

Artistry in the ancient novel

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Scholarship on the ancient novel has advanced by leaps and bounds since the re-start marked by Perry's *The Ancient Romances* in 1967.¹ But there are still problems in dealing with issues of technique and quality in the ancient novel. There is still the basic problem that we may not have a large enough sample of the form from which to disentangle any 'rules of the game' that may be peculiar to our genre. We do not rightly know the status of the one novel that seems to almost all workers in the field to be significantly wanting: part of the problem with the *Ephesiaca* of Xenophon of Ephesus may be one of inept abridgement.² We do not have agreement on the history of the genre insofar as it may affect our judgement of what kind of narrative materials the novelists had at their disposal. To some students these questions may well appear to be positive advantages: because we do not have a context, we will not be influenced by it. The problem is that we shall most likely be influenced by other, arguably less appropriate contexts: we shall be tempted to make unfair comparisons between a small random sample of the ancient novel and a much more selective preservation of other genres; and we shall be still more tempted to place that sample against the total achievement of 'the novel' in the last two and a half centuries. I have largely confined myself to the 'canonic five' Greek novels or 'ideal romances', but have not hesitated to step outside the pale when necessary.

Over against the disadvantages we have one advantage: that the degree of similarity in plot among our five complete Greek novels does enable close comparison to take place among the five. But we have not the routine facility taken

¹ The result has been a generous accumulation of study guides and surveys to take account of the proliferation of books and articles. One notes in particular Tatum (ed.) (1994); Morgan and Stoneman (edd.) (1994); Schmeling (ed.) (2003); Whitmarsh (ed.) (2008); Cueva and Byrne (edd.) (2014).

² Konstan defends Xenophon against general scholarly disregard (in Morgan and Stoneman 1994), 49-63; but the more frequent the comparisons on individual headings, the less convincing the case. O'Sullivan (1995) stresses the formulaic nature of the text.

for granted for modern authors, that any given author can have one of his works compared with the rest of his output.

Whether or not the literary criticism of ancient novels can realistically take place, it is certainly the case that much value-judgement of novels has already been offered, some no doubt wrong-headed, but much at least reasonable, if not universally convincing. Much is scattered through the relatively rich provision of the last few decades in surveys whose characterisation of individual novels entail some element of judgement or preference; and much more is at least inherent in the succession of scholarly studies on aspects of the novel, chiefly on origins, from Rohde's *Der griechische Roman* onwards.

The order of reading

There is at least one problem of procedure which is rarely acknowledged in relation to the problem of quality: the order in which one reads the novels for the first time may be suspected of inducing some kind of prejudice. If one approaches Xenophon of Ephesus first, one is in danger of setting the expectations of the genre too low, and pulling the rest down with it; or perhaps just as unfortunately, pulling Chariton down with Xenophon, and stressing the distinction between 'sophistic' and 'non-sophistic' novels. Chronological study and social history may reinforce potential prejudice, or impose it for themselves: Chariton's work may be seen as an 'undeveloped' novel because it is historically early (or often thought to be so), while the working out of a readership may condemn us to judge Chariton to be destined for low expectations. One does not 'judge' Barbara Cartland or Mills and Boon: their products are born predestined for the pulp-mills. Moreover prejudice can work the other way: a certain interpretation of the 'sophistic novels' may tend to taint the genre as a whole with a certain view of the Second Sophistic, as a forcing-ground for verbal self-indulgence and false sentiment. And such judgement can then be read back to taint the pre- or non-sophistic novel as well.

Classification as such poses other problems: as well as division into sophistic and pre-sophistic, we are sometimes encouraged to think in terms of 'exception' and hence by implication of 'rule': Longus' island setting and pastoral décor may suffice to put him in a class apart; Xenophon's indifferent quality may have a similar effect, for different reasons. The problem of origins has also played some part in conditioning critical attitudes to the novel. Those who start from a position that the novel is some kind of poor relation of historiography may well feel that the result is indeed a kind of sentimentalised pseudo-history, with Xenophon and Chariton as the most obvious casualties. Attempts to see the novel as latter-day

Epic may well produce similar revulsion. The attempts to see the novel as the illegitimate offspring of any given pair of pre-existent genres may again have consequences every bit as prejudicial as the 'biological' metaphor so vigorously combated by Perry.³ In particular one tends to feel that the sins of New Comedy have been transferred to the novel as to a scapegoat. Menander or Terence may use any plots with impunity, because they are classics and curriculum authors; but Chariton is not a classic, *therefore* he must be made to bear the brunt of critical condescension. In all this there is no substitute for discovering what if any the origins of the novel, or of any individual novel plot, actually might be. No-one who has worked on the *Onos* triangle could seriously maintain that someone unaware of the short Greek version is better equipped to come to terms with Apuleius than someone who is.

One desirable but unattainable perspective on the novel is that through which it was or could have been viewed in antiquity itself, particularly by contemporaries. Bryan Reardon looks at one end of the spectrum, by suggesting such pointers to Aristotelian views of Epic and Drama as might also be applicable to the novel.⁴ This is useful, provided we bear in mind that Aristotle may tend to look on literature as a scientific observer, not necessarily the best viewpoint for sympathetic literary understanding. Two other strata of ancient reaction to literature might at least hope to provide complementary perspectives; the random commonsensical reactions of a practising writer, such as Horace's in the *Ars Poetica*; and the whole apparatus of rhetorical instruction which forms a necessary preparation in Late Antiquity for effective expression in prose.

A basic obligation of anyone writing an extended narrative in prose is that they should hold the reader's attention for what follows, or else provide sufficient incentive to divert the reader to something else. In response to this problem all four of the complete, competent novelists have a different way forward. In Chariton's case the author has only to allow the story to establish its own forward momentum.⁵ The mainspring of the plot is that Callirhoe has innocently acquired two husbands; the author has only to reach the position in his story where this point must be established and the story will have a self-contained excitement and suspense thereafter. The reader must keep asking what can actually happen to remove one of the husbands plausibly and solve the problem of the child both might claim as theirs; as he does so Chariton can properly divide attention between Callirhoe and the first husband Chaereas, provided that he keeps both strands of the plot pointed towards convergence in Babylon.

³ Perry (1967), 11-14.

⁴ Reardon (1992), 46-96.

⁵ For 'forward movement' in general in the novel, Reardon (1969).

Achilles Tattius relies, as Chariton does, on a linear progression of plot. But here the management of the story is different. Again there is an amorous triangle, but it takes the author a very long time to reach it. And in his case the end result is somehow never quite so much in doubt. Instead we have four articulated sections, tending to emphasise the pairs of book-divisions. The initial complications reflect the author's mischievous perversity: there is a long leisurely development of an underhand affair alternating with rhetorical flourishes of all sorts – only to be dramatically legitimated when the hero's original fiancée Calligone is captured by pirates. Not for the last time Achilles springs a dramatic surprise: a sudden stroke followed only later by elaborate explanation. When the wavelengths do divide, they do not result in the geographical divisions of simultaneous action; instead we find that Leucippe turns up in disguise in the very same place as Clitophon. Achilles plays his own games with extremes of complexity and simplicity: there would be a strong sense of anti-climax, but for the fact that Melite's role is handled in such a way that its possibilities are still in doubt: one could almost be misled into suspecting that Melite will replace Leucippe as surely as the latter had replaced Calligone in Clitophon's affections.

By contrast Longus has the quite different momentum of changing seasons and children growing up. But there are other factors as well. It is not just the seasons and the awakening of adolescents that motivates the plot, but the counterpoint between these and sudden strokes of slapstick that carry it forward, as well as the deliberate intervention of individuals. It takes a whole book to establish the very realisation of first love, and that not by name; another to get to an oath of fidelity brokered by the livestock (!); another to have Daphnis sexually initiated, at a time when the guarantee of Chloe as a wife is still not to be taken for granted; and it takes the whole novel to make a woman of Chloe.

It is in Heliodorus that we are forced to take account of plot structure less as a means to an end than as an end in itself. The author seems to address himself to playing games with an intrinsically complicated plot.⁶ We have a whole book to introduce the lovers *in medias res*, at the point of changing hands from one pirate band to another. But much of that same book is occupied with a long novella by the minor character Cnemon on his own diverting but scarcely vital details. This is flying in the face of any conventional notion of plot-development; it can only work because a self-confident and assured author has already mystified his reader into interest in the couple. The real manipulation can begin when the master narrator Calasiris starts recapping the plot to Cnemon; only by the end of book 5 can we actually arrive at the point of having initial curiosity satisfied.

⁶ On the plot in particular Winkler (1982), 93-158; Morgan (1994), 97-113.

With this massive tour-de-force to manage it is perhaps not surprising that Heliodorus spends little time on the separation of the couple, which is really lost in the tangle of the plot. Once together again from the beginning of book 7, they still take nearly four books to get from Egypt to Ethiopia. One could well argue that by that time any sense of curiosity or suspense is long past; but again one feels that Heliodorus succeeds on his own terms. Again it takes considerable confidence to divert the reader's interest into the siege of Syene in book 9, and still more to elongate the recognition scene in book 10.⁷

Melodrama and Adventure

The plot summaries of ancient novels alone would lead to the conclusion that love and melodrama are the central ingredients, and that it is the winning combination of the two that qualifies the five extant novelists as the distinctive genre they appear to form. It is particularly useful to us that Xenophon of Ephesus is of a rather lower, barer literary order than the other four: that shows us how difficult it is for pure melodrama *per se* to sustain a story of much length at any literary level; and by contrast how resourcefully the other writers seem to succeed in transforming melodrama into literature.

The central melodramatic motif might be economically described as 'beauty under threat'. The reader's horror and sympathy is to be excited by impending torture, mutilation or sexual outrage on the human scale, or at least a hint of natural disaster in the world outside. *Scheintod*, pretended death, characterises the one situation, shipwreck the other. Chariton's melodrama is simply that implied in the plot itself, emphasised rather than heightened by rhetorical protest, but not intensified greatly by the author. The temptation of outrage by pirates is never stated; indeed Chariton's pirates are really entrepreneurs first and foremost. The sexual implications of marrying Dionysius to save Chaereas' child are stated with modest circumspection and little fuss; only at the court of Artaxerxes is there anything that amounts to suggestiveness on the part of the eunuch go-between, while the Great King himself behaves with something like decorum.

By contrast Achilles sets out to take the melodramatic implications to extremes, by flaunting almost incredible distaste in front of the reader. Chariton's *Scheintod* is in fact completely natural – Callirhoe experiences a coma following an assault while pregnant. There are no artificial additives here. But Achilles keeps contrivance to the maximum, and the material is entirely episodic; the whole incident could be cut without the slightest difference to the story. Moreover

⁷ On the ending, Morgan (1989), 299-320.

Leucippe's recovery from death is followed almost immediately by an artificially induced madness before she appears to lose her head literally – by decapitation. The sheer concentration of threats and disasters in books 3-4 and early 5 emphasises how readily Achilles can switch horrific and distasteful disasters on and off.

Longus has his fair share of the melodramatic repertoire. But in this case threats are delightfully neutralised, with a charming mixture of realism and contrivance. The pirates are shipwrecked, young dandies marooned with the loss of their vessel, troops called out to avenge a discomfited picnic-party; and a whole fleet tormented by Pan and his minions.⁸ And lovers' naivety means that the pair are largely insensitive to the threats. Daphnis is more puzzled than perturbed by a drunken homosexual's attempt at assault, and scarcely inconvenienced let alone offended by it.

Heliodorus deploys much the same resources of melodrama as Achilles: but melodrama is time and again tempered by mystification: the celebrated opening with its vessel displaying the evidence of a violently aborted banquet leaves the pirates who discover it more puzzled than anything else; or Charicleia is taken for dead, but the corpse turns out to belong to the wrong woman, again in circumstances which call for bewilderment as much as horror.

The handling of melodrama over all is a matter of taste, and we have five different such tastes in evidence. There is an extreme example in Xenophon of Ephesus:⁹ Habrocomes, wrongly convicted of murder, is condemned by the prefect of Egypt to crucifixion: he prays to the sun to free him if he is guiltless; and the cross is duly blown into the Nile in answer to his prayer. Undaunted, the prefect condemns him to the pyre, and the Nile in flood puts out the flames. The effect could be replicated almost anywhere in Xenophon: the crudity lies partly in the extremes of effect, and partly in the apparent determination to accumulate as many such effects as possible.

