

Representing Time in Ancient Fiction

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The novel, from the very beginning, developed as a genre that had at its core a new way of conceptualizing time.

Mikhail Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for a Study of the Novel" (1941)

Genealogies of a Genre

It has been over forty years since Ian Watt argued in his persuasive and influential book that the novel was a cultural creation of the emerging English middle classes and that its salient formal feature was a new, more rigorous kind of realism — "formal realism." By now his thesis has been repeatedly criticized on both logical and empirical grounds, but it still provides the most common point of reference for discussions of the origins of the novel. Watt's claim that the novel is as uniquely English, at least in its origins, as it is distinctively modern in its methods still underlies the most ambitious attempts to revise or replace his account. Later refinements on Watt's thesis have traced the novel back to other literary sources and areas of culture such as journalism or an assortment of popular and ephemeral forms (L.J. Davis, J.P. Hunter, W. B. Warner) or grounded his account more thoroughly in the evolution of pre-eighteenth century culture and society (M. McKeon). Even those scholars (like Reed and McKeon) who have acknowledged the inconvenient fact of novelistic fiction written in other languages in earlier centuries have balked at the idea that such fiction appears before the time of Cervantes. Now M.A. Doody has come along and cut the Gordian knot of origins by annulling the fundamental distinction between novelistic and

other forms of fiction such as romance.¹ With that old can of worms out of the way the history of the novel stretches right back to Chariton. What I would like to do here is to sketch an alternative Bakhtinian account of the genre that will do justice to the insights underlying the theses of both Watt and his critics, namely, that 1) something novel emerged in the fiction of the eighteenth century duly reflected in a new terminology (novel vs. romance) but that 2) these texts were far from being as unprecedented as the English department thesis suggests, since novelistic forms of fiction had appeared at least twice before, not only in Renaissance Spain but also in the Roman empire.² While the varieties of fiction that appeared in the 18th century have become canonical examples of the genre of the novel in English, they do have a genealogy that can be traced back to antiquity, which illuminates what is distinctive about the novel as a form of discourse as well as what is and isn't distinctively modern about it. As part of this genealogy, the ancient examples of novelistic fiction (e.g., Apuleius and Petronius) can be systematically or generically distinguished from the heroic romances written in Greek. In other words, novelistic fiction has been invented more than once and, while its earliest examples are still intimately related to romance and other pre-novelistic and oral forms of storytelling, they also provide interesting precedents for what have usually been considered some of the modern and early modern novel's distinguishing features—such as contemporaneity and certain kinds of realism.

There are many ways of worldmaking. Genres are one of them. As Nelson Goodman has argued; “The many stuffs—matter, energy, waves, phenomena—that worlds are made of are made along with worlds. But made from what? Not from nothing, after all, but from other worlds. Worldmaking as we know it always starts from worlds already on hand; the making is a remaking.”³ And so it is with genres. “Where do genres come from? Quite

¹ Doody's definition of the novel—i.e., “A work is a novel if it is fiction, if it is prose, and if it is of a certain length” (Doody 1996.16)—is simply too general to be useful. It gives the false impression that works as varied as Lucians *Verae Historiae*, Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe* and Petronius' *Satyrice* are somehow all examples of the same genre. Not only would this require us to ignore what is original and distinctive about each of these texts but in the process to adopt a critical stance utterly alien to the classical concern with genre, convention and tradition.

² The works referred to in this paragraph are: Watt 1957; Reed 1981; Davis 1983; McKeon 1987; Warner 1998, and Hunter 1992.

³ Goodman 1978.6.

simply from other genres,” or so argues Todorov:⁴ “A new genre is always the transformation of an earlier one, or of several: by inversion, by displacement, by combination.”

But how does something new enter this system? Of course Bakhtin staked out a position in the 20’s in opposition to Russian Formalism that rejected the idea of genre “as the recombination of ready made elements.”⁵ Instead, he argued that the category of genre be understood not simply as “a specific grouping of devices with a defined dominant”⁶—as the Russian Formalists had defined it—but more dynamically as a form of utterance, i.e., not as a set of repeatable rules or conventions that can be specified linguistically; thus by genre Bakhtin does not mean only the hierarchy of literary genres—the usual meaning of the term; his concept is much more capacious embracing the whole spectrum of verbal experience—spoken, written, and thought—as expressed in utterances whether called literary genres, speech genres, inner genres, or behavioral genres.⁷ In *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* the authors argue: “One might say that human consciousness possesses a series of inner genres for seeing and conceptualizing reality. A given consciousness is richer or poorer in genres, depending on its ideological environment.”⁸ Similarly, in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* Voloshinov observes: “Any utterance, no matter how weighty and complete in and of itself, is only a moment in the continuous process of verbal communication. But that continuous verbal communication is, in turn, itself only a moment in the continuous, all-inclusive generative process of a given social collective ... verbal communication can never be understood and explained outside of this connection with a concrete situation.”⁹ On the next page he clarifies the point: “The process of speech broadly understood as the

⁴ Todorov 1990.15.

⁵ Bakhtin and Medvedev 1985.140.

⁶ Bakhtin and Medvedev 1985.129.

⁷ Of course Bakhtin distinguishes between “primary (simple) and... secondary (complex) speech genres—novels, dramas, all kinds of scientific, major genres of commentary, and so forth—[that] arise in more complex and highly developed and organized cultural communication (primarily written) that is artistic, scientific, sociopolitical, and so on. During the process of their formation, they absorb and digest various primary (simple) genres that have taken form in unmediated speech communion. These primary genres are altered and assume a special character when they enter into complex ones” (Bakhtin 1986. 61–2).

⁸ Bakhtin and Medvedev 1985.134.

⁹ Voloshinov 1973.95.

process of inner and outer verbal life goes on continuously. It knows neither beginning nor end. The outwardly actualized utterance is an island rising from the boundless sea of inner speech; the dimensions and forms of this island are determined by the particular situation of the utterance and its audience."¹⁰ All these formulations are attempts to deny that we can explain the genesis of genres solely by reference 1) to social conditions; 2) to language as a system (*langue*) or 3) to the individual psyche—as opposed to the utterance in which all three factors inevitably intersect. That is why Bakhtin can argue in his late essay “The Problem of Speech Genres” that “utterances and their types... are the drive belts from the history of society to the history of language.”¹¹

Hence what is surprising and problematic about genres is not that new ones emerge or that old ones change over time but that they also persist over centuries and across cultures constituting a kind of transcultural memory, as Bakhtin argues.¹² But as the Formalist Iurii Tynyanof points out, “it is only in the context of changing generic paradigms that a single genre’s function can be grasped.”¹³ The function (or meaning) of any one genre will be shaped most fundamentally by its place in—or outside of—the system of canonical genres that obtain in a given historical moment and, hence, by its relation to other genres. The function of Old Comedy, for example, depends on its relations to tragedy and satyr-play, which are more complex than mere opposition. Just as languages depend on a system of phonemic and semantic differences between words, so does the entire system of genres extending from complex literary genres to everyday speech genres. That is why a

¹⁰ Voloshinov 1973.96. Cf. Voloshinov 1973. 40–41: “In the verbal medium, in each utterance, however trivial it may be, this living dialogical synthesis is constantly taking place, again and again, between the psyche and ideology, between the inner and the outer. In each speech act subjective experience perishes in the objective fact of the enunciated word-utterance and the enunciated word is subjectified in the act of responsive understanding in order to generate, sooner or later, a counter statement. Each word, as we know, is a little arena for the clash of differently oriented social accents. A word in the mouth of a particular individual person is a product of the living interaction of social forces”. Bakhtin’s contribution to the works of Medvedev and Voloshinov is of course problematic. The passages cited are consistent with his oeuvre as a whole. For the authorship of the disputed texts, see Morson and Emerson 1991.101–120.

¹¹ Bakhtin 1986.65.

¹² See “Response to a Question from the *Novy Mir*”: Bakhtin 1986.

