

## ‘FROM NOVELISTIC ROMANCE TO ROMANTIC NOVEL’: THE REVIVAL OF THE ANCIENT ADVENTURE CHRONOTOPE IN BYZANTINE AND MODERN GREEK LITERATURE

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This paper deals with the presence of Bakhtin’s adventure chronotope in the ancient Greek novel (first centuries AD) and its re-appearance in the Byzantine novel (12<sup>th</sup> century) and modern Greek romantic novel (1830–1850). Unlike previous scholarship on Bakhtin, which has adopted chronotopical analysis almost exclusively for the purpose of chronological literary history, our semiotic approach to narrative genres addresses diachronic similarities between three generic variants by taking into account cultural-historical circumstances. We argue that these similarities consist of a highly specific combination of (1) a certain degree of (proto-) ethnical awareness primarily based on the classical heritage of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC (‘Hellenism’), and (2) a fundamental unease among the *literati* with the prevailing political climate. In our view, both circumstances found an adequate mode of expression in the narrative syntax of the adventure novel.

### **Genre Theory, Chronotopes and Communal Identity**

Genre study has always been an important strand of literary theory. However, little attention has hitherto been paid to the cognitive function of literary genres; the belief, that is, that fixed poetic and narrative structures should be understood as means for storing and conveying highly specific forms of human knowledge. As Morson observes:

Critics and intellectual historians have overlooked that *literary genres are themselves profound forms of thinking*. The most important content of literature is not to be found in explicit statements nor even in a given work’s import, however profound. We must not miss the wisdom carried by genres themselves. (Morson 1991: 1076–1077; italics in original)

Morson’s remark echoes one of the achievements of a theoretical model that has taken precisely this approach as its starting point, namely Bakhtin’s

(1981 and 1986) theory of the literary chronotope. The basic principles of this theory can be summarized in three points. First, unlike purely formalist or structuralist approaches to novelistic time and space, Bakhtin argues that these categories constitute a fundamental unity. This inseparability of time and space is denoted by the term ‘chronotope’—literally meaning ‘time-space’—and refers to the ‘world construction’ at the base of every narrative text, comprising a coherent combination of spatial and temporal indicators. More precisely, Bakhtin clearly distinguishes between ‘major’ chronotopes, which encompass or dominate entire narrative texts, and ‘minor’ ones, which he locates on the level of narrative motifs or scenes (1982: 243, 252). For the present discussion, the category of ‘major’ chronotopes is of central importance. Second, Bakhtin, strongly adhering to the idea that the number of possible world constructions is not infinite, points out that in the history of the western novel recurrent configurations of time and space ‘[...] provide the basis for distinguishing generic types; they lie at the heart of specific varieties of the novel genre, formed and developed over the course of many centuries [...]’ (Bakhtin 1982: 250–251). Consequently, recurrent major chronotopes can be divided into classes of still more abstract ‘generic chronotopes’, also described as identifiable ‘narrative types’. Third, chronotopes, as sophisticated narrative genres, reflect a significant amount of human knowledge by propagating a specific ‘world view’ (Morson 1991: 1087; Keunen 2001: 421 and forthcoming).

Semiotic approaches (Lotman 1977; Fokkema 1985) divide the notion of literary genre into its syntactic, semantic and pragmatic components. According to this division, the field of ‘pragmatics’ studies the function of literary genres as well as the contextual circumstances in which they originate, while ‘syntactics’ and ‘semantics’ focus on their compositional and thematic features respectively. Applied to Bakhtin’s theory, the syntactic dimension of generic chronotopes is embodied by their ‘world construction’, while their semantic content is tantamount to the corresponding ‘world view’.

As this article demonstrates, Bakhtin’s theory is particularly useful for a typological history of the novel. So far, however, scholarship has adopted chronotopical analysis almost exclusively for the purpose of chronological literary history. This emphasis on differences rather than on similarities between world constructions has inevitably led to the assumption that every cultural-historical period has developed its own gamut of chronotopes so as to voice time-specific world views. This almost exclusive focus on time-specific, synchronic features of narrative genres, however, has distracted scholars from the question of how syntactic and semantic *similarities* between generic chronotopes in different periods of literary history can be accounted

for. In this respect, the reception of literary models through translations or theoretical essays has always been regarded as sufficient as an explanation for any revival of past chronotopes. This one-sided approach does not square with insights from the field of comparative literature, which point out that far-reaching structural affinities between literary systems are unlikely to be the result of merely 'genetic' influences, but can only be adequately explained by taking into account so-called 'typological' or cultural-historical circumstances too (Đurišić 1974: 123–178; Zima 1992: 94–165). What is more, indications for such a contextual approach to narrative types can also be found in Bakhtin's own writings: '[s]emantic phenomena can exist in concealed form, *potentially*, and be revealed only in semantic contexts of subsequent epochs that are favorable for such disclosure'.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, striking parallels between generic chronotopes underlying the novelistic production of two or more historically remote eras can only be conclusively explained by taking into account their respective cultural and socio-political contexts.

Critical accounts of the precise meaning of the term 'world view' range from the highly abstract to the concrete. An interesting example of the latter is the following proposition by Morson:

As 'congealed old world view', a genre *remembers* past experience. That is, genres contain a vast storehouse of experiential wisdom of which we are often unaware, but which can be partially reconstructed under the pressure of *new* [similar] experiences.<sup>2</sup>

In this article, we present a case from Greek literary history which shows that deliberate attempts to construct 'communal identities' with the aid of narrative texts can be regarded as instances of highly specific 'world views'.<sup>3</sup> In addition, we will argue that a comparative analysis of the pragmatic circumstances in which recurrent chronotopes appear possibly provides a first and necessary step towards understanding their diachronic dimension. Our contextual approach draws upon Benedict Anderson's (1991) influential insight that every large-scale community—from primitive forms of society to modern nation-states—is 'imagined', in that they consist of members that are predominantly unknown to each other and yet indeed feel united by a kind of group consciousness, largely based on a common spoken language and the sense of a shared cultural-historical past. Moreover, Anderson argues, communal identities are for the most part deliberately initiated by an intellectual elite, to be generally imposed through a 'top-down' process in which literature, especially both the formal structure and also the national content of novels, has an important role to play.<sup>4</sup>