If we look at a comparable situation in Chariton, we find the same kind of actions, but a very different nuance to the narrative. Chaereas and his friend Polycharmus are to be crucified (again after wrongful accusation of murder); when Polycharmus utters the name Callirhoe (as the cause of their troubles) the overseer takes her name as that of an accomplice, and reports to Mithridates, satrap of Caria; as he is already infatuated with a girl he supposes simply to have the same name, he investigates, and realises that his captive Chaereas can be used to get the girl away from her new husband.¹⁰ There are two points that mark out the episode in Chariton. In the first place, the episode, if still melodramatic, is far more

⁸ Longus 1.20;2.14;2.19f.;2.25.

⁹ Xenophon 4.2.

¹⁰ Chariton 4.2 – 4.4.1.

obviously in the realms of the natural and the possible. There is much less of a role for the supernatural in this subtly rationalising author. Secondly, there is the possibility of a facetious imitation of Herodotus. The celebrated episode of Croesus' rescue from the pyre is occasioned by his executioner's curiosity about the name that evokes his miseries.¹¹ We might feel there is trivialisation here, but of a cleverly entertaining sort. Instead of territorial wars that bring down empires, it takes just one woman to bring Asia to a halt! Whatever is going on, it is not just melodrama.

Characters and their function

The nature of romance plots imposes certain constraints on the characters themselves.¹² There is an extent to which the *Liebepaar* seem destined to function as two complementary halves of a pair.¹³ Displays of spectacular heroic behaviour are rare: both are young lovers whose first impulse or reaction is the response to the other. An author can choose to contrive near-exact symmetry in their reactions under similar sets of circumstances, as when they first fall in love, realise that they are separated, or are pressured by some kind of sexual threat or temptation.

In all the cases we have there is a strong element of status and in some cases status-consciousness. The lovers themselves are either noble or even royal, and each of the novelists has a problem with how to balance social status and state of mind: antiquity had a very much more strongly stratified view of the matter than do we, and we have a variety of nobles, princesses, or the like reduced to tears, depression, inaction, indecision, and the rest.¹⁴ Euripides had blazed a trail for others to follow. Whatever the circumstances, we are seldom allowed to forget for long that Callirhoe is the daughter of Hermocrates of Syracuse.

In order to threaten the characters there must be rivals, and it is perhaps here that the novelists have been able to exercise a genuine resourcefulness and sense of independent development to its full extent. In particular Chariton's Dionysius and Achilles' Melite are able to establish themselves as real people – particularly the latter. In both cases the involvement is innocent: genuine marriage is the goal, and both are ignorant of the circumstances of their marriages. Dionysius is recently widowed, Callirhoe acquired as a slave girl in good faith; while both

¹¹ Herodotus 1.86.

¹² See now De Temmerman (2014).

¹³ For the notion of 'sexual symmetry', Konstan (1994).

¹⁴ There is a tension between elevated social status and what is very often New Comic middle-class behaviour: Heliodorus' juxtaposition of Cnemon and the upper echelons of the Persian Empire or the religious hierarchy of Memphis emphasises the contrast.

Melite's husband and Clitophon's fiancée are thought to be dead. And once the previous partner has turned up, there is genuine suffering for the 'excluded' party. Dionysius is consistent throughout: he has the manners of a gentleman, and sometimes the paranoid insecurity of someone who knows Callirhoe is just too good to be true; and in the end he is lulled into self-delusion that she still loves him.¹⁵ Melite however has the sense and good grace to accept that she has lost Clitophon, though she salvages the situation in the single impulsive seduction of her no-longer-husband.

One more minor rival has crucial and complementary miniature roles. Dorcon acts as the inept would-be seducer of Chloe and serves as a foil in the innocent awakening of Daphnis and Chloe to their sexuality; but ineptitude turns to pathos when he is butchered by the pirates (like an ox, as he is well equipped to appreciate); yet he saves his rival Daphnis with only Chloe's single kiss as his reward before he dies of his wounds. He is uniquely portrayed as a boastful and not innocent 'bad boy', but poignantly redeems himself.

Towards a Rhetoric of Romance: the handling of dialogue

We tend to take it for granted that in a novel the characters will reveal themselves to one another and to the reader in their own words. Ancient novelists had such a resource at their disposal, but do not always use it quite as a twenty-first century reader of prose fiction might feel entitled to expect; but their use of it is varied by means consistent with the personalities of their authors.

The traditions normally associated with the formation of the novel may offer rather fewer formative resources in this respect than in others. For a start, classical drama, tragic comic and mime alike, are in verse; historiography and rhetorical exercise favour the artificial elements of direct expression; and dialogue in prose is traditionally associated with philosophy. The novelists are faced with a vacuum which each must learn to fill in his own way.¹⁶ Chariton demonstrates here, as in so many other departments, an unobtrusive, no-nonsense approach: characters speak simply, urgently and directly in a manner which is not likely to impede the course of the plot. With Achilles there is more than one technique in operation. As in his prose style in general, so in the interchanges between characters: he can use the briefest or most urgent of exchanges when he pleases, or he can opt for long set-piece speeches. It would be particularly tedious if all the characters revealed themselves through text-book exercises as such, and simply left it at that.

¹⁵ Chariton 8.5.13f.

¹⁶ On the whole subject, Anderson (2014), 217-230.

But Achilles has carefully contrived that some kind of academic scenario is in play. The display of sexuality in the natural world in book 1 underlines the link between rhetoric and the erotic; or generals can exercise their ingenuity in explaining oracles.¹⁷ Again, minor characters can be differentiated, as in an exchange of rhetorical fables between Satyrus and the surly servitor Conops.¹⁸

Heliodorus is often seen as of a piece with Achilles Tatius: both their works could be regarded as self-indulgently rhetorical efforts. But comparison of the pair will show that there the resemblance ends. Dialogue in Heliodorus is much less a matter of exchanging paradoxes as of partially unravelling mysteries: this applies as much to the briefest non-sequitur dialogue with a deaf fisherman as to the impasses between Cnemon and Calasiris.¹⁹

There is one situation in which all the novelists indulge, and on which each is quite clearly differentiated from the rest: the hero or heroine expostulates on his or her emotional dilemma: what is he or she to do? If only x were by his or her side! After all the miseries of the past, the present or future dilemma will be even worse: Callirhoe in particular makes a great deal of her progressive separations from Chaereas; Xenophon of Ephesus' heroine is not far behind in her expressions of pathos:²⁰

And so when she was by herself, (Anthia) took her opportunity, and dishevel-
 ling her hair, she exclaimed: how unjust and wicked I am in everything I
 do! For I do not suffer for Habrocomes as he does for me. He endures chains
 and tortures, and perhaps has even died, so as to remain my husband; while I
 forget his sufferings and marry, unhappy creature that I am; and someone will
 sing my bridal hymn, and I will go to Perilaus' bed. But, my dearest darling
 Habrocomes, do not be at all aggrieved over me, for I would never wrong you
 of my own free will. I will come to you and still be your bride even after
 death...

One such speech might be unexceptional: a special degree of eloquence to underline an extreme situation (in this case Anthia is contemplating suicide to avoid marriage with a rescuer, Perilaus). But such outbursts are either legion in the novels or are taken to be such. It may be worth suggesting that they are not always as stereotypical as they seem: like so much else they are nuanced according to the personality of the author. And secondly, they can be contrived for an important

¹⁷ Erotic rhetoric, 1.16-19; oracle explanation: 2.14.1-6.

¹⁸ Achilles 2.20-22.

¹⁹ Fisherman's dialogue: *Aethiopica* 5.18.4ff.

²⁰ Xenophon of Ephesus 3.5.2ff.

secondary purpose: they can serve as a very useful if not downright essential means of reminding the reader of what has actually been happening: the hero or heroine (for the most part) has to remind us as well as him or herself of ‘the story so far...’.

In some cases at least we find long speeches in the mouths of the secondary characters. In a fair proportion of these cases, where rhetorical effect is established, it tends to be rather deliberately undercut. The most obvious case is that of Charmides, the Egyptian general in Achilles Tatius, who buys time to gaze at Leucippe, with whom he is besotted, with a monologue on the capture of the hippopotamus, digressing into a disquisition ending with the aromatic breath of the Indian elephant!²¹ The general effect is to give the impression that he is a tediously irrelevant bore. One notes too the long *Ars Amatoria* of Clinias to Clitophon on wooing, only to be immediately undercut by the loss of his own lover in a riding accident.

Longus has rather a different approach to the same kinds of situation: the parasite Gnathon, attached to Daphnis’ brother Astylus, has the pathetic rhetoric of the parasite in love, when we know that his suit is hopeless;²² Daphnis and Dorcon display their juvenile and more than faintly absurd rhetoric to Chloe, but it is an almost throwaway compliment, rather than any texture of argument, that has the desired effect on the impressionable girl and prompts the all-important kiss for Daphnis.²³

Sometimes the speeches, especially in situations of extreme melodrama, are quite deliberately ornamented in the most striking way. Most controversial, perhaps, are the speeches made by Achilles’ hero, Clitophon, on the no fewer than three occasions when Leucippe’s corpse has undergone *Scheintod* (‘your repose is the robbers’ repast’²⁴). Second time round (5.7.9), when Leucippe has supposedly been decapitated, the reaction of Clitophon is more perfunctory, but of the same order: ‘a small part of you remains to me though it appears the greater part, while the sea has the whole of you in a tiny compass’. Not that Clitophon is unaware of the example already set in the mourning competition between his cousin Clinias and the father of the latter’s lover Charicles when killed in a riding accident. Again Achilles himself is at pains to make extreme rhetorical effects from the wounds themselves: ‘you have not died a common death for me; not even your corpse is a sight fit to be seen! Other bodies preserve recognisable traces, and even

²¹ Achilles Tatius 4.2-5.

²² Longus 4.16; cf. the general tenor of the parasites’ letters that make up book 3 of Alciphron.

²³ Longus 1.17.

²⁴ Achilles 3.16.4; 5.7.4; 7.5f.

if they have lost the bloom they preserve the image'.²⁵ Achilles seems preoccupied with presenting mutilated corpses as grotesquely as possible.

'Exception' and 'Rule' in Ancient Fiction

The five extant Greek novels are usually held to provide a norm for some kind of standard type.²⁶ Even this is in some way a simplification: Longus is arguably some distance from the rest, and the Late Latin *Apollonius of Tyre* is in some respects quite close to some notion of type.²⁷ Nonetheless the summaries of plots of lost novels tend to confirm that the extant five are at least a useful basis for generalisation. There are quite a number of possible ways of defining the kind of plot, but the action is centred on a young hero and heroine, either in love or newlywed. The action is concerned with threats and obstacles to their relationship, usually but not always of a melodramatic sort: 'capture by pirates' is typical and common to all five. And when the threats and obstacles are overcome, a happy ending occurs.²⁸

Even then the outline is reduced to this simplest of simplifications: it is difficult to account for all the constituents simultaneously. To some extent it depends on how one tries to formulate the plot in the first place. The above formulation happens to fit the plot of Plautus' *Rudens*, for example, just as well.²⁹ But other features are noteworthy: a quasi-oriental ambience (which again has to be carefully defined); the prominence of chastity, real or apparent, and divine intervention, with some room for manoeuvre, and the appearance of apparent secondary generic colouring: one plot may chiefly resemble pastoral, another historiography, a third romantic melodrama, and so on. What has not been done, at least successfully so far, is to identify any single plot as a pre-existent story, though there has been a general awareness that 'folktale' in some form is at least one of the constituents.³⁰ The importance of 'origins' should not be dismissed. A general feeling that the novel draws on a wide palette of sources and colours seems both sensible and plausible:³¹ but it is only one of several theoretical possible relationships

²⁵ Achilles 1.13.2f.

²⁶ For the question of genre, Selden (1994), 39-64.

²⁷ For the nature of this text, Kortekaas (2004).

²⁸ Again this does not rule out the possibility of a more tragic plot in the future, as indeed in the case of Abradatas and Panthia in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*.

²⁹ Cf. N. Lowe (2000), 203-205.

³⁰ Contrast Anderson (2000), 228f., who assigns Aarne-Thompson index numbers to a cross-section of plots.

