Orality and Authority in Xenophon of Ephesus

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Xenophon of Ephesus' *Ephesiaka* has often been viewed as an oral text, or at least as a text which arises from an oral narrative tradition. James O'Sullivan has made that argument most systematically, analysing the pervasive presence of formulaic language within the novel,[1] and Xenophon's love of unmotivated transitions between episodes[2] as features of oral narrative. His argument offers an alternative to the common assumption that Xenophon's text is an epitome of a longer work.[3] Tomas Hägg has made similar points in arguing that the novels of Chariton and Xenophon arise from an oral background, which goes some way towards explaining their love of stereotyped phraseology, repetitive plotting, obsessive recapitulation of earlier events, and repeated use of formulaic transitional phrases, qualities which are pre-

[1] O'Sullivan 1995, esp. 30–68 for detailed exemplification of this.

[2] See O'Sullivan 1995, 88–90.

[3] See O'Sullivan 1995, 99–144 for rejection of various forms of the epitome theory, first proposed at length by Bürger 1892. Most scholars, following Hägg 1966 and Hägg 1983, 21, now acknowledge the precariousness or at least the inconclusiveness of the arguments in favour of epitomization: e.g., see Schmeling 1980, 21, 76–77; Anderson 1982, 148 (although the assumption he replaces it with, that the author is simply inept, underestimates vastly the complexity of the text, as I aim to demonstrate at least in part in what follows); Konstan 1994, 49; Holzberg 1995, 52–53; Kytzler 1996, 348–350. Chew 1997–8 and 1998 rejects the epitome theory more forcefully. The question of whether the text is an epitome or not is not important for my argument here: epitomization seems to me perfectly compatible with the claim that the author introduces overtones of oral narrative to his work; and the epitomator, if there was one, should surely be credited with a creative contribution to the text as it stands, rather than being viewed as a vandal of some superior original.

sent with a frequency far greater than in any earlier Greek prose.[4] The orality of the *Ephesiaka* has not been universally accepted.[5] Nevertheless, it is clear that the qualities O'Sullivan and Hägg have drawn attention to are a central feature of the text, however we choose explain them. What neither of these scholars does, however, is to take the further step of exploring the ways in which Xenophon *represents* orality within the narrative itself, and the possibility that this might have self-reflexive implications for the oral qualities of his writing. Exploring those issues will be the main aim of this article. I should stress that undertaking this project need not commit one to agreement with O'Sullivan's full thesis. I am not arguing here that the author of the text was necessarily someone composing within an oral story-telling tradition; nor do I mean to endorse O'Sullivan's theory that Xenophon's novel is by far the earliest of the Greek novels which survive, and therefore much closer to what he sees as the genre's oral origins.[6] I do, however, share with both Hägg and O'Sullivan the assumption that the author introduces overtones of oral narrative style to the text, in particular through his use of repetitive language (that observation seems to me to be perfectly compatible with the assumption that Xenophon used other models for his ostentatiously simple style in addition);[7] and that Xenophon characterizes his own text as being on the borderline between orality and literacy.[8]

These repetitive features of the novel, I suggest, offer a powerful vehicle for Xenophon's nightmare vision of the Mediterranean world. They allow an impression of liberation not only to the characters, but also to the narrative itself, which is free to lurch in unexpected directions, flaunting its ability to

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[4] Hägg 1994; cf. Ruiz Montero 1982, who argues that Xenophon's obsession with the word καί is a feature of oral style; and Ruiz Montero 2004. Others have made the same point about oral characteristics in less systematic terms, e.g., Kytzler 1996, 351: 'His is not the sophisticated style adopted by the schools of rhetoric, but the simpler way of addressing an audience used by (oral) narrators'.

[5] E.g., see Lowe 2000, 230, n. 10 for doubts about O'Sullivan's conclusions; for more positive, though still in some places sceptical responses, see Morgan 1996; Chew 1997–8, esp. 206–207.

[6] Cf. Hägg's scepticism (Hägg 1994, 48) about the theories of Merkelbach 1962 (who uses the formulaic qualities of the *Ephesiaka* as evidence) and Scobie 1983 that the novel as a genre had an oral origin.

[7] E.g., see Chew 1997–8, 206 and Ruiz Montero 1982, 317 on the Ionian prose of Herodotus and others as an alternative model.

[8] See Hägg 1994, esp. 62–67; Ruiz Montero 2004, esp. 58–60, who argues that Xenophon cleverly adapts oral elements to written form in a highly sophisticated exercise of 'rhetorical mimesis' (60).

forge a great range of new scenes through repeated components.[9] At the same time, however, that very repetitiveness sometimes gives a sense of the difficulty of escaping from endlessly recycled patterns of action.[10] This is a world where everything is always both unexpected and oppressively predictable at the same time. In many cases the novel's abrupt transitions, far from giving an impression of freedom of choice in the movements of Anthia and Habrokomes, instead show them being spirited away to the furthest corners of the Mediterranean against their will.[11] It is hard to read without being overwhelmed by a sense of déjà-vu, as the characters must also be in facing their continual stream of tribulations. That claustrophobic repetitiveness works not just at the level of plot (one might think, to name only the most blatant examples, of the repeated scenes of internment or enclosement which Anthia must face—a repetition which is claustrophobic in the fullest sense of the word[12]—or the repeated pattern whereby newly introduced characters fall immediately in love with Anthia and Habrocomes, a development which is usually described in just a few lines, often with the same simple expressions, in a way which enhances the sense of sameness and inevitability[13]), but also at the level of language,[14] via the many repeated phrases O'Sullivan catalogues. Xenophon, in other words, not only draws on oral techniques, but he also uses those oral qualities carefully as a vehicle for some of the novel's most powerful narrative effects.