### The Adventure Novel of Ordeal in Greek Literary History

In Bakhtin, the ‘adventure novel of ordeal’ denotes a generic chronotope that has been highly productive in Greek literary history. The term refers, firstly, to a series of ancient Greek stories of love and adventure written in the south-eastern Mediterranean during the first centuries AD. Today, this ancient genre survives only in five extant novels (Chariton of Aphrodisias’ *Callirhoe*, Xenophon of Ephesos’ *Ephesiaka*, Achilleus Tatios’ *Leukippe and Kleitophon*, Longos’ *Daphnis and Chloe*, and Heliodoros of Emesa’s *Aethiopika*) and a number of fragments and summaries.<sup>5</sup> The history underlying the plot of the individual novels is stereotypical. A boy and a girl who are exceptionally beautiful and of high birth fall in love at first sight but are separated from each other through a series of adventures. Typically, they are shipwrecked or enslaved by pirates or other enemies in remote territories and separated for a long time, during which their mutual fidelity is repeatedly put to the test. Moreover, death always threatens the young heroes, who run the risk of being murdered or executed, or try to escape their misfortunes by committing suicide. Their mutual fidelity is rewarded with reunion in a happy ending.

Our work places itself in a tradition that regards these texts as the first novels in European culture, thereby challenging the view that the novel is a product of 17<sup>th</sup>-century England, as Ian Watt (1960) and, more recently, McKeon (1987) have argued. As Doody has pointed out, the (Anglo-Saxon) distinction between ‘novel’ and ‘romance’ posits the presence of realism as an essential prerequisite for any narrative to be worthy of the title ‘novel’ (Doody 1996: 1–2). Interestingly, Bakhtin’s account of ancient Greek narrative fiction has often been read as a legitimization of this corpus’ characterization as ‘romance’ (Konstan 1994: 11; Doody 1996: 2). As this paper argues, adopting the basic points of Bakhtin’s chronotopical description of this corpus does not necessarily preclude reading these texts as genuine novels.

Almost a millenium after the ancient Greek novel’s heyday, the genre reappears in the form of a deliberate revival in the Byzantine 12<sup>th</sup> century, with four extant novels written during the reign of emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1143–1180), presumably within a decade either side of 1150 (Theodoros Prodromos’ *Rodanthi and Dosiklis*, Nikitas Evgenianos’ *Drosilla and Chariklis*, Konstandinos Manassis’ *Aristandros and Kallithea*, and Efsthathios Makremvolitis’ *Ysmini and Ysminias*).<sup>6</sup> Another 650 years later, the adventure novel of ordeal served as model for at least six Modern Greek novels in the romantic tradition during the twenty years following Greek independence in 1830<sup>7</sup> (Panagiotis Soutsos’ *Leandros* [1834], Alexandros’ Soutsos’ *The exile of 1831* [1835], Iakovos Pitzipios’ *The orphan-girl from Chios* [1839],

Georgios D. Rodokanakis' *Megaklis* [1840], Epameinondas Frangkoudis' *Thersandros* [1847] and L.S. Kalogeropoulos' *Floros* [1847]).<sup>8</sup> Unlike the Byzantine novel, however, this re-appearance of the genre was not acknowledged by Bakhtin himself.

In the first chapter of his seminal essay (1982: 86–110; cf. also 1986: 11–16), Bakhtin's concept of the so-called 'adventure chronotope' sets out to capture the world construction underlying the ancient Greek genre. Several of Bakhtin's views on various aspects of this genre have recently been challenged by a number of scholars problematizing the apparent simplicity behind some of his categories.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, not all the details making up his adventure chronotope in particular are defensible (De Temmerman 2004). Indeed, Bakhtin's thoughts about ancient literature—and even literature in general—are fundamentally informed by his teleological view of western literary history, which he regards as a series of genres leading up to the ideal of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century realist novel and the chronotope of 'real historical time' internalized in it. Consequently, 19<sup>th</sup>-century novelistic literature provides Bakhtin with a set of criteria for the assessment of earlier genres.<sup>10</sup>

It is our belief, however, that the essence of Bakhtin's adventure chronotope stands the test of critical scrutiny. What is more, we argue that it is, generally speaking, characteristic of the Byzantine and modern Greek variant too. The core of Bakhtin's adventure chronotope is the cultural separation between the world where the hero and heroine feel 'at home' in the beginning and at the end of the story, and the 'outside world', mostly barbarian, in which they undergo various adventures. The plot, that is, is informed by a conventional macro-sequence that consists of 'adventure time-space' preceded and followed by 'biographical time-space'.<sup>11</sup> Whereas it is only in the latter that time essentially affects the biographical course of the heroes' lives (first encounter and subsequent marriage), the sum of their ordeals in adventure time-space is characterized, at least to a certain extent, by 'reversibility'. This implies that, unlike the 'historical' time conception of the modern realist novel, the individual adventures in the ancient Greek novel do not contribute to any *organic* evolution of the protagonists—to a combination, that is, of biological and psychological change, as in the 'historical' time conception of 19<sup>th</sup>-century realism. Bakhtin equally characterizes adventure space as 'interchangeable', since the rather stereotypical story-line is more a function of space's symbolic meanings than of unequivocally identifiable historical and social conditions, as is the case in realist novels since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Our argument is that Bakhtin's concept of the adventure chronotope, broadly describing the basic syntactic features of the ancient Greek novel, equally captures the narrative deep-structure of the Byzantine and romantic

adaptations of the genre. In setting out to explain why the revival of these chronotopical characteristics took place, we point out that the basic insights informing Bakhtin's adventure chronotope provide an adequate instrument for a diachronic study of the semantic and pragmatic components of this genre. In our view, these components are intimately connected with the issue of communal identity as theorized by Benedict Anderson. Challenging a series of misinterpretations of the latter's work, Culler has recently tried to restore Anderson's original line of argument by calling the formal structure of the *novel in general* a

condition of possibility for imagining something like a nation, for imagining a community that could be opposed to another, as friend to foe, and thus a condition of possibility of a community organized around a political distinction between friend and enemy [...]. (2007: 71)

Paradoxically, it is precisely this attempt to divert critical attention from the national content of *some novels* that proves fruitful for the rather limited corpus under discussion in the present article.