¹³ Fowler 1981.235.

genre's function, or meaning, cannot be determined in isolation or only by reference to its contents or tropes (as Doody has attempted.)

One way of distinguishing recent attempts to account for the genre of the novel is the way its relationship to romance is conceived. For Watt, romance—particularly French heroic romance—is the foil for the novel and the contrast between the two genres is not considered problematic. More recently, a split has emerged between those like M. McKeon who see the novel emerging out of the transformation of romance—following Northrop Frye among others—and those like J. Paul Hunter who claim that the novel arises by some alchemy from almost any genre but romance, particularly minor journalistic genres that addressed the “desire for literary novelty.” Finally, there are those (like L.J. Davis) who acknowledge the difficulty that our two categories—novel and romance—are in some respects overlapping and so dismiss the distinction as “ideological” without spelling out in argument what this would mean. Aren't all generic distinctions ideological? Doody takes this position to its logical conclusion by simply declaring that the distinction between novels and romances has outlived its usefulness—for whom?—without actually explaining why we are better off ignoring a distinction critics from Clara Reeves to Northrop Frye evidently have felt needed to be made—not to mention the fact that readers, reviewers and publishers employ the same distinction routinely. Literary history needs finer distinctions, not fewer categories. The sheer persistence of the distinction between novels and other kinds of fiction would suggest that it corresponds to something in our experience as readers.

It is interesting therefore that Bakhtin thought it important to distinguish the different kinds of fiction produced in antiquity and did so independently of the distinction traditional in English between novels and romances. He investigated the ancient genres of fiction in at least three ways: 1) by analyzing the representation of space-time (or the *chronotope*) in Greek romance (taking Achilles Tatius as an example) and contrasting its practices with those of Apuleius and Petronius; 2) by distinguishing two major “stylistic lines of development” corresponding to Greek romance and Roman fiction; 3) by constructing “the image of man” or conception of the subject made possible by the literary practices examined in the first two categories. (Bakhtin's conception of the novelistic hero is not unlike the idea that the novel introduced a new kind of realism into literature.)

While many scholars of Greek romance have endorsed or disputed some of Bakhtin's conclusions, rarely are the arguments by which he reached his conclusions examined, as if they were self-evident or irrelevant. But Bakhtin's arguments are far from self-evident and this is an odd approach given the novel ways of thinking about prose fiction that Bakhtin attempted, particularly in his analysis of speech (or "images of language") and space-time (or "chronotopes.")

Elsewhere I have sketched a synoptic account of Bakhtin's general theory of the novel as it applies to ancient literary history¹⁴ (and the evolution of narrative forms from Homer to Petronius, from heroic verse to comic prose.) What I would like to do here is to offer a dialogical account of some of Bakhtin's specific interpretive claims, his conclusions and bold generalizations, in light of the analysis that produced them. This requires tracing the main stages in the argument, attending closely to Bakhtin's own formulations and responding to the problems and gaps in his account. If we do so in the case of the chronotope of Greek romance, a clearly structured argument emerges in which the analysis of time correlates with that of space; both serve to account for the determining role of chance in these narratives, which in turn produces a characteristic kind of plot—"adventure-time"—and a certain "image of the individual" peculiar to the genre. To follow the course of Bakhtin's argument it is important to remember that the analysis is always subordinated to a general anthropological interest in how the "individual," "hero," or "human being" is constructed and understood in a particular genre, which is what makes each genre its own way of apprehending the world. Genres are valuable cultural inventions that last for centuries and understanding how and why they differ is a high priority for him.

It will emerge from our analysis that we only impoverish our understanding of ancient fiction by lumping its weird and heterogeneous representatives into a single literary category. What names we use to designate those categories isn't the crucial question, of course, though the upshot of my argument favors preserving a set of distinctions that have proven useful over time. The interesting question for literary historians or theorists is whether only one distinct type of fiction was invented in antiquity, or as Bakhtin argues, at least two (and perhaps more) varieties of fiction can be usefully distinguished, each of which represents important stages as well as permanent possibilities in the history of prose fiction.

¹⁴ "Inventing the Novel": Mandelker 1995; Branham and Kinney 1997: xi–xxvii.

Chronotopics

To his astonishment, a man all of a sudden exists after countless thousands of years of non-existence and, after a short time, must again pass into a non-existence just as long. The heart says that this can never be right, and from considerations of this kind there must dawn even on the crude and uncultured mind a presentiment of the ideality of time. But this, together with the ideality of space, is the key to all true metaphysics because it makes way for an order of things quite different from that which is found in nature. This is why Kant is so great.

Schopenhauer, "Additional Remarks on the Doctrine of the Vanity of Existence," *Parerga and Paralipomena* (1850), trans. E.F.J. Payne

The chronotope is Bakhtin's ambitious attempt, inspired by Einstein according to Bakhtin and his biographers,¹⁵ to add the dimension of time to our idea of genre to account for the very different ways that have developed over the centuries for imagining and representing the spatial and temporal aspects of experience. But as Bakhtin points out in a footnote and as my epigraph from Schopenhauer is meant to suggest, the idea of the chronotope probably owes a lot more to Kant than to Einstein:

In his "Transcendental Aesthetics" (one of the main sections of his *Critique of Pure Reason*) Kant defines space and time as indispensable forms of any cognition, beginning with elementary perceptions and representations. Here we employ the Kantian evaluation of the importance of these forms in the cognitive process, but differ from Kant in taking them not as "transcendental" but as forms of the most immediate reality. We shall attempt to show the role these forms play in the process of concrete artistic cognition (artistic visualization) under conditions obtaining in the genre of the novel.¹⁶

¹⁵ Clark and Holquist 1984.69,277.

¹⁶ Bakhtin 1981.85 (note 2). Bakhtin also records a debt to the physiologist A. A. Uxtomskij, whose lecture on the chronotope in biology he attended in 1925 (Bakhtin 1981.84.n.1).

The idea seems to have two aspects as Bakhtin develops it: 1) the founding or “indispensable” assumptions of a genre (or indeed any utterance) that themselves may never be the object of representation and yet shape the parameters of the way that spatial and temporal relationships are “artistically expressed” in a given genre; 2) how these “appropriated aspects of reality” are used to articulate the specific meaning of a “concrete artistic cognition” or artifact. The chronotope is not simply another ingredient of genre, therefore, to be added to the other qualitative or quantitative constituents. As a fundamental working assumption that shapes the genre’s way of seeing reality, it should provide an analytic framework for understanding how and why each genre (or sub-genre) “is adapted to conceptualizing some aspects of experience better than others.”¹⁷ As the name suggests, the concept is meant to imply the “inseparability of space and time” (84), but the relationship is not symmetrical. Since time is a function of space—as its fourth dimension—every temporal concept necessarily implies a correlative concept of space or place, but as Bakhtin pursues his hypothesis, time clearly emerges as the focus of his interest, “for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time” (85). If the utterance (or genre) is the atom or building block of consciousness and discourse, the chronotope is that which makes possible a particular type of utterance by determining its horizons in space and time.

One way of focusing the concept of the chronotope is to consider some of the questions it is formulated to help us address: e.g., how does narrative contrive to make its verbal representation of experience “concrete?” How does the author simulate or assimilate temporal forms of experience? Specifically, what kinds of change are possible in a particular narrative world—spatial, biological, seasonal, psychological, social, cultural? Finally, and most importantly, what are the consequences of any particular chronotope for the way in which the “human image” is constructed in a given genre? For “the image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic,”¹⁸ and it is the answer

¹⁷ Morson and Emerson 1990.276.

¹⁸ Bakhtin 1981.85. As J. Ladin observes in his excellent analysis, “Fleshing Out the Chronotope” (Emerson 1999.212–236): “...chronotopes both become significant through their association with the presentation of human character and, at the most ‘major’ level, define and limit the ways in which human character can exist in the narrative. In effect, different constructions of identity, character, and —as in Rabalais —humanness in the broadest sense require different space-times for their representation ... Ultimately, chronotopes are intertwined with character because, as Kant pointed out, time and space

to this question that makes the emergence of any genre historically significant for Bakhtin.