However I also argue here, more innovatively, that Xenophon's representation of the powers of speech *within* the story of the novel itself is imbued with a similar tension between freedom and constraint, between pre-

[9] Cf. Hunter 1996, 199: 'Xenophon's novel presents us with a more open and less 'directed' narrative than any of the other four Greek novels which survive in a manuscript tradition'.

[10] For a good statement of that atmosphere of nightmarish repetitiveness, see Kytzler 1996, 343–345.

[11] See Lowe 2000, 230 on this 'pinball' effect.

[12] E.g. Anthia's burial alive in *Ephesiaka* 3,7–8, and her imprisonment in a trench with wild dogs in 4,6. Both of those incidents are discussed briefly by Doody 1996, 337–338 and 343–344 in the light of the obsession in both ancient and modern fiction with enclosed spaces like tombs, caves and labyrinths.

[13] For examples, see 1,14, 1,15.4, 2,3, 2,11, 2,13, 3,11, 3,12, 4,5, 4,6, 5,4; and for an example of formulaic repetition, see the reuse of the expression ἐρᾷ σφοδρὸν (or, at 1,15, φοβερὸν) ἔρωτα at 1,14,7, 1,15,4, 1,16,4, 2,3,7, 2,11,1 and 5,4,5; discussed by O'Sullivan 1995, 64 and 182.

[14] Cf. Kytzler 1996, 350–351.

dictability and randomness. The tensions which are ingrained in Xenophon's own textual 'utterances', within the detailed texture of his own quasi-oral writing, also structure the utterances of the characters themselves, in their speeches to each other and to the gods. I want to suggest, in other words, that the author not only uses the formulaic trappings of orality to create particular narrative effects, but also reflects self-consciously and self-reflexively on the status of oral communication through an obsession with describing different types of speech, and with juxtaposing spoken and written communication within the world of the characters themselves.

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Xenophon, of course, is not unusual in his fascination with a range of different varieties of communication. For one thing, the Greek novels are studded with examples of writing. Often these written texts seem to offer certainty—both to us as readers and to the characters themselves. Letters[15] and inscriptions[16] guarantee identity and continued fidelity: for example in *Ephesiaka* 5,12, discussed further below, where the inscription accompanying Anthia's dedication gives a sign of her survival and sets in motion her reunion with Habrokomes. We find similar examples in other texts: for instance in Achilles Tatius 5,18 where Leukippe's letter to Kleitophon gives news of her survival; and in Heliodorus, *Aethiopika* 4,8 and 10,13, where the inscription on Charikleia's band provides evidence of her origins, although in the second of those passages the band is not on its own enough to convince Charikleia's father.[17] Written texts also express unwavering determination on the part of the characters who create them; and they carry hidden truths which cannot be discovered within normal conversation, for example proof of wrongdoing, or guarantees of the survival of hero or heroine and of their continued affection. At the same time, however, that sense of textual certainty is often counter-

[15] See Létoublon 2003.

[16] See Sironen 2003, esp. 290–292 on Xenophon.

[17] Cf. the letter from Chaireas to Callirhoe in Chariton 4,6 in which Chaireas reveals that he is still alive, and which shocks Dionysius, although he then finds ways of explaining it away as a trick.

balanced by connotations of the deceptive potential of writing,[18] an association which stretches back at least to Plato, or to Euripides' *Hippolytus*, where Phaedra's lying letter condemning her stepson, taken to be true by her husband Theseus, leads to Hippolytus' destruction. For example, the capacity of written texts to express firm resolution is clear in the exchange between Manto and Habrokomes at *Ephesiaka* 2,5. Both of them there proclaim their unmoving determination—Manto to seduce, Habrokomes to avoid seduction. That impression of refusal to compromise is intensified by the one-sided nature of epistolary communication, which shuts off the possibility of immediate contradiction. At the same time, however, we also see here the capacity of written texts to have unexpected consequences. Manto denounces Habrocomes to her father Apsyrtos orally—in contrast to Phaedra's written denunciation of Hippolytus—but her original letter then turns out to have a power she herself had not anticipated, when it falls under the gaze of an unintended reader, her father Apsyrtos, and so unmasks her deception (*Ephesiaka* 2,10).

Written texts thus tend to be authoritative in the *Ephesiaka*, as in many of the other novels, even if their authority is sometimes unpredictable and hard to read. We might expect the novels to draw a distinction in this respect between oral and written communication, casting oral communication as lacking in authority by comparison. Often, however, they show oral communication sharing these characteristics of textual authority, taking on quasi-magical, incantatory characteristics, in place of the conversational qualities of randomness and inconsequentiality. Xenophon's *Ephesiaka* is typical in that. Xenophon uses sporadic examples of authoritative writing of the kind I have just mentioned. In addition, however, the novel is threaded through with many different types of verbal utterance, not only chance conversational utterances, but also more formalised examples of speech: prayers,[19] promises, threats, prophecies, spoken and fulfilled with varying degrees of authority and success. Repeatedly as the novel progresses oral communications are shown to have the potential for authority and numinousness which we also find in their textual equivalents (as we shall see in more detail in sections three and four, below): prayers bring immediate fulfilment; erotic

[18] See Whitmarsh 1999, esp. 155–156; on the ancient novels specifically, see Stoneman 1995 who discusses the novels' tendency to characterize inscriptions as riddling texts, difficult to decipher or to trust.