Moreover, this line of thought suggests an alternative to an often-vexed argument originally developed to account for the alleged appearance of the Greek novel in the late Hellenistic period and its re-appearance in Byzantine times. According to the so-called 'salvation theory', the ancient Greek novel, featuring most importantly the themes of love and isolation, arose in response to existentialist concerns about the isolated individual in the Hellenistic cosmopolitan world. Perry (1967: 48), for example, regards the novels as 'latter-day epic for Everyman' and identifies the insignificance of the individual in a newly expanded world as a crucial factor in the appearance of the novelistic genre. Reardon, for his part, argues that the Greek novel, as a Hellenistic myth, reflects

[...] aspirations towards salvation, intimations of immortality. [...] The novel, then, represents the individual in life, concerned with private problems: problems of spiritual life, of salvation and existence, of this world and the next, of the spirit and the flesh. (1969: 307)

In scholarship on the Byzantine novel, similar accounts set out to explain the revival of the ancient genre as a reaction against uncertainty following the Byzantine defeat by the Selçuk Turks at the battle at Manzikert (1071).<sup>12</sup> In both fields, however, this theory has by now been largely rejected, not least because its assumption of a mass readership has convincingly been challenged by recent papyrological and literary research, suggesting on the

contrary that readers were confined to the educated elite.<sup>13</sup> Our approach suggests an alternative to the salvation theory that is in line with these recent insights.

### Contextual Analysis and Semantic Deep-Structure

When comparing the socio-historical contexts in which the adventure novels of ordeal flourished in the three periods of Greek literary history under consideration, one comes across two typologically similar circumstances which seem to have made an important contribution to the rise and later revivals of the genre. These involve a highly specific combination of (1) a certain degree of (proto-)ethnical—including cultural—awareness<sup>14</sup> primarily based on the classical heritage of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC ('Hellenism') and (2) a fundamental unease with—and sometimes even subversion of—the prevailing political climate among the writing elite. As will be apparent from our subsequent analysis, both these pragmatic circumstances led intellectuals of the respective periods to conceptualize an 'imagined community' by promoting the values of Hellenism. In this respect, the corresponding 'world view' consisting of the semantic topics Greek cultural superiority and political discontent found an adequate mode of expression in the narrative syntax—that is, world construction—of the adventure chronotope.

In our view, (proto-)ethnical awareness is an important strand in the development of the *ancient Greek novel*. The oldest representatives seem to have originated in Asia Minor under Roman occupation (from 146 and 129 BC in Greece and Asia Minor respectively). Traditionally, the focus in Greek literature of the first centuries AD on the cultural heritage of Greece has been regarded as a compensatory response to Roman domination and the loss of political power (Bowie 1970; Anderson 1990; Alcock 1993: 7). Recently, Whitmarsh has convincingly pointed out that a correct understanding of the cultural omnipresence of the Greek past in the imperial period requires a somewhat more dynamic conceptualization of the notion of identity itself. Being 'Greek' in this 'Roman' world was informed by an active and unremitting engagement involving the incarnation and performance of some basic moral, cultural, and intellectual qualities. One of the key tools in this activity was *paideia*, translatable as 'education', but equally implying civilization and culture.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, although the Greek elite participated in politics and was, in fact, far from powerless at the provincial level, Greek intellectual *self-representation* was highly informed by an awareness of political subordination and an aspiration to compensate for this with *paideia* (Whitmarsh 2001: 18–20).

Given the political context in which the Greek novels functioned, they are characterized by a puzzling paradox. Although Rome must have been omnipresent in the authors' daily lives, it is conspicuously absent in the novels themselves, which unflinchingly erase what must have been one of the most important social and political factors in contemporary reality. Generally speaking, this situation is in line with the overall tendency in Greek literature during the Second Sophistic of downplaying the presence of Rome by focussing on the Greek past (Bowie 1970: 3–4). As has been pointed out repeatedly, however, Rome is implicitly present in Chariton's *Callirhoe*, the oldest extant novel. Some scholars have drawn attention to Chariton's depiction of the Egyptian rebellion and his representation of Syracuse as possible *loci* of imperial resonance,<sup>16</sup> whereas others have argued that Chariton's Persian court echoes the Roman imperial court.<sup>17</sup> The trial scene in the fifth book of the novel in particular has been characterized as emblematic of the ambivalent attitude of Greeks towards their Roman rulers.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Rome's presence in Chariton's novel has also been discerned on a more fundamental level. The explicit identification of Aphrodisias as the narrator's hometown and the emphatic presence of its goddess Aphrodite in the novel draw attention to the highly privileged connection between Rome and Aphrodisias, cult site of Aphrodite/Venus, who, according to Roman imperial self-definition (Edwards 1998; Connors 2002: 23), was the mother of Rome's mythical founder Aeneas. Recently, Chariton's novel has been read as an implicit story about the transition from Syracusan democracy to tyranny, a theme, as Smith rightly but tantalizingly puts it, 'that was highly relevant for a Greek writer and audience of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE' (2007: 247).

The ambiguous situation of the complete absence of explicit references to Rome on the one hand and the clear implicit engagement with the issue of imperial power (in Chariton, at least) on the other, forms an instructive background against which to consider the representation of the novels' protagonists. As a matter of fact, the novelistic protagonists incorporate a fissured combination of characteristics emblemized by the narrative macrosequence of the adventure chronotope. On the one hand, they incarnate moral and cultural qualities, like *paideia*, which sharply distinguish them from most of their non-Greek (barbarian) enemies, who cross their path in adventure time-space but stay well outside the protected realm of their biographical time-space. On the other hand, they display a certain lack of actual power over the world that they inhabit, a powerlessness echoed by the mere fact that, again in adventure time-space, they are tossed all over the Mediterranean by divine forces or by pirates and other enemies. Most notably, scholars have discussed the passivity of some of the male protagonists,



who are often utterly defenceless against the various misfortunes befalling them in adventure time-space.<sup>19</sup> In our view, this particular combination of characteristics is interconnected with concerns central to identity construction by the Greek elite under the Roman empire.