³¹ Cf. A. Billault (1989), 144-151 for the correspondence with New Comedy.

between the genre and its predecessors: the novel may be what it is because it echoes narrative material echoed by its alleged sources.

The label 'romance of love and adventure' tends to foster the notion that the novels have the same plot, or next to it. But there is at least a case for arguing that Chariton's plot is really quite different, or quite differently handled, from the rest.³² There is as suggested a very considerable dynamism in the central motif as Chariton treats it: what is to happen when both Callirhoe's husbands turn up at the same time? Moreover, there is a further problem: what will happen over the child of the first husband, passed off as that of the second? The plot cannot really end until that is solved, let alone the original lovers reconciled. Such a plot, simply told and cleverly paced, has a natural mechanism of inbuilt suspense. The apparent variation on this plot, that of Xenophon, has the couple married at the outset, but only their chastity threatened rather than second marriage and child to complicate matters. Such a formula is not sufficient to 'write itself;' and it runs a high risk of deteriorating in Xenophon's hands into random encounters and 'rambling'.

Daphnis and Chloe, on the other hand, has another mechanism: by making sexual awakening the central force of the novel, the author has raised a different kind of question: how will the couple come to discover 'the real thing'? And how can the author possibly describe it when they do? Suspense is duly created, and we are left asking *something*. The other two novelists are clearly in the business of very considerable diversification beyond the basic requirements of telling a long story: sexual awakening has already taken place, and rivals are effortlessly seen off, so how else can the reader's attention be held, or what kind of curiosities can be used to divert it?

Some scholars view the sequence of events in the novels as more or less random. However, there is in at least some of the plots a sense of escalation in the intrigues and obstacles. This is to be seen in the way that threats to the couple start on a small or trivial scale, and become much more ambitious. This is conveniently illustrated in Chariton: first a domestic, local intrigue (though instigated by jealous tyrants from elsewhere), then the inevitable pirates, then a complicating bigamous marriage to a powerful Ionian, then intrigue at the court of the king of Persia, before Callirhoe can finally be restored to Chaereas. In Longus such an escalation is similarly managed. Dorcon is an inept rival whose attempt to rape Chloe is seen as no more than a harmless prank. The pirates kidnap one of the pair, then the youths from Methymna, then the war expedition; this beside the escalating sexual awareness of the couple themselves. In the case of Heliodorus the pattern is obscured somewhat by the sheer convolution of the narrative; but an elongated siege-piece is reserved for close to the end, with the less pretentious

³² As a plot related to AT 883A/B.

pirates and palace intrigues preceding. The trivial domestic drama of Cnemon is used as the opening.³³ Sometimes the characters emphasize the escalation with speeches of a ‘first that, and now this!’ variety: Achilles and Xenophon are much more difficult to reconcile with this escalating effect. Achilles diminishes the importance of the *Scheintod* with a ‘law of diminishing returns’, as less of the heroine’s corpse seems to be left each time she is abducted. The threats do escalate: first a domestic snatch, then pirates out to sacrifice the heroine, then the general sent to overpower the pirates, then complex domestic intrigue with an unwanted marriage of the hero. Xenophon by contrast seems to mishandle and jumble the themes considerably: the brigand Hippothous’ power grows, but then diminishes again: there is some sense of climax of danger in the heroine’s finding herself in a brothel, or in the increase in the threats to the lovers, but generally inept handling nonetheless.

Plot and Subplot

One of the features of the novel, sophisticated or otherwise, is its capacity for sustaining more than one action at a time. This might be felt as an obvious opportunity of extended narrative scale: there is room to develop the affairs of more than just the hero and heroine; and there is also less risk of the plots’ becoming one-dimensional. But there are distinct advantages in a single, uninterrupted action. Chariton has no difficulty in keeping the readers’ attention. When the lovers are separated by circumstances and the actions alternate in parallel strands, the promised convergence of both strands at a trial scene in Babylon still gives the plot suspense and forward movement. Longus too has a single focus of interest; the prospect of the lovers to consummate their relationship by understanding enough about love and sex gives the story all the vitality it needs. In the case of the other three however there is a substantial counterpoint to this. One technique is to have a second individual in quest of or in need of a lover, and to have them available as helpers and contacts of the original pair. This is the function of the pirate chief Hippothous in Xenophon, or the hero’s cousin Clinias in Achilles Tatius: both have lost (male) lovers under tragic circumstances, and the former will acquire a new partner by the end of the action; during the course of it their paths will cross and re-cross those of the hero or heroine. The fortunes of Cnemon in Heliodorus follow the same pattern, this time with a heterosexual story. A further development is to link the main and subplots more closely together, so that in Achilles Tatius the hero is actually engaged to a half-sister who is promptly

³³ On the episode’s function, Morgan (1989B), 99-113.

abducted; only at the end of the plot is she returned and married to her abductor. In the summary of the plot of Iamblichus' novel, a character in a subplot is mistaken for the hero of the main plot, offering the possibility of a 'melodrama of errors'.³⁴

In the first place the subplots tend to aim at contrast and complement: the homosexual sub-plots offer this automatically; so does the incidence of actual death in the subplots, as opposed to the merely pretended death of the heroine in the main action. The ambitious tale of Cnemon presents a cravenly superstitious and cowardly Athenian in love with a treacherous courtesan – about as far removed as possible from the heroically athletic Thessalian Theagenes and his pure Ethiopian princess. The adventures of Calasiris in Heliodorus have a double connexion, on the one hand with his bringing back the princess towards Ethiopia and his intervention in the struggle of his sons in Egypt, one of whom turns out to be one of the pirate chiefs encountered in the opening scene.

The subplots vary greatly in their share of the action and their degree of interaction with the main plot. Both Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus allow a large measure of complication at the outset, as Achilles is determined to present clearly the problems of Clinias and Calligone unfolding around Clitophon's infatuation with Leucippe. Heliodorus presents a long narration by Cnemon of his reverses in Athens into the middle of an as yet only slowly unfolding situation of the hero and heroine in Egypt.³⁵ There is a sense in both cases that the bulk of complication is presented at the outset, and that after the first two books or so the main action is under way and subplot material only intervenes incidentally after that point. The problem with managing the subplots is in keeping control of loose ends: by the other end of Achilles Tatius we have more or less forgotten who Calligone was, let alone should we be much concerned over what was her fate at the hands of her kidnapper.³⁶ And it might be argued that by well into Book 6 of Heliodorus, the story of Cnemon and Thisbe has run its course, and he is rather conveniently betrothed to Nausicles' daughter, while the main plot runs inexorably on.

Opening the novel

The writer's first task is to introduce his characters and set the action in motion; or to break into it if it is already under way. There are five different approaches:

³⁴ Iamblichus *Babyloniaca* 75b-76a.

³⁵ *Aethiopica* 1.9-17.

³⁶ Achilles 8.17.3-6

two opt to begin with the love affair and proceed rapidly to marry the couple off;³⁷ the other three opt for the life-history of the couple from birth, the complications of a previously arranged marriage, and the entry at one of the most complex moments in the story.

It may be no coincidence that it is the non-sophistic novelists who go straight in to the narrative of the love-affair; the three sophistic writers use an oblique opening, two by means of an ecphrasis that either supplies the story or simply prompts it; and in the other case by an arresting ecphrasis mystifying the whole business.³⁸ It might not be unfair to say that each author has established his credentials within the first page. Chariton and Xenophon both opt for the direct approach, the former with a single introductory sentence on himself. For the former we are given the setting of the couple in their city, as the children of its most eminent families, and Eros is set to take charge more or less immediately.

Foreshadowing, Preparation, Mystification

An important component of plot management is managing what is suspected, contriving how to take the reader unawares, and toward the end of the work avoiding a sense of total predictability. The most obvious way of looking forward is simply by means of bald statement. The clearest example of this device is in Chariton, in the foreshadowing of the trial: we are given every encouragement to anticipate that Chaereas is going to be produced alive when most people suppose him dead, so that the opportunity for surprise is quite deliberately sacrificed.³⁹ But for all the anticipation of the event the reader still cannot anticipate the outcome: there is a considerable risk that the king himself will try to put pressure on the highly vulnerable Callirhoe, or that one or both of her husbands will be threatened.

Chariton resorts less than others to subtle or artistic anticipations such as dreams, anticipatory ecphrasis or the like. When he does use them it tends to be in a cynical or hard-headed way: the characters *imagine* that things work; the narrator appears to record them for a smile against the naivety of his characters.⁴⁰ By contrast the sophistic novelists sprinkle their texts with hints, explicit or otherwise, of what is to happen either next or possibly even next-but-one in the chain

³⁷ I.e. Chariton and Xenophon of Ephesus.

³⁸ I.e. Longus and Achilles; and Heliodorus, where the opening ecphrasis is a landscape, not a work of art.

³⁹ E.g. Chariton 4.4f.

⁴⁰ That is not to underestimate the importance of dreams: see MacAlister (1996), 165-168.

of events.⁴¹ Longus, for example, offers a simultaneous dream to the foster-fathers of Daphnis and Chloe:⁴²

They seemed to see those nymphs, the ones in the cave where the spring was, where Dryas found the child, handing over Daphnis and Chloe to a handsome boy with an arrogant air, with wings on his shoulders, carrying tiny darts and a little bow. He touched both of them with a single dart and ordered Daphnis to graze the herd of goats, Chloe the flock of sheep.

This tells the reader more than it tells the two dreamers, who have simply to accept the couple's occupations as predetermined. Of course we know right away that the arrogant boy is Eros, and that of course Daphnis and Chloe are going to fall in love, and that their initial occupations at least will be country ones: but that is just about all we know, and Longus has not given too much away.

The large-scale sophisticated novelists, by contrast, have scope for elaborate games with or about the interpretation of signs in the text: they can plant trails true or false, and even have the characters engage in sophisticated discussion on that very subject, or be shown thanks to the readers' greater knowledge to be interpreting wrongly: the pirate chief at the end of Heliodorus' first book interprets his dream in terms of wishful thinking to the opposite effect of the outcome due to take place:⁴³ for him to 'have and not have' Charicleia, and to 'slay but not wound' her by the sword now acquire opposite meanings to those entertained previously. And this is not the last case of naïve misinterpretation of divine signs. Nor of course is the omniscient narrator obliged to 'show his hand' and 'correct' wrong interpretations immediately. It is moreover the privilege of the omniscient author to comment on major turning points in the action as they occur: hence Chariton:⁴⁴

But Fortune found a way of upsetting the plot, putting off all notion and all discourse of love...

The reader has just been manipulated to expect something very different. Pressure from the Great King has been mounting on Callirhoe to accept his amorous attentions, and naturally the eunuch Artaxates has got nowhere in his quest to bring the heroine round either, but his parting shot runs the risk of actually being an

⁴¹ On anticipatory events, Bartsch (1989).

⁴² Longus 1.7.

⁴³ Heliodorus 1.30.

⁴⁴ Chariton 6.8.1.

effective one. She has, after all, already submitted to the embraces of an unloved husband to save her child: it looks as if the eunuch has manoeuvred her to expect that the only way both to regain her first husband and ensure that he is kept alive is to sleep with the king for a limited time. This might still have engendered a suicide pact; but it would be hard to imagine that Chaereas could be much more hurt at the thought of a second rival than he has already been by the first.

The sense of an ending

All five of the extant Greek novels spend a high proportion of their story on the ending, in four of the cases with a great deal of care.⁴⁵ This raises the artistic problem of how to maintain interest in the action of the novel once the sense of a happy ending has been more or less established. Perhaps the most clear-cut case before us is that of Longus: by the end of book 3 marriage is clearly in prospect for Chloe, and cannot be too long delayed. And Daphnis, after no lack of failure with Chloe, has at last found out how to make love: so how does Longus, an economical miniaturist, fill a whole quarter of his work, still maintaining interest and suspense?

