BAKHTIN'S THEORY OF THE

LITERARY CHRONOTOPE:

REFLECTIONS, APPLICATIONS, PERSPECTIVES

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Bakhtin's essay on the chronotope is unique, so far as I know, in presenting the history of the novel as inseparable from the theory, or "poetics", of the genre. Even today, only a minority of literary historians are prepared to consider the whole chronological development of fiction from the ancient Greek novels to the consolidation of realist conventions in the nineteenth century, from which all more recent developments derive. Although many details of Bakhtin's historical knowledge have been overturned since his own day, and his detailed working out of the theory of the chronotope in relation to the ancient Greek texts has been challenged, nonetheless I believe that the chronotope provides a valid basis for a new "historical poetics" based on corrected facts, and extended to include texts, such as the Byzantine and Early Modern Greek "romances", that were unknown to Bakhtin.

Such a "historical poetics" is necessary because the novel, lacking any theory of its own before the modern period, can only be defined, as a genre, through an understanding of its history. And that history remains, today, remarkably contested. Does the novel begin in eighteenth-century England, in seventeenth-century Spain, in northern France in the twelfth century, or in Greek under the Roman empire? Each of these starting-points has had its proponents, each proposed starting-point has in turn, implicitly or explicitly, defined everything that followed.[1] This is grounded in a way of thinking that goes back to antiquity: if we find it unproblematic to define all subsequent epic with reference to Homer, all subsequent tragedy with reference to Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, all subsequent comedy with reference to Athenian New Comedy (with appropriate nods back to the "Old Comedy" of Aristophanes), then it is pretty well inevitable that, according to our choice of starting point, we will define the novel in terms of Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding, *or* of *Don Quixote*, *or* of Arthurian romance, *or* of the ancient Greek (and perhaps also Roman) prose fictions of the first centuries CE. The choice of starting-point determines everything else.

Bakhtin's approach takes the long view. But even more important than that is his insistence that history and theory are inseparable. We will never understand either the history or the nature (poetics) of the novel if we look only at either one of them. The unique promise of Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope is that it offers the possibility of tracing the history, not of individual novels or novelists, nor even of a genre, but of the *poetics* underlying all of these. How does the concept of representing

human, individual experience in language, through narrative, change over long periods of history?

That, it seems to me, is the question that Bakhtin addresses, particularly in his long essay on the chronotope (FTC). Such a project has a curiously complementary relationship to that of Auerbach, in *Mimesis*, that was generated at almost the same time, under the shadow of a different totalitarian system but the same world conflict, and also looks "in" at European culture from a position of geographical and cultural exile. Auerbach, too, insists on the historicity of both writing and experience, and sets out to trace their interrelation through what he calls "imitation". As he puts it:

> Imitation of reality is imitation of the sensory experience of life on earth – among the most essential characteristics of which would seem to be its possessing a history, its changing and developing. (Auerbach 1953: 191)

Auerbach's approach is complementary to that of Bakhtin (apart from the differences between the two scholars' backgrounds) because *genre* was precisely what Auerbach was *not* interested in, indeed the tyranny of ancient genre-theory emerges as the "villain" of Auerbach's story. Perhaps for that reason, Auerbach has almost nothing to say about the ancient Greek novel.[2]

This paper forms part of a larger, ongoing project, to investigate how certain narrative possibilities that seem to have crystallized for the first time in the ancient Greek novel have proved persistent and productive over time, undergoing subtle transformations during formative later periods in the history of the genre, notably the twelfth century (simultaneously in Old French and in Byzantine Greek) and the eighteenth (the time when, according to a narrower definition, the novel is said to originate). For the present, my more limited aim is to revisit the two main essays in which Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope (and of the "historical poetics" of the novel) are developed, and to extrapolate what seem to me to the most significant and productive lines of his approach, both in general, and with specific reference to the ancient Greek novel. I will then attempt simultaneously to apply and to modify Bakhtin's model, in the light of a reading of Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon* and with reference to previous critiques. The final part of the paper examines how this approach can be productive for a reading of a much later text, often regarded as "foundational" for the modern development of the genre, especially in English, Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749).

Bakhtin's Concept of the Chronotope, Particularly with Reference to the Ancient Greek Novel

The discussion that follows is based principally on Bakhtin's long essay on the chronotope, written in 1937-38 but with the final part added as late as 1973 (FTC), with some reference also to the surviving portion of his lost study of the *Bildungsroman*,

dating from 1936-38, but not published until the 1970s (BSHR). Among critiques, one of the most valuable, which also extends the possibilities of the concept in directions not directly followed up here, the relevant chapter in Holquist's monograph stands out.[3]

In the most general terms, Bakhtin's "historical poetics" charts a continuous and creative evolution from the static ancient forms (the ancient Greek novel, the Roman novel, ancient biography) to what in the *Bildungsroman* essay he calls the "novel of emergence": "Man's emergence is accomplished in real historical time, with all of its necessity, its fullness, its future, and its profoundly chronotopic nature" (BSHR: 23).

We are entitled to wonder to what extent, or in what sense, this is to be seen as an evolutionary process, or even in the Marxist sense a teleological one. I believe that a history of the novel *should* be an explanation of how the current state of affairs came into being – or perhaps more usefully, how the novel came to arrive at the high-point of European realism in the mid-nineteenth century, from which all later offshoots derive. Bakhtin is not explicit on this, as on much else too. But I would want to emphasize the evolutionary, rather than teleological, model: change is built into the process, though not necessarily continuous. It is reasonable to look for overarching trends (from simple to complex, from static to dynamic, for instance), but just as with biological evolution, we should not be surprised to see a high degree of complexity in the earliest forms (Chariton's *Callirhoe*, I believe, provides a perfect example of this). Similarly, we should not assume that change is always for the "better", or even always in the same direction. Again, just as in biological evolution, we should expect to find "hopeful monsters" – patterns of change that died out early (there are examples of this phenomenon in late Byzantine and Early Modern Greek, for instance).