The link between the representation of cultural superiority in the novels and contemporary cultural politics has extensively been dealt with by Haynes, who claims that the innovative novelistic construction of the dominant, educated and rhetorically skilled feminine functions as a sign of Greek cultural integrity and superiority under Roman imperial rule (2001: 74, 80–88; 2003: 13–14, 44–80). Taking up this notion of character, we suggest taking into account the issue of the protagonists' powerlessness as well. As a matter of fact, the issue of social control is a much more important theme in some of the novels than has been pointed out so far. Given the extraordinary physical beauty of the novelistic heroines, which accompanies their cultural excellence, Egger (1994) observes a contrast between their omnipotence on the erotic level and their powerlessness on the social level. In her view, then, the heroines' erotic attractiveness marks the realm in which the issues of power and control are thematized. Some of the novels, however, also complicate and thematize the concepts of control and power outside of the erotic realm by depicting protagonists who are able to acquire control over their social environment in the course of the narrative. As one of us (De Temmerman 2007) has argued elsewhere, Chariton implicitly depicts his heroine as changing from a helpless victim, manipulated and controlled by her (often barbarian) enemies, to a resourceful woman, capable not only of withdrawing herself from manipulation by others, but also of rhetorically and socially controlling other characters herself. This observation is important for two reasons. Firstly, it challenges the purely 'static' world construction underlying the conception of character in Bakhtin's adventure chronotope, while simultaneously pointing to the fact that the adventure chronotope does indeed not offer any *organic* evolution as it does in 19<sup>th</sup>-century realism. More importantly, however, the fact that character evolution is shaped precisely on the level of social control and power suggests that we should read the novel's protagonists not only as the incarnations of physical, intellectual and cultural excellence (as Egger and Haynes both do), but also as characters actively engaged in establishing control over the world of adventure time-space which poses dangers and threats to their love and happiness.

Thus, the protagonists' identity construction in the adventure chronotope thematizes precisely the combination of cultural excellence and actual powerlessness that informs the Greek elite's self-perception in the novels' heyday. The complication of the latter issue in some novels, and notably in

Chariton, suggests that they dynamically engage with present cultural concerns rather than offering a direct and unproblematic reflection of contemporary reality. Thus, both through plot and characterization of the protagonists, the world view of the Greek adventure chronotope highlights, in miniature, one of the basic concerns of the intellectuals' self-definition in this era.

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When turning to the *Byzantine 12<sup>th</sup> century*, a similar combination of perceived political powerlessness and a cultural search for self-definition seems to have concerned the learned elite.<sup>20</sup> Under the Comnenian dynasty (1081–1185) the intellectual bourgeoisie lost the prominent position in the state hierarchy that they had occupied in the previous period. Byzantine *literati* of the 12<sup>th</sup> century had to content themselves with a lower social rank than the princes of the imperial family. At the same time, the imperial court, and especially Manuel I (1143–1180), developed a great liking for intellectuals from the West. Unlike official Byzantine historiographers, who remained remarkably faithful to the regime, skilled men of letters started to air their political discontent through literary texts.

Byzantine group consciousness—as an ‘imagined community’—of old comprised a political, a linguistic and a religious component, all three stemming from different ethnic and/or cultural traditions. The first involved the awareness of being part of a well demarcated (although subject to change over time) geographic territory sometimes called Ρωμανία (‘Romania’), ruled by the Roman emperor in Constantinople and organized according to Roman (‘Ρωμαϊκός’) institutions and law; the other two were the common spoken (and since the 6<sup>th</sup> century also administrative) language of the Byzantines, which was Greek, and Christianity as their official religion (also from the 6<sup>th</sup> century onwards). Contrary, then, to traditional views of Byzantium as a multi-ethnic empire, the question of ethnicity was originally not at stake.<sup>21</sup> However, the growing pressure on the borders of the Byzantine empire—both from the Western crusaders and the Selçuk Turks in the East—and the resulting substantial loss of territory (especially in the aftermath of the battle at Manzikert, 1071), together with the unfavourable disposition of the regime of Manuel I towards the bourgeois elite, provoked some sort of an ‘ethnic’ reflex in intellectual circles. This process, it has been suggested, might also have been reinforced by the fact that the Byzantine empire was gradually becoming more or less reduced to regions in which the spoken language of the overwhelming majority had been Greek ever since classical antiquity (Beaton 1989: 8 and 2007: 88; Rapp 2008: 141).

Be that as it may, such an ethnical reflex is clearly evidenced by the gradual adoption of an alternative to Byzantine self-designation which had a certain proto-ethnical connotation to it, since Ρωμαίος ('Romaïos', inhabitant of the Roman empire) started to experience some competition from 'Ἑλλην (‘Hellenē’), a term that previously had referred exclusively to the ‘pagan’ ancient Greeks. A number of studies have situated the rise of Hellenism and the concomitant gradual adoption of a new terminology for Greek self-designation only from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Angold 1975; Dimaras 1992: 207–208), or at most acknowledged some isolated signs of Hellenism dating back to the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century (De Boel 2003: 171–175; Page 2008: 63–67). Drawing on Magdalino’s cultural-historical analysis, however, Beaton has recently brought into the open more conclusive linguistic evidence that, at least among intellectuals, Byzantine group identity may have been subject to change as early as the 11<sup>th</sup> century and was certainly so in the course of the 12<sup>th</sup>:

Under the new pressures of the twelfth century, the long discussed term ‘Hellenes’ came to be revived, cautiously and experimentally, as a way of differentiating the in-group from the ‘other’, one that is based on (spoken) language and perhaps other aspects of what we would now call ethnicity. But ‘Hellenē’ never becomes a primary term of self-definition in the twelfth century, as it would as early as the thirteenth, under the impact of the Fourth Crusade, and again to some extent in the fifteenth. (Beaton 2007: 94)