[19] Enermalm 1997 gives a brief survey of the prayers in the novel, with translation of some of the most important examples.

utterances and vows of fidelity leave almost physical traces on the world around them and on the souls of the characters who utter them; and even casual descriptions offer magically transparent access to visualization of the things they describe.

That blurring of the boundary between spoken and written in the world of the characters has similarities with the way in which Xenophon's own text stands between orality and writtenness, giving repeated glimpses of flexible and formulaic oral qualities lying behind its textual surface. For Xenophon's characters, in other words, as we shall see in the three sections following, understated conversationality increasingly takes on an identical status to authoritative textuality: chance words and despairing words, just as much as monumental inscriptions, have magical, though sometimes unintended and deceptive efficacy. And that thematic obsession is echoed by the narrative rhythms of the novel as a whole, which are on the one hand spontaneous and random, full of abrupt, conversational transitions between different episodes, and on the other hand—and increasingly—inflexible and predetermined, conforming ostentatiously to generic expectations and repetitive frameworks. Xenophon's text is thus a typical example of the way in which all of the novels parade their status on the borderline between oral and written, but it is a special case simply because it hints at a connection in this respect between textual form and narrative content.

In blurring written and spoken, the novels are typical of the Greek and Latin writing of the Roman Empire, which so often uses the imagery of 'voice' in its reactivation of the texts of the literary past. That tendency is shown perhaps most startlingly in the work of Athenaeus, where the deipnosophists' recall of the texts of the Hellenistic library is represented as a vast and bewildering conversation with the scholars and poets of the past. Alessandro Barchiesi has shown how Latin poetry strives for similar effects, as the different texts of the literary canon whisper to each other within the writing of Ovid.[20] Xenophon of Ephesus displays for us the opposite side of this process. If texts can come to life again in vocal form, so can voices crystallize into the form of text, moving from a state of living fluidity to textual fixity, as they increasingly do in Xenophon's novel, much as life is captured and frozen in a work of art (though always with the potential to be brought to life again by the magical powers of *ekphrasis*, the visual equivalent of the deipnosophistic art of giving voice to the fossilized writings of Classical

[20] Barchiesi 2001, esp. 26–27, drawing on Hinds 1985.

Greece). In playing so insistently with the dichotomy between text and voice, the Greek novelists of the Roman empire—even or perhaps especially Xenophon himself—may be closer to the preoccupations of their sophistic cousins than we sometimes assume.

Xenophon's play with the alternating associations of speech—associated both with fluidity and fixity—also has implications for the way we understand the links between orality and liberty. As Victoria Rimell suggests in her introduction, we tend to link speech with freedom—the freedom to do and say what we need to do. 'Freedom of speech' is still one of our dominant images for civil liberty. And for the literature of the Roman Empire speech and freedom or empowerment are often similarly linked.[21] Xenophon's narrative—again like the other novel texts—offers us narrative confirmation of that assumption, but also at times challenges it. The narratorial voice itself, as I have suggested, takes on an air of spontaneity and freedom through its association with orality. The story is represented as being unrestrained by the hand of fate—at least within the limits of the prophecy given to the protagonists' parents in 1,16—able to go wherever it wishes to, to range across the territory of the Mediterranean world with bewildering liberty. For the characters too, speech means liberty. So long as the hero and heroine have voice they have hope, through the capacity to persuade and to reiterate their devotion to each other. Their letters and their inscriptions act as substitute voices, bids for freedom, speaking, often with almost magical success, across boundaries where verbal communication is impossible. Anthia's mastery of speech—for example in the scenes where she lies to get herself out of trouble—is a sign of empowerment, as for many of the other Greek novel heroines.[22] And yet at the same time, running through the novel, is an alternative set of connotations, which paint speech as a form of subjection. For example,

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[21] For an example from the ancient novels, see Finkelpearl 2003 on the opening of Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* Book 11, where Lucius—whose loss of human voice in the bulk of the novel is a sign of his disempowerment, disempowerment which is several times described through the metaphor of low social status or enslavement—regains his voice with the help of Isis; cf. Whitmarsh 1999, esp. 151–158 on (Ps).-Lucian's *Nero*; and Whitmarsh 2001, 165–167 on the way in which a range of writers both endorse and ironize Trajan's attempts to encourage free speech.

[22] See Haynes 2003, esp. 14, 18, although she also points out (56) that Anthia's control of speech on closer inspection turns out to be less unequivocally empowering than it might at first appear, for example because most of Anthia's talking is done in private, to herself, rather than in the public sphere; cf. 87–88 on the way in which the heroes of the Greek novels tend to be reluctant to speak publicly.

many of the predictions and promises the characters make come true, as we shall see in sections three to five, below—a sign of the way speech can empower, can come under human control; but at the same time it also becomes clear that even their own chance words have often been played out in ways they could never have expected, tying them in to their predestined fate. Spoken words are powerful and empowering, but their power does not always work in the ways we can expect it to, or in ways we can control. The association of both speech and writing with unpredictable numinousness clearly owes a great deal to Attic tragedy and to the world of Herodotus' *Histories*. Xenophon transplants those narrative preoccupations (as far as we can tell from the scanty evidence in the text for its date of composition and for the date of its dramatic setting) to a contemporary, Roman Empire setting,[23] to a world which is more cosmopolitan and more decentred, where voices must struggle even harder to hold on to their authority and their identity across the vast expanses of the Mediterranean world, which constantly threaten anonymity and loss of community, and where the individual, however powerful, constantly risks being submerged or swept away by powers beyond his or her control.