While the conception of the chronotope is clearly experimental, still in process as Bakhtin wrote — “a metaphor almost but not entirely”¹⁹ — fortunately, his analyses of the chronotope of Achilles Tatius and Apuleius are among his most extended and explicit. This account leads him to distinguish three ways of representing time in postclassical ancient literature, which can also be found in combination—1) “adventure-time,” 2) “everyday time,” and 3) “biographical time.” We will focus on the first two.

Bakhtin’s first case study in his long essay on the chronotope is devoted to analyzing the kind of “adventure-time” ascribed to Greek romance. The Greek romancers not only invented “the technique of its use” but so perfected it that “in all subsequent evolution of the purely adventure novel nothing essential has been added up to the present day” (87). He begins his account of the genre by constructing a “typical composite scheme” of the romance plot.²⁰

There is a boy and a girl of *marriageable* age. Their lineage is *unknown*, *mysterious* (but not always: there is, for example, no such instance in Tatius). They are remarkable for their *exceptional beauty*. They are also exceptionally *chaste*. They meet each other *unexpectedly*, usually during some festive *holiday*. A *sudden* and *instantaneous* passion flares up between them that is as irresistible as fate, like an incurable disease. However, the marriage cannot take place straightway. They are confronted with obstacles that *retard* and delay their union. The lovers are *parted*, they seek one another, find one another; again they lose each other, again they find each other. There are the usual obstacles and adventures of lovers: the abduction of the bride on the eve of the wedding, the *absence of parental consent* (if parents exist), a different bridegroom and bride intended for either of the lovers (*false couples*), the flight of the lovers, their journey, a storm at sea, a *shipwreck*, a miraculous rescue, an attack by *pirates*, *captivity* and *prison*, an attempt on the innocence of the hero and heroine, the offering-up of the heroine as a purifying sacrifice, wars,

only become time and space after being constructed by individual consciousness” (223–4).

¹⁹ Bakhtin 1981.84. See Bender and Wellbery 1991.

²⁰ Bakhtin 1981.87–8.

battles, *being sold into slavery, presumed deaths, disguising one's identity*, recognition and failures of recognition, presumed betrayals, attempts on chastity and fidelity, false accusations of crimes, court trials, court inquiries into the chastity and fidelity of the lovers. The heroes find their parents (if unknown). Meetings with unexpected friends or enemies play an important role, as do fortune-telling, prophecy, prophetic dreams, premonitions and sleeping potions. The novel ends happily with the lovers united in marriage. Such is the schema for the basic components of the plot.

In light of the composite he argues that none of the plot motifs found in the genre are actually new, but that “the elements derived from various other genre’s assumed a new character and special functions in this completely new chronotope—that of an ‘alien world in adventure-time’” (89).

What then is “adventure-time” and how does it transform what would evidently be a very derivative genre into something both new and enormously influential? Bakhtin argues that the typical plot of Greek romance moves entirely between two poles, two moments that in and of themselves have “biographical significance” — the moment in which the protagonists meet and fall in love and that in which they are successfully united in marriage. Few readers would disagree with this observation, it is the next step in the argument that is provocative. “The gap, the pause, the hiatus that appears between these two strictly adjacent biographical moments and in which, as it were, the entire novel is constructed is not contained in the biographical time sequence; it lies outside biographical time; it changes nothing in the life of the heroes and introduces nothing into their life. It is, precisely, *an extra temporal hiatus between two moments of biographical time*” (90).

Bakhtin calls the two biographical moments “strictly adjacent” because “in essence nothing need lie between them” (89). The romances do not actually revolve around the significance of these two biographical moments—as later novels might—but around the adventures that serve to separate them and thereby delay the fulfillment of desire. Yet by the end of the story, Bakhtin maintains, it is clear that these adventures have no lasting consequences—“it is as if nothing had happened between these two moments, as if the marriage had been consummated on the day after their meeting” (89). While Bakhtin qualifies this assertion in his concluding remarks, as we shall see, he explicitly rejects the idea that the purpose of the adventures and or-

deals is to dramatize a process of maturation in which the heroes' self-knowledge and mutual understanding increases: "then we would have an example of a much later European novel-type, one that would not be an adventure novel at all, and certainly not a Greek romance" (90). To illustrate his point he cites the parodic treatment of the timelessness of adventure fiction in *Candide*, where the protagonists overcome all obstacles by the story's end only to discover that they have grown old and "the wondrous Cunegonde resembles some hideous old witch" (91). Biological time has overtaken adventure-time.

While Bakhtin's claims about the absence of change in Greek romance have been rejected *in toto* by some scholars, his analysis of how change is registered verbally in the romances, "of what it is like on the inside," has been largely ignored.²¹ His argument is that adventure-time consists of a series of short segments corresponding to separate adventures: "within each such adventure, time is organized from without technically" (91). That of course does not deny the kind of duration that would appear to be intrinsic to narrative: "within the limits of a given adventure, days, nights, hours, even minutes and seconds add up, as they would in any struggle or any active external undertaking. These time segments are introduced and intersect with specific link-words: 'suddenly' and 'at that moment'" (92). He then treats these key words as expressive of adventure-time; since they "best characterize this type of time, for this time usually has its origin and comes into its own in just those places where the normal pragmatic and pre-meditated course of events is interrupted—and provides an opening for sheer chance, which has its own specific logic" (92), namely, that of "chance simultaneity" (accidental meetings) and "chance rupture" (accidental separations). This "random contingency" makes the adverbs "earlier" and "later" of crucial

²¹ It is always important to ask who is experiencing a given chronotope, as Ladin observes (in Emerson 1999): "both the aesthetic power of the chronotope and many of its conceptual difficulties grow out of the fact that a chronotope cannot be identified without specifying the relation between the represented space-time and consciousness ...we must know whose chronotope we are examining: an individual character's perception (an intrasubjective chronotope); a collective space-time that is actually or potentially shared by more than one character (an intersubjective chronotope); or an extradiegetic space-time perceptible only to narrator, author or reader ... (a transubjective chronotope.) Each of these types of chronotopes is simultaneously defined by the consciousness (i.e., character) to which it is related and *makes that consciousness visible*; transubjective chronotopes are the primary means by which literature implicates readers and makes our responses (aesthetic, moral or otherwise) part of the work" (224).

importance to this kind of narrative: “Should something happen a minute earlier or a minute later, that is, should there be no chance simultaneity or chance disjunction in time, there would be no plot at all and nothing to write a romance about” (92). The game chance (*tukhe*) plays with “suddenlys” and “at that moments” makes up the entire contents of the romance, as Bakhtin illustrates by analyzing the lucky and unlucky turns of plot in Achilles Tatius (92–4).

Bakhtin’s point is that while any “event” will have duration such a series of adventures has no intrinsic limits. That is because the actions that transpire within adventure time lie outside the normal temporal sequences—historical, quotidian, biographical, biological, maturational— “beyond the reach of that force, time, that generates rules and defines the measure of a man” (91). Hence, such a series of adventures could in principle be extended to much greater length, as it would be in seventeenth century fiction, because “all the days, hours, minutes that are ticked off within the separate adventures are not united into a real time series, they do not become the days and hours of a human life” (94). Adventure-time is controlled by chance and consists of a series of interruptions of the “normal, intended or purposeful sequence of life events” (95). These interruptions are the point where non-human forces—the gods, fate, or fortune—intervene and “take all the initiative” (95).²² The heroes are forever having things happen to them, as a result: “a purely adventuristic person is a person of chance,” a person to whom a story happens (95). It is because such chance events can never be foreseen, that fortune-tellers, oracles, and dreams play the role they do in this kind of narrative.²³

This account of time forms the premise for the analysis of space in the romances; but the link between space and time has “not an organic but a purely technical (and mechanical) nature” (99). That is, the nature of space in the romances is a function of plots ruled by chance. Such a plot requires “an *abstract* expanse of space ...and plenty of it,” since “the contingency that governs events is inseparably tied up with space measured primarily by *distance*, on the one hand, and *proximity*, on the other” (99). Hence, while the world of the romances is in virtue of its plot “large and diverse,” it is for that very reason also “abstract.” By “abstract” Bakhtin means that the events

²² Bakhtin does not mean that chance takes “any specific initiative”: Bakhtin 1981.97.