This new terminology was meant to distinguish genuine Byzantines – that is, Orthodox Greek speaking Romans – both from Slavophonic Orthodox Christians (e.g. Bulgarians) and from Western Catholic Romans, that is Latins. On top of traditional determining factors in Byzantine self-representation such as language, religion and the awareness of being part of an empire governed by the legitimate ‘Roman’ emperor, then, a number of 12<sup>th</sup>-century intellectuals seem to have undertaken an attempt to add a proto-ethnical dimension. At the same time, the Byzantine Renaissance of ancient Greek culture and learning, which had begun as early as the 9<sup>th</sup> century, reached a peak during the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup>. This ‘Renaissance’ involved, amongst other things, both the reception of and abundant critical reflections on the ancient Greek novel. Such a reception fitted into a wider context of Byzantine interest in (often postclassical) ancient culture and served as a ‘genetic’ catalyser for the revival of the novel genre.<sup>22</sup> Unlike former studies arguing that Byzantine Hellenism was purely a matter of imitation, Macrides and Magdalino believe that it should be regarded as a daring attempt to enrich the Byzantine communal identity with a cultural

dimension that was ultimately rooted in the classical heritage of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, despite its '[...] paganism and the imperfection of its statehood [democracy]' (1992: 155).

Next to other forms of literature, the contemporary adventure novel proved an adequate narrative structure in which to express the political and cultural concerns of Byzantine authors. In Theodoros Prodromos' *Rodanthi and Dosiklis*, for example, the culturally and morally irreproachable 'Hellene' protagonists—whose homeland in 'biographical time-space' resembles a remote 'ancient Greek' past—are in every respect opposed to the 'barbarian' pirates who inhabit 'adventure time-space'. Moreover, given the lurking subversive attitude towards the imperial power adopted by these novelists, it is probably not mere coincidence that Prodromos' description of the barbarian royal household owes much to the Byzantine imperial apparatus (Macrides & Magdalino 1992: 152). As had been the case in the ancient novel, in view of a longed-for 'communal identity' the 'world view' propagated by a series of 12<sup>th</sup>-century narratives draws in similar (but not identical) ways on the distinction between 'Hellenes' and 'barbarians'. The following quote is exemplary of this point:

The division of the world into Hellenes and barbarians implied that the Romans were among the latter and that the empire was a barbarian state – an implication reinforced by the portrayal of monarchical power as alien to the Hellenic way of life. Above all, the idealisation of this way of life as idyllic and virtuous [...] struck at the root of the assumption that the salvation of mankind was tied to one faith, one form of government and one city. (Macrides & Magdalino 1992: 155)

Admittedly, a lot of work still needs to be done, but a number of studies implicitly or explicitly corroborate the view that the narrative structure of the adventure chronotope easily lent itself either to a contribution to the rise of Hellenism (Alexiou 1977: 35; Burton 1998: 181) or to indirectly raising critical questions about contemporary political and even religious matters (Burton 1998; Jouanno 2005). Most recently, Kaldellis has re-addressed the Byzantine novel, especially *Rodanthi and Dosiklis*, from the perspective of the 'Hellenes vs. barbarians' polarity. Even if he is not fully convinced by Magdalino's identification of the Byzantine imperial establishment with the latter pole, his general conclusion does seem to corroborate our analysis of the semantic deep structure of the Greek adventure chronotope:

[T]he polarity of Greeks vs. barbarians is important in the novels and was likewise fundamental to the revival of Greek identity in the twelfth century.

[...] in the social world of twelfth-century Byzantium the sophists' attempt to fashion new Hellenic identities was driven by their need to differentiate themselves from the barbarians who were assaulting the empire militarily from outside and from those who were advancing within it socially and politically. Under those circumstances, anyone who was not a barbarian was one of 'us', and the classical tradition predisposed these scholars to regard non-barbarians as Greeks. (Kaldellis 2007: 267–268)

Nevertheless, we must not lose sight of the fact that not every 12<sup>th</sup>-century novelistic text shared this subversive attitude towards the political and religious dogmas of the time. De Boel (2003), for instance, has convincingly argued that the unknown author of *Digenis Akritis* certainly did not align himself with the revival of Hellenism but rather supported the more conservative stance *vis-à-vis* Byzantine identity propagated by official historiography.

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The socio-political context in which the third and final manifestation of the Greek adventure chronotope flourished was the direct result of the Greek struggle for independence against the Ottoman Turks (1821–1828). Although the Greeks eventually gained political control over their homeland in 1832, the newly founded kingdom remained firmly within the sphere of influence of the great European powers.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the intellectual elite from Constantinople—the so-called 'Phanariots'—who had held high positions in the Ottoman state hierarchy from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards and consequently gave preference to a restoration of the Byzantine empire 'from within' rather than to Greek independence through military action (Clogg 1992: 21–29), openly doubted the administrative capacities of indigenous politicians. Once the Greeks had fought their way to independence, the prevalent nationalist ideology – inspired by the romantic concept of the nation-state—brought about the necessity of 'constructing' their own national past; the need, that is, of making a well thought-out selection of those episodes from Greek history '[...] which retrospectively could claim to have made the present existence and future aspirations of the nation inevitable' (Beaton 1988: 99). It goes without saying that the resulting Greek 'national identity' was less rooted in the periods under Frankish or Ottoman dominion than it was in the history and culture of their glorious ancestors from antiquity and Byzantine times.<sup>24</sup> That the 19<sup>th</sup>-century ideology of Hellenism should indeed be regarded as a discursive construction serving the purpose of an 'imagined community' is evidenced by a number of examples which undeniably show that the peasantry during the previous period of *Tourkokratia* (1453–1821)

had had a cyclical rather than a linear sense of time, and thought of the ‘Hellenes’ as mythological superheroes rather than in terms of their aged forefathers. In those days, it is not surprising that classical antiquity was far from being a self-evident frame of reference for the majority of inhabitants of the Greek world (Hamilakis 2007: 64–74; Livianos 2008: 258). The necessity, then, of a national history in the formation process of nation-states could in more general terms be described as follows:

A distinguished history is an essential attribute of any new state, since a past justifies the right to a future. The intellectual elite must confer upon the new nation the prestige of a renowned genealogy and relate this tradition to the community as a national myth. (Jusdanis 1991: 27)