3

I want to turn first to the opening scenes of the work, in order to show how Xenophon conjures up a world which is overrun with voices—wishes, prayers, laments, threats, oracles—and in doing so challenges us to question the relative power of each. The work opens with a glimpse of the hero, Habrokomes, a divinely handsome boy who scorns the power of Eros, in the manner of Hippolytus. In retaliation, Eros afflicts him with love for the equally beautiful Anthia. Both are racked by the torments of passion. When their parents see no end in view they go to the oracle of Apollo in Kolophon, which tells them that Anthia and Habrokomes must marry, but also predicts a horrible future for them, with suffering and separation overseas. Their parents therefore send them away to travel, bowing to the prediction of the oracle, as if the authority of its voice is unquestionable, rather than seeking to

[23] E.g., see Schmeling 1980, 18–19; Kytzler 1996, 346–348; however, see also O'Sullivan 1995, 1–9 and Morgan 1996, 200 for reminders of the precariousness of the Roman imperial date commonly ascribed to the work; and Rife 2002 for argument against those objections.

resist it. Throughout these opening pages we see repeated acts of speech. Often speech here is ineffectual. Sometimes, however, with great perseverance, repeated words are seen to have some power to change the situation and shape the future, though not always in intended ways. There is a sense of hierarchy, as we shall see, between ineffectual casual utterances and effective formal utterances—the oracle being the supreme example of the latter, with prayers and promises and predictions slightly lower down—but that distinction is not always maintained, and there are moments when even the most casual of sentences comes to have a strange numinous significance for the future of the protagonists.[24]

The first example of speech we see comes from the mouth of Habrokomes. The opening paragraph describes his upbringing and his virtues in conventional tropes of biographical praise, in ways which recall, amongst other things, the conventions of written, epigraphical praise for young athletes.[25] That sense of conventional virtue is shattered, however, when we see speech finally intruding twenty lines in, breaking the sculptural perfection of his opening image by revealing Habrokomes' tendency towards contemptuousness. Habrokomes, we hear, 'scorned all those who were said to be beautiful', and 'mocked those who spoke in those terms for being unaware that only he was beautiful' (*Ephesiaka* 1,1,4–5).[26] In making those criticisms he expresses his contempt for the words of others, for the idle gossip of the city. He then seeks to replace that with his own more authoritative judgement. He expresses his contempt for the god Eros too, 'saying that he himself would never fall in love or be subjected to the god against his will' (1,1,5). In making that claim, of course, he immediately shows that his own speech may be no more reliable than the speech he mocks, for all the signs suggest that Habrokomes' subjection—like the subjection of some latter-day Hippolytus—cannot be far away. Here, then, speech is associated with lack of power and misjudgement. Or alternatively we might characterize this utterance as having an inverted, misdirected power, since the words themselves are precisely the things which lead to their own non-fulfilment, through the way they anger Eros. Eros' response, in contrast with Habrokomes', is not char-

[24] On accidental prophecy in Virgil, *Aeneid* 7.116 and elsewhere, see Horsfall (2000) 118–19.

[25] E.g., see Robert 1960, 342–9 on combined praise of body and mind in athletic inscriptions.

[26] All translations are my own (following Papanikolaou's 1973 Teubner text of the *Ephesiaka*).

acterized by speech, but rather by military-style action, in a description of arming himself for metaphorical battle against his scorner (1,2,1), another sign that action is being privileged ahead of speech, at least in this opening sequence, as a vehicle of empowerment.

Those initial utterances are soon supplemented by others. In the festival where Habrokomes and Anthia first see each other, we hear the words of the festival-goers filling the air: some, the narrator tells us, praised their beauty, some went further than that: 'already now some people added these words: "what a marriage that would be, between Habrokomes and Anthia"' (1,2,9). Here casual gossip is more powerful than Habrokomes at least would give it credit for, foreshadowing the marriage which is to come (the prescience of their outburst signalled by the word 'already'), although no doubt these onlookers have not envisaged the full story, have not envisaged the hardship which will follow the wedding. But then, after that momentary hint of accurate prediction, we are overcome again by the helplessness of words. It is sight, not speech, which binds the two lovers together so immediately and irrevocably—a single glance enslaves them. And their attempts to use speech to escape from their passion are unsuccessful. In 1,4 Habrokomes laments his fate, mirroring his sense of helplessness by the jerkiness of his speech, which is filled with fevered questions and exclamations. He continues to express defiance of Eros (1,4,3)—as he had done before—but that utterance is immediately shown to be hopeless, for his resolve finally snaps a moment later when Eros redoubles his attack. Habrokomes' subsequent words of submission, just a moment later, seem to be no more successful. His wail of surrender, handing himself over to Eros (1,4,4–5), is a performative utterance, making him into a prisoner as he utters it, but it fails to lead to the softening of Eros' anger which Habrokomes had hoped for. Both of these failed moments of speech are succeeded by identical formulaic bridges which emphasize, by their repetition, the futility of spoken words: 'He said these things (ταῦτα ἔλεγεν) and the god fell on him more violently…' (1,4,4); 'He said these things (ταῦτα ἔλεγεν) but Eros continued to be angry…' (1,4,5).