²³ Bakhtin concludes this stage of his analysis by considering the plot motif of “meeting” as “part of the concrete chronotope that subsumes it” (Bakhtin 1981.97).

of the adventure can really unfold anywhere. They have “no essential ties with any particular details of individual countries” (99) of the kind that might figure in later novels as determining causes and are characteristic of classical or oral genre’s. The fondness of the romances for detailed descriptions does not alter the abstract character of their representation of place. Certain features associated with a particular part of the world may be carefully described, e.g., its odd animals or famous landmarks, but they are described as if they were, “isolated, single and unique. Nowhere are we given a description of a country as a whole, with its distinctive characteristics, with the features that distinguish it from other countries, within a matrix of relationships” (101). Hence, we lack a meaningful or concrete context in which to place the detailed descriptions, which often seem to be relished for their own sake.²⁴

Thus the space of Greek romance is that of an alien world²⁵ filled with “isolated curiosities and rarities,” e.g., natural or cultural wonders that stand free of a meaningful context: “These self-sufficient items—curious, odd, wondrous—are just as random and unexpected as the adventures themselves; they are made of the same material, they are congealed ‘suddenlys’, adventures turned into things, offspring of the same chance” (102). But that is why the genre coheres possessing “its own consistency and unity” (102).

Indeed, the degree of abstraction is not a failure but a necessary characteristic of the genre since “every concretization, of even the most single and everyday variety would introduce its own rule generating force, its own order, its own inevitable ties to human life and to the time specific to that life” (100). This would have the effect of critically limiting “the power of chance; the movement of the adventures would be organically localized and tied down in space and time.” That is why the romancers never depict their own

²⁴ Descriptions of artifacts, a distinct subset of *ekphrasis*, or detailed description, cultivated particularly in the Second Sophistic, do stand apart from a concrete context but may be used to reflect on the aesthetics of the text they appear in, as they are, e.g., in Lucian, see Branham 1989.38–46. Cf. Bartsch 1989.

²⁵ Bakhtin calls the space of romance “alien” (or “foreign”) because it is not represented either as “native, ordinary and familiar” nor, by contrast, as actually strange and exotic. It may seem that part of the genre’s appeal is in fact in its presentation of the exotic or strange, but Bakhtin’s point is that to create an impression of the genuinely exotic a contrast is needed with a native, ordinary point of view but that the latter is present only to “a minimal degree” in Greek romance (Bakhtin 1981.101). For example, none of the romances even mentions the Roman empire. The world is largely imagined in terms to be referred to Greek tradition: Scarcella 1996.221–76.

world, which would be completely incompatible with “that degree of abstractness necessary for Greek adventure-time” (101). So Bakhtin can conclude from his analysis of the chronotope of Greek romance that “the adventure chronotope is thus characterized by a technical, abstract connection between space and time, by the reversibility of moments in a temporal sequence and by their interchangeability in space” (100).²⁶

It is important to remember that this characterization of the chronotope of Greek romance is contrasted not only with that of later novels but also with those of the classical genres such as epic and drama. Unfortunately, this all important element in the argument is treated only briefly (103–4), but it remains essential for understanding the direction of Bakhtin’s analysis: “The time of ancient epic and drama was profoundly localized, absolutely inseparable from the concrete features of a characteristically Greek natural environment, and from features of a man-made environment; that is of specifically Greek administrative units, cities and states ... Historical time [e.g., Herodotus or Thucydides?] was equally concrete and localized—in epic and tragedy it was tightly interwoven with mythological time” (104). We would like to know more precisely what Bakhtin means here by “historical time” or “mythological time,” but it seems clear that the classical genres that originated in still predominately oral and local cultural contexts are distinguished by being concretely tied to particular places familiar to the audience and the author. (Consider the role of the Aereopagus in the *Oresteia*, for example.) That is why Bakhtin can conclude that “these classical Greek chronotopes are more or less the antipodes of the alien world as we find it in Greek romance” (104). Hence, contrary to some characterizations of his theory of the novel,²⁷ Bakhtin’s account of romance does not reflect a desire to cast literary history in terms of a simple progression (e.g., from less to more realism, or from monoglossia to heteroglossia.) And it is only because the chronotope of romance differs so fundamentally from that of the classical genres that “the various motifs and factors worked out and still alive in other ancient genres” take on such different functions in the new genre: “in the romance

²⁶ Ladin in Emerson 1999: “Bakhtin’s ‘adventure time’ is actually a synthetic resolution of the conflict between abstract space-time in which the adventures of the Greek romance occur and the ‘realistic’ space-time that a reader naturally infers in creating the *fabula* [in the Russian Formalists’ sense] of such romances. The result is a new kind of space-time, which can be defined only by describing (as Bakhtin does) the conflict between extended narrative time and biological time” (225).

²⁷ Cf. McKeon 1987.11–14.

they entered into a new and unique artistic unity, one, moreover, that was far from being a mere mechanical melange of various ancient genres” (104).

The general picture implied by these remarks seems to be one that hinges on the contrast between classical genres that originated in the context of oral cultures and postclassical genres such as Greek romance that developed after the spread of literacy and had to adapt to the new conditions of their existence, in effect, by constructing novel chronotopes. While one postclassical chronotope, that of romance, is abstract and alien in time, the novel will develop strategies for creating concrete worlds in which characters are embedded in a network of temporal relations in which their “becoming, a man’s [Bakhtin’s words] *gradual* formation” (392) can be represented. This is a process that would take centuries but already in Roman fiction we find, according to Bakhtin, new ways of constructing the spatiotemporal framework of the “human image.”

Thus Bakhtin’s conception of the chronotope is an attempt to delineate time as an organizing principle of a genre, the ground or field against which the human image is projected, which necessarily sets it apart from all other forms of narrative in antiquity (as readers have often noted by contrasting Greek romance with Roman novels or Hellenistic epic.) Only when we have done so, he would argue, can we address the question which actually forms the *telos* of his investigation: “how indeed can a human being be presented in adventure-time” (105)? If he is essentially passive and unchanging, a person to whom things happen, “his actions will be by and large of an elementary-spatial sort” of “enforced movement through space (escape, persecution, quests).” It is in fact the human movement through space that “provides the basic indices for measuring space and time in Greek romance, which is to say, for its chronotope.” Indeed, that is what makes the primary couple’s most important action that of *resisting change*. Chance may run the game, Bakhtin observes, but the hero (or heroine) “keeps on being the same person ...with his identity absolutely unchanged” (105).²⁸

Bakhtin argues accordingly, and here he moves closer to contemporary readings, that the “enormous role played by such devices as recognition,

²⁸ Bakhtin then digresses on “the distinctive correspondence of an identity with a particular self” as the “organizing center” of the human image in Greek romance: “No matter how impoverished, how denuded a human identity may become in Greek romance, there is always preserved in it some precious kernel of folk humanity: one always senses faith in the indestructible power of man in his struggle with nature and with all inhuman forces” (Bakhtin 1981.105).