The other general point to make is that Bakhtin's term "chronotope" points directly to the two most fundamental components of any narrative: position and movement in space, and their interrelation with the passage of time. At the beginning of the essay Bakhtin himself makes passing reference to Einstein's theory of relativity, which established time as a dimension of space, but he himself downplays this cosmological background, and it has been suggested that the relations that define the chronotope have more to do with Kant than with Einstein.[4]

To turn now to the theory in more detail, Bakhtin asserts:

> In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. (FTC: 84)

Elsewhere he tells us, "the chronotope […] defines genre and generic distinctions" (ibid.: 85). "A literary work's artistic unity in relationship to an actual reality is defined by its chronotope" (ibid.: 243). "That is, we get a mutual interaction between the world represented in the work and the world outside the work" (ibid.: 255). Chronotopes, moreover, "are the organizing centers for the fundamental narrative events of the novel" (ibid.: 250); they "serve for the assimilation of actual temporal (including historical) reality, [and] permit the essential aspects of this reality to be reflected and incorporated into the artistic space of the novel" (ibid.: 252).

What all this would appear to mean is that, first of all, the chronotope is to be understood as the distinctive configuration of time and space that defines "reality" within the world of the text, *as conceptualized within that world itself*. But there is a further dimension, which emerges mainly from the addendum to the essay, written in 1973. Here the chronotope emerges as *also* being the relation between that imagined world and the real, historical world, similarly constituted (because for Bakhtin reality is never "given") out of a perceived relation between space and time, at the point in historical time where the work is either written or read (see especially FTC: 243-58).

The main part of the essay defines nine different chronotopes, more or less in historical sequence, starting with the ancient Greek novels (the "Greek romance" in Bakhtin's terminology, as translated) and ending, with a touch of circularity, with the "idyll" in the fiction of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A tenth chronotope (perhaps subdivided) would seem to be implied by the essay on the *Bildungsroman*, which although apparently written first, brings the story to connect fully with the triumph of realism in the nineteenth century (see Morson and Emerson 1990: 405).

To focus now on what he has to say about the first of these, the chronotope that defines the ancient novel, this is, according to Bakhtin, "the adventure novel of ordeal" (ibid.: 86). Its characters' experiences "affirm what they […] were as individuals, something that did verify and establish their identity"; they pass "the test" (ibid.: 106-7). The plot of the ancient novel takes place in "adventure time" (ibid.: 87 and passim). The world in which the hero and heroine endure their adventures is "an alien world in adventure time" (ibid.: 89, 102). This world of adventure is "abstract" (ibid.: 101), which is why it appears to be ruled by Chance (ibid.: 95ff). Intriguingly, "adventure time leaves no defining traces and is therefore in essence reversible" (ibid.: 100, see also 110). Space, too, is interchangeable: "what happens in Babylon could just as well happen in Egypt or Byzantium and vice versa" (ibid.). It may be concluded, then, 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" (ibid.; emphasis in original). The entire chronotope of adventure lies in the "gap, the pause, the hiatus that appears between these two strictly adjacent biographical moments" (ibid.: 89).

Some of these generalizations by Bakhtin about the ancient novel have fared better than others at the hands of modern scholarship. That the ancient novel was about a

test or ordeal was recognized long before Bakhtin and is not contested; the same can be said about the predominance of adventures and the role of chance (but also of a "fate" or "providence" on which Bakhtin has less to say). The more original, and promising, separation between what happens to the lovers in "adventure time" and the "biographical moments" in which they fall in love and are subsequently (re-) united as man and wife, seems to be echoed, from quite a different perspective, by Winkler (1994: 28): "the entire form of the Greek romance can be considered an elaboration of the period between initial desire and final consummation". Konstan's (1994: 45) influential proposal, elaborated from Foucault, that the novelty of the novel (in the ancient world) lies in its establishment of the new concept of "sexual symmetry" also seems, at one point, to concede that the world of adventures portrayed in them is paradoxically static (see also Ballengee 2005: 136). But in general, it is the "abstract" and "reversible", or "interchangeable", qualities of time and space in "adventure time" that have come in for most criticism.[5]

In order to see how Bakhtin's ideas may still be productive, and also where they may be in need of modification, I turn now to the novel that Bakhtin seems to have had most in mind when writing this part of his essay, *Leucippe and Clitophon* by Achilles Tatius.[6]

Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon*

Time in this novel is represented in a generally linear fashion, consonant with the novel's first-person narration (although the narrator's viewpoint is frequently violated), except for the representation of certain key events which are in effect narrated twice. These have to do with the apparent deaths of the heroine, of which there are no fewer than three in the novel; the first two of these, but not the third, are explained retrospectively and revealed to have been illusions. As for space, the action is concentrated into three main locales: the city of Tyre where the narrator, Clitophon is at home and first falls in love with Leucippe; the Egyptian Delta, where the pair undergo the most obviously dramatic of their adventures; and the city of Ephesus, where their continuing trial by ordeal assumes more urban, and urbane, guise. Each of these locales is separated from the previous one by a liminal space of contrasting sea-voyages. This, at its simplest, is how time and space are interwoven to create the narrative fabric of *Leucippe and Clitophon*.