The fact that Modern Greek literature in the newly independent state could not rely on an elaborate prose tradition—both the Turkish occupation and the subsequent military and political upheavals proved rather uncondusive to literary activity—prompted writers to search for their models elsewhere. Apart from the obvious choice for European romantic authors such as Goethe, Chateaubriand or Foscolo, the first Modern Greek novelists also found inspiration in their own remote literary history. The adventure novel offered them the double advantage of perfectly fitting in with the Greek national identity under construction (Roilos 2003: 62, 65), while at the same time providing a sophisticated narrative structure that was able to give voice to the Phanariot’s political discontent. As in the Byzantine 12<sup>th</sup> century, the revival of the adventure novel in the first two decades of newly independent Greece did not appear out of the blue. The ‘genetic’ evidence for the dissemination of this literary model is primarily embodied by the figure of Adamandios Korais, who as early as 1804, in his long introduction to an edition of Heliodoros’ *Aithiopika* (1804), had made a plea for a return to the Greek roots of the novel genre (Angelatos 1997: 193–199; Tziouvas 1997: 10–12; Beaton 1999: 54–56; Beaton 2009). Since both Panagiotis and Alexandros Soutsos were students of Korais in Paris in the 1820s (Droulia 1994: 16–17), it should hardly surprise us that they were the first to put their tutor’s theoretical convictions into practice. Moreover, in the absence of an elaborate Modern Greek prose tradition, the republication of Hellenistic and Byzantine novels had become a common practice in Phanariot circles ever since the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Kechagioglou 1991: 58–59; Beaton 1999: 54).

In accordance with the pragmatic context of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the world view of the romantic adventure chronotope can very well be illustrated by the rarely studied example of *Thersandros* (*Θέρσανδρος*, 1847) by the Cypriot author Epameinondas Frangkoudis.<sup>25</sup>

The *fabula nuda* of this epistolary novel is quite simple: Eleni and Thersandros, both residents of Cyprus, fall desperately in love but due to the hero’s humble birth they are not allowed to marry. The outbreak of the Greek revolution, appealing to Thersandros’ patriotic feelings, provides him with a pretext to abandon his beloved and set course for mainland Greece. After a journey of more than two years along various regions of the Greek world, the protagonist returns to Cyprus, informed by his best friend that Eleni is suffering severely from their enduring separation. The heroine, meanwhile, has stubbornly resisted her father’s plans for her marriage and decides to spend the rest of her life in a convent. On the day that she officially takes the veil, however, Eleni is poisoned by the chambermaid at her rejected suitor’s instigation. Since Thersandros arrives too late to prevent the crime, he murders his opponent in an act of revenge and then, in a macabre scene, commits suicide next to the exhumed corpse of his beloved.

As is evidenced by this summary, the typical macro-sequence of the adventure chronotope is one of the influences underlying the plot of Frangkoudis’ novel. This view is underscored by its tripartite structure, the main episodes being entitled *ἀναχώρησις* (‘departure’), *περίηγησις* (‘travel’) and *καταστροφή* (‘catastrophe’) respectively. The subtitle of the novel’s last part neatly brings us to a more or less general feature of the romantic variant of the genre: the consistent equation of ‘biographical time-space’ with ‘romantic spleen’, at the outset leading to a provisional separation of the lovers through a series of adventures, while at the end resulting in eternal loss through the typically romantic motif of the death of the heroine and the subsequent suicide of the hero.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, in ‘adventure time-space’ the semantic topics |nationalism| and |political discontent| to a large extent outstrip the personal misfortunes of the central couple. The patriotic purport of this central section is apparent from a series of—perfectly reversible—‘travel motifs’, which brings Thersandros to geographically extensive parts of the Greek world. Time and again in his letters and diaries, the protagonist opposes the deplorable situation of *Tourkokratia* with celebrated episodes from the history of ancient Greece, alternately glorifying the heroism of the Greek *αντάρτες* (‘partisans’) in their current struggle for freedom against the ‘barbarian’ Ottoman Turks. In the following example from a description of the famous battle of Tripolitsa, Thersandros draws an analogy between the contemporary military situation and the battle of Troy:

Υπό της Τριπολιτζάς τα τείχη ο Ελληνικός στρατός ωμοίαζε τους Αχαιούς εις το Ίλιον. Αγέρωχος, πλατύστερνος, εϋκνήμις ατενίζων εις τους πύργους

της, με αυτά τα όμματα του να τους καταφάγη εξήτει. [...] Εν μέσω του μαύρου καπνού, ηκούετο κατά καιρούς η *άγρια φωνή των βαρβάρων*, και μακρόθεν οι λόφοι αντεβόδουν ... κάθε χειρ έπληττε *μανιώσα* ∇ όλος ο Ελληνικός στρατός, σιωπών αναβάς τα τείχη, ερρίφθη κατασφάζων και κατασφαζόμενος, κρούων και κρουόμενος, ωθών και ωθούμενος ...—(Frangkoudis 2002: 108–109;

Under the walls of Tripolitsa *the Greek army resembled the Achaeans in Troy*. Imperious, broad-chested and strong-legged they looked at the towers and sought to devour them with their eyes. [...] From the midst of black smoke there came now and again *the wild voices of the barbarians*, and far off the hills reverberated ... every single hand was fighting in a rage—the entire Greek army, climbing the walls in silence, threw themselves into battle, slaughtering and being slaughtered, striking and being struck, pushing and being pushed ...—(our translation) ‘our italics’

Furthermore, whereas the ‘story’ proper takes place during the first years of the war of independence, the level of ‘narration’—primarily textualized by a number of extensive footnotes—reflects the political situation of the period in which the novel was actually written. In these paratextual passages the narrator takes the opportunity to ardently denounce Europeanizing tendencies within Greek society, the indifference of Cypriot politicians to the enduring Ottoman yoke and also the politics of interference in Greece’s internal affairs by the European powers. The following quote from a full-page condemnation of the British occupation of the Ionian islands is a case in point:

Αγγλία, Αγγλία, επιθυμώ να με μισήσης όσον σ’ έμισησα. Επιθυμούσα της αγανακτήσεως την πυράν, την οποίαν εις τα στήθη μου φέρω κατά σου, ν’ ανάψω γενικώς επί της υψηλίου. Επιθυμούσα να αδυνάμη να σε κολαφίσω και βαρυπλήξω μ’ όσην δύναμιν Συ κολαφίζεις και βαρυπλήττεις την Επτάνησον. (Frangkoudis 2002: 121)

England, England, it is my desire that you hate me to the same extent as I have been hating you. I would love to light all over the world the flame of indignation which in my heart I carry against you. How I wish that I could slap and strongly thump you with the same strength with which you have slapped and strongly thumped the Ionian Islands. (our translation)

The striking thematic homology between the narratological levels of ‘story’ and ‘narration’ suggests that Frangkoudis conceives of the English as the western incarnation of Ottoman barbarism, if not worse.