At the other extreme, in Heliodorus matters are rather different. Again there is a point after which the ending must surely come: once Calasiris has filled in all the 'story so far' and it is clear that Theagenes and Charicleia, already in Egypt, are destined for Ethiopia, then again we expect the completion not to be long delayed: but Heliodorus is both volatile and writing on the grand scale: we have to endure a prolonged siege of marginal relevance and an extended dénouement with many quasi-legal quirks before the author will let his story go, as he seems clearly reluctant to do. First the hero and heroine have to undergo a chastity test on a golden gridiron (10.8-21): Charicleia appeals against sacrifice as a native Ethiopian, and a royal one at that, citing the high priest Sisimithres who had handed her over to the Egyptian Calasiris in the first place, and the royal band that accompanied her, as well as explanation as to how Ethiopian parents came to produce a white child by maternal impression. We have the paradox of Charicleia begging that if she is spared but Theagenes has still to be sacrificed, she herself should be the sacrifice; only a married person can perform the sacrifice, and she claims Theagenes as her husband. Achilles is similarly expansive, though he appears to have accidentally omitted the final frame of his initial frame-narrative.

⁴⁵ For the ending of Heliodorus in particular, Morgan (1989), 299-320.

The variation on recurrent topoi: crowd scenes and spectacle

Given the specialised nature of the plots, it seems inevitable that there will be strong similarities between similar situations in different works. The following topoi will illustrate both the problems and the solutions which the extant writers have sought. Each of the extant novelists finds at least some occasion for a crowd scene in the context of the action: even Xenophon of Ephesus can bring himself to describe an initial procession. Most of the writers we know are able to infuse such scenes with their own personality or narrative priorities.⁴⁶ Chariton's crowd scenes are short and stereotyped:⁴⁷

At dawn, then, there was a great deal of elbowing around the palace; the narrow streets were full to overflowing; everyone ran together apparently to hear the trial, but really to see Callirhoe.

The Babylonian crowd has already staged an extempore beauty contest between Callirhoe and the Persian Rhodogyne, motivated by curiosity, while the Syracusans had actually taken the initiative and persuaded Hermocrates to let his daughter marry Chaereas at the outset; they will be no less curious when the victorious Chaereas' ship sails back to Syracuse. Chariton's crowds are naïve, one-dimensional, and never inclined to lose an opportunity to witness or further the cause of Eros. They can also be used to represent contrary opinions: views are divided between aristocratic support for Mithridates (originally from Bactra); the ordinary people support Dionysius: 'For he seemed to have been badly treated contrary to the laws and to have been plotted against as concerning his wife, and what was more, such a wife!'⁴⁸ The women are similarly divided, between the local beauties, jealous of Callirhoe, and the ordinary women, jealous of the local beauties, and therefore sympathetic to the Greek stranger. In a number of such instances Chariton is able to exploit dramatic irony, as here, since the crowd have jumped to conclusions: the Babylonian crowd will have to reassess the situation once it becomes clear that Chaereas is still alive; they are not yet as we are 'in the know'.

By contrast Xenophon's crowds seem simply to provide support and wonder for the couple, and indeed have the mental horizons of crowds in gospel-type narratives ('and all the people were amazed'). The crowd in Heliodorus' Ethiopia has its naivety exploited to the limit: they sway between clamouring for human

⁴⁶ E.g. Chariton 6.2; Heliodorus 3.1-3.

⁴⁷ Chariton 5.5.8.

⁴⁸ Chariton 5.4.1.

sacrifices and for their abolition; and in between can be bemused or mystified when the language barrier confuses the negotiations between Charicleia and her newfound father Hydaspes. Already we have found that the Delphic crowd behaves as a religious court following the elopement of Charicleia and Theagenes, and that the Egyptian crowd at Memphis forms a spontaneous religious precession (4.19ff.;7.8). The much rarer crowd in Achilles Tatius sums up the possibilities:⁴⁹ ‘a crowd gathered round me, a confused mixture of sympathisers, miracle-mongers, and the merely curious’.

Falling in love in the novel

Each individual author has at the outset the problem of how to put his own stamp on the operation without which the plot cannot move off in the first place. The cliché of love at first sight, followed by debilitating symptoms of love-sickness, is common to four of the five. But it is handled in characteristically different ways. For Chariton, as so often, it is all a brisk and matter-of-fact business: within the very first chapter of book 1 the couple have met, been inflamed, had their amorous illness, and Chaereas has revealed his malady; public acclaim promptly solves the problem, thanks to the Syracusan assembly dominated by Eros. But this very simplicity is used to generate the first problem. Precisely because Chaereas has simply won Callirhoe without all the normal inconveniences of wooing, he is in trouble with the jealous Sicilian tyrants whose overtures were of no avail.

A much more elaborate version of the same cliché is used by Heliodorus, who drags it out for chapter after chapter of the *Aethiopica*. The interest is not so much in the extravagant décor of a procession and games at Delphi, as in the pretence and detailed commentary on it supplied by the Egyptian priest Calasiris, for whom it is a triumph of his powers of detection and capacity to conceal the facts as far as possible from the girl's father, and so contrive an elopement.⁵⁰ The result is an elaborate charade in which the lovers' symptoms are confused with those of the evil eye, and interwoven with the general trickery and obfuscation that are Heliodorus' trademark.

Two of the others opt for a different approach: Achilles' hero Clitophon falls immediately for his newly arrived cousin, a war refugee in his own house: he is already about to face an arranged marriage with his half-sister Calligone, and so there is scope for a counterpoint of erotic symptoms and subterfuges (kisses on the cup, snatched embraces) culminating in a failed attempt to spend an

⁴⁹ Achilles 7.14.1 (tr. Winkler).

⁵⁰ Heliodorus 2.5-8.

unhindered night together. The narrator's trademarks of learned eroticism and piquancy thus set up an opportunity which it takes a warning dream of the heroine's mother to frustrate.

Longus as so often goes his own way: although the symptoms of love-sickness are the same, the timescale is very different: the couple have grown up together and experience the transitions of adolescence in a delicately amusing way without discovering so much as the name of love until the second book. This all but avoids altogether the sense of cliché which each of the others has to handle.

The figure and power of Eros is a preoccupation in itself, and the novelists set out to personalise his paradoxical aspects in some way or other. The portrayal of Eros was well established in prose as early as Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*; and in poetry in Hellenistic literature in particular, and even in Hellenistic Epic, where the *dolion brephos* aspect of Eros can be found even in the divine machinery of Apollonius' Romantic Epic.⁵¹ This stable element enables us to see five different viewpoints on the characterisation of Eros. Chariton gives him a discrete variety of roles in the plot management, generally of a subversive character: Eros controls the Syracusan assembly at the very outset, and is able to subvert even the Great King in his own kingdom.⁵² Achilles Tatius' temperament seems peculiarly suited to emphasising the shameless effrontery of Eros: he is depicted in the opening ecphrasis already in command of the liaison between Zeus and Europa, and it is specifically from this image that the discussion begins. Much is made of the impiety of defying him; and his role more than once as a self-taught or improvising sophist⁵³ is an all too ready role model for the hero Clitophon himself. So, in practically the same breath (1.10.1f.) is the idea that love is a midwife:

A young man in the first flush of love needs no instruction as to how to bring it to birth. For if you feel the labour-pangs and the time has clearly arrived you cannot go wrong even when it is your first time, and you will be able to give birth with love as your midwife.

As often in Achilles, an ironic 'anti-Plato' takes over: where we expect Socratic midwifery, we now have Eros.

It is in Longus, however, that the traditional poetic attributes of Eros are most effectively deployed. The idea of Eros as a playful and domineering child seems particularly appropriate to a tale in which the lovers are very young and themselves very naïve. His prominence is already established in the preface where the

⁵¹ Cf. Lesky (1976).

⁵² Chariton 1.1.12; 6.2.4 (sacrifice to Eros).

⁵³ Achilles 1.10.1; 5.27.4.

whole work is presented as an *anathēma*, a votive offering, to the god. But it is the first appearance in simultaneous dreams to the foster-parents of the two foundlings that determines his characterisation throughout. He is a domineering young boy (not named and not described) who gives them their orders on how to bring up the children. When he is first named, it is in a scarcely less vague picture told to the pair by Philetas, the old man passing on the wisdom of his own experience. Love is a boy thought to have been disturbing the garden but in fact looking after it, as he admits to having looked after Philetas' own love for Amaryllis. Wings are mentioned, so that Daphnis and Chloe seem more confused than before (is Love a boy or a bird?). Pan refers to the authority of Eros as in command of the story, when forcing the Methymnaean general to hand back Chloe; and he is able to unstring his bow at the end of the text when his task is done. Here then is a miniature role for Eros in a miniature text.

It is all the more interesting to compare the presentation in Heliodorus. Here the general air of propriety and pontification admits a good deal of trickery and diversion, but leaves no real room for Eros in his traditional role.⁵⁴ Perry had the feeling that Charicleia and Theagenes were not really interested in love;⁵⁵ and although there is a mystic sense of divine control, it is scarcely the traditional Eros who seems to be in charge. The point where the couple fall in love, indeed, is theologised by Heliodorus into a meeting of souls;⁵⁶ there would readily have been room for a mystical doctrine of Eros, but the *dolion brephos* is perhaps significantly no more.

A complementary theme to the presentation of Eros is the handling of Tyche and her relationship to the workings of any other deity or deities in the plot. The problem is much the same as in the care of the voyage-narratives of traditional Epic: there will be a general assumption that the lovers will re-unite and will arrive at a specific destination. But there has to be a sufficient counterpoint of surprise, threat, and frustration to enable the action to continue in a way that somehow avoids the predictable. The gods have to be felt to be in control, but not to the extent that characters have no room to react to situations. This balance was at one stage one of the factors that gave the novel its indifferent reputation: there was a sense of comfortable contrivance with which the novelists were somehow felt to be involved.

But once again we have a variety of individual approaches. In Chariton, although dreams do actually occur and characters declare themselves helpless in the face of Tyche, the author himself keeps his readers one step ahead of the

⁵⁴ For the limits of love in Heliodorus, Konstan (1994), 90-98.

⁵⁵ Perry (1967), 107.

⁵⁶ Heliodorus 3.5.

characters for most of the plot, so that much of the immediate interest is in anticipating characters' reactions to unfolding situations: in particular we have no idea how matters can be resolved between Chaereas and Dionysius. In other words the gods are weak, the plot particularly strong and well articulated.

In Achilles, we know from the time that Leucippe turns up again in book five that the re-uniting of the lovers is only really a matter of time. But the consummation of Clitophon's affair with Melite is unexpected, and the chastity tests with their divine approval are actually cleverly circumvented, (or the forces of providence connive at their own duplicity). Heliodorus exploits this latter technique very clearly: the characters so constantly misinterpret or doubt any warning of providence, and the action is so tightly complicated, that sense of outcome is once more lost until perhaps the beginning of the last book, even when the destination of Ethiopia has been predetermined as early as book 2.

Longus for his part seems to have found a simple and spontaneous approach in which narrative problems simply disappear. The specific focus on the sexual escalation of the story means that by as late as the end of book four we are still obliged to ask how the author could possibly settle for describing the couple's first night. Nor does the almost casual break in the dramatic illusion (that Love has chosen to make a story about Chloe)⁵⁷ tell us any hint of *how* Love is going to conclude his account.

Moreover writers are not afraid to point out the absurdity of some of the bold strokes pulled in the course of their plots. One notes in particular Chariton's casual report in the (very clever) impasses at the Persian court that Tyche simply starts a war.⁵⁸ Longus is scarcely far behind with 'Love caused something serious to happen'.⁵⁹ Two of the sexual complications, Clitophon's actually sleeping with Melite, and Daphnis with Lycaenion, are abruptly executed and could not readily have been predicted.⁶⁰

It is only really in Xenophon of Ephesus that the strokes of Tyche seem conspicuously mishandled. Famously so is the business of sending the couple out to fulfil the warnings of the oracle,⁶¹ which should surely have happened as a result of frantic efforts to avoid it. There is a sense of too many gods and too many incidents for the scale of the work, though this may be the result of abbreviation; (strangely enough the ending might seem more effective than much of the rest).

⁵⁷ Longus 2.27.

⁵⁸ Chariton 6.8.1.

⁵⁹ Longus 1.11.1.

⁶⁰ Achilles 5.27.2-4; Longus 3.18.

⁶¹ Xenophon 1.6f.