At this point it will be useful to make explicit a distinction that derives from Bakhtin's terminology but is not applied explicitly or consistently by him in his discussion of the ancient Greek texts. The adventures which make up the greater part of each of these texts, according to Bakhtin, take place in what he calls "adventure time". Logically, this expression ought to be understood as shorthand for "adventure time-space", since the theory of the chronotope binds time and space into a continuum (see FTC: 84, quoted above). What happens in this time-space Bakhtin contrasts with what he terms "biographical moments". Implicitly, then, the world

depicted in these texts can be separated into two kinds of time-space: "adventure time-space", where the adventures happen, and "biographical time-space", in which the characters are at home, fall in love at the beginning, and live happily ever after at the end. This is the distinction that I propose to employ in the discussion of *Achilles Tatius* that follows.[7]

Biographical Time-Space in *Leucippe and Clitophon*

At home in Tyre, Clitophon falls in love with the beautiful Leucippe, his cousin from Byzantium. They attempt to make love and almost succeed. Frustrated, the pair elope by sea. The narration of these events takes up most of the first two of the novel's eight books (1.3-2.31). Everything that follows belongs in the (biographically) infinitesimal gap between desire and consummation, which comes in the final paragraph (8.18), amid a perfunctory résumé of final travels that in a few sentences take the reunited lovers back to Byzantium (her home city) for their wedding, then to Tyre (his home city) for the winter, before returning once more to Byzantium.[8]

Throughout these portions of the text, the characters do change and develop. Actions have consequences; their effects are irreversible. The process of falling in love is narrated with some detail that includes fundamental changes to the characters, particularly the first-person narrator. These changes are not reversible in the way that the apparent deaths of Leucippe later, in adventure time-space, are reversed. Had Leucippe and Clitophon subsequently fallen out of love, become indifferent to one another, or fallen in love with other people, each of these (biographical) possibilities would have necessitated a further, and again irreversible, set of changes; it could not have been represented as the simple *reversal* of what had gone before. Similarly, and more obviously, events that befall minor characters in Books 1 and 2, and which can be said to mirror aspects of the main story as it will develop later, have an unquestioned finality that contrasts with the outcome of similar events in "adventure time-space". The death of Charicles, the hero of an abortive homosexual subplot, includes graphic detail and emphasizes the destruction of the beauty of the beloved, anticipating the false deaths of Leucippe and Clitophon's laments that will follow them (1.13, p. 15). But no miraculous revelation will reveal this death to have been an illusionist's trick: Charicles remains dead. Similarly, when Clitophon's intended bride, Calligone, is conveniently removed from the story, by being abducted by pirates, no miracle, chance, or fate intervenes to restore her. She reappears in the narrative only at the very end, when the hero and heroine are briefly returned to the "biographical space-time" with which they began.

This, then, is biographical time-space. And Achilles Tatius may be one of the first to represent it, at this length, in fiction.

Adventure Time-Space in *Leucippe and Clitophon*

Spatially, this divides up into two main locales, where contrasting types of adventure take place, separated from the preceding "biographical time-space", and from each other, by sea-voyages, again of markedly contrasting character. Schematically, the spatial distribution of Leucippe's and Clitophon's adventures after their elopement can be represented like this:

> Voyage from Tyre to Egypt: storm, shipwreck (2.32-3.5);
> Egypt: extreme, outlandish adventures, including apparent evisceration and decapitation of the heroine (3.6-5.14);
> Voyage from Egypt to Ephesus: calm sea and a new kind of threat to the lovers' constancy, in the form of erotic temptation (5.15-5.17);
> Ephesus: urban(e) intrigue introduces greater complexity and a correspondingly more human/ credible scale of action (marital infidelity, masters and slaves, court drama) (5.17-8.18).

There can surely be no better example of Bakhtin's "empty time-[space]" than this. All the action which lies between the lovers' elopement near the end of Book 2 and the concluding sentences of the final paragraph in Book 8 separates, in Bakhtin's phrase, "two strictly adjacent biographical moments". The first such moment occurs when the hero and heroine first attempt to sleep together, the second when they are married. What lies between is precisely a *test,* an ordeal akin to initiation, which takes place, in relation to the "biographical" world experienced by the characters, not chronologically at all (the passage of time in these portions of the narrative is unimportant) but, as it were, thematically.

Not only that, but in "adventure time-space" the world in which the lovers have to act, and in which things happen to them, appears to obey different rules from the world they have left behind. This is most apparent in the episodes that stretch realism to the limits, associated with the fake deaths of Leucippe, but more interesting is the abrupt change in the norms of sexual behavior that comes about once they are launched upon their adventures – and which logically is the opposite of what might have been expected. In the biographical time-space of the first two books, a man and a woman can risk going to bed together, and at worst risk disgrace and might have to flee their home, as Leucippe and Clitophon in fact do. The prohibition on sex before marriage that is often assumed to be a convention of the entire genre conspicuously does not appear to be in force in Clitophon's Tyre; it is introduced suddenly at the beginning of Book 4. It is paradoxically the leap into adventure time-space, motivated as an escape from the (relatively mild) constraints of Tyre, that imposes on the lovers an entirely new rule of sexual abstinence. For the heroine in particular, in the world of their adventures, the penalty for unchastity is understood to be separation and death.

Bakhtin's theoretical distinction between biographical and adventure time-space (even though not articulated quite so explicitly in his essay) works well for this novel, and helps to explain why the characters behave differently at home in Tyre and abroad on their adventures. In this novel, at least, it can be argued that in adventure time, "time *is* reversible", as happens with the first two false deaths of Leucippe, each literally reversed as the illusion is explained. On the other hand, it is not quite true that "what happens in Babylon could just as well happen in Egypt or Byzantium and vice versa". While *specific* locations are not important and could easily have been changed, different kinds of action are associated with different spaces, whether rural or urban, on land or on the sea. It may also be no accident that *Leucippe and Clitophon*, like all the five ancient novels that have survived complete, tests its hero and heroine in each one of these clearly differentiated *kinds* of space.

