.<sup>82</sup> But it would be wrong to suggest that the Greek novelists were wholly unaware of the potential of extra-literary discourse and were incapable of incorporating such language into their own narratives. Alvares has convincingly suggested otherwise in his reading of the forensic speech of Mithridates during the trial scene in *Babylon*. In that scene, Mithridates challenges Dionysius to plead with the King to dismiss the suit against him, threatening that if Dionysius persists with the case, then he will surely lose Callirhoe. Dionysius of course, wholly unaware that Chaereas is alive and in league with his opponent Mithridates, disregards the challenge and declares of himself that “Dionysius will never be found making false accusations!” (οὐδ’ εὐρεθήσεται ποτε Διονύσιος συκοφαντῶν, 5.7.9). The narrator then continues:

Ἐνθεν ἔλων ὁ Μιθριδάτης φωνὴν ἐπήρε καὶ ὥσπερ ἐπὶ θειασμοῦ “θεοὶ” φησὶ “βασίλειοι ἐπουράνιοί τε καὶ ὑποχθόνιοι, βοηθήσατε ἀνδρὶ ἀγαθῷ, πολλάκις ὑμῖν εὐξαμένῳ δικαίως καὶ θύσαντι μεγαλοπρεπῶς· ἀπόδοτέ μοι τὴν ἀμοιβὴν τῆς εὐσεβείας συκοφαντουμένῳ· χρήσατέ μοι κἂν εἰς τὴν δίκην Χαιρέαν. φάνηθι, δαίμον ἀγαθέ· καλεῖ σε ἡ σὴ Καλλιρόη· μεταξὺ δὲ ἀμφοτέρων, ἐμοῦ τε καὶ Διονυσίου στὰς εἶπον βασιλεῖ τίς ἐστιν ἐξ ἡμῶν μοιχός.”

<sup>79</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 65.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Branham and Kinney 1996: xxii.

<sup>81</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 65–66.

<sup>82</sup> Reardon 1991: 3.



Taking up from this point Mithridates raised his voice and as if he were divinely inspired spoke: “Royal gods who dwell in heaven and below the earth, come to the aid of a good and noble man who has often prayed to you in due manner and made rich sacrifices. Reward me for my piety now that I am falsely accused! Furnish for me Chaereas, if only for this trial! Appear, dearly departed! Your Callirhoe summons you! Standing between us both, myself and Dionysius, declare to the king who amongst us is the adulterer!” (5.7.10).

Suddenly Chaereas, presumed dead, steps into the court and all are astonished, in awe of Mithridates’ apparently divine ability to re-animate a corpse. Such bombast goes beyond the flourish of Asianist rhetorical style, for as he induces a quasi-trance, Mithridates adopts the persona of an inspired necromancer, “mimicking the incantation of a magus who calls upon the powers of heaven and earth to raise a dead man.”<sup>83</sup> This interpretation is reinforced by Callirhoe’s later remark: “Perhaps Mithridates conjured up a ghost for the trial. They say there are magicians among the Persians”<sup>84</sup> (τάχα γὰρ Μιθριδάτης διὰ τὴν δίκην εἶδωλον ἔπεμψε· λέγουσι γὰρ ἐν Πέρσαις εἶναι μάγους, 5.9.4). And though Mithridates’ performance is a *coup de théâtre*, his language and the form of his incantation need not be understood as dramatic in a literary sense.<sup>85</sup> Rather, Alvares argues, in depicting Mithridates’ performance Chariton drew upon popular contemporary sentiments toward *magoi* “both as keepers of the occult wisdom of the East and fatuous con-artists.”<sup>86</sup> Similar views on Persian *magoi* can be found in later texts such as Apuleius’ *Apology* (24–43) and Lucian’s *Menippus*. As a prayer, Mithri-

<sup>83</sup> Alvares 2000: 384.

<sup>84</sup> Goold’s translation (1995: 273).

<sup>85</sup> The chorus of Persian elders in Aeschylus’ *Persai* summon the ghost of King Darius, but the language is quite different. Instead of praying to θεοὶ βασιλῆιοι ἐπουράνιοι τε καὶ ὑποχθόνιοι, the chorus prays only to χθόνιοι δαίμονες ἄγνοι, | Γῆ τε καὶ Ἑρμῆ, βασιλεῦ τ’ ἐνέρω (628–629). In Mithridates’ incantation, the θεοὶ are asked to send Chaereas who is named as a δαίμων ἀγαθέ. But in Aeschylus’ drama, the gods themselves are named as δαίμονες (not θεοὶ) and the ghost of Darius is named as a ψυχὴν (not a δαίμων). And whereas Chaereas’ shade is summoned to prove Mithridates’ innocence in an adultery trial, the ghost of Darius is summoned for a much graver purpose, to speak the future (πέρας εἴποι, 632). As a form of supplication, Mithridates’ incantation seems closer to the prayer of Chryses at the beginning of the *Iliad* (1.37–42), but again the language and vocabulary are much different.