The lovers' quarrel

As in other respects, each of the novelists goes his own way in his handling of the *Liebepaar*. In spite of the obvious limits on the permutation of what lovers can say, the narrative personalities show through. Here for example is Chariton, when Chaereas reproaches his wife wrongly for unfaithfulness:⁶²

Finding the bedroom door still shut, he banged angrily on it. When the maid opened it he fell on Callirhoe: his anger turned to grief, and he tore his clothes and started crying. When she asked what had happened, he could not speak: he could not disbelieve the evidence of his eyes (signs of a party outside), nor could he believe what he did not want to believe. As he was at a loss and shaking, his wife, who had no idea what had happened, begged him to tell her why he was angry. His eyes were bloodshot and his voice hoarse: 'I am upset for my misfortune, that you have forgotten me so quickly'; and he blamed her for the party. But she was a general's daughter and full of spirit: provoked by the unjust accusation she replied: 'no-one has held a party at my father's house; but perhaps your doorstep is used to revelry and your marriage is upsetting your lovers!' With this she turned away, covered her face and burst into floods of tears. But lovers easily make up, and they are glad to accept apologies from each other. So Chaereas changed his tone and began to win her over, and Callirhoe was quick to welcome the change of heart. This inflamed their love all the more, and their parents considered themselves fortunate when they saw their children's harmony.

The narrative can be taken at its face value: emotions are simply and directly expressed, and respond to the manipulation of events by outside forces. They kiss and make up, as lovers do; and that is just about the end of the matter.

If we look at lovers' quarrels elsewhere in the novelists we can find Leucippe's rebuke of Clitophon (by letter, given the highly literate nature of their relationship):⁶³

You know all I have suffered through you. And yet I have to remind you that I left my mother for you and chose to wander. For you I endured shipwreck and suffered at the hands of pirates; through you I became a sacrifice and was offered in expiation, and already I have died twice over. Through you was I sold and bound in iron and bore a hoe and dug the earth and was whipped, so

⁶² Chariton 1.3.4-7.

⁶³ Achilles 5.18.3f.

that I should submit to another man as you have succumbed to another woman?

But the example par excellence is in Longus:⁶⁴

When Daphnis saw the apple, he rushed to climb up and pick it, and ignored Chloe's efforts to stop him. When he ignored her, she went off to her flocks in high dudgeon; he ran up and made haste to pick it and take it as a present to Chloe and spoke to her, angry as she was.

(He speaks, presenting her with the apple, and comparing her to Aphrodite).

With these words he placed the apple in her lap. She kissed him as he approached, so that Daphnis had no regrets at his daring to climb so high, for he received a kiss better than even a golden apple.

Unsurprisingly we find Xenophon unable to contrive an effective version of such a situation.

The handling of Scheintod

Pretended death, like capture by pirates, has come to be regarded as one of the trademarks of the novel plots. There is at least one example for each text. But the term 'apparent death' can obviously be made to cover several different varieties. The most obvious and most natural is perhaps the situation found in Xenophon of Ephesus, where the heroine herself is attempting suicide, but is given a sleeping draught instead of poison. This gives the opportunity for a typically sentimental 'suicide soliloquy' in which the heroine (as it invariably is in the novels known so far), can take a rhetorical farewell to the world in some style.⁶⁵

A similar result, the heroine entombed alive and found by tomb-robbers, is motivated accidentally in Chariton, where the degree of deception is very thorough altogether: her assailant and family think her dead, as does the first of her tomb-robbers, leaving the way open for *grand guignol* if not comedy.⁶⁶ There is a more naturalistic version in the Late Latin *Apollonius of Tyre*, oddly in so variable and ill-constructed a text, where a doctor, or rather one of his perceptive

⁶⁴ Longus 3.34.

⁶⁵ Xenophon 3.6.

⁶⁶ Chariton 1.8-9.4.

students, realises that Apollonius' wife has not actually died in childbirth after all;⁶⁷ two more artificial versions are offered by Iamblichus, one with both hero and heroine suffering from poisoning by infected bees, another in which a young woman is simply mistaken for a corpse.⁶⁸ Heliodorus produces yet another variation, where a killing is described as taking place (of the heroine); the killing is genuine enough, but it turns out to have been (unintentionally) of the wrong woman; the living survivor Charicleia is once more mistaken for a ghost, and there is the added mystification as to how Thisbe, the real victim, came to be in a place where she could be.⁶⁹

But the *pièce de résistance*, for good or ill, is supplied by Achilles Tatius. There seems a self-conscious and deliberately calculated point in choosing to set up a sequence of three such episodes, but in diminishing order of elaboration and excitement. The first has a bizarrely explicit human sacrifice by pirates, in which the heroine's body is apparently opened and the contents eaten. The hero's extraordinarily grotesque rhetoric on this occasion, of which he is a helpless but distant witness, is then interrupted by the two pseudo-pirates who arranged the stunt, and one of them even goes so far as to pretend to be resurrecting Leucippe from the dead in two stages (the first with the exposed guts still externally arranged), before the ruse can be revealed, reliant as it is on extraordinary coincidences, such as the pirates' custom of initiating new recruits by this means, and the handy availability of a stage dagger.⁷⁰

A similar trick is allowed to vary this initial event when Leucippe is (supposedly) beheaded and Clitophon reclaims only the headless corpse; this time the essential variation is that the trick is not explained until the very end of the novel (until in fact Leucippe has gone missing a third time);⁷¹ comment is explicitly made on the diminishing return of the heroine's corpse, and on her habit of dying and resurrecting.⁷²

The whole *topos* seems to develop in yet another direction in the *Ass-Romance*,⁷³ where both versions have the robbers debate enclosing a young girl

⁶⁷ *Apollonius of Tyre* 26f. The text as a whole reflects many of the same sorts of ineptitude as Xenophon of Ephesus.

⁶⁸ Iamblichus at Photius Cod. 74b, 75a. The outline known from Photius' summary and a number of fragments shares tastes with Achilles Tatius.

⁶⁹ Heliodorus 1.31.1; the mystery is not finally unravelled until 5.1f.

⁷⁰ Achilles 3.15-22.

⁷¹ Achilles 5.7.4; 8.16.

⁷² Achilles 7.5.3.

⁷³ The short Greek epitome, and Apuleius' elaboration of this work are properly seen as offering a Comic Romance; but the distance is not too far from Achilles Tatius and Iamblichus.

inside the disembowelled body of an ass, and speculating on the torture which would result;⁷⁴ a similar ploy, which does develop into yet another *Scheintod*, is included in Xenophon of Ephesus, where its suspense value is ‘sprung’ too soon: Anthia is enclosed in a trench with two wild dogs, which however are simply fed by a devoted pirate.⁷⁵

There is no doubt that the artistic possibilities of these events sit on the fringe of grotesque bad taste, in most cases knowingly so. But we must be prepared to ask why the motif is so persistently cultivated, and why there is a particularly voyeuristic streak.⁷⁶ As usual individual authors tend to underline their individuality in the way they deploy the topos: Heliodorus characteristically endows it with prophetic equivocation: Thyamis ‘will kill Charicleia and not kill her’;⁷⁷ Achilles is a connoisseur of voyeuristically refined cruelty; Chariton by contrast demonstrates how delicately the topos can be executed by anyone so minded.

Storm and Shipwreck

Like *Scheintod* scenes, storms and shipwreck offer a natural ingredient of melodrama already well established in Epic at least. But once more there is a great deal of opportunity for the tastes and personality of the author to assert themselves. In the case of Chariton there actually is the capture of a ship, but the author takes care not to be drawn into digression, so tight is the organisation of the plot itself.⁷⁸ The two obvious perpetrators of ‘digressive’ storms are Achilles and Heliodorus, both of whom indulge in extreme ecphrasis.

Achilles⁷⁹ provides the nearer version to a conventional storm scene, with the expected darkened sky, mountainous waves, competing winds, and shrieking passengers: the first three elements at least can readily be paralleled from Epic, all four from life. However the temptation to indulge in epigram after epigram for its own sake is actually resisted, and Achilles is able to establish his literary credentials with in the first instance a very precise description of tacking when confronted with a head wind; but secondly by exhausting the passengers’ attempting to counterbalance the roll of the ship, described by the metaphor of ‘running a foot race under arms’ (i.e. encumbered with luggage). Jettisoning goods is another cliché of ancient storms, and Achilles uses an ironic aside en passant: ‘and even

⁷⁴ Apuleius *Met.* 6.31f.; *Onos* 25.

⁷⁵ Xenophon 4.6.

⁷⁶ Cf. Konstan (1994), 60-73.

⁷⁷ Heliodorus 1.30.

⁷⁸ Chariton 3.7.3.

⁷⁹ Achilles 3.1-4.

many of the merchants themselves seized the goods in which their hopes resided, and made haste to toss them overboard'.⁸⁰ Achilles does however manage a 'novelty' sea-fight, when the passengers fight the crew abandoning ship for possession of the lifeboat. The most extravagant rhetoric is assigned to the hero Clitophon rather than the narrator: the prayer that a single fish should engulf Clitophon and Leucippe together. One suspects too that there is quite deliberate *kakozēlon* here: the idea that the two should at least mingle their flesh if only in the inside of the same fish seems peculiarly at home in this author.

When Heliodorus uses the topos the effect is much less conventional,⁸¹ with little detail on the mechanics or description of the storm. There is a typical trademark of Heliodorus, suggesting doubt as to the cause of the sudden bad weather 'taking its turn from the moment, changed at the wish of some fortune'. But the main interest is in an unusual paradox (or a novel variation of an existing one). The pirates, though experienced in handling a light cutter, are rash and incompetent in controlling a large merchant-ship; incompetence is more of a threat than the storm; the pirate Trachinos acts decisively to cut away the cutter. Jettisoning equipment and the helmsman abandoning his post are features common to both, but again Heliodorus maintains interest by wisely keeping conventional storm features in the background.

Longus has several variations, each highly unusual: the light pirate ship is capsized when a herd of captured cows rush overboard in response to Chloe's piping; the Methymnaean expedition is besieged at night by a divine attack, with dolphins charging the boat; and the Methymnaean yacht is wrecked when its substitute hawser parts.⁸² None of these episodes requires conventional description, though Longus does accumulate details of the terrifying night laid on by Pan for the Methymnaean fleet. But the shipwrecked yacht episode in particular is well integrated into the action: thanks to it, Daphnis is able to salvage a purse containing three thousand drachmas, and so start the final course towards marriage with Chloe.

We might expect the comic novels to have a different approach again, and once more Petronius is able to innovate, although we must remain vague as to the overall context: The short extracts of a shipwreck scenario at 114f. offer new angles on the topos: most particularly in the contrast between the opprobrious Lichas, reduced so quickly from the tyrannical ship's master to a drowned corpse jeered by his old enemy Encolpius; and his incompetent poet Eumolpus insists on remaining aboard the doomed vessel, so consumed is he with a poetic

⁸⁰ Achilles 3.2.9.

⁸¹ Heliodorus 5.27.

⁸² Longus 1.30.1f.; 2.25; 2.14.1f.

masterpiece; more cynical in effect is the observation that those who come to loot the ship change into rescuers only when they realise there are survivors still able to defend their property.⁸³

Against these resourceful workings we can set the indifferent efforts of Xenophon of Ephesus; and *Apollonius of Tyre*, where a storm scene is built up unusually out of a long Virgilian verse pastiche in what is otherwise a prose texture.⁸⁴ In this latter case at least we might harbour the strong suspicion that the storm is only there because all self-respecting melodramatic narratives are felt to have to have one.

Little can be said of the evidence in fragmentary texts. The Herpyllis romance uses a storm to separate the two lovers;⁸⁵ at least the storm there cannot have been used as a purely gratuitous exercise, to be applied indiscriminately whenever lovers have taken to the water. And fragment C of *Ninus* is generally taken to imply a shipwreck as a means of reversing the king's fortunes;⁸⁶ without a context it may be wise to suspend judgement.

Courtroom melodrama

The novelists in general have an appetite for courtroom scenes, and the drama that attends them: a present-day preoccupation with the same makes explanation superfluous. They can serve to articulate, intensify, and even conclude the tensions in the plot, and act as a natural showpiece for rhetorical bravura and melodramatic twists. The success of the topos does not as it happens require a high degree of rhetorical skill, which it is tempting to overuse. The most striking single instance is that in Chariton, where the author has taken great care to ensure that both strands of the action converge on it, and early enough in the plot for the reader not to be able to guess the eventual outcome.