How, finally, can the time and space represented in the fictional world of the characters be mapped in relation to the time and space in which the novel must have been written and first read? Here, as with all the ancient novels, we are hampered by having no useful or trustworthy information about the author, even less about his intended readership, and by considerable imprecision about the time and place of writing. So far as is known, the novel was written c. 150-200 CE. Its author is associated by tradition with Alexandria and was probably a "Greek with Roman citizenship", "a Hellenized Roman Egyptian" (Morales 2001: xii-xiii, xvii).

In relation to that (approximate) point in history and in historical geography, as we understand these things today, we can say that all the places mentioned in the novel are real, in the sense that their names would have been recognizable to readers of that period as belonging to the same world that they themselves inhabited. The things that happen in the novel's three main cities – Tyre, Alexandria and Ephesus – could all, more or less, be imagined as possible in the late first century (though one might hope that the decapitation of female captives on shipboard was not a daily occurrence in the harbor of Alexandria!). The same can be said of the novel's voyages: storm, shipwreck, and idyllic conditions were certainly among the real possibilities to be faced at sea at the period, as was the risk of capture by pirates. Extreme violence, when it occurs in the fictional time-space of the novel, is largely confined to the Nile Delta, presented as a wild no-man's-land infested by robbers and pirates (the *boukoloi* of the narrative). Most probably, the world depicted in books 3 and 4 represents an urban dweller's nightmare of what life *might* be like, *out there*. There are other reasons, too, for supposing that the novel's first readers are imagined as belonging to an urban, educated elite – and these include the detail that the hero himself is a reader of books (1.6, p. 8). But even in the novel's most wildly improbable episodes, there is no role for the fantastic. Unlike Odysseus or Jason before them, Leucippe and Clitophon never stray off the map of the real world altogether. There are instances of the uncanny, certainly, manifested in ways that would have been quite in keeping in a late nineteenth-century novel too: pictures, dreams, and on one occasion a divine epiphany foretell a future which then comes true; a supernatural lie-detector near the

story's end gives the right answers, but the text does not insist on the mechanism employed.

The time of the action can best be summarized as vaguely non-present in relation to its readers. The violent world of the Nile Delta is further distanced by the temporal indication: "*At that time*, the whole of the coastal region [of Egypt] was under the control of pirates" (3.5, p. 47). But in general the temporal distance that has led some commentators to describe the ancient Greek novel, as a whole, as a form of "historical novel" (Perry 1967; Hägg 1983) is absent or understated in *Leucippe and Clitophon*, particularly by comparison with *Callirhoe* or the *Aethiopica*. On the other hand, in *Leucippe and Clitophon*, as in all five complete ancient Greek novels, not a single mention is made of the *political* geography of the time when it was written and must first have been read: every one of the locales mentioned had for most of the previous two centuries been under the rule of imperial Rome (Hägg 1983, 1988). When this fact is remembered, the chronotope of all five of these novels takes on a further dimension: the world they create *resembles* that of their authors and first readers in many respects, but is in fact an imaginative construct. The biographical time-space in which the characters fall in love and marry, no less than the adventure time-space in which they are tested almost to destruction, are both of them fictional projections of an idealized Hellenistic world. In that world, Greek language and Hellenic culture are predominant, and the contemporary political reality of Roman rule has never existed.

Tom Jones

In order to suggest how such a re-reading and partial modification of Bakhtin's theoretical template could prove productive for a new "historical poetics", that would include both ancient Greek fiction and its modern counterpart, I turn now to a text which has often been regarded as "foundational" for a much narrower reading of the genre's history.

The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling, by Henry Fielding, was first published in 1749.[9] Bakhtin, in his study of the *Bildungsroman*, assigns it to the category which he terms the "early biographical novel of emergence" (BSHR: 24, see also 18; see also Morson and Emerson 1990: 408, 410). Even Bakhtin, then, sides with the majority which sees Fielding's novel as looking forward to the rapid and far-reaching developments in fiction that took place between the late eighteenth century and the middle of the nineteenth. In the view of many English-language historians or theorists of the novel, who have followed in the footsteps of Ian Watt's influential study of 1957, *Tom Jones* belongs among a handful of texts of the period that mark a decisive break with the older tradition of the "romance", and the beginning of the novel proper.

The counter-case was made as long ago as 1976, but does not seem to have been seriously followed up by specialists.[10] According to Miller (1976: 9), "*Tom Jones* is in all major essentials a 'romance' and vitally profits from earlier modes of fiction, indeed, cannot be adequately interpreted – or 'decoded' – unless the conventions of romance are imaginatively comprehended". I believe that this is true; but the case made by Miller is a very generalized one and assumes a curiously undifferentiated history of what he calls "the Romance Tradition" from the ancient Greek novels (which he seems to know mostly through Perry), via the medieval romance of chivalry, to the popular French romances of the seventeenth century which were Fielding's particular *bête noire*; Miller focuses mainly on romance paradigms drawn from the sixteenth-century *Amadís de Gaula*, though he also makes telling use of Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, a text with which the eighteenth-century innovations in fiction are more commonly contrasted than compared.

Following Miller's lead, but making a much more direct connection to the ancient genre and its chronotope than is suggested by his study, I propose that despite Fielding's overt and often-repeated claim to be creating something entirely new in what he insists on calling a "history", part of the game implicitly played out in this most playful of fictions is surely to map the time-space of the fictional foundling's history on to that of the best-known predecessor in the genre then known as "romance": *Leucippe and Clitophon*.[11]

The novel's eighteen "books" are grouped into three roughly equal "parts", of six books each. Schematically, the structure of the novel can be represented as follows:

I   Jones' early years spent on Squire Allworthy's estate (at one point named "Paradise Hall");
II   Wanderings and adventures of Jones and Sophia on the road, in search of one another;
III   Wanderings and adventures continued, but now in London (with return in the final chapter).