disguise, temporary changes of dress, presumed death (with subsequent resurrection), and presumed betrayal (with subsequent confirmation of unswerving fidelity)" reveal the basic "compositional" or "organizing" motif to be a "test of the heroes' integrity, their selfhood" (106). The centrality to the genre of testing the primary couple leads him to characterize this earliest type of fiction more fully as "the adventure novel of ordeal," organized around trials of the primary couple's "chastity and natural fidelity." This organizing motif requires the artful fabrication of complex situations meant to test other qualities as well such as "nobility, courage, strength, fearlessness and—more rarely—their intelligence" (106). The fiction as a whole, therefore, is designed as an elaborate test presided over by chance of a set of highly valued traits conducive to survival, and, more importantly, to marriage. Thus Bakhtin's argument moves from the analysis of time and space to the significance of chance and the organizing principle of testing to the conception of the human being and consequent meaning or function of the genre: "The result of the whole lengthy (story) is—that the hero marries his sweetheart. And yet people and things have gone through something, something that did not, indeed, change them but that did (in a matter of speaking) affirm what they, and precisely they, were as individuals, something that did verify and establish their identity, their durability and continuity. The hammer of events shatters nothing and forges nothing—it merely tries the durability of an already finished product. And the product passes the test. Thus is constituted the artistic and ideological meaning of Greek romance" (107).²⁹

As if dissatisfied with his conclusion's failure to account convincingly for the genre's lasting appeal, its "enormous life-force," Bakhtin then interjects that "no artistic genre can organize itself around suspense alone" (107). Yet the suspense excited by the testing of the primary couple seems to be the principal source of the genres appeal, at least as Bakhtin has analyzed it. And given the conventional and, hence, predictable nature of the romance plot, what suspense there is can concern only means—how will they get out of this one? — rather than ends—will they survive and be reunited? As if by way of qualification Bakhtin adds, "only a human life, or at least something directly touching it, is capable of evoking such suspense. This human factor ... must possess some degree of living *reality*" (107).

²⁹ He sees it as the first example of the *Prüfungsroman*, a term long applied to the "seventeenth century Baroque novel by literary historians who view it as the furthest extent of the European development of the Greek novel" (Bakhtin 1981.106).

This reveals a vexing problem. The description of the characters just offered as “already finished” products would seem to leave room only for an attenuated sense of “living reality” in romance. This evidently leads Bakhtin to supplement his account of the genre with some observations on the unique and paradoxical nature of the human image in Greek romance. It is unique, he says, in that privacy and isolation are the essential attributes of its characters making them unlike their counterparts in “all classical genres of ancient literature,” (108) since they concern us (or the author) only as *private individuals*. New Comedy might seem to provide a counter-example to this generalization, but the consequences of being the citizen of a particular city are still crucial to the genre, the basis for its plots, at least in its Greek form. But New Comedy is probably the classical genre closest to romance and it could be said of it, as Bakhtin says of Greek romance, that “social and political events” take on meaning only “thanks to their connection to the private life” (104). Yet, paradoxically, in view of the exclusive and novel focus of the genre on the private life of its heroes, it never developed a means of expression adequate to the inner life of the individual. The characters in romance speak and behave like the public figures of the classical genres, particularly the historical and rhetorical genres. Indeed, a public accounting of the adventures of the primary couple is characteristic of the genre’s ending and serves to provide a quasi legal and judicial “affirmation of their identity, especially in its most crucial aspect—the lovers’ fidelity to each other (and, in particular the chastity of the heroine.”) Hence, Bakhtin concludes “the public and rhetorical unity of the human image is to be found in the contradiction between it and its purely private content. This contradiction is highly characteristic of the Greek romance” and reflects the failure of the ancient world to generate “forms and unities that were adequate to the private individual and his life” (110).

Such is Bakhtin’s argument. We may not agree with his conclusions but they are produced by a form of analysis that has some methodological interest in its own right. They are not merely the oracular pronouncements they often seem when cited and discussed out of context.

The most obvious objection to Bakhtin’s account of the genre of Greek romance as the first form of the European novel is that one atypical work of Greek fiction, Longus’ *Daphnis and Chloe*, is explicitly concerned with the protagonists sexual coming-of-age and measures its fictional time by the seasons. Nature and natural change are clearly thematized by Longus, even if

the studied naiveté of the narrative's presentation of character is more conducive to dramatizing sentiment and mood than representing psychological change. The changes that are represented take the form of distinct stages in a pastoral parable of *eros*. But Bakhtin acknowledges this exception arguing that the chronotope of Longus is an oddity among the romances: "At its center we have a pastoral idyllic chronotope, but a chronotope riddled with decay, its compact isolation and self-imposed limits destroyed, surrounded on all sides by an alien world and itself already half-alien; natural idyllic time is no longer as dense, it is cut through by shafts of adventure-time. Longus' idyll cannot, of course, be definitively categorized as a Greek adventure romance" (87).

It may be that in this as in many other respects Longus is the exception that proves the rule of the genre. But if there is a consensus among contemporary critics of the genre it is that Bakhtin could not be more wrong in denying time and change to the other Greek romances: "Time is of the very essence in the Greek novels."³⁰ "The heroes change, they are not the same persons in the end as they were in the beginning of the story ... Character development through suffering is actually a favorite theme."³¹

The argument to support these claims is made most forcefully and subtly by David Konstan in his lucid exposition of the symmetry of desire in Greek romance. But when we inspect the argument carefully it turns out to support, not the reality of change, but the importance of endurance and constancy, the very qualities Bakhtin attributes to the genre. And constancy as a theme may well seem oddly suited to an emphasis on change or development. Konstan argues ingeniously that the very fact of endurance "supplements" or "qualifies" the original emotion. "This persisting love, *eros* augmented by fidelity, registers a change in the desire of the primary couple and differentiates their passion from that of rivals" (46–7). But does it work by actually registering change or rather the absence of change? Isn't it the persistence of the original emotion that distinguishes the primary couple rather than a process of change? And is this change or maturation ever dramatized or reflected upon by the primary couple? Do they notice a change between their original passion and its "augmented" or "qualified" form? Or isn't it just the opposite—the astonishing absence of change despite the countless reversals and misfor-

³⁰ Konstan 1994.47.

³¹ Billault 1996.127–8.

tunes they have endured, which do indeed affect their appearance but not evidently their loyalty?³²

Indeed, Konstan concedes at the beginning of his argument that the situation in Greek romance “does not involve a progress in the character of the male protagonists or other figures” of a kind that has inspired modern romance since Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* (45). This is precisely Bakhtin’s point. In fact, the more we look at these two accounts, the closer they appear. After all, Bakhtin concedes that the genre “affirms,” “verifies,” and “establishes” the primary couple’s identity, durability, and continuity. The qualities Bakhtin emphasizes are remarkably similar to those seen as evidence of change by Konstan. Fans of the genre may be engaging in special pleading in attributing to it thematic concerns and formal resources that we have come to value from later forms of fiction.

It could be argued, however, that what Bakhtin’s analysis all but leaves out—the sources of the genre’s appeal and evident longevity—makes his account incomplete. Indeed, it is in a sense perverse to describe adventure-time privatively as an absence of change or time, since it is precisely the timeless quality of romance that makes possible the genres “magical narratives,”³³ i.e., its appeal to fantasy and idealization. Similarly, it enables those “accident prone but indestructible” heroes to achieve a quasi mythic stature that comes from defying the ravages of time to which the rest of us are subject. And while Bakhtin is right to stress the crucial role of contingency in these stories, he never considers the way blind chance is magically transformed into providence to produce the wished-for ending. But isn’t this too a crucial component of the genre’s way of conceptualizing time and the human image?

Be that as it may, the role of chance is clearly the key to Bakhtin’s conception of the chronotope of Greek romance. This characterization does indeed serve to differentiate Greek romance from forms of fiction in which the hero takes the initiative, as he often does in the nineteenth century novel or the earlier *Bildungsroman*. But it isn’t clear how it would distinguish Greek from Roman fiction, since in many respects Apuleius’ Lucius or Petronius’

³² Konstan points out that at least in Xenophon the beauty that always marks the onset of *eros* continues to be attributed to the primary couple even when their adventures have altered their physical appearance beyond recognition: “Beauty is the beginning of *eros* and remains its emblem, even when the hero and heroine are so transformed in looks that they are unrecognizable” (Konstan 1994.48).