On the other hand the last two books of Achilles Tatius revolve round a trial of the hero Clitophon for murder of Leucippe, like Chariton's Callirhoe still alive. Here there is much less of a sense of climax: Leucippe has disappeared before and we are not obliged to ask what will be the consequences for her rival Melite when she at last turns up. Indeed her appearance before the trial even begins easily refutes the charge. But the appetite in rhetorical circles for absurdity in court cases is strongly indulged here. Clitophon has already expressed a death-wish by falsely

⁸³ Petronius, *Sat.* 115.1f.; 114.14.

⁸⁴ *Apollonius of Tyre* 11.

⁸⁵ *Herpyllis* (Winkler-Stephens (1995), 158-161).

⁸⁶ *Ninus* fr. C (Winkler-Stephens 64-67).

confessing to the murder of his beloved, and the trial is resolved by a *proklēsis* which entails two equivocal chastity tests: the oaths are so worded that both Leucippe and Melite, the former guilty in spirit, the latter in fact, are able to escape.⁸⁷ The trial scene is also tricked out with some of the typical interests of the author. The speech of the priest at Ephesus against Melite's real husband Thersander is a *psogos* exceptionally rich in sexual innuendo.⁸⁸

Heliodorus for his part again devotes substantial space in the latter part of the work to trial or trial-like proceedings. Charicleia is first accused of murder, and is subjected to a sham trial in Egypt in order to further the designs of the Persian Arsake with Clitophon: the *pantarbē* stone easily sets the inevitable result at nought.⁸⁹ A much more protracted procedure is given over to the gradual establishment of Charicleia's identity as an Ethiopian princess, in that a death sentence, or rather allocation as a human sacrifice, awaits the *Liebespaar* unless the law itself can be abolished. Here again the opportunities for the rhetoric of the *controversia* are very considerable ('a father debates whether to sacrifice his daughter or abolish the law...').⁹⁰

As so often, it is Longus whose miniature scale and lightness of touch averts the problem of becoming weighed down in ever more ponderous and convoluted proceedings. For a start the 'trial' is an informal procedure in which the village elder Philetas is called in to arbitrate in a case where Methymnaean aristocrats hold Daphnis responsible for the wreck of their vessel, since one of his goats had eaten the withy with which it was insecurely moored. The whole business is treated at the level of trivial farce, though frictions of this general kind are not unknown in the daily life reflected in Egyptian papyri. The Methymnaeans patronise their opponents by talking in words of one syllable; and Philetas comes up with an ingenious evasion: the wind and waves were to blame, and they were in the jurisdiction of another court.⁹¹ The whole episode has an air of folk-wisdom about it, and might not have been out of place in a work like the *Aesop Romance*.

The comic novels for their part are able to make perhaps the most extensive use of trial proceedings. Apuleius sets up an elaborate mock trial scene as the festival of laughter, with the victim making his ludicrously bombastic defence speech on a triple murder charge for the murder of what turn out to be no more than three animated wineskins,⁹² and the inset tales and reflections may well reflect Apuleius' own brush with the law in a defence speech still extant.

⁸⁷ Achilles 8.11-14.

⁸⁸ Achilles 8.9.1-5.

⁸⁹ Heliodorus 8.7-11.

⁹⁰ Heliodorus 10.7-40.

⁹¹ Longus 2.17.1.

⁹² Apuleius *Met.* 3.3-9.

Individualising the villains

The novel is often characterised by its pirates and bandits, but these are seldom examined closely. When this is done we tend to find that they are not always what they seem: if they are not fair-minded priests or nobles in disguise they may be pricelessly comic professionals. Chariton's Theron has the physiognomy of a distinctly new comic villain – hard-headed, treating his vocation as a job and a trade, and good at it:⁹³

When he went to bed he could not sleep for saying to himself 'Am I risking my life battling against the sea and killing the living for the sake of tiny rewards, when it is possible to get rich from a single corpse? Let the die be cast: I will not let this profit go by; so who will I enlist for the enterprise? Take note, Theron, who is useful among those you know? Zenophanes of Thourii? – astute but cowardly. Meno of Messana? – daring but treacherous'. And he went through each one with his calculations like an assayer of silver, rejecting many but considering some suitable. So at dawn he ran to the harbour, searching out each one. Some he found in brothels, some in the market, a suitable army for such a general.

Chariton has a playful eye for the incongruity between the villain and his low companions and his lively intelligence; the incidental metaphor of the pirate as an assayer is neatly applied; he of all people should be an expert in gain. And this impression is carried through: it is he who makes the fateful decision neither to restore Callirhoe to her parents nor to kill her, but to sell her at a safe distance; it is he who thinks the Athenians will be too inquisitive;⁹⁴ he is extremely careful and circumspect over the details of the sale of the girl to Dionysius' steward Leonas. In the sequel he is becalmed without water and steals from his fellow pirates; and unlike any other principal pirate in the novels, he is actually executed, with Chariton's ironic aside that he was looking out over the scene of his triumphs.⁹⁵

The character of Theron accords with the overall scheme of the author: he tells a melodramatic and unashamedly sentimental story with more than just a touch of humour and sympathetic observation. Pirates assume a no less prominent role in Heliodorus, where the most prominent among several pirate chiefs turns out in due course to be the dispossessed High Priest of Memphis, no less: he is inspired by his interpretation of a dream to ask his men for the heroine Charicleia,

⁹³ Chariton 1.7.1-3.

⁹⁴ Chariton 1.10-11.7.

⁹⁵ Chariton 3.4.18.

for what he implausibly makes out to be reasons of piety and propriety.⁹⁶ When circumstances change he is ready to reinterpret the dream and kill Charicleia, as he supposes;⁹⁷ and it is still a considerable surprise when his priestly credentials fully emerge: but that is part of Heliodorus' overall interest in Perry's 'sacerdotal strategies'; even the pirate chief has to turn out to be a high priest.

In the hands of a competent author such a role can be made to convince: only in one case, that of Xenophon of Ephesus, do the pirates seem as poorly handled as the rest of the plot. Hippothous, who occupies a comparable stretch of plot to Calasiris' son Thyamis, has been forced into piracy by social injustice at home in Sparta; we find him alternately trying to help Habrocomes to find Anthia, then threatening her himself both before and after.⁹⁸ But at no point is there any attempt at psychological development. Only the *boukoloï* as presented by Achilles Tatius seem to embody the horrific cruelty one might have expected of all such. Longus has pirates outdone by no more than a shepherdess' piping-tune, and drowned thanks to their heavy armour.⁹⁹

Inset narratives

The novelists have the opportunity to show their skills as storytellers on a small scale as well as a large one. The result is a number of miniature 'insets' in the texture of the plots, most notably where new characters encountered on the course of their journey are required to introduce themselves with tales of their life-story so far. All that is strictly necessary in such instances is that the new character should adequately account for his presence (they turn out to be exclusively male). The general expectation is that there has been some love-affair scarcely less ill-starred than that of the hero and heroine themselves, offering some degree of literary counterpoint. But there is also a measure of diversification here: the stories tend to reflect the narrative preoccupations and personalities of the novelists themselves.

There are two such stories in Xenophon of Ephesus which might serve to offer an illustration of the bare minimum required: the narratives of Hippothous and Aigialeus. In fact when looked at in parallel the tales follow as nearly identical a formula as is consistent with being different at all.¹⁰⁰ The teller is wealthy and in

⁹⁶ Heliodorus 1.20.

⁹⁷ Heliodorus 1.30.

⁹⁸ Xenophon 2.13; 4.6.

⁹⁹ Longus 1.30.2f.

¹⁰⁰ Xenophon 3.2; 5.1.

love; a god envies their happiness. Parental interference results in a rival to be avoided, and elopement is necessary; a memorial is set up for the now-deceased partner. There are differences: Hippothous is in love with a youth, murders the rival who has seduced him, and the partner dies tragically; Aigialeus is in love with a girl, both are in exile, and the partner eventually dies of old age. A memorial is 'answered' by a mummified corpse. Both plots might also be said to reflect in a limited way the main story itself – and indeed may consist of little more than a miniaturised version of it.

The case of Xenophon highlights both the opportunities and the pitfalls of the inset tale. It is easy to fall into a contrived parallelism. It is useful to contrast Achilles Tatius in this department: again we find two subplot narrations presented which are close enough to be compared. The second of these, the tale of Menelaus, is presented in a manner similar to those of Xenophon's efforts: the lover had indulged his (male) beloved's passion for hunting, and has accidentally killed him with a javelin in an attempt to protect him from a wild boar. The choice of theme is rather different: the lover himself killed or fatally wounded his beloved: there was in fact no rivalry entailed on this occasion. But the description is not much more elaborate, though one notes the exploitation of paradoxes:¹⁰¹

If I felt any emotion at all, it was like dying a living death. Still more pitiful, he stretched out his hands to me, still breathing a little, and embraced me, and as he died, he did not hate me, his vile killer, slain as he was by me, but breathed his last as he embraced the hand that killed him.

But Achilles' first story, though dealing with the same motifs once more, has a very different quality: in this case Clitophon's cousin Clinias has indulged his lover Charicles with the gift of a horse; the rider has received news that his father has arranged a marriage with an ugly woman for her wealth. The gift of the horse proves fatal, as in bolting the horse kills Charicles. Here we have the two themes discussed so far in combination: the lover causes the victim's death in an outdoor accident, and there is rivalry through parental interference.¹⁰² But the scale and manner of presentation are wholly different from anything seen so far. The story is more fully integrated into the main action: Clinias is giving Clitophon a man-to-man talk about love; Charicles has received a message that he is to marry, and takes the horse out for the first time. After an elaborate *Ars Amatoria* the messenger returns with a report of Charicles' death and the body is brought in. There is a hint as early as this of Achilles' penchant for the elaborate rhetorical description

¹⁰¹ Achilles 2.34.5.

¹⁰² Achilles 1.7f.

of wounds ('he was hurled from his saddle as from a catapult, and his face was mutilated by the branches, gashed with as many wounds as there were sharp points on the branches' ...).¹⁰³

Achilles has taken over a simple skeletal story of lovers' mishaps and developed the presentation to a new dramatic effect. He is also able, we could argue, to give the parallelism of his two tales some additional meaning: the two homosexual lovers Clinias and Menelaus will be drawn together by the similarity of their misfortunes. The whole business is an obvious rhetorical extravaganza, but it is not just that: the simple tale has been resourcefully diversified. One notes however that after initial elaboration the story of Menelaus is told much less extravagantly, and this is a characteristic of Achilles: rhetorical bolts are shot early, and the variations on them tend to become simpler.

By contrast one notes that there is little trace of this kind of narrative in Longus. There is information that various people have sexual histories of one sort or another, but no-one really comes from far enough away to require this sort of introduction. It is generally helpers of the hero and heroine who are accorded a sub-tale; the helper Philetas does mention his own love for Amaryllis, but it is really parallel to the affair of Daphnis and Chloe rather than presented as a diversionary contrast to it. The digressive action finds its significant expression rather in the myths, to which we shall return.

By contrast again, Heliodorus produces by far the most ambitious extant narrative of a helper's misfortune, the story of Cnemon and Thisbe. The first instalment is told at very great length when the obliquely introduced main plot has only just been established, and spreads over much of book 1.¹⁰⁴ Cnemon has been framed by his stepmother with Thisbe's help; he is exiled, but Thisbe now frames the stepmother in turn. He goes off in search of Thisbe to find her murdered in Egypt; he meets her former lover Nausicles with whom she had eloped, and marries the latter's daughter Nausicleia. There is some limited resemblance to motifs prominent in Chariton's introductory intrigues: the stepmother claims to have been kicked while pregnant, as Callirhoe genuinely was. There is also an ostentatiously 'Athenian' décor, with careful attention to the minutiae of festivals and law-courts. But the integration into the text is very carefully contrived; the second part is carefully placed as late as book 6.

There are three inset myths in Longus which pose a special problem like the parallel tales in Achilles and Xenophon; these tend to form a set of variations: there is a tale by Daphnis on the origins of the dove, by Lamon on Syrinx; and by

¹⁰³ Achilles 1.12.5.

¹⁰⁴ Heliodorus 1.9-17; see Morgan (1989), 99-113.