It is only after pages of prayers and laments—both from the protagonists and from the people of Ephesus—that the god relents. The impression is that prayer may eventually have some efficacy, but only after enormous effort and an exhausting process of trial and error. In 1,5, for example, Habrokomes and Anthia both continue to pray in identical manner, but without confessing their passion to each other. The parents of Habrokomes offer prayers

together with sacrifices, as if in an attempt to increase their power. And Anthia's parents even go so far as to bring in prophets and priests, who 'sacrificed and poured libations of many different types and uttered foreign sounds' (1,5,7), striving, without success, for more and more powerful and authoritative forms of speech. The culmination of this series comes in the visit to the oracle of Apollo, although even here we are told that they 'asked the god to tell the truth' (1,6,1), as if they are worried that even these most authoritative of words could go astray. The words of the oracle do finally bring a kind of resolution, a chance for the protagonists to escape from their passion and to control their own destinies. And yet the oracle also of course brings further enslavement, predicting their separation and future suffering after marriage, in fact actually leading to that enslavement by the way it prompts their parents to send them away.

In the lead-up to their departure, finally, we again see the air filled with the clamour of voices, as the people of Ephesus pray for their safety. As the ship slips away from the harbour wall they attempt to bridge the gap by their voices:

> 'The sailors had already begun to make a din…There was a mass of confused shouting from those on the ship and those on land. On one side they shouted "Oh dearest children, will we your parents see you again?" And on the other side, "Oh parents, will we ever embrace you again?" There were tears and moaning, and each of them shouted loudly to each of their loved ones by name. And Megamedes, taking a dish and pouring a libation from it prayed loudly enough to be heard by those in the ship. "My children," he said, "may you have good fortune, and may you escape from the hardships of the prophecy. May the Ephesians receive you safely back again, and may you regain your dear homeland. But if anything else should happen, know that we too will not go on living. The road we are sending you on is unfortunate but necessary"' (1,10,8–10).

Here, at the climax of the opening scenes in Ephesus, there is an extraordinary concentration of voices flying in many different directions.[27] Once

[27] That sense of a cacophony of largely ineffective voices is repeated soon afterwards in another maritime scene, in *Ephesiaka* 1,14, where the pleas of the people on the burning ship after pirate attack can do nothing to save them, in contrast with the effective pleas for mercy of Anthia and Habrokomes in 1,13.

again they express doubt and hopelessness, particularly in the anguished questions of the parted families. At the same time, these voices try to fix and control the future, through their prayers, and through their use of naming ('each of them shouted loudly to each of their loved ones by name'). In Xenophon's world, indeed in the world of the Greek novels more widely, with their abrupt separations and precarious reunions, names, like letters, are a powerful resource for separated lovers as they seek to track each other down, a way of controlling the unpredictability of the world.[28] Megamedes' prayer comes true of course, or at least the part of it where he asks for their safe return. In the penultimate sentence, however, meaning slips away from her control. When she says that they will die 'if anything else happens', she means to say that they will die from despair, or perhaps at their own hands, if Anthia and Habrokomes do not come home safely. But the narrative plays this out as if she had meant something different, as if her promise is to die if Anthia and Habrokomes do not escape from the 'hardships of the prophecy'. Anthia and Habrokomes succumb to those hardships; and when they return to Ephesus they find their parents dead. Megamedes' words are true in ways he does not quite realise.

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How are those effects played out in the rest of the work? For one thing, the oscillation between successful and unsuccessful speech continues throughout. That in itself is hardly surprising: it is exactly what we would expect from any work concerned with conflict and persuasion, fulfilment and non-fulfilment of goals. Once again, however, it is striking that there is a sense of numinous power attached to the spoken word, a sense that words can at least sometimes bring immediate and reliable fulfilment. And once again, as in the opening sequence set in Ephesus, that impression increases as we read on.

Many of the early examples of magically effective utterance are veined with hints of unintended fulfilment or unreliable communication. In 1,11, for example, Anthia pledges her undying love for Habrokomes. That pledge stands firm against the repeated threat of rape and seduction. However, it

[28] It is striking that an unusually large number of Xenophon's characters are named, often with names which have some significance for their character or profession: see Hägg 1971, 25–29 and Ruiz-Montero 1994, 1107–1109. The dangers of anonymity in the novel are clear in 4.6, where Hippothoos mistreats Anthia, not knowing who she is.

also has overtones which seem to be outside Anthia's control. Her exact words, rather like Megamedes', are rather apocalyptic:

> 'I swear to you…that if I am separated from you even for a short time, I will neither live nor will I see the sun' (1,11,5).

That oath is repeated in 2,1, when both hero and heroine are threatened by predatory seducers:

> '…if I am outraged, may I not continue to see the light of day' (2,1,6).

Anthia escapes the threat of rape, of course, though only just, but her promise comes true twice even so, in ways she had not intended: first when she is mistakenly buried alive in 3,7, and second when she is imprisoned in a covered pit with dogs for killing a would-be seducer (4,6), in both cases, as she had predicted, cut off from the 'light of the day'. Elsewhere, apparently efficacious communication is imbued with connotations of inaccuracy. In 3,3, for example, Habrokomes is able to recognise Anthia simply through the (absurdly vague) description the bandit Hippothoos gives of her:

> '"She was beautiful in every way, Habrokomes, and simply dressed. Her hair was blonde and her eyes beautiful." He had not even finished speaking when Habrokomes shouted out, "It is my Anthia you have seen, Hippothoos"' (3,3,5).