³³ Cf. Jameson 1975.

Encolpius are characters whose stories happen to them. Indeed, we all are since “chance in general is but one form of the principle of necessity and as such has a place in any novel, as it has its place in life itself” (97). Nevertheless, the passivity of the heroes—if not the heroines—of Greek fiction has often been noted and even if there are important respects in which Encolpius and Eumolpus “take the ideological initiative” in their tirades on education and the arts they remain at the mercy of a plot that unfolds with the help of chance and adventure-time. But if the chance ruled domain of adventure-time is clearly central to Roman fiction, how and why does Bakhtin distinguish its chronotope from that of Greek romance?

The “how” is easy: he posits a new category called the “adventure novel of everyday life:” “in a strict sense,” he says, “only two works belong to this category,” Apuleius’ *Golden Ass or the Metamorphoses* and Petronius’ *Satyrical*. What sets this category apart from the Greek romances is not simply that two ways of organizing time, namely, adventure time and everyday time, characterize it, but that “both adventure and everyday time change their essential forms in combination” producing a completely new chronotope, which Bakhtin glosses as “a special sort of everyday time” (111).

Despite the fact that he will later say that the process of representing time (or historicity) is more advanced in Petronius than in Apuleius, Bakhtin focuses his only analysis of this chronotope on Apuleius, presumably because the text is complete and the story itself on the level of plot is emblematic of change, that is, “of how an individual became other than what he was” (115). What I want to do here is to summarize his analysis and to ask if we can extrapolate from it and some brief but suggestive comments on Petronius what form a Bakhtinian analysis of the chronotope of the *Satyrical* would take.

While Bakhtin has specified two sequences that define this chronotope—everyday and adventure time—we find that his argument actually depends on constructing three sequences, the third being a sequence defined in moral-religious terms. First, he emphasizes that there is “no evolution...what one gets rather is crisis and rebirth. For the *Golden Ass* does not unfold in biographical time” but represents “exceptional” and “unusual” moments that “shape the definitive image of the man, as well as the nature of his entire subsequent life” (116). Such time is fundamentally unlike the adventure time of Greek romance precisely because it leaves “a deep and ineradicable mark” on the hero. It is nevertheless clearly a type of adventure time precisely be-

cause it too consists of “exceptional” and “unusual” events, “events determined by chance which moreover manifest themselves in fortuitous encounters (temporal junctions) and fortuitous non-encounters (temporal disjunctions).” What clearly differentiates this time from that of Greek romance however, is that the “logic of chance is subordinated to another and higher logic” (116). Thus while most events in the novel are determined by chance, both the initial and the final links in the series are not. The initial link is determined by Lucius and reflects his personality, his curiosity, when he decides to experiment with magic. Similarly, the final link is not determined by chance but by Isis, who, Bakhtin argues, is not a mere synonym for “good fortune,” as are the gods of Greek romance, but “a patroness” directing Lucius to purification rituals, and *askesis* (117). Thus because both the initial and final links of the sequence lie beyond the power of chance “the nature of the entire chain is altered” (117). Instead of resulting in a “simple affirmation” of the hero’s identity, as does Greek romance, it rather constructs “a new image of the hero, as a man who is now purified and reborn,” i.e. who is not what he was (117).

Therefore, he argues that the chance generating separate adventures “must be interpreted in a new way.” He cites the interpretation of the priest of Isis, who reads the entire adventure sequence of Lucius as one of “punishment” and “redemption.” Thus the adventure sequence dominated by chance is subordinated to a second sequence defined in moral and religious terms that “encompasses it and interprets it” as moving from guilt (or error) through punishment to redemption and blessedness. The crucial point is that it is the second sequence that determines “the shifting appearance of the hero” (118). Moreover, the logic of this sequence is alien to Greek adventure-time, since it is irreversible—the order of events matters—and is grounded in “individual responsibility,” i.e., in the initial choice of the hero. It has a definite shape and degree of ineluctability that the Greek adventure sequence shows no hint of.

In contrast to Greek adventure time Bakhtin stresses the advantages of this chronotope for expressing “more critical and realistic characteristics of time: Here time is not merely technical, not a mere distribution of days, hours, moments that are reversible, transposable, unlimited internally, along a straight line; here the temporal sequence is an integrated and *irreversible whole*” (119), free of the “abstraction” he has attributed to Greek adventure time. Bakhtin also notes its crucial limitations: as in Greek romance the indi-

vidual is “private and isolated.” His change or metamorphosis has “a merely personal and unproductive character” (119). This point may overlook the ideological implications of a novel that appears to celebrate conversion to a popular pagan cult at the very moment when the gospels were being written and disseminated. Nevertheless, Bakhtin argues that the basic temporal sequence of the novel is “a closed circuit, isolated, not localized in historical time,” by which he means it does not participate in what he calls “the irreversible historical sequence of time because the novel does not yet know such a sequence” (120).

Such is his characterization of “adventure time” in this chronotope. But, he asks, how is “everyday time” expressed and “how does it mesh with this distinctive adventure time to form one novelistic whole?” (120) The way it is expressed is through the metaphor of the road taken by the hero as “the path of life:” “The choice of a real itinerary equals the choice of the path of life. The concreteness of this chronotope permits everyday life to be realized within it.” Nevertheless, the major turning points in the life of the hero are found “outside everyday life,” which, Bakhtin comments, seems to “spread out along the edge of the road itself, along the sideroads” (120). And this is the crucial point: Lucius “merely observes this life...in essence he does not participate in this life and is not determined by it” (121). What he does experience are still “events that are exclusively extraordinary” and are defined by the moral sequence “guilt → retribution → redemption → blessedness” (121). Thus the moral sequence ends up governing both adventure time by determining its initial and final moments—and everyday time—by giving it a necessary role in Lucius’ story, namely, that of punishment for error—as the priest of Isis reads it. Indeed, as Bakhtin points out, it coincides with Lucius’ presumed death—his family thinks him dead during the time he’s wandering through everyday time as an ass. Thus it is the moral sequence that links the extraordinary—adventure time—with the ordinary—everyday time—forming a temporal and novelistic whole.

Still, while according to this reading of Bakhtin’s analysis everyday time has a genuine function in the novel, it is not, he insists a causal one. He stresses “the extreme importance” of the fact that the hero is an interloper and observer of everyday life but still outside it. He argues that the hero’s stance is a reflection of the fact that classical literature “was one of public life and public man” (123). The attempt to represent the private life, he says, produced “a contradiction between the public nature of literary form and the

private nature of its content.” It was, he says, “in the process of resolving this problem” that the ancient novel emerged.³⁴

Now what does this analysis imply for Petronius? Bakhtin’s remarks on Petronius are tantalizingly brief and not entirely consistent. He begins by stressing that unlike Apuleius in Petronius’ world “socially heterogeneous elements come close to being contradictory. As a result his world bears witness to the distinguishing features of a particular era, the earliest traces of historical time” (129).³⁵ Moreover, “if such contradictions were to surface,” he says, “then the world would start to move, it would be shoved into the future, time would receive a fullness and a historicity” (129). He further observes that in Petronius “adventure time is tightly interwoven with everyday time (therefore the *Satyricon* is closer to the European type of picaresque novel.”) He then notes that while Petronius has no “clearly defined” moral sequence or metamorphosis—such as the guilt → retribution → redemption sequence of Apuleius—there is an “analogous motif” of persecution by an angry god, Priapus, parodying the *Odyssey* and *Aeneid* and novelizing the oldest way of motivating a plot. But Bakhtin only mentions this motif, he doesn’t analyze it. It does, however, suggest an irreversible order and a moral sequence. But then Bakhtin seems to contradict himself saying that “the location of the heroes vis-à-vis everyday life is in all respects the same as it was for Lucius the ass” (129). But how can we reconcile that with his assertion in the same paragraph that “in Petronius adventure time is tightly interwoven with everyday time,” whereas he has just argued at length that they are not interwoven in Apuleius but rather are at right angles and only intersect at two moments—those of punishment and redemption. Indeed, how could the two be tightly interwoven if everyday life plays no causal role in the novel, as he insists it does not in Apuleius?