Already this structure invites comparison with that of *Leucippe and Clitophon*, as summarized above. Squire Allworthy's estate corresponds to Clitophon's home city of Tyre, the wanderings of Tom and Sophia to the two sea-voyages that bring Leucippe and Clitophon first to Egypt, for the most outlandish of their adventures, and then to the new, but still foreign, urban environment of Ephesus. The last of these, of course, corresponds to the final testing of Tom and Sophia in London.

Just as Konstan (1994) has argued for the ancient Greek novel, so too the story of *Tom Jones* is based upon the idea of "sexual symmetry". Fielding questions many things in his narrative and in his frequent digressions, but never this: the only possible outcome of the plot (other than a tragic one) is the mutual happiness of a man and woman in marriage. In keeping with the rhetoric of the ancient novel, Jones even vows "eternal constancy" to Sophia; if he does not quite keep that vow, as we shall see, neither did Clitophon.

Just like the ancient novelists, too, Fielding plays games with chance (called "Fortune"), and implies a providential role for the author of his fiction (see e.g. I. I, p. 31; IV. XII, p. 172; XIII. VI, p. 619). The choice of the name Dowling for the minor character whose long-delayed revelations bring about the resolution of the plot, with its echo of the term "dowel" (referring to an invisible means of forming a joint in carpentry), in turn echoes the role assigned in several of the ancient novels to a "providence" that is often more or less explicitly to be identified with the ingenuity of the author (particularly by Heliodorus).[12]

Even the theme, obligatory in the ancient genre, of *Scheintod* (false, or apparent, death) is not absent from *Tom Jones*. On no fewer than three occasions, one of the lovers is briefly believed to be dead (the same number as the false deaths of Leucippe). Naturally these play a much smaller part in Fielding's narrative than they do in *Leucippe and Clitophon*, with the result that they are easily overlooked. But the fact that Fielding troubled to include such an inherently non-realistic element in his fiction is surely further proof that he is consistently playing with the conventions of the older genre. Immediately after the youthful bout of fisticuffs between Jones and his rival for Sophia's affections, Blifil, Sophia herself appears on the scene and faints. "Miss Western is dead", several bystanders immediately cry out, which prompts Jones to a precocious recovery from his injuries; picking up Sophia in his arms, "he had carried her half ways before they knew what he was doing, and he had actually *restored her to life* before they reached the waterside" (V. xii, p. 229; emphasis added). Often in the ancient novels, too, the theme of *Scheintod* is followed by a figurative (or parodic) intimation of a return from the dead. Later, at Upton, in a brawl provoked by an insult to his feelings for Sophia, Jones is knocked unconscious and thought to be dead (VII. xii, p. 328). Later still, in London, Sophia is tested with a false report of Jones's death, an episode that more closely recalls the third false death of Leucippe, in a false report given to Clitophon (XV. III, pp. 693-4; see Ach.Tat. 7.2-3 = Whitmarsh 2001: 113-4).

As for the theme of the test, in *Leucippe and Clitophon*, as we saw, chastity was imposed on the lovers once they set out on their adventures. The heroine passes the test fully, despite severe threats. Clitophon succumbs on a single occasion, when he sleeps with the widow Melite after all, just when it had seemed that he had successfully resisted her attentions (5.25, p. 97). Exactly the same pattern is followed by Fielding. Sophia's chastity is absolute, even in the face of temptation followed by attempted rape (XV. ii, pp. 688-92; v, pp. 698-9). Jones is tempted not once, like Clitophon, but three times – successively by Mrs. Waters at Upton, by Lady Bellaston, and again by Mrs. Fitzpatrick in London. On the second of these occasions certainly, and probably also on the first, like Clitophon he succumbs.[13]

Even the element of the exotic is not absent, as Jones makes his way across the home counties of England, although once again the parodic element is striking. Three of Jones' encounters along the road deserve to be singled out under this heading: with the strange "Man of the Hill", who seems at first to be associated with witchcraft;

with a band of gypsies, represented as enjoying a kind of miniature utopia, under their king, even called (directly recalling Achilles Tatius) "Egyptians"; and perhaps, more briefly, at the very end of the road, with the highwayman near London who ends up begging for mercy from his would-be victim.[14]

Finally, the description of Sophia takes up most of a chapter whose parodic nature is overtly declared in its title: "A short hint of what we can do in the sublime, and a description of Miss Sophia Western". The mock-ekphrasis of the heroine includes the following sentences, which can be quite closely paralleled in Achilles Tatius' ekphrasis of *Leucippe*:

> […] She was most like the picture of Lady Ranelagh; and, I have heard, more still to the famous Duchess of Mazarine [famous court beauties] […] Her eyebrows were full, even, and arched beyond the power of art to imitate. Her black eyes had a lustre in them, which all her softness could not extinguish. […] Her cheeks were of the oval kind; and in her right she had a dimple, which the least smile discovered. Her chin had certainly its share in forming the beauty of her face; but it was difficult to say it was either large or small, though perhaps it was rather of the former kind. Her complexion had rather more of the lily than of the rose; but when exercise, or modesty, increased her natural colour, no vermilion could equal it. (IX. ii, p. 135)

Compare the description of Leucippe:

> She looked like a picture I had once seen of Selene on a bull: her eyes were blissfully brilliant; her hair was blonde, curling blonde; her brows were black, unadulterated black; her cheeks were white, a white that blushed towards the middle, a blush like the purple pigment used by a Lydian woman to dye ivory. Her mouth was like the bloom of a rose, when the rose begins to part the lips of its petals. (Ach. Tat. 1.4.3, transl. Whitmarsh 2001: 6-7)

The point of making these comparisons is not just to argue that Fielding was consciously positioning his work in relation to the ancient "romance", and in particular in relation to its probably best-known exemplar at the time, *Leucippe and Clitophon*. Rather, once the common underlying template is recognized, it becomes possible to measure how far Fielding has traveled from his ancient predecessor in his use of it. An obvious measure, here, is the element of parody, which is ubiquitous in *Tom Jones* and needs no special illustration. Another, that I think has not been examined before, is the representation of space and time, that is to say, in Bakhtin's terms, of the novel's chronotope.