<sup>86</sup> Alvares 2000: 383.

dates' speech has a very long generic tradition behind it, indeed. But in Chariton's text, the prayer genre is reaccentuated<sup>87</sup> for the nearly parodic representation of a contemporary *magos*.

In the trial scene from Chariton's *Callirhoe* we therefore have an image of language drawn from *real life*. We see Mithridates' speech as sheer performance, recognizing the booming voice and hocus-pocus as the tricks of a con-man who milks his dramatic moment for all it is worth. The audience of Persians at the trial might be taken in by the bloated language, but we, sharing the narrator's perspective, are not. And granted this position of narrative superiority, we can enjoy the irony of the situation. For all his frenzied utterances, it seems as if Mithridates were about to forecast some momentous, earth-shaping event (μεταξὺ δὲ ἀμφοτέρων, ἐμοῦ τε καὶ Διονυσίου στὰς εἶπον βασιλεῖ). But only at the very end of his speech is the joke revealed (τίς ἐστὶν ἐξ ἡμῶν μοιχός). Humorously, the audience is led to believe that Mithridates' voice transcends the cosmos and summons the ghost of a dead man to reveal not Fate, not the future, not the end of the world, but merely the identity of a paramour. Divine forces are made to seem actively engaged in the rather crude sexual affairs of mortals. And this, I argue, is precisely the effect described by Bakhtin when languages collide in the novel's discursive system. Bakhtin writes that in novelistic discourse "Another's sacred word ... is degraded by the accents of vulgar folk languages, re-evaluated and reinterpreted against the backdrop of these languages, and congeals to the point where it becomes a ridiculous image, the comical carnival mask of a narrow and joyless pedant, an unctious hypocritical old bigot, a stingy and dried up miser."<sup>88</sup> We need not see Mithridates in such harsh terms, but what he accomplishes is, in effect, the comic degradation of sacred language. The language of the lofty, in other words, is brought low.

I maintain that, though Chariton did not extensively incorporate the language of contemporary reality in his narrative, he was at least aware of its potential as part of a burgeoning, hybrid literary form. Bakhtin himself seems to suggest as much for the Sophistic novels when he laments the irretrievable loss of "the background of heteroglot words and meanings against which these novels sounded and with which they dialogically interacted."<sup>89</sup> Sealed off from the heteroglot background of which Chariton's

<sup>87</sup> Morson and Emerson 1990: 293.

<sup>88</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 77.

<sup>89</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 375.

novel was a part, it is impossible for us to judge precisely where an image of language from real life is actively incorporated into the text.

#### 4 Conclusion

Though he made no nominal distinction between “novel” and “romance,” Bakhtin nevertheless distinguishes between the novel’s First and Second Stylistic lines of development. The First Stylistic line of development is embodied by the Sophistic novels and is typified by the fact that they know “only a single language and a single style,”<sup>90</sup> and that they do not incorporate heteroglossia. The Second Stylistic line of development, by contrast, “incorporates heteroglossia *into* a novel’s composition, exploiting it to orchestrate its own meaning and frequently resisting altogether any unmediated and pure authorial discourse.” I have tried to demonstrate though how Chariton’s novel *does* incorporate heteroglossia into its composition and that it does “involve a sideways glance at others’ languages, at other points of view and other conceptual systems, each with its own set of objects and meanings.”<sup>91</sup> Bakhtin’s distinction between the First and Second lines of stylistic development of the novel begins to break down once a text like Chariton’s is closely scrutinized, and it becomes ever more difficult to draw the line between “true novels” and a body of literature that “merely approximates true novelness.”<sup>92</sup>

If Chariton’s novel is aware of multiple literary styles and incorporates those other voices within its narrative, how then does Bakhtin account for the alternate voices in works belonging to the First Stylistic line of development? Morson and Emerson explain that the First Stylistic line of development “seems beleaguered by heteroglossia at the gates, heteroglossia waiting to overwhelm it. Far from ignorant of speech diversity, it is polemically directed at it; the style of the first line is offered as something tested, contested, retested.”<sup>93</sup> I concede that Chariton’s narrative relies on a “dialogizing background,”<sup>94</sup> but I resist the notion that Chariton’s narrative is engaged in a polemical diatribe against alternative, potentially subversive voices. Chari-

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<sup>90</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 375.

<sup>91</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 376.

<sup>92</sup> Morson and Emerson 1990: 345.

<sup>93</sup> Morson and Emerson 1990: 346–347.

<sup>94</sup> Morson and Emerson 1990: 347–348.

ton's Eros, though he is fond of winning, is said programmatically by the narrator at the beginning of the novel to delight in *paradoxical* successes (φιλόνεικος δέ ἔστιν ὁ Ἔρωσ καὶ χαίρει τοῖς παραδόξοις κατορθώμασιν, 1.1.4). Chariton's narrator continually smiles and winks at the reader, inviting the centrifugal forces which undermine sentimental idealization.

I conclude by following Bakhtin's own advice: "In any objective stylistic study of novels from distant epochs it is necessary ... to rigorously coordinate the style under consideration with the background of heteroglossia, appropriate to the era, that dialogizes it."<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Bakhtin 1981: 422.

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