Habrokomes' correct recognition, from these frail words, is fully in line with the numinous world of the rest of the novel, where sudden, barely motivated narrative transitions and miraculous coincidences crowd in one after the other. And yet there are clearly comical implications here.[29] If it were not for the fact that the narrative has already shown us the encounter between Hippothoos and Anthia, we might suspect that Habrokomes' identification of her is incorrect, based as it is on such flimsy evidence. Even with the knowledge that Habrokomes is correct, it still seems possible that he would have said this whether or not the girl was Anthia. How many other descriptions of

[29] Cf. König, forthcoming, on the way in which many of the Greek novels comically juxtapose praise of unmistakeable beauty with scenes of non-recognition or near non-recognition.

beautiful women has Habrokomes misidentified, we might wonder, before getting this one right?

Even efficacious speech, then, tends to be slightly precarious, based on shaky foundations or bringing unintended consequences. Increasingly, however, Xenophon eliminates those subversive hints and allows the possibility that verbal utterances may be not only powerful, but also empowering, controllable and reliable.[30] For one thing, we see Anthia's powers of persuasion and verbal deception on show in impressive ways, for example in 3,11 and 5,4, where in both passages she saves herself from rape by appealing to the protection of the goddess Isis. Soon after her escape from the second of those threats, she prays at the temple of the god Apis, which is renowned, so Xenophon tells us, for the oracles it gives through the mouths of a choir of local children in front of the temple. Anthia prays for a sign that she will be reunited with Habrokomes, and immediately, as she leaves the temple, the group of children shout out together, 'Anthia will soon get back her own husband Habrokomes' (5,4,11). For Habrokomes, too, words start to work more reliably. At 5,1, for example, in words which seem to herald the final 'act' of the narrative. Habrokomes laments his fate and prays to Apollo—'have pity now, and bring the final parts of your prophecy to fulfilment'—as if he realises that the fulfilment of the first part of the prophecy, with its prediction of suffering, can guarantee the reliability of its promised resolution. Before that, in Book 4, his prayers to the god of the Nile have miraculous effect. In one case he is strung up for crucifixion, having been framed by a woman whose advances he refuses, and his prayers bring immediate escape: 'a gust of wind suddenly blew up and struck the cross, sweeping away the soil on which it had been fixed from the top of the cliff. Habrokomes fell into the river and was carried downstream. The water did not harm him, the chains did not hinder him, no wild beasts attacked him; instead the

[30] That movement looks back to Homer, *Odyssey* Books 13–24, where communication with the gods becomes increasingly powerful after Odysseus regains the protection of Athene, first of all unpredictably powerful (e.g. in Odysseus' unwitting curse of the Phaiacians at 13,213–214); and then later increasingly directed, as Odysseus' knowledge and confidence increase, especially in those scenes where Odysseus is able instantly and knowingly to fulfil his own prediction and the predictions of others (e.g., 21, 199–225, where Philoitios and Eumaios pray for Odysseus' return, and Odysseus immediately reveals himself before their eyes); cf. Hunter 1996, 191 on Anthia's growing skill in the cunning use of speech as a development which parallels the lessons learned by Odysseus in the *Odyssey*.

current escorted him along' (4,2,6). He is recaptured and put on a pyre to be burnt to death, but again escapes by the help of the Nile, which rises up in flood to put out the flames. Xenophon emphasizes the fact that just a few words from Habrokomes, left to the last possible moment, are enough: 'when the flames were on the point of touching his body he prayed again just a few words, as many as he was able, for the god to save him from the troubles he was facing' (4,2,8).

The final resolution of the novel is facilitated by a set of physical texts, rather than verbal utterances, but these texts are represented almost as extensions of the voice, at least in the sense that they are able to initiate and sustain conversation; or perhaps better as texts which have the capacity to initiate dialogue and speech, by prompting passers-by to give voice to the information they contain and in turn to respond. The first text in this climactic exchange of communications is the inscription which Habrokomes and Anthia had put up in 1,12 in the course of their initial visit to Rhodes, together with offerings to the God Helios. At the time this detail had seemed incidental, and unlikely to have any bearing on their future action. But in Book 5 the voices of Habrokomes and Anthia, fixed within the words of the inscription, are reactivated when their old servants Leukon and Rhode notice the dedication and put up a dedication of their own to honour the lost lovers. Habrokomes comes to the temple and reads both inscriptions, and is then reunited with Leukon and Rhode who arrive soon afterwards. The servants and Habrokomes do not recognise each other, but they are able to identify each other through the conversation which the dedication arouses. In that sense the inscription of Leukon and Rhode is represented as more powerful than visual recognition. Presumably they could have wandered past each other in the street, if it had not been for these dedications, with their ability to speak out clearly within the uncertain world of the novel. Anthia's reunion with Habrokomes is managed by a similar mechanism. Anthia sees the dedications at the temple, and adds one of her own:

> ANTHIA DEDICATED THIS LOCK OF HAIR TO THE GOD ON BEHALF OF HER HUSBAND HABROKOMES' (5,11,6).

Once again it is Leukon and Rhode who see the inscription, and then track down Anthia herself in order to reunite her with her husband. As before, the ghost of visual non-recognition haunts this scene. Leukon and Rhode do not

recognise Anthia when they see her weeping in front of the temple; they are able to piece together her identity only through her presence in front of the dedication, which seems to guarantee the presence of Anthia much more firmly than the sight of her in person.