Biographical and Adventure Time-Space in *Tom Jones*

A greater proportion of Fielding's novel than of Achilles Tatius' is taken up with biographical time-space. The whole of Part I is presented as the biography of the hero, from the first discovery of the infant in Squire Allworthy's bed, to his expulsion from the protected environment of the squire's estate at the age of twenty. But that traumatic event precipitates the hero, just like his ancient Greek counterparts, into a world of unpredictable wanderings and adventures. The same applies to the heroine, too, with only the small difference that in most of the ancient novels the pair set out on their adventures together, and are then separated, whereas in *Tom Jones* Sophia leaves home separately, but with the same aim: to find her lover and be reunited with him. Part II of *Tom Jones* unmistakably plunges both Jones and Sophia into a different world from the one that they (or the reader of the novel thus far) have been used to: a world of "adventure time-space". True, most of the "adventures" are, in Fielding's own term, "mock-heroic" rather than heroic, and as we shall see shortly, the extent of the displacement is bathetically small, compared to the wanderings in four out of the five ancient novels, that encompass the whole of the eastern Mediterranean and its hinterland. But in principle, what Bakhtin writes of "adventure time" holds good for Part II of *Tom Jones* also: what happens could happen anywhere, in any order; what appears to be the case is very often reversed by subsequent revelations (time is, in that sense, "reversible").

This actually holds true not only of Part II but of Part III, up to the middle of the last chapter, as well. Here we are in London, but in the big city the wanderings, misunderstandings, and seemingly random, "testing" adventures continue until the final unraveling of the plot brings about the long-delayed reunion of the lovers and their return (as in *Leucippe and Clitophon*) to their starting-point. To an extent, the urban world of London is less strange and (only superficially) less threatening to the lovers' wellbeing than the hazards and privations of their respective journeys. But this is true of the corresponding adventures of Leucippe and Clitophon. These also centre upon the space of a city and its immediate environs, and also culminate in a complex set of revelations. Only in the concluding pages of *Tom Jones* does the biographical thread resume, from the point where it had been arbitrarily broken off at the end of Part I.

Read in this way, Fielding's novel does not only parody its ancient precedent, it also gives new life and vitality to a genre whose imitations had by the mid eighteenth century become hackneyed indeed. If *Tom Jones* is an "early biographical novel of emergence", it *becomes* one by virtue of exploiting possibilities that were already latent in one of the earliest surviving texts in the genre. For all the author's bold assertions in the programmatic, self-reflexive opening chapters of each book, that he is creating a new kind of writing, different from epic and romance and closer to history – assertions which ever since seem to have been accepted at face value by criticism – the way in which Fielding actually sets about telling the supposedly *real* history of a *unique* individual is by reverting to some of the oldest conventions in the genre. Like the best

parodies, *Tom Jones* does not only subvert what it mocks, it validates and perpetuates it too.

The Time-Space of the Novel's Writing and First Readers

It is in this aspect of the chronotope that Fielding's originality most strikingly stands out. As we have seen, the world of the ancient novel is distanced from that of its authors and first readers in terms of *political*, though not spatial, geography (the suppression of the reality of Roman rule) and of historical time. Fielding, while otherwise following ancient conventions, inverts these, to the extent that if we were to define what is new about the "chronotope" of *Tom Jones* (and indeed of most realist fiction since) it must surely lie in the collision between the world represented in the text and that inhabited by author and readers. At first sight, this is no more than to restate an obvious truth, one usually taken for granted in any discussion of realism in fiction during the last two centuries. How radical this collision is, in terms of the "historical poetics" of the genre over time, only becomes fully apparent when *Tom Jones* is set side by side with the chronotope of the ancient novel.

To take time first: Fielding was not the first to make claims for a work of fiction as being a form of history, indeed it is quite likely that the ancient novel itself began as a form of "apocryphal" history. But Fielding brings to his task a self-awareness, and a consciousness of precedents, that were naturally not available to his ancient precursors.[15] Fielding has much to say in his introductory chapters on this, asserting, for example, his liberty to linger or to leave things out at will (II. I, pp. 67-8). Almost more provocative is the use of headings for books and chapters which often do no more than denote intervals of time. This is one sense in which, as Bakhtin puts it, of the ancient novel: "Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible"; but denoting the passage of time was a preoccupation for ancient novelists too, who are perhaps at their most insistent on specifying the alternations of days and nights when the time they represent is at its most "abstract" or "empty".[16]

But Fielding, unlike any ancient novelist, or any author in the "romance" tradition, confronts his characters with historical situations which were contemporary with the writing of the book, and would have been familiar memories to its first readers. The 1745 Jacobite rebellion is first mentioned early on in Part II; it would appear that the first chapters of the novel had already been written before these events even took place (VII. xi, p. 321; see Bender 1996: xv). Later, a frisson of real danger to Sophia is introduced, through a false report of a French landing in England in support of the rebels (XI. vi, pp. 515-16). Time, by the end of the novel, has come round so that the characters are reported to be living in the same present tense in which the author addresses his readers. On the last page we are told that the happy couple have "*already* produced two children", of whom the younger is "a year and half old" (XVIII. "THE LAST", p. 870).