### Concluding Remarks

To conclude, let us provide the foregoing account with some nuancing. At a *theoretical level*, firstly, it is important to acknowledge that significantly similar pragmatic circumstances are themselves not *sufficient* triggers of a re-appearance of specific generic chronotopes. It is, of course, easy enough to point to other periods in, for example, Byzantine history that are equally characterized by cultural superiority and political discontent, and yet were never conducive to a literary genre informed by the adventure novel. We do argue, however, that in the three periods under consideration both circumstances need to be taken into account in order to fully explain the re-appearance of the adventure chronotope. Subsequently, from the perspective of *literary history* our contextual analysis offers one strand that suggests an alternative to the influential theory that the adventure novel functioned as a kind of 'salvation literature' in both imperial and Byzantine times, but it certainly does not exhaust this multifaceted and highly complex issue. It has been suggested, for instance, that 'oriental' influences must have played their role in the formation of the ancient, Byzantine and Modern Greek variants alike. To take the ancient variant first, some structural elements of this literary form might indeed have originated from oriental sources.<sup>27</sup> In the case of the Byzantine novel, intensive cultural and literary exchanges with the Arab East have been attested from the 7<sup>th</sup> century onwards, including Greek translations of 'novelistic' texts which to a certain extent seem to have influenced some generic and thematic features of Byzantine narrative (e.g. narrative within the narrative, frame stories, exoticism, fairy tale-like elements, etc.) (Kechagioglou 1987: 76–79, 1988: 156–161, 1989: 65–67). Finally, a case has been made for the existence of a genuine 'Ottoman literary polystem' at least from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, in which all sorts of narrative texts and genres featuring themes of love and adventure and stemming from a plethora of cultural and/or linguistic traditions (Arab, Turkish, Armenian, Greek, Balkan, etc.) circulated (Kechagioglou 1996: 115–120, 1997). Be that as it may, the present state of scholarship does not seem to affect our analysis of the semantic deep-structure of the Greek adventure novel, for in none of the three cases is there evidence available suggesting that the (re-)emergence of the Greek adventure chronotope was due to oriental variants of this genre. If anything, the oriental connections nuance the merely 'intracultural' character of genetic contacts which we have regarded as conducive to the revival of the Greek adventure novel. Finally, it goes without saying that the semantic deep-structure of the genre does not encompass all the meanings and functions of the three *historical manifestations* of the Greek adventure chronotope and their *individual*

*representatives* from a ‘synchronic’ point of view: differences between individual texts and periods are no doubt as meaningful as similarities.

Our comparative approach to the ancient, Byzantine and romantic adventure novels has nevertheless revealed a number of new insights which might offer some prospects for further investigation. First and foremost, the ‘world view’ common in all three manifestations—the combination, that is, of the semantic topics |cultural superiority| and |political discontent| expressed by the exemplary behaviour of ‘Hellene’ protagonists and their powerlessness in ‘adventure time-space’ respectively—heightens our understanding of the semiotic deep-structure of the entire genre and its particular function in three different attempts to establish a Hellenic ‘communal identity’. In addition, various sets of parallels pertaining to only two variants not only indicate closer literary (‘genetic’) relations or stronger cultural-historical (‘typological’) resemblances between the periods involved, but also point to the correspondingly distinctive character of the third. Thus the ancient and Byzantine novels both share the expression of Greek cultural supremacy over barbarian enemies through the evocation of ‘biographical time-space’ in an ideal ‘Hellenic’ setting, as opposed to the romantic variant in which the heroes’ homeground is saturated with personal misfortunes. Next, whereas the adventure novel originated in the first centuries BC and AD and hence, as a new literary form, cannot be directly attributed to classicizing tendencies, its deliberate revival in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in itself constituted a way to voice the ideology of Hellenism. When it comes to political criticism, finally, the Modern Greek variant seems to have most fully exploited the subversive potential of the genre, in degree (both implicit and explicit) as well as with regard to the kind of political subordination under attack (both foreign and indigenous).\*

## Notes

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1. Quoted by Morson (1991: 1088) from Bakhtin’s ‘Reply to a question from the *Novy Mir* editorial staff’; Morson’s italics .