He then switches course again still in the same paragraph saying “But, we repeat, traces of historical time (however unstable) turn up in the social heterogeneity of this private-life world. The image of Trimalchio’s feast and the way it is described serve to bring out,” he says, “the distinguishing fea-

³⁴ This point may be important for understanding why Bakhtin says that Petronius took the process of representing “historicity” further than anyone else: Bakhtin 1981.129.

³⁵ Cf. the observation in *Discourse in the Novel* that “the most important elements of the double voiced and double languaged novel coalesce in ancient times” (Bakhtin 1981. 372).

tures of the era: that is, we have to some extent a *temporal whole* that encompasses and unifies the separate episodes of everyday life” (129).

Let us consider the last claim first, namely, that Trimalchio’s feast “brings out the distinguishing features of the era” and, more importantly, that it displays a “temporal whole” unifying and encompassing “the separate episodes of everyday life,” episodes that in Apuleius are, according to Bakhtin, “chopped up into separate segments” thereby presenting an everyday world that is “scattered, fragmented, deprived of essential connections” (128). Before we do so we need to recall how Bakhtin actually characterizes everyday time— “the time in which private life unfolds” (127). Everyday time seems to be defined primarily by what it is not: it is not cyclical, natural, mythical or sacred; nor is it like adventure time a series of “unusual” or “exceptional” events. Because it is by definition not public—in contrast to the classical genres—it is presented as the “underside of real life,” a kind of “nether world.” At its center is “the logic of obscenity,” literally that which is not supposed to be seen (or viewed publicly), which is for that very reason irresistible. Thus is “the alienation of the everyday plane from nature” actually emphasized (128).

In light of these considerations what features of Trimalchio’s feast might Bakhtin cite to support his claim that in it “episodes of everyday life” are unified by an idea of time, a temporal whole? It clearly bristles with chronotopic motifs. Let us consider some of the most characteristic and what may unify them. First, it may be significant that the whole episode is introduced by an obscure reference to the last supper of gladiators, given that the feast is dominated by Trimalchio’s comic obsession with his own death and with measuring out the time of his life, which seems to thematize time from a particular cultural standpoint and to link the beginning of the feast to its end. The party is of course framed by references to clocks —by no means common in ancient literature³⁶— the clock Trimalchio keeps in his dining room “with a trumpeter on call to announce the time, so that he knows at any moment how much of life he’s already lost” (26) and the sundial he plans for his funerary monument, “so whoever checks the time will have to read my

³⁶ See Dohrn-van Rossum 1996. Chap. 2; Borst 1993; Cipolla 1977; Cf. Barchiesi 1981.

name, like it or not" (71). This statement comes close to identifying Trimalchio with the passage of time.³⁷

Similarly, the feast is framed with funereal art—the mural seen upon entering and the description of Trimalchio's tomb—and that art is autobiographical:³⁸ Trimalchio's career is depicted visually on the mural and summarized in the epitaph on his mausoleum; the description of the tomb is then followed by an autobiographical outburst or apologia (*Satyrical* 29, 71, 74–7). And that is when we learn of the Greek astrologer Serapa, who, Trimalchio reports, told him exactly how many days he would live: "right now I have thirty years, four months, and two days to live. And I shall soon come into a legacy. My horoscope says so" (77).

Second, there is the disconnection of the present from the mythical past that is now a jumble of names and events comically recombined in Trimalchio's memory: "Diomedes and Ganymede were two brothers. Helen was their sister. Agamemnon stole her and then gave Diana a stag instead. So now Homer tells how the Trojans went to war with the Parisians. Of course Agamemnon won and made his daughter, Iphigeneia, Achilles' wife. That's why Ajax went crazy, as he'll explain in a minute" (59).

Third, there is the literal representation of everyday time in the report on Trimalchio's holdings, in which time is represented as a calendar of profits and losses: "July 26th, on the estate at Cumae, which belongs to Trimalchio, there were born thirty male slaves, forty females; 500,000 pecks of wheat were transferred from the threshing floor to the barn; 500 oxen were broken in. On the same day, the slave Mithridates was crucified for speaking disrespectfully of the guardian spirit of our Gaius" (53).³⁹

Fourth, there is the social heterogeneity characteristic of the time expressed, for example, in the disjunction of wealth and social status, which is presented as a comic anomaly in the person of Trimalchio but registers a social shift symptomatic of the early empire; as do the non-Italic names of

³⁷ There also seems to be a systematic contrast between Trimalchio's time — which is limited and running out — and his seemingly endless supply of money.

³⁸ Branham and Kinney 1997: note 29.2

³⁹ Cf. the astrological calendar (*tabula*) Encolpius observes on his way to dinner: "[on it] were painted the phases of the moon and images of the seven planets, and lucky and unlucky days were marked with studs of different colors": Branham and Kinney 1997.chap. 30.

all the characters in the *cena*—except for Fortunata—signifying their foreign origins and lowly status in Italy.

Fifth, in general, culture has triumphed over nature. Most obviously, food is a form of play; it is disguised so that its original nature is unrecognizable; it may contain living things; it is frequently chronotopic, e.g., in one of the first courses the food is arranged to represent the twelve signs of the zodiac, each of which is explicated by Trimalchio. Most significant though are the wishes of the guests to stretch or control time (like food): “I like nothing better than making one day in two,” says Habinnas, the mason best known for his tombstones. Of course the best example is provided by Trimalchio in his attempt to attend his own funeral: “Pretend I’m dead; play something beautiful,” are his last words in the novel.

Finally, despite the ubiquitous clocks and calendars, we lose all sense of time at Trimalchio’s party until a rooster is heard crowing. When natural time intrudes, it is interpreted by Trimalchio as an ominous sign. Indeed, his panic soon leads to the end of the party.

There are many other echoes of the time of Nero, chronotopic motifs which are themselves concerned with the registering and marking of time: for example, Trimalchio’s preservation of his first beard in a “none-too-small golden casket” (29) — it is the extravagance of this rite-of-passage (as much as the fact that Nero is said to have done the same thing) that makes it specifically Neronian. Similarly, there is Trimalchio’s sundial, which may be a parodic echo of the monumental sundial in the Augustan complex in the Campus Martius; and his autobiographical mural which is imperial in its pretensions—it shows Mercury, Fortuna and the Three Fates presiding over Trimalchio’s career. We do, indeed, seem to have a concerted effort to construct a temporal whole that unifies separate incidents and expresses the distinguishing features of the era in a parodically exaggerated form, or as Schopenhauer would say, an idea of time not to be found in nature.