Daphnis himself on Echo.¹⁰⁵ In each case there is a metamorphosis of a young girl into a creature or aspect of nature. It is difficult to produce any plausible direct relationship between any of these tales and its immediate context, as we can expect to so obviously for similar material in Achilles Tatius, and this perhaps seems odd in so accomplished an artist as Longus. We should perhaps try another route: that these tales have some of the function of the tale of Conops in Achilles: or represent only the sort of material that a goatherd would be expected to know – simple aetiological information about how the present order of things comes to be as it is. The tales offer at least a limited parallelism: in each case we could argue that the girl has in some way been overcome, and transformed in some musical sense: Phatta loses her singing-contest but is transformed to a singing dove; Syrinx escapes Pan but becomes his musical instrument; and Echo is dismembered (with a pun on *melē*) into a musical repetition.

The Calligone narrative in Achilles offers an opportunity for scrutiny of craftsmanship: in the first instance we might note the general patterning to serve as a parallel incident to the main plot itself. Callisthenes elopes with Calligone (without her consent, the essential difference); and he too behaves chastely towards the object of his affection till her father's blessing has been duly obtained.¹⁰⁶ There is also the matter of an opportunity for considerable ethical contrast between the two halves of the story: Callisthenes begins as a wilfully licentious tearaway, to be transformed by the power of his beautiful captive into a model citizen, for whom Sostratus behaves like a typically New Comic father. But there is also very careful control of the highly precise accumulation of detail necessary to bring off a complex, sudden and exciting kidnap – of the wrong woman. It might be argued that some of this is *ben trovato*: hearsay brides do occur in voluptuous oriental fiction, but they do not belong plausibly in the world of carefully organised kidnap – all the less so in conjunction with convenient coincidence – Leucippe's mother, whom Callisthenes has seen, just happens to be with Calligone, whom he has not seen.

Narrative voices and viewpoints

In a large proportion of the novels we have, characters within the story will narrate large stretches of the action from their own viewpoint; in no fewer than three cases, Achilles Tatius and the two comic novelists, the whole plot action is presented in this way.

¹⁰⁵ Longus 1.27. 2-4; 2.34; 3.23. See especially Hunter (1983), 52-57.

¹⁰⁶ Achilles 8.17.3-6. Note Reardon's comment (1971), 363.

On the whole Clitophon's narrative verges on the objective: although he is telling a story about himself, it could a good deal of the time have been about someone else. He is unselfconscious about dealing with details he could not have known, or which could not have been known at the time. No-one was to know that Charicles was 'on his first and last ride' until his fatal accident was reported; Panthea's dream, on the strength of which she disturbs Clitophon in bed with Leucippe, is related as it happens, although Clitophon himself could only have found out about it after he had eloped with Leucippe.¹⁰⁷ He has of course a privileged position in describing his own emotions as they occur, but to some extent this is fused with his cultural mannerism of giving asides and reflection on the psychology of love itself, and then 'objectified'.

He is inclined to describe his role as a helpless lover in reported behaviour with his confidants Cleinias and Satyrus, a fact which tends to minimise any moral misgivings about his having an affair with his cousin in the run-up to an arranged marriage with his half-sister. First-person narrative may encourage the narrator to confide his ineptitudes to his reader, as when he is surprised by Leucippe herself amid his mythological musings, or when he relies on Satyrus to feed him contrived conversation to direct Leucippe's thoughts in an amorous direction.¹⁰⁸ But his interventions can be telling: of an early amorous encounter with Leucippe he is able to say 'What her reactions were I could not say'; but of the conversation on amorous paradoxography: 'she seemed not to be displeased by our discourse'.¹⁰⁹ He does not omit to say that Leucippe was safely out of earshot when he and Menelaus were discussing the relative merits of homosexual and heterosexual intercourse.

But one episode emphasises his editorial role very obviously. If he is telling his own story, then he will be responsible for the inevitable summaries that may be called on from time to time to fill new characters in on the action. He reports himself in very specific detail in book 8 as giving Leucippe's father Sostratus his account of their story:¹¹⁰

And I went through all the events from our elopement from Tyre: the voyage, the shipwreck, the events in Egypt, the herdsmen, the kidnap of Leucippe, the fake stomach at the altar, Menelaus' trick, the general's infatuation and Chaereas' potion, the abduction of Leucippe by the pirates, and my wound in the thigh: (I showed them the scar). When I came to the business of Melite, I

¹⁰⁷ Achilles 1.8.11; 2.24.

¹⁰⁸ Achilles 1.17.1.

¹⁰⁹ Achilles 2.8.1; 1.19.1.

¹¹⁰ Achilles 8.5.1-5.

edited events, emphasising my continence and yet telling no lies. I recounted Melite's love, my chastity, all the time she begged me, how her request came to nothing, all her promises and laments. I mentioned the ship, the voyage to Ephesus, how we shared the same bed, and (I swore by Artemis), that she rose as one woman from the bed of another. One detail only I passed over of my conduct, the delicate business of my relations with Melite after that point. I did mention the dinner, and how I made a wrongful accusation against myself, and I took the story up to the sacred embassy; then I declared 'these are my adventures; Leucippe's are of more substance: she was sold as a slave, dug the ground, and was despoiled of the beauty of her head: you see how she has been shorn'. And I recounted in detail all that had happened to her. And when I reached the events concerning Sosthenes and Thersander, I emphasised her adventures much more than mine, giving her the credit as a lover should in her father's hearing: that she bore every kind of physical outrage but one, and for the sake of this one endured all the others. 'And she remained, father, up to the present just as you sent her from Byzantium'.

Clitophon is at pains to stress how far he has edited the narrative to take account of the audience, including as it does Leucippe's father. The melodrama is telescoped so that the narrator can emphasise his own editorial cunning, and how he has in effect seriously misrepresented his relationship with Leucippe; he leaves the reader to remember that the encounter that brought about the elopement in the first place was anything but chaste in intent. The speech is all the more focused on Clitophon's omissions if we contrast it with the narratives of Leucippe and her father, whose functions are merely to fill in the gaps in the narrative that Clitophon had no means of knowing.

Leucippe's speech is in fact the only opportunity we find of herself as narrator.¹¹¹ Not only does it convey the facts of the case (a prostitute on board was decapitated in place of Leucippe, and her body tossed into the sea). She nuances the account not only with gaps – she did not clearly know why the other girl was there – but tells with skill and relish the fate of Chaereas, who had argued with his fellow pirates and been killed with her approval). This paves the way in turn for Sostratus' morally elevating story of how Calligone's abduction had reformed her dissolute captor.¹¹²

When on the other hand we encounter Petronius' anti-hero Encolpius we have a much more emphatic and equivocal use of the first person to record the narrator's embarrassing humiliations. It falls to his lot to recount his more or less

¹¹¹ Achilles 8.16.

¹¹² Achilles 8.17f.

constant miscalculations and misreadings of his situations, with a much greater emphasis on his ignorance of what is happening or about to happen. Hence a whole catalogue of misinterpretations of Trimalchio's pranks at the *Cena*, and a very careful nuancing so that it is carefully conveyed just how long it took for Encolpius to realise that the bizarre banquet is turning into a nightmare.

The most accomplished voice, it might be argued, in any of the novels from the point of view of narrative technique, is that of Calasiris, the Egyptian priest in Heliodorus who instigates the elopement of the couple from Delphi to Ethiopia.¹¹³ He tells his story in several instalments to the Athenian Cnemon, himself no mean raconteur, over no fewer than some three books of a ten-book novel. He is constantly aware, and alerts the reader to constant awareness, of the fact that a tale is in process of being told, and takes an almost professional pride in recounting his various deceits en route.

Cnemon broke in: 'Enough of herdsmen and satraps and Great Kings. For you nearly got away with skipping to the end of your story: you wheeled on this episode that has nothing to do with Dionysus, as they say. So take back your tale to where you promised. For I have found you like Proteus of Pharos, not like him turning to a false and shifting mirage, but always trying to divert me'. The old man replied: 'you shall hear it, and I will recount my own tale, not with a slippery account as you suppose, but preparing a well-ordered and continuous hearing of events in order'.

Having established his narrative evasiveness even before the start of his tale,¹¹⁴ Calasiris actually begins. He is able to explain at some length his reasons for wandering to Delphi before Cnemon interrupts to comment on the aptness of his description: Calasiris explains his introduction to Charicles after a speech on the cause of the Nile flooding; thereafter we have a long account of Charicles' having been given a mysterious child on a sojourn to Egypt, with an interruption for the arrival of Theagenes on a sacred mission from Thessaly, which in turn has to be explained. At this point Calasiris expects to abridge, but Cnemon forces him into full-blown ecphrasis of that, and even of the words of a hymn in a separate interruption. The *enargeia* of his description of Theagenes and Charicleia prompts Cnemon to think he sees them – in his mind's eye, as it turns out in yet another interruption. The narrative, postponed for food, now needs a lamp-lighting libation when he comes to a vision entrusting Theagenes and Charicleia to him; he has to explain a divine sign further illustrated by the 'fact' that Homer is an

¹¹³ See especially Winkler (1982), 93-158.

¹¹⁴ Heliodorus 2.24.

Egyptian(!) When Theagenes himself comes to see him, supposing that Egyptian magic is of use for helping in love-affairs (more elaboration), Calasiris is able to comment on his own trickery:¹¹⁵

I held back a little, made meaningless calculations with my fingers, shook my locks, and feigned that I was possessed by a spirit; I said ‘you are in love, my child’. He leapt up at the prediction and when I added the name of Charicleia, he really thought the divine voice was speaking through me as a medium.

Not only does the whole business represent a masterly performance on Calasiris’ part, demonstrating gratuitous and occasionally quite suspect information en route: it successfully constructs a deliberately tantalising narrative. Cnemon at times makes it quite difficult for Calasiris to get to the point. And it relies heavily on the fact that by this time the reader must be curious to know who Charicleia can be, and how exactly she and Theagenes came to be on the magnificently described nautical enigma with which the novel had opened. Heliodorus like Achilles before him is fairly leisurely at the start of this gargantuan *Ich-erzählung*; once into the narrative of the elopement there is less interruption, except that the story is actually broken for sleep, and by an interlude in which Cnemon mistakes Charicleia for Thisbe and she herself reappears in the plot but without Theagenes. Calasiris’ narrative resumes at 5.17, not uncharacteristically with a description of sea-currents in the Crisean Gulf. Here again Calasiris admits to editing information about the plottings of pirates on the way (5.21), with a strongly Homeric touch in a guest appearance of Odysseus at 5.23. The story of evading pirates does not end till 5.33. At this point Calasiris is able to use only the ‘restricted’ view of the narrative. Having withdrawn to a hilltop, he has lost touch at this point corresponding to the beginning of the original action proper (1.1).

Dialogue

It is natural to expect the writers of any extended work in prose to have a command of dialogue technique, in order to reveal the characters as they interact.¹¹⁶ And we can expect as much nuancing as there are novelists themselves. At the most banal level the dialogue conveys little more than business-like communication, as between Leonas and his master Dionysius:¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Heliodorus 3.17.

¹¹⁶ Compare Anderson (2014), 217-230.

¹¹⁷ Chariton 2.1.8f.

‘Master, I have lost you a talent’. Dionysius replied ‘This mishap will make you more prudent in the future. But what went wrong? Surely the slave girl you bought didn’t run away?’ ‘Not she’, he replied, ‘but the man who sold her’. ‘He was a trafficker then, and he sold you someone else’s slave in a deserted place for that reason. Where did he say she was from?’ ‘Sybaris in Italy, sold by her mistress on account of jealousy’. ‘Find out if there are any Sybarites living locally. And meanwhile leave the woman there’.

There is a considerable tendency to report characters’ exchanges in indirect speech rather than direct, clearing the way for ‘showpieces’ of solo or antiphonal rhetoric. It is no surprise that Petronius and Chariton emerge as the most practised handlers of dialogue. At this level dialogue establishes an impression of the ordinary, the routine, the everyday; and it is suited to the rapid forward movement of the plot as a whole, when crucial negotiation is in progress to make sure that Dionysius marries Callirhoe. Such naturalness can be rare to find in the more sophisticated novelists. Achilles in particular tends to make his characters interact in antithetical essays rather than dialogue of the conventional sort (in spite of the Platonic colouring of much else in his work). But note Achilles 2.33.2f.:

‘Where are you from, young man?’ ‘My name is Menelaus and I am a native Egyptian. And you?’ ‘My name is Clitophon and this is Clinias, both from Phoenicia’. ‘And what is the reason for you sailing away?’ ‘If you first tell me your story, I will tell you ours’.