Similarly, as was mentioned above, the space in which all the action unfolds, whether in "biographical" or "adventure" time-space, is homely and can be presumed to have been familiar to the majority of the book's first readers. Fielding's achievement here has been to map on to a landscape that is inherently the opposite of the exotic, adventure world of "romance", a sequence of adventures which mirror those of earlier "romances". As a consequence, in *Tom Jones* it is only the boundaries of the text that mark off the textual space and time inhabited by the fictional characters from the time and space in which Fielding, his publisher, and his readers also live.

So despite its parodic relation to the ancient novel (and Bakhtin's model helps us recognize this), Fielding moves towards a type of representation that is radically different from the "static" type found in *Leucippe and Clitophon*. As Bakhtin summarizes the chronotope of the *Bildungsroman*:

> The hero himself, his character, becomes a variable in the formula of this type of novel. Changes in the hero himself acquire *plot* significance, and thus the entire plot of the novel is reinterpreted and reconstructed. Time is introduced into man, enters into his very image, changing in a fundamental way the significance of all aspects of his destiny and life. (BSHR: 21)

Theoretical Implications

This parallel reading of *Leucippe and Clitophon* and *Tom Jones,* in the light of Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope, highlights the persistence of the ancient Greek novel as a narrative template even, or especially, in a text which has usually been valued for the explicit distance that it creates between itself and the older "romance" and has consequently been read as a foundational text for the subsequent development of the genre.

In their opening chapter, Bemong and Borghart propose five different "levels of abstraction" at which the concept of the chronotope can be (and has been) understood. Evidently enough, the discussion of *Leucippe and Clitophon* can be situated on their level 4: the chronotopic characteristics discussed serve to define the genre (or at least the subgenre) of the ancient Greek novel, as well as text-specific deviations from it or elaborations on the given template. But what of *Tom Jones*? The persistence of chronotopes, more or less fossilized, over long periods of time is remarked on by Bakhtin himself as well as by influential commentators (FTC: 85; Morson and Emerson 1990: 371-2; Bemong and Borghart in the present volume). But Fielding's use and adaptation of the chronotope of ancient fiction goes far further than the "creative recycling" or "revival" implied by Bakhtin and discussed explicitly elsewhere in this volume (Bemong and Borghart in the present volume; see also Borghart and De Temmerman 2010). It would be perverse, surely, to insist that the chronotope which defines the (sub)genre of *Tom Jones* is the same as that which defines the ancient

Greek novel, since most readers have followed Fielding's own injunctions in the introductory chapters to each book to read his text otherwise. This is where Bemong's and Borghart's third level, the "major" or "dominant" chronotope can be especially valuable, since it "serves as a unifying ground for the competing local chronotopes in one and the same narrative text" (Bemong and Borghart in the present volume). Thus, schematically, one might propose that Fielding more or less deliberately overlays a radically new, not yet fully formed, chronotope, that of the "novel of emergence", upon the inherited chronotope that once defined ancient fiction, and still perhaps did define its avatars down to the seventeenth century.

In this case, "the simultaneous existence in literature of phenomena taken from widely separate periods of time" certainly does "greatly complicate […] the historico-literary process" (FTC: 85). This brings me to the second, closely related, theoretical implication of the present discussion: can a chronotope be "transhistorical"? This was an issue debated productively, but I think inconclusively, at the conference on which this volume is based. Even in the sense of the "stubborn existence" of chronotopes, long after they have ceased to be "productive" (the French seventeenth-century romances so derided by Fielding, for instance, or the Byzantine and modern Greek novels adduced by Borghart and De Temmerman 2010), it is by no means certain that the same patterning of events in space and time, encountered in texts written at widely separated historical moments, represents the identical *chronotope*.

That the chronotope in such cases is the same after all would seem to be supported by some of Bakhtin's own comments ("they continued stubbornly to exist") and, for example, by the intriguing, but in the end I suspect limiting, proposal of Scholz to bring the chronotope within the framework of formalist/structuralist analysis and extrapolate it as "referring to the generative principle of plot".[17] On the other hand, a rigorous reading of Bakhtin's essay, and particularly of its final part, would suggest that precisely what is most valuable about the concept of the chronotope is its *historicity*. Chronotopes do not merely organize space and time within a text, which ever after enjoys a fixed, transcendental, transhistorical existence; they do so within the historical process, in which no two moments can ever be identical (see Morson and Emerson 1990: 428-9).

This aspect of the chronotope is illuminated, in characteristically paradoxical fashion, and presumably without any knowledge of Bakhtin, in Borges's often cited fiction, "Pierre Menard, author of the *Quixote*". The fictional French author, writing in the early twentieth century, laboriously produces a text that is "verbally identical" to Cervantes's novel, but "almost infinitely richer" (Borges 1970: 69). "Menard's fragmentary *Quixote* is more subtle than Cervantes'" (ibid.: 68), precisely because written in a different epoch, by a writer whose historical, geographical, linguistic and cultural context could hardly have been more different from that of Cervantes three hundred years before him. What distinguishes Menard's *Quixote* from the real one (and at this point it ceases to matter that the former only exists – *could* only exist – within a fictional text) is precisely their respective chronotopes, as delineated in the

last part of Bakhtin's essay. That is to say, even if the spatial and temporal relations *within* the two texts are absolutely identical, what makes them utterly different, as Borges insists that they are, is their respective spatial and temporal relations to the world in which they were created and are (now, or at any time) read.