2. Morson (1991: 1087) (*italics in original*). Studies exemplifying more abstract approaches regard the domain of prose fiction either as a laboratory where humanity has carried out subsequent experiments with combinations of time and space in order to adequately model exterior reality (Clark & Holquist 1984: 278; Holquist 1990: 116; Morson & Emerson 1990: 366; Danow 1991: 46–47), or as narrative evidence for the existence of allegedly universal cognitive patterns based on the alternation between regularity and contiguity (Keunen forthcoming).
3. We prefer the term ‘communal identity’ to ‘national identity’ because we deal with two eras of Greek cultural history long before the rise of the modern European nation-states, namely the Roman imperial period and the Byzantine 12<sup>th</sup> century. In these periods, any existence of nationalism or even ethnic self-awareness is a hotly debated issue among specialists in the respective fields.
4. Apart from Anderson’s study, see also Jusdanis (1991: 46–68) and, more recently, Culler (2007: 43–72) on the role of narrative texts in the formation process of imagined communities, in these cases nation-states.
5. Note that Longos’ novel does not entirely match Bakhtin’s chronotopical category of the ‘adventure novel of ordeal’; it equally displays characteristics of the idyllic chronotope. For English translations and references to editions of the original texts, cf. Reardon (2008<sup>2</sup>). Holzberg (2006) gives a handsome overview of all ancient Greek novel texts, and situates the genre within its literary and social context.
6. An excellent general introduction to the Byzantine novel can be found in Beaton (1989: 49–86). More comprehensive studies, albeit from completely different angles, are MacAlister (1996: 115–164) and Roilos (2005).
7. This insight was first voiced by Henri Tonnet (1994) and, even more so, by Dimitris Tziouvas in his groundbreaking 1997 publication.
8. The corpus seems to fall into two branches: on the one hand, there are the novels by Pitzipios and Kalogeropoulos, which openly adopt the generic features of the adventure novel in their surface-structure; in the four remaining novels, on the other hand, the genre can only be traced in the narrative deep-structure.
9. Kahane (2005), for example, goes some way towards blurring a number of basic distinctions informing Bakhtin’s opposition between epic and novel. Whitmarsh (2005), for his part, points out that the novel, rather than merely being a ‘constitutively ‘open’ form’, equally harbours centripetal forces.
10. Cf. also Borghart (2009), who draws upon the following observation by Morson & Emerson (1990: 384): ‘Throughout his discussion, Bakhtin seems to be not only describing the chronotope of the Greek romance but to be eulogizing its implicit opposite, the nineteenth-century novel’.
11. See Beaton (2000: 182) and Borghart (2009). On a personal note, we should point out that, for Bakhtin, this macro-sequence does not by definition describe a circular movement.

12. Beaton's chapter on the Byzantine novel (1989: 49–86) is undoubtedly the most cited account when it comes to the theory of 'salvation literature'. A comprehensive survey of similar critical studies can be found in Jeffreys (1998).
13. On the readership of the ancient Greek novel, cf. Stephens (1994) (papyrological evidence) and Bowie (1994) (literary evidence). On the readership of the Byzantine novel, cf. Jeffreys (1998).
14. We understand the controversial notion '(proto-)ethnical awareness' not in unequivocally racial terms but rather in the moderate sense recently attributed to it in the realm of Byzantine studies, namely as a form of communal identity primarily based on a shared spoken language and a believed common cultural past, as opposed to affiliation on the grounds of religion or the institutional framework of a state only (Beaton 2007). Paul Magdalino, for his part, makes a similar case for its political correlate '(proto-)national awareness' (1991: 4–6).
15. Whitmarsh (2001: 21) lists *praiotes* ('gentleness'), *sophrosyne* ('self-control'), *epieikeia* ('decency'), *philanthropia* ('benevolence'), and – most importantly – *paideia* as key qualities informing Greek identity construction.
16. Smith (2007: 91) suggests that Chariton's depiction of the Egyptian rebellion could have echoed Alexandrian discontent under Roman rule. Connors (2002: 16–21) reads evocations of imperial power in Chariton's representation of Syracuse.
17. Cf. Schwartz (2003: 379–390), Alvares (2001). See Smith (2007: 10–13) for a fuller overview of scholarship addressing Rome's implicit presence in Chariton.
18. Schwartz (2003: 391) points out that the hellenized characterization of Chariton's Persian king Artaxerxes (as opposed to the traditional depiction of his entourage as barbarian) places Hellenic identity at the center of power and, therefore, points at the Greek embrace of imperial power 'as long as it acknowledges the superiority of Hellenic values and, importantly, awards them a place in the empire'. Cf. also Smith (2007: 139).
19. Cf., among others, Konstan (1994: 15–26) and Haynes (2003: 81–82).
20. Unless otherwise indicated, the following discussion is based upon a series of articles on 'nationalism' and 'Hellenism' in 12<sup>th</sup>-century Byzantium by the renowned historian Paul Magdalino (Magdalino 1991, 1993: 382–412 and Macrides & Magdalino 1992), the recent monographs by Kaldellis (2007) and Page (2008), and the handsome overview of the Byzantine communal identity provided by Rapp (2008).
21. For a detailed account of Byzantine communal identity we refer to Kaldellis (2007: 42–119) and Rapp (2008). Interestingly, the former makes a (rather controversial) case for looking upon Byzantium as the first nation-state in world history (see especially 74–82).
22. See Beaton (1989: 11–15, 19–25), MacAlister (1996: 153–164) and Kaldellis (2007: 225–316) for a discussion of the Byzantine Renaissance in general. MacAlister (1996: 108–112), Roilos (2005: 40–50) and Penninck (2007: 253–260) provide detailed overviews of evidence suggesting that the literary model which the ancient Greek novel eventually was to become, at least from the 9<sup>th</sup>

- century onwards continuously circulated, was read and even provoked quite an amount of critical reactions.
23. Jusdanis (1991: 13–48) describes in post-colonial terms the general mechanism whereby the price that peripheral cultures had to pay in order to join in with the Western European political and social structure of the nation-state, in almost every single case consisted of political, economic and cultural dependence upon the West. In analyzing the Greek pursuit of independence, he comes up with sufficient evidence for substantiating this claim.
  24. In the immediate aftermath of the Greek revolution, intellectuals were not eager to include the Byzantine period in their construction of Greek national identity and focussed exclusively on their glorious ancestors from classical antiquity. Yet, for a variety of reasons—such as the unmistakably Orthodox dimension of the Greek identity, the irredentist ideal of the 'Great Idea' ('Μεγάλη Ιδέα') and the unbridgeable temporal gap that lay between Modern and Ancient Greece—they began to realize that Byzantium was really needed as an intermediate stage (Magdalino 1991: 2; Hamilakis 2007: 112–119; Livianos 2008: 261).
  25. A number of recent studies that discuss Frangkoudis' life and some aspects of his literary production—especially *Thersandros*—are Mitsakis (1993), Chatzopoulou (1995), Kechagioglou (1996), Stavridis (1996) and Papaleondiou (2002).
  26. In recent publication on A. Soutsos' *The exile of 1831*, one of us shows how this ingenious alteration of the genre is primarily used to adapt the narrative structure of the adventure chronotope to the ideas of European Romanticism (Borghart 2009). This analysis, however, only holds for the second branch of the romantic adventure chronotope, not for the two adventure novels proper.
  27. See, for example, Anderson (1984: 1–24) and Anderson (1993).

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