Furthermore, the prevalence of writing in the final pages of the novel is paralleled by an increasing atmosphere of writtenness in the work's style. In this final scene of the work, I have argued, the move towards increasingly certain and authoritative use of words—similar to, but on a larger scale than, the equivalent move in the opening scenes in Ephesus in 1,1–12—culminates in a set of texts. These are in a sense the supreme example of authoritative and numinous speech, inscribed voices which proclaim the names of those who have set them up, in a world where names are such an important bulwark against the threat of anonymity. Moreover, that move across the boundary from speech to text mirrors the progress of the narrative itself, which moves from randomness, confusion, wilful and unmotivated transitions to a tightly directed, predetermined and generically predictable ending, setting the story of Anthia and Habrokomes in stone in the final vision of their life together in Ephesus. "Setting in stone" seems an appropriate metaphor, in fact, given the details of the last few lines, where we hear first that Habrokomes and Anthia built large tombs for their deceased parents, and then that Hippothoos built a tomb for his dead lover Hyperanthes. There is an atmosphere of monumentalization here, as the powerful yet unpredictable voices which we have heard clamouring against each other throughout the novel are finally fixed in irrevocable form.[31] And it is a monumentalization, a writtenness, which applies not only to the lives of the characters, but also to the text itself. Stephen Nimis, for example, has drawn attention to the heavy atmosphere of closure in the final pages of the novel.[32] He follows Bakhtin in suggesting that oral, epic narrative tends not to value closure greatly, in contrast with written, novelistic discourse. And he argues that we

[31] Cf. Watanabe 2004, 34–6 on the way in which Xenophon's representation of Hippothoos in the closing scenes of the novel sidesteps the sense of impermanence which usually attaches to male-male relations in ancient Greek culture, so adding to the strong atmosphere of fixity in the final pages; for example Xenophon records here Hippothoos' adoption of Kleisthenes, his *eromenos*, as heir.

[32] See Nimis 2004, although he also notes the way in which the techniques of closure associated with written narrative are combined here with references to performance, as if the author, influenced by both oral and written culture, is dramatizing his own anxieties about how exactly to end the novel; cf. Nimis 1999, 218–23.

see a switch from one to the other in the final section of Xenophon's text. Xenophon's text is marked out, like many of the other novels, by its open-endedness, its sense of freedom from pre-determined plotting, but this atmosphere of open-endedness is increasingly constrained in the novel's final pages by the desire for closure. Nimis also suggests, more specifically, that Xenophon reminds us of the written status of the novel here, by hinting at an equation between the text itself and the dedication made by Anthia and Habrokomes in the temple of Artemis in the very final sentences of the work.[33] By that argument the increasing prevalence of written texts in the final stages of the novel and the increasingly written style of the text are intertwined with each other, as if Xenophon has introduced that move from voice to written text, from unpredictable to authoritative words, into the narrative itself in order to give us an image for the changing stylistic rhythms of his own composition. Xenophon, it seems, invites us to imagine the *Ephesiaka* itself as a text which is becoming increasingly monumental, increasingly fixed and circumscribed, as if it is itself, a commemoratory inscription like the ones set up by his characters, dedicated to the gods by the hero and heroine themselves.

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For Xenophon, then, verbal communication has a range of different potentials. Sometimes it is an expression of helplessness, a useless vehicle which can do nothing to control the vagaries of the precarious world his characters live in. At other times it takes on more numinous overtones, although in these cases it can be dangerous and uncontrollable, since chance remarks so often lead to unintended consequences. And finally in other forms it can be a tool for empowerment, as it is for Habrokomes and Anthia increasingly in the second half of the novel, as they gain more and more control over their own words. In this final form spoken words form a continuum with texts. They take on quasi-textual authority.

Is this an optimistic view of the possibilities of human communication? Perhaps so. However, we might also pause to consider what the future holds in store for the protagonists, now that the prophecy is fulfilled, now that these rare moments of empowerment, these moments when everything seems

[33] Nimis 2004, 186–187.

to be going right, as the oracle reaches its climax, are over. Will Habrokomes and Anthia be catapulted back into the world of ineffectual speech and unpredictably dangerous speech which we saw at the beginning? The pattern of characters getting what they ask for, but then finding that their own words have had unintended significance, that what they asked for is more complicated and dangerous than they had ever expected, is so strong in the early part of the text that it is hard for us as readers to throw off the expectation that it will continue to be important. We might, in fact, wonder if the fantastical concatentation of authoritative utterances at the end of the novel really brings freedom to Anthia and Habrokomes at all. Return to the *polis* is the goal of all their desires, but it is a return which in many ways cuts them off from the freedoms they have experienced in their removal from Ephesus, submitting them to the authority and the expectations of the *polis*, which, as the opening passage of the novel has told us, worships Habrokomes almost as a god, but also expects something from him in return, 'hoping that he would be an outstanding citizen' (1,1,3). Marriage in the Greek novels, as Margaret Doody has argued,[34] often carries overtones of submission to oppressive social norms, which to some extent undermine the happy endings of the novel, in contrast with the personal freedoms associated with chastity when hero and heroine are away from home. The closing paragraphs of the work offer a fantasy of fulfilment, but they also have overtones of finality, for example in the atmosphere of death in the final lines, where we hear that the main characters lived out 'the rest of their lives' in Ephesos, with mention also of the building of tombs and memorials. Monumentality and fixity may be liberating, but they are also linked here with death and finality.

Those overtones of inflexibility are thematized within the work's representation of erotic looking in ways which perhaps have ominous implications for the work's closing scenes. Repeatedly—and increasingly—the act of looking seems to have a monumentalizing effect, turning the beloved into something fixed and statuesque.[35] Most obviously, the figure of Aigialos at

[34] Cf. Doody 1996, 62–81, esp. 68–73.