What is this idea? What Petronius has done is to fuse what Bakhtin would call the chronotope of carnival rooted in ancient folkloric traditions associated, e.g., with the Saturnalia⁴⁰ with the specific features of his own

⁴⁰ There are numerous Saturnalian motifs in the Trimalchio episode that I don’t discuss here, but they are clearly symptomatic of the chronotope: 1) Trimalchio keeps his guests waiting while he plays a game (33); later he has his slaves join the party (70. 10–11); he has a boar served with a freedom cup (*pileus*) on its head and then liberates a slave, Dionysus, who puts the *pileus* on his own head (41); the freedman Ganymede denounces corrupt bureaucrats (*aediles*) who live “like everyday is the Saturnalia” (44.4); Encolpius

time and place in the age of Nero.⁴¹ Everyday episodes are unified by an idea at once traditional and strangely contemporary. The uncrowning of the old king (and the mock crowning of the new) is the defining image of Bakhtin's concept of carnival—as he says in the Dostoyevsky book⁴²—precisely because it expresses its chronotope, one in which death is seen as an aspect of life, not merely as its opposite or negation. The carnival king (*Saturnalicus princeps*)⁴³ is an image of time's passing.⁴⁴ Trimalchio is the lord of misrule, the old king—and this is what makes him comic—who is eagerly awaiting his own uncrowning, which he enacts in a mock ritual. Trimalchio's determined attempt to enjoy his own funeral, to witness his own exit and read his own epitaph is a comically literal version of Bakhtin's idea. He expresses the chronotope in many ways, not least, for example, in the verses he composes while contemplating a toy skeleton:

Alas poor us, we all add up to squat
When Orcus gets his hooks in that's the lot

compares one of Trimalchio's disguised dishes—fish and birds made of pork—to dinners made of wax or clay that he had seen at the Saturnalia in Rome (69.9); Trimalchio's whimsical gifts for his guests recall Saturnalian gifts (chap. 56; see Branham and Kinney 1997. note 56.2); finally, one of the freedman angered by Ascylytus' raucous laughter asks rhetorically, "What is this, the Saturnalia?" (58.1–2). Since this last instance shows that it is not literally the Saturnalia, taken with the other Saturnalian motifs it implies that Trimalchio lives a continual Saturnalia, a carnivalesque contradiction in terms—*non semper Saturnalia erant* (Seneca *Apoc.* 12.2)—that reminds us of the limits of the chronotope by transgressing them (cf. Branham and Kinney 1997 note 30.2).

⁴¹ Bakhtin 1984a. 166: "Carnivalization is not an external and immobile schema which is imposed on ready-made content: it is, rather, an extraordinarily flexible form of artistic visualization, a peculiar sort of heuristic principle making possible the discovery of new and as yet unseen things." See Döpp, "Saturnalien und lateinische Literatur" in Döpp 1993. 145–177.

⁴² See Bakhtin 1984a. 124: "Under this ritual act of decrowning a king lies the very core of the carnival sense of the world. . ."

⁴³ Seneca, *Apoc.* 8.2. Temporary kings and the inversion of the hierarchies associated with wealth and poverty, work and play, are central to Lucian's image of the traditions about Cronos, who is pictured dressed like a king and carrying a "sharpened sickle" (*Saturnalia* 10). Aristotle (probably following a folk etymology) identifies him with time (*kronos*: *Mu.* 401a15). See Versnel 1993. chap. 3; Burkert, "Kronia-Feste und ihr altorientalischer Hintergrund" in Döpp 1993. 11–30.

⁴⁴ See Bakhtin 1984a. 124: "Carnival is the festival of all-annihilating and all-renewing time . . . he who is crowned is the antipode of a real king, a slave or a jester."

So live while it's your turn, cause then it's not.

Satyrica 34.10⁴⁵

The carnival is motivated not negated by the awareness of death. (The famous Sibyl in the bottle (in chapter 48) wants to die precisely because she cannot). I suspect that the Trimalchio episode is metonymical for the whole novel, much as the Cupid and Psyche story is for *The Golden Ass*. Is it just a coincidence that what we have of the novel concludes with another parodic funeral feast, this one parodying the last supper of the Christians, the model for a rite that does deny death?

So much for Trimalchio. At least as fundamental as any of these features of the *cena* is Bakhtin's claim that adventure time and everyday time are "tightly interwoven," since this would characterize the whole *Satyrica* not just the Trimalchio episode. But how are they interwoven outside of the carnival series?⁴⁶ Let us consider the motif of persecution by an angry god which seems to provide an irreversible sequence linking all we have of the novel. According to Quartilla, priestess of Priapus, Priapus' wrath was provoked by the heroes inadvertently stumbling into a sacred rite in a grotto and "seeing what is forbidden to see. . . those ancient secrets that scarcely three mortals have ever known" (17). She tells them that to expiate their transgressions they must take part in a cure, i.e., a Priapic orgy which she presides over with her whalebone staff. Certainly, this episode fits Bakhtin's characterization of everyday time as at bottom obscene and it is obscene in Bakhtin's sense: "that is, the seamier side of sexual love, love alienated from reproduction, from a progression of generations, from the structures of the family and the clan. Here everyday life is priapic" (128). Of course we don't know how or if Encolpius ever succeeds in appeasing the god, but at least from this point on he sees himself as persecuted by Priapus.⁴⁷ He does say, however, in a fragment near the end of the novel (chapter 140): "There are greater gods who have made me whole again. For Mercury, the courier of

⁴⁵ *eheu nos miseros, quam totus homuncio nil est!*
sic erimus cuncti, postquam nos auferet Orcus.
ergo vivamus, dum licet esse bene.

⁴⁶ Cf. Bakhtin 1984a. 133–4: "Behind all the slum-naturalism scenes of the *Satyricon*, more or less distinctly, the carnival square is glimmering. And in fact the very plot of the *Satyricon* is thoroughly carnivalized." For Bakhtin's analysis of the *Widow of Ephesus* as the realistic representation of a folklore sequence, see Bakhtin 1981. 221–24.

⁴⁷ See *Satyrica* 139.2.

souls, by his good will has restored to me what an angry god had chopped off: consider me more favored than Protesilaus⁴⁸ or any of the ancient heroes. With that I lifted my tunic and commended all of me to Eumolpus. At first he was shocked, but then, to be fully convinced, took the gifts of the gods in both hands.”⁴⁹ Encolpius is not a finished product, but still in process.⁵⁰

Another crucial moment at which adventure time and everyday time would seem to intersect is in the Lichas plot. Somehow—in a part of the novel we don’t have—Encolpius and Giton become Lichas’ guests and then take advantage of his hospitality. There are references to Lichas’ wife that suggest she may have run off with Encolpius and company—another epic motif—and that her elopement also involved the theft from Lichas’ ship of a robe and a rattle sacred to Isis. Thus both Priapus and Isis intersect with the plot at these moments setting up sequences—which inevitably have a moral or religious dimension—that would appear to govern the whole. (I wouldn’t be surprised if it turned out to be Isis who ultimately saves or redeems Encolpius from Priapus’ wrath, perhaps because he restores the stolen tokens.) In any event, it would appear that in the interweaving of everyday time and adventure time the trajectory of the heroes is determined (i.e., everyday time has become part of a causal sequence.) If so, we have a pair of sequences encompassing and unifying individual episodes and playing a causal role. So we can conclude as we began: “the novel, from the very beginning, devel-

⁴⁸ The reference to Protesilaus in this passage may be highly significant: “According to legend the first Greek to be killed at Troy, Protesilaus, was brought back to life for a brief tryst with his grieving wife, who had slept with his effigy in the interim (see Apollodorus, *Epit.* 3.30). This version of Protesilaus’ story is thus an inversion of that of Orpheus or Alcestis (Bowersock 1994. 112). But in the empire the legend of Protesilaus continued to grow until he became “the polytheists’ new representative of bodily resurrection” (Bowersock 1994. 113). See esp. Philostratus’ *Heroikos*.” Branham and Kinney 1997.150: note 140.3.

⁴⁹ For the theme of impotence, see Branham and Kinney 1997 notes 128.1, 131.1, 137.1 (and note 48 above); Cf. McMahon 1998.

⁵⁰ While it may be objected that Bakhtin’s emphasis on the development of characters or their experience of change is misplaced and alien to classical genres, Simon Swain has argued persuasively that in Plutarch, for example, individuality, gradual development (under the influence of both heredity and the environment), instability of character and the role of chance, or sudden change, are all acknowledged factors: Swain 1989. Cf. Edwards and Swain 1997.

oped as a genre that had at its core a new way of conceptualizing time.” QED.⁵¹

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⁵¹ This paper was presented at the International Conference on the Ancient Novel in Groningen (2000). It will appear in a slightly altered form in *Bakhtin and the Classics*, ed. Branham (Evanston 2001).

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