This is why I believe that in future it may be necessary, and productive, to distinguish between the "chronotope" as archetypal plot-structure, or template, from the "chronotope" in its more fundamental historical (and even historicist) sense as I believe it was intended by Bakhtin to be understood. The former has an evident transhistorical existence, and can be seen as an intertextual resource available to writers in any epoch, as well as being at some specific times more or less imposed on them; but it is in the story of the latter that a true "historical poetics" would have to consist.

In this paper I have used the term in both of these senses. In the first sense (the chronotope as transhistorical plot-structure, template, or archetype) Fielding exploits a still-productive potential that has come down to him via the long history of the genre in which he is working; but it is in the second sense (the chronotope as an unrepeatable intersection of a fictional world with a given place and time in human history) that the concept of the chronotope can provide a measure, as it were, of the distance traveled *along the same scale or axis* during the centuries that separate the writing of the two novels. *Tom Jones*, according to this reading, represents not a radical break but a measurable shift in poetics along a scale that can be calibrated in historical time.

This is precisely the kind of "measurement" that ought to be provided by a "historical poetics", which I suggest, for that reason, should be seen as a worthwhile methodology for a new understanding of the novel as a genre at once in and about history.

Endnotes

1. See, indicatively but obviously not exclusively: Doody (1997), Frye (1976), Mander (2007), McKeon (2002), and Watt (1957).

2. "The stylistic level of the *Decameron* is strongly reminiscent of the corresponding antique *genus*, the antique novel [...] This is not surprising, since the attitude of the author to his subject matter, and the social stratum for which the work is intended, correspond quite closely in the two periods, and since for Boccaccio too the concept of the writer's art was closely associated with that of rhetoric. [...] Yet while the antique novel is a late form cast in languages which had long since produced their best, Boccaccio's stylistic endeavor finds itself confronted by a newly-born and as yet almost amorphous literary language" (Auerbach 1953: 216).

3. Holquist (2002: 109-26). Among critiques of Bakhtin's reading of the ancient novel, the most important remains Branham (2002). See also Branham (2005) and specific contributions cited below. See also Morson and Emerson (1990: 366-432).

4. Argued by Branham (2002: 165). But see contra Morson and Emerson (1990: 366-9).

5. See particularly, and most recently, Ballengee (2005), Smith (2005), Whitmarsh (2005), and for a view more sympathetic to Bakhtin's approach, Kim (2008).

6. References are given parenthetically in the text, in the form of book-number followed by para-graph-number separated by a full-stop (most if not all translations also include these numbers). Page numbers refer to Whitmarsh (2001).

7. Although differently formulated, and to a different end, I suggest that this distinction is congru-ent with the revisionist distinctions introduced into Bakhtin's theory respectively by Whitmarsh and Ballengee: in the one case between "centrifugal and centripetal forces" (Whitmarsh 2005: 116-19), in the other between "inner experience" and "public image" as validated by society (Ballengee 2005: 135). Smith (2005: 173), in his chronotopical re-reading of *Callirhoe*, also seeks to rescue what he calls a "real-life chronotope" from the dominance of Bakhtin's empty adventure time.

8. Nothing in the text explains how Clitophon came to be alone in Sidon, where in the first two paragraphs of Book 1 he meets the book's supposed author and begins to tell the story that makes up all the rest of the text. The fullest discussion of this incomplete "frame", which cer-tainly complicates matters, is to be found in Repath (2005). The issue has intentionally been left out of the present analysis.

9. References here are given in the form of book-number (in roman) followed by chapter number (roman, small caps), separated by a full-stop. The page references which follow are to Fielding (1996).

10. See indicatively Rawson (2007), which gives a representative overview of current scholarship and does not make any mention of either the "romance" or Miller (1976).

11. Thanks to an exhaustive study by Mace (1996), we know that Fielding's knowledge of ancient texts was considerable, and she also argues that he makes much more systematic use of this knowledge in his fiction than he has often been given credit for. But a striking absence from that study is any mention of the ancient novel, either of texts or of authors. It seems incredible that Fielding would not have known of *Leucippe and Clitophon*, as Richardson knew the *Aethiopica.* For the purposes of this paper, it is not important to establish the precise route by which Field-ing had access to the chronotope of the ancient novel.

12. Dowling first appears as the unnamed messenger from Salisbury (V. VIII, p. 212 and IX, p. 217) and is introduced by name when Jones first meets him (VIII. VIII, pp. 374-5; see XII. X, pp. 571-6). After a number of further preparatory appearances, Dowling finally tells his story at XVIII. VIII, pp. 838-40.

13. Mrs. Waters (an added frisson to this episode is given by the fact that she soon turns out to be none other than Jenny Jones, supposed by the reader, and by all the characters at this point, to be Jones's own mother): IX. V, pp. 442-4; see VII, p. 448; Lady Bellaston: XIII. VIII, pp. 627-8; IX, pp. 632-4; XV. IX, pp. 717-22; Mrs. Fitzpatrick: XVI. IX, pp. 767-8.

14. See, respectively, VIII. X-XV, pp. 383-421 (esp. X, pp. 383-5; XI, p. 388), XII. XII, pp. 581-7 (see XIII, p. 587: "his Egyptian majesty"), and XIV, pp. 592-5.

15. Compare the influential formulation by T.S. Eliot (1975: 40): "Someone said: 'The dead writ-ers are remote from us because we *know* so much more than they did.' Precisely, and they are that which we know".

16. For a thorough exploration of the representation of time in the ancient novels (dating from before Bakhtin's work became known in translation), see Hägg (1971).

17. Scholz (2003: 163), cited by Bemong and Borghart elsewhere in this volume. Note the implicit nod to both transformational grammar and Lévi-Strauss's theory of myth.

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