[35] See Morales 2004, 33–34 on the way in which the desired, gazed-at woman is often described in statuesque terms in ancient literature; and 156–220 on the variety of ways in which Leukippe is envisaged as object of the male gaze in Achilles Tatius' novel, often in ways which suggest her objectification, or which foreground her Medusa-like capacity—a capacity which is out of her control—to incapacitate male lookers by her beauty, although Morales also argues that Leukippe's objectification is never straightforward, that Achilles Tatius always leaves open other ways of reading the exchange between

the beginning of the final book (5,1), who has had his wife Thelxinoe embalmed after death and keeps her in his home as his constant companion, confronts us very bluntly with the theme of fixity in erotic relations.[36] Aigialos and Thelxinoe are equivalent to Anthia and Habrokomes in many of the details of their relationship: for example, Aigialos describes how they, like Anthia and Habrokomes, fell in love at a festival in their youth. And perhaps ominously for the final reconciliation of Xenophon's hero and heroine the permanence of Aigialos' relationship with his wife is clearly a poor substitute for the original. Habrokomes and (especially) Anthia are repeatedly described as statuesque figures, like human copies of divine forms. That statuesque, godlike imagery is particularly apparent in the festival scene at the very beginning of the novel, where both hero and heroine are exposed to the gaze of the assembled people of Ephesus,[37] and in their visit to Rhodes in 1,12, where we hear that they were worshipped as gods because of their beauty. And it is picked up again briefly immediately after their reconciliation, as the people of Rhodes celebrate their reappearance: 'Once again we are seeing Habrokomes and Anthia, the beautiful (τοὺς καλούς)'.

We might even wonder whether the joyful reunion of these lovers is at the expense of full and open communication. The very last scene of verbal utterance in the novels comes when Anthia and Habrokomes are telling their stories to each other, and protesting their faithfulness. Xenophon sums up their conversation as follows: 'They made these defences through the whole night, and easily persuaded each other, since that is what they wanted' (ῥᾳδίως ἔπειθον ἀλλήλους, ἐπεὶ τοῦτο ἤθελον) (5,15,1). The word 'persuaded' slyly introduces connotations of seduction here. Perhaps the point is that the language of persuasion, which we have seen so frequently in the mouths of the novel's predatory characters—and in the words spoken by Habrokomes and especially Anthia in order to escape from other predatory characters—is being recuperated here; as if it is fine for Anthia and Habrokomes to seduce each other now, or as if the powers of persuasion which were previously used in a defensive, deceptive fashion can now be turned to

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viewer and viewed; cf. Hunter 1994 on Chariton's use of statuesque imagery for Chaireas and Kallirhoe.

[36] Cf. Konstan 1994, 48.

[37] E.g., in the ekphrastic description of Anthia in 1,2; in the description of Habrokomes as 'image of a beautiful god' (καλοῦ μίμημα θεοῦ) in the same section; or in the account of their mutual infatuation in 1,4, where Habrokomes is immobilized, unable to move because of the power of the god Eros.

happier ends. But it is hard to avoid the more subversive and comical overtones of this phrase, which not only implies that these two have a natural predilection to yield easily to persuasion, but also hints at the possibility that they may be omitting details after all, like Odysseus to Penelope,[38] or like Anthia earlier in the novel in her persuasion of Psammis in 3,11 or of the brothel-keeper in 5,7 (or that neither would know if the other was); and that the numinous power of the spoken word, which has gathered in strength increasingly in the second half of the novel, may not be so far removed from the connotations of deceptiveness and unreliability which were so prominent in the opening scenes. For Xenophon, in other words, verbal utterance has the potential to empower. We have seen how the novel progressively intensifies that impression as it proceeds, moving from random speech and speech which miscarries towards a more authoritative kind of oral communication. And yet even in these final scenes he does not allow us to forget that words always have the potential to mislead, and to press the novels' characters perhaps just a little too easily and too quickly into the familiar, formulaic roles for which they are programmed, 'because that is what they wanted'. That movement is mirrored by the changing character of Xenophon's own text, which moves from oral, conversational structure, with all its freedom and abruptness, towards textual certainty and clarity, as the exhilarating geographical and narrative improvisation of the early part of the work fades into history, set in stone in the closing, monumental phrases of the final lines.[39]

Xenophon's text has oral characteristics. To understand fully the effects he achieves through those characteristics we need to look, I have argued, not just at the language of his work and its narrative structure, but also at the story itself; and we need to take into account the novel's intriguing overlaps between form and content. Speech in the novel is both empowering and constraining, predictable and unpredictable; Xenophon's oral, speech-like style is the same. The voices of the novel are replaced in the very final scenes by a set of written texts which help to bring the plot to its resolution; Xenophon's text too takes on an increasingly 'written' style in those final pages. The work itself obsessively thematizes questions about the powers of the spoken

[38] Cf. Kleitophon's partial account to Leukippe in Achilles Tatius, *Leukippe and Kleitophon* 8,5.

[39] I am grateful to Marko Marinčič for pointing out to me that in some ways Achilles Tatius' novel (unusually for the Greek novel texts) moves in the opposite direction, towards an increasingly oral quality, by choosing not to return to the narrative frame at the end of the novel (cf. his chapter in this volume).

word, repeatedly explores the ambiguous position of speech between efficacy and randomness, between empowerment and oppression; and Xenophon's formulaic, abrupt, conversational language, which is itself by turns exhilaratingly flexible and oppressively repetitive and predictable, provides a powerful vehicle for exploration of those themes.

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