Heliodorus is well aware of the possibilities of contrasting quickfire dialogue and more elaborate narration:¹¹⁸

‘But what name must I call you?’ said Theagenes. He replied ‘Cnemon’. ‘From where?’ ‘Athens’. ‘And how do you come to be here?’ ‘Stop’, said Cnemon. ‘Why do you stir up and unbar such matters? My tale is the stuff of tragedy. It would not be fitting to wheel in my misfortunes as an episode in your adventures’.

Both Achilles and Heliodorus can fall back on evasiveness preceding a narrative. Sometimes however a novelist will experiment with answering speeches rather than conversation. An interesting case is the double antithesis after the trial scene in Chariton. We are told first that opinion was divided as to who was the ‘true’ husband of Callirhoe. Once the antithesis of claims has been put, we learn that

¹¹⁸ Heliodorus 1.8.

this was only what the men said. The contrasting advice to Callirhoe is then given. Chariton is able to express the respective claims in succinct and effective epigram in the manner of a double *meletē*; but we are then given a female ‘angle of vision’: the men think in terms of the husband’s claims, the women of how the heroine herself actually feels.

Achilles tends to fall back on antithetical speeches, sometimes eccentrically contrived, as when he presents antithetical fables in the conversation between Co-nops and Satyrus.¹¹⁹ Here the fable of the gnat, the lion and the elephant is told in a relatively plain style, as one expects a simple cautionary animal tale to be. But the rejoinder given to Satyrus has a different feel both in the flamboyant narration and more particularly in the gnat’s own speech, where his boastfulness approaches the height of elegant sophistic virtuosity – before he has his comeuppance at the hands of a spider. Even the hero’s servant is able to tell a simple fable with nothing less than sophistic panache. But it is Longus who tends to think most effectively in antithesis on this scale; the rustic debate between Dorcon and Daphnis might illustrate naïve young men making antithetical boasts (and within their speeches in extremely short cola).

Personality and Paradoxography

It used to be regarded as a self-evident symptom of the lack of taste of ancient novelists that they had a reputation for paradoxography, for the more or less gratuitous and irrelevant deployment of digressions from history, geography, or anything else that happened to interest them. More recently it has been possible to explore some of the materials in relation to their contexts, in the use of anticipatory ephrasis, for example. But it has still not been possible to see an author’s nuancing of paradoxography as a part of his literary personality. It is time to take a look. One example gives us a good idea of what we might expect:¹²⁰

My father made ambitious and expensive preparations for the dinner: among them he set down a sacred vessel that was very precious, second only to that of Glaucus of Chios. The whole vessel was of rock crystal. Vines surrounded it that grew from the bowl itself with their clusters hanging down in all directions. All the grapes seemed an unripe green, so long as the bowl was empty; but if you filled it with wine, the clusters gradually reddened and darkened as

¹¹⁹ Achilles 2.21f.

¹²⁰ Achilles 2.3.

the green ripened; Dionysus was depicted near the clusters, to be the husbandman of the wine.

As it happens we do have just such an object from some two centuries after Achilles; and it is every bit as special an item as Achilles quite clearly implies here. But why is it there? The answer in this case may be simple enough: the first erotic gesture of the novel – lovers' exchanged kisses – are about to take place through the subterfuge of passing the communal cup. Achilles has simply chosen to underline the fact.

Perhaps the most distinctive instance of paradoxography in the extant novels is the speech of Clitophon to Leucippe about the wooing in the natural world. Where Longus or anyone else might have been content with 'the birds and the bees do it', it is a part of the outlook of Achilles and more precisely his character Clitophon to argue that 'educated fleas do it' – or at any rate stones, palm-trees and land-and-water snakes.¹²¹ In one sense Clitophon is simply taking the advice of his cousin Clinias, that in talking to the virgin Leucippe he must not actually mention the act itself. By displacement he can however talk about 'natural' instances of sexual attraction. One might suspect the speech of being loaded with sexual innuendo for Clitophon's own case: the body of the drooping palm-tree stands upright when a female graft is implanted. Mingling of waters is equally erotic. It seems more difficult to make sense of the last instance: the female snake (of a different species) has to wait until he has spilled his poisonous serum on the sand.

Even where paradoxographical passages seem to function for their own sake, they can still be used to embody a particular viewpoint or individuality on the part of the author. For example, the ephrasis of the crocodile which points to the end of book 4 of Achilles Tatius seems to embody or effectively sum up that author's fascination with rhetorically refined cruelty. In fact as so often the treatment is quite skilfully observed, and takes its fantastic quality partly from the unfamiliarity of the creature itself, partly from the elegant phrasing of the description. One notes an apparently contrived inconsequence: in finishing the half-way mark of the work with the open jaws of the crocodile, it is perhaps not irrelevant to note that Lucian has his actual crew inside a well-toothed whale at the halfway mark of *Verae Historiae*.¹²²

Not unrelated is Achilles' indulgence in double ephrasis of a grotesque mythical scene. First the story of Philomela, Tereus and Procne is described as it is seen in situ as a painting in an artist's studio described by the omniscient narrator

¹²¹ Achilles 1.17f.

¹²² Lucian, VH 1.30.

in the normal way;¹²³ the myth is then retold through the voice of Clitophon, explaining the painting to Leucippe. The first version is inclined to focus on sexually explicit detail, such as Philomela's attempt to conceal her breasts from her ravisher; the second is delicately expurgated of such details ('he began his journey as the husband of Procne, but returned the lover of Philomela'). But in the end grotesquerie proves irresistible:

'Tereus, when he saw the remains of his son, mourned over what he had eaten, and realised that he was the father of the meal'.

Realism

Again, most of the authors in our canon have at some stage to address the question of 'corroborative detail'. It is not enough just to make two young people fall in love. They must have their adventures in a setting that is in some sense authentic and credible, and may serve to reinforce the reader's confidence in the writer's omniscience. The phrase 'documentary realism' goes a good deal of the way towards explaining the prominence of documents and letters in the novels as a guarantee that the lovers are moving in a familiar world; and the generally historical 'feel' of the background serves to maintain the same illusion. But again there must be a choice of which details to highlight, in particular to emphasise a preoccupation of the author himself. In this respect the sophistic novelists are particularly well-equipped, and Longus especially has an easy mastery over the use of detail to determine ethos and atmosphere: if one detail only were to be selected, it might be the statement that the vines of Lesbos stand so low off the ground that even a baby could pick grapes.¹²⁴ Comparison in detail to Dio's *Euboicus* might serve to emphasise that the latter is a great deal more concerned about the 'subsistence economics' of the countryside: Dio is concerned to emphasise a picture of rural self-sufficiency and one in which romance is discreetly subdued almost to vanishing point.

Sometimes the detail can be minute. For example, why should the Methymnaeans bind Daphnis with a dog lead?¹²⁵ Because, presumably, it was the only thing handy. But it reinforces once more the careful integration of human and animal worlds. It also replicates the kind of improvisation which has brought about this particular problem in the first place: a farmer had taken the mooring

¹²³ Achilles 5.3.4-8.

¹²⁴ Longus 2.1.4.

¹²⁵ Longus 2.14.3.

rope of the Methymnaean yacht and replaced it with one a goat could eat...Or when Daphnis needs to be absent¹²⁶ so that Chloe can be kidnapped, 'Daphnis was not at that point grazing his goats: he had gone up to the wood, and was busy cutting greenery for fodder in winter for the kids'. Moreover after the day's excitement of losing Chloe and agonising in the usual way, 'he collected the leaves he had cut and returned to the farm'.¹²⁷ Or when the Methymnaean expedition is preparing its anchorage, the ships are left in a deep anchorage to prevent any of the country folk from doing the ships any harm from landward. Even when the flock are disembarking¹²⁸ 'the sheep ran off the gangway slipping on their horny hooves; but the goats moved much more confidently as they were used to walking on steep rocks'.

Nor should we underestimate the degree of realism in the smallest detail. Heliodorus for example makes much and light-hearted use of the evil eye, when Charicleia has fallen in love. But this is a characteristic interest of Egyptian folklore to this day and the recipes for avoiding it are also perfectly real, to say nothing of the Ethiopian royal belt carried and worn by Charicleia, and which might indeed genuinely serve as an apotropaic. Indeed for the authenticity of superstition, we might do well to compare the neurotic and gullible Charicles so easily led by Calasiris to the religious personality of Aelius Aristides.

It is most particularly in historical or quasi-historical detail that the novelists can weave a web of plausibility, at least up to a point. Heliodorus' war between Egypt under Persian rule and an aggressive Ethiopia can be tied down to an actual and now remote historical time-frame; though quite crass military anachronism does occur, as when Persian *cataphractarii* make their appearance in a text set many centuries BCE, Heliodorus for his part would no doubt have got the detail right had he had the resources to do so.¹²⁹

In the case of Achilles it is perhaps more difficult to characterise any single approach to realism. Much indeed is 'realistic' enough: a (quasi-) contemporary settling, a 'modern' morality; but also any essential information can be given in full, such as the precise arrangements of sleeping quarters, essential for the sexual intrigue in book 2; the military ambush by the *boukoloï* of the government forces in book 4; numerous nautical details, and the medical information about the antidote to Leucippe's sleeping potion. But any such considerations tend to shade into a peculiar kind of grotesqueness, to which realism is perhaps little more than a foil. The ecphrasis of Perseus and Andromeda, for example, tends to focus on the

¹²⁶ Longus 2.20.2.

¹²⁷ Longus 2.24.3.

¹²⁸ Longus 2.28.3.

¹²⁹ On 'history and realism' in Heliodorus, Morgan (1982), 221-265.

nature of the blade of Perseus' sword, and the kind of horrific wound it can inflict.¹³⁰

He was equipped in his right hand with a twofold iron weapon divided into a sickle and a sword. For the hilt began as two from one; from half the blade it was a sword, then it divided, one half sharpened, the other curved and the sharp end remained a sword, as it began, but the curved part became a sickle, so that with one stroke the one slashed and the other cut.

There is no particular direct 'use' for this specific detail as it happens. But we should be tempted to remember a certain other 'dual-purpose' sword already described: the dagger later in book 3 with the retractable blade, so essential to make Leucippe's first *Scheintod* effective:

Nonetheless the ethos of a genuinely 'realistic' novel soon puts the ideal romances into perspective: Petronius' *Satyrica* applies the skills of documentary realism as no other. Part of the contrast with the ideal romances is actually a matter of social level: by setting the story, or parts of it, in an ambiguous social echelon of the present the author secures a distinct advantage.

Conclusions

At this point we can take stock and ask how our appreciation of plot construction, characterisation, the handling of stereotypical situations, and the emergence of individuality can be used to artistic ends. Although there is a general consensus that Xenophon of Ephesus performs poorly in comparison with others on every count, it is very difficult to 'rank' the others in anything more than a subjective or even whimsical way. Perhaps the most obvious difficulty is in ranging Heliodorus against Achilles Tatius. Longus and Chariton seem not to be in competition with any others: each establishes effortlessly a league of its own, in which distinctions of sophistic and pre-sophistic matter scarcely at all. The closer one looks, the more one appreciates cultivated control of detail pulling the large-scale narrations in opposite directions. We could say that Heliodorus wins hands down in terms of plot construction. But in a curious way this actually works against him: it is just too easy for the reader to be lost, and once we have worked our way from the middle back to the beginning there is a risk that interest begins to pall. By contrast Achilles' distinctive voyeurism and contrived cruelty offers something with which Heliodorus cannot compete: it is almost as if one were to try to compare

¹³⁰ Achilles 3.7.8f.

Lucian and Aelius Aristides. It is noteworthy that Achilles accumulates his string of sophistic showpieces close to the beginning, while Heliodorus saves his for the end. But all in all the four competent novelists leave the genre far above the level they were placed on by Rohde or B.E.Perry. The hints of further variation in the accessible fragments and summaries in Winkler and Stephens should give us confidence for a greater future comprehension of the genre.¹³¹

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¹³¹ I am grateful to Gareth Schmeling and an anonymous referee for comment on this